

*** Reduced Olympic Games

Extract of an article by Mr Hans-Joachim Funke, published by Olympisches Feuer, No. 11.

... It is not a question of wishing to take part in vague general discussion. It involves revitalising these Olympic Games of tomorrow if we want them to survive. And this means eliminating the all-too-human influence in the evaluation of sports performance.

In other words, every time judges are allowed to introduce subjective elements of their origin, motivation or social perspectives, the Olympic idea is overtaxed. It follows that any sport in which the performances cannot be judged with precision by a novice must be withdrawn from the Olympic programme.

Here the heresy begins, as nobody so far dared to think that gymnastics for example should be eliminated. This idea is enough to make people who have anything to do with gymnastics shudder. But what will happen to the Olympic Games if—and it not only regards gymnastics—things continue as in the past? The list of sports affected is certainly quite long, and the International Federations would kick up a fuss with the IOC. But their selfishness in protecting their own interests disregards the fate of the five rings. Do all these federations even realise that this search for their own prestige, under cover of the “Olympic Games”, rather than creating harmony, could mean the end to every effort to save the fundamental idea of Olympism?

If a reform of the Olympic programme is under discussion, then to my mind such essential ideas should also be considered. Who would say that this is going beyond the goal? That boxing and wrestling are

classic Olympic disciplines in character, and that team sports embody the interests of sport in our time?

Admittedly. So here is a counter-proposition: abolish the human narrow-mindedness; leave general excitement for the aesthetic enjoyment of gymnastics, if we keep to the example we took, and not for the emotion-packed medal distribution; hold world championships *before* the Olympic Games, and let the ten best teams put on a great gymnastic display that will thrill the world! Only don't burden the Games every four years with the lead weight of purely technical or specialised disputes. This plan is equally valid for all the sports in question.

Would this involve a depreciation in the quality of the Games? Certainly not. The programme's growth to infinity is already apparent. Is this the meaning of the Games?

A radical reduction and strengthening of the programme can only be beneficial to the Olympic Games, and neither the “old” nor the “young” participating countries need suffer. Perhaps the gold medal would not be so overestimated, which would do it a lot of good as it would no longer be the object of national jealousies...

H.J.F.