

The French Games



by Daniel Mortureux



As well as being the dedicated and competent assistant to the Comte de BEAUMONT, Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee, Daniel MORTUREUX is also Deputy Treasurer of the French Olympic Committee. He has very kindly written for the "Olympic Review" the following article, which shows what an exciting experience 'The French Games' are for his country.

At a time when the problems of human environment, pollution, drugs and juvenile delinquency are of major concern, the French Olympic Committee considered it more important to give youth the opportunity of fulfilling themselves completely within our society. In fact, modern civilisation must guarantee to youth the physical movement and recreation it desperately needs.

In a world where specialisation and standardisation tend to dilute an individual's character, the French Olympic Committee dedicates these Games to youth, so that sport, with its requirements, its different incentives that are initiated, its joys and its sorrows, may play a prominent role in education.

It is not enough just to speak to young people; they must be given good health, excellent morals, a sense of ef-

fort and a balanced mind, all of which are necessary for their development, enjoyment of life and their future.

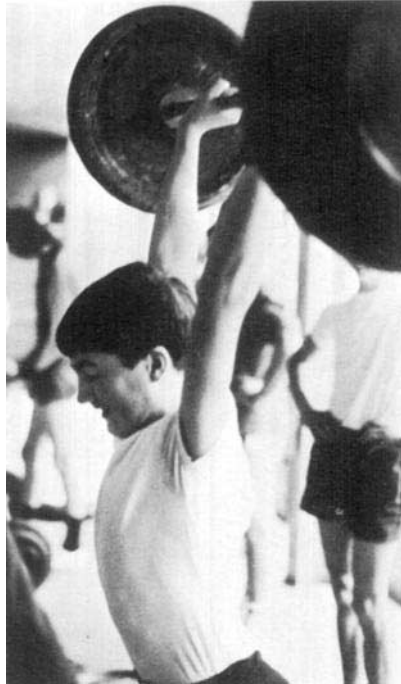
The young must all be able to practise sport as one big family, without any discrimination; sport is a school and a game where loyalty in competition engenders respect and friendship. Sport, in our mechanised and sometimes inhuman civilisation, must be an explosion of purity which constantly renews hope and humanity.

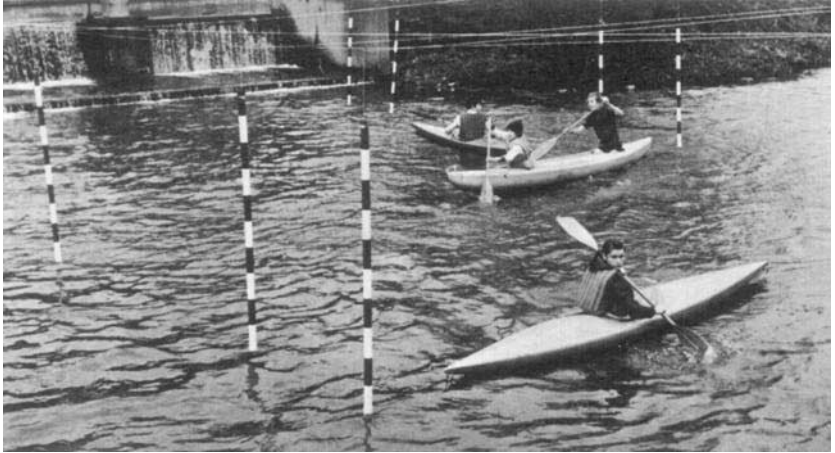
Although much progress has been made, sport in France is far from being practised by the mass of youth in our country.

The French Olympic Committee, as heir to the idea of Pierre de COUBERTIN and thoroughly convinced of the educational virtues of sport, decided to create the French Games.

In 1967, the Comte de BEAUMONT, President of the French Olympic Committee, launched the idea of the French Games. They were organised by the French Olympic Committee in 1971, with agreement and support from the Public Authorities and were to provide young people with the opportunity of meeting each other, not only by the means which already exist but also within the form of their everyday life: their villages, communes or towns.

The French Games is an appeal to each person's conscience to effort and collective enthusiasm. This is the desire to





realise, by the willingness of other people, something which does not seem possible. The main objective of these Games is to increase the basic participation in sport. They are open to all young boys and girls from the age of 10 to 17 years, according to the discipline.

By this initiative, teenagers are able to practise sport with the support of their families, who are now convinced of the educational efficiency of sport. The important thing is not the search for a sporting elite but the possibility offered to our youth of introducing them to sport in order for them to get to know each other and to taste the benefits of a physical and moral togetherness.

The initiative must create, within each village, the spirit of emulation and contribute to the development of a favourable opinion for sport.

The French Games brings together girls and boys from all regions of France in a sincere and impartial competition. The Games are to be held in the towns and villages; the mayors and elect, teachers and professional and voluntary arrangers are responsible for the organisation. Overall control is still held by the French Olympic Committee with the co-operation of the Ministry for Youth and Sport. The preliminary heats will give way to meetings at cantonal, district and departmental levels.

It is an 'open door' operation: all available open spaces (sports grounds, stadiums, swimming pools, recreation grounds, etc.) being place at the disposal of the Games. The initiative and energy of each commune will be the most important factors in the local phases of the Games.



In each academy a decentralised organisation is to be set up: Regional Organising Committees (R.O.C.), who in their turn create Departmental Organising Committees (D.O.C.), much nearer to the actual Games, whose task it is to welcome the winners of the local heats.

Within the same academy, inter-departmental meetings will allow the R.O.C.s to pick out the best to meet in inter-academic competitions, within zones established by the French Olympic Committee.

Still preserving their academic status, the zone winners

will take part in a national competition.

The French Olympic Committee selects the town which will hold the national competition. It will be unique not only in its organisation but also in the extent to which it will be advertised. The French Olympic Committee will greatly publicise this event, at the same time preserving its character of extreme simplicity, sporting friendship and joy, which are the very essence of this meeting.

The details for the simplified events were settled in ag-



reement with the participating National Federations. However, it has been clearly stated that the participation of each commune or town does not imply the organisation of all events in each sport. Complete freedom has been given to the organisers so that they may use the local grounds and sports facilities available to their fullest capacity. The form of the technical rules is established by each Federation and placed at the disposal of the organisers. The spirit and aim of the operation is not so much to investigate and create new structures and a technical organisation on a basic level, as to gather a sincere, mass participation of youth, with adults to guide them.

Although the French Olympic Committee started the French Games and at the time received technical support from the competent services of the Ministry for Youth and Sport, it has to pay all the expenses incurred for this operation. No grant was received at any stage whatsoever. It is therefore through an appeal to people's generosity and the patronage of banks and private industry and public support that the French

Olympic Committee is able to launch such an event.

It is quite difficult, at the present moment, to draw any conclusions from the 1971 French Games. For only one Organising Committee covering eight departments of a population of 2,200,000 inhabitants, more than three hundred towns and communes have asked to organise the French Games. The enthusiasm with which the 1971 French Games were received, even before they ended, was tremendous. This passion should not be deluded and the French Olympic Committee intends to repeat this event every two years, in a more complete and perfected way.

D.M.

