



The Modern Sports Administrator: His Problems and a Code of Conduct

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At the beginning of this article it is well worth quoting Aldous Huxley's views on sport (from "Ends and Means") and to test ourselves against the ideals expressed.

"Like every other instrument that man has invented, sport can be used either for good or for evil purposes. Used well, it can teach endurance and courage, a sense of fair play and a respect for rules, co-ordinated effort and the subordination of personal interests to those of the group. Used badly, it can encourage personal vanity and group vanity, greedy desire for victory and hatred for rivals, an intolerant esprit de corps and contempt for people who are beyond a certain arbitrarily selected pale."

The following statements will be read by officials connected with sport in 130 or more countries with National Olympic Committees recognised by the IOC and must therefore be in general terms. No one will deny that the playing of games teaches, indirectly, many admirable lessons which, if learnt in one's youth, are character forming and tend to make good citizens in every country. A sense of fair play is very important and many instructive pamphlets and oral exhortations to encourage it have been made by heads of state and governing bodies, and inducements in the form of trophies and diplomas have been offered by organisers of tournaments to encourage players to *play the game*.

Total respect for the rules

A respect for rules is most important for legislators and administrators. I always

remember the President of the Football Association of England teaching me a lesson when I suggested that certain rules might be relaxed to avoid punishing an offending club severely because I thought there were mitigating circumstances. He emphasised that no one is entitled to act contrary to rules, regulations or statutes. If an administrator weakens on that principle, he said, we can say good-bye to democratic rule. He ended: "A man cannot get lost on a straight road!" I learnt then what has been a guide throughout my life's work that the members of any organisation must be dedicated to sport and the rule of law and democracy. Even if we don't like what the rules say they are what we have to accept until they are changed at a congress or annual general meeting. Any other action will result eventually in trouble.

Many actions and attitudes of people in sport have changed in the last decade. Cynics have stated that international sporting contests result in international misunderstanding. This is not true of the contestants who make friendships and create understanding. Time and time again it has been proved that friends formed through sport, international or in one's own country, remain friends. But prestige has become so important for one's country and for oneself. Representatives of the countries competing in international sports events are placed in a difficult position.

They are reminded often, especially by the authorities of the particular sport in some countries, that they, as performers, have their country's reputation in

their hands. They are reminded too that their own and their country's reputation is made not only in the stadium itself but on millions of television screens throughout the world. This is a big responsibility. The public pay money to be entertained and the star performer makes sacrifices to be fit for the big event. The organisers of the Olympic Games and other tournaments want the outstanding performers from many countries to attract big crowds to help meet the ever rising costs of staging the events. In recent years too the receipts from television, films, sponsorship and advertising have become important.

Problems with which the IOC Executive Board are directly concerned are firstly the amount of time selected players should spend on training together and the amount of money which should be expended. This is a vexing question because the practice varies in different countries. Many of them, in many sports, are prepared to spend much more time and money than others.

Secondly, the eligibility rule is still not applied uniformly, but it is good to note that a much more realistic text has recently been adopted.

If the National Olympic Committees and the International Federations interpret the new rule and apply it strictly many anomalies will be reduced.

In some sports there are not enough qualified coaches and this is where the recently formed Solidarity Fund can give much service. Coaches are teachers, but whereas teachers in every country are trained and prepared for their profession, coaches often are not. They sometimes are former skilled performers, but today a coach should be knowledgeable about many subjects such as the psychological and physio-

logical approach, man management, diet, treatment of injuries and physiotherapy. The Solidarity Fund should help "emerging" countries to set up a panel of coaches for different sports and arrange that the members of the panel meet at intervals for further instruction and "refresher" courses. Coaches who can speak the language of the country in which they are working have a distinct advantage over others who require interpreters. I am often told that a coach from another country exercises more discipline and authority over his students than a national. This is often because the visitor has been trained to exercise authority and may be more respected because he has a famous name or reputation.

When selecting potential coaches for training, their willingness to act under authority and their ability to impose discipline should be studied.

Respect for oneself and for authority

Sport is meant to be played and enjoyed. When it is, there is no resentment against authority. At schools or clubs boys and girls recognise, however unruly they may feel, that without some form of authority and leadership, unruliness can degenerate into indiscipline and mob rule. It is this acceptance on the part of a sportsman that he must learn from qualified coaches how to improve his performance by means of properly directed training methods, a fairly rigid keep-fit programme and constant practice that is the bedrock of organised sport.

The mark of a civilised nation is that its leaders think before they talk and talk before they act. This, naturally, can lead to a plethora of commissions, working parties and so on, resulting in frustration for more forceful characters. But

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patience is rewarded. Far better to endure a committee session and to feel that everyone has had a chance to express his views, or to state a case, than to settle for a dominant leader who overrides all policies and opinions contrary to his own or, to preserve his status, kills new ideas at birth. There is a great deal to be said for authority to be invested in an elected body, the basis of democratic government.

Finally, I would say that the need of respect for the authority of administrators is as strong and as willing as ever on the part of sportsmen and women. Competition is fiercer despite a much tighter administration of games in all civilised countries and the acceptance of proper coaching in every form of sport is becoming more widespread. Participation in organised sport means that one voluntarily accepts a code of conduct and a set of laws or rules. This very acceptance is a source of pleasure and satisfaction to the sportsman, and the more anarchic the state of the world may be, the more firmly does he adhere to his own order. Self-respect and respect for authority is the sportsman's answer to intolerance, dissension, drug-taking and licentiousness.

S. R.



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