

Sport! Why?

Thoughts at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games

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In our world is it possible to find a more beautiful and fascinating spectacle than the official opening ceremony of the Olympic Games... than the parade of nations, the traditional arrival from Greece of the Olympic flame into a crowded stadium alive with colour... than the flight of pigeons announcing that the youth of the world has assembled for friendly competition... than the songs, music and so on? It is wonderful to the spectator.

The veteran, however, who has spent a lifetime in sport, finds beauty not only in what his eyes behold, but also in what is hidden from view yet represents the real meaning of the festival.

Does there exist any other world-wide movement capable of assembling numerous "fans" from more than 100 different countries at a friendly meeting of mutual, highly beneficial, interest? Isn't it wonderful to see young people from different and politically hostile blocs, different social backgrounds, different religions, etc. meet, talk and symbolically, as well as literally, give each other a pat on the back-in the stadium, in the Olympic village, in trains, buses, etc? And isn't it of fantastic importance that this is shown to millions of spectators all over the world? This spirit is perpetuated by the sports movement, not only at the Olympic Games, but also in the intervening years, among and within nations.

Does there exist any other movement capable of making such an enormous contribution to the creation of real bro-

therhood on this earth-and why not say to the creation of peace?

During the parade of nations the veteran thinks that he is seeing not only a very handsome youth, but furthermore the healthiest and strongest youth of the world. It is not possible to achieve Olympic results with, for instance, technique and talent alone. It is also necessary to train and train for years in order to obtain real health and essential strength. The scientifically proved fact that sport brings strong muscles and good health is believed by a lot of (ignorant) people to be its only advantage.

The veteran knows better. Over the years he has learned that the youth marching in front of him is not only 100% healthy, but furthermore a very competent youth, successful, happy and of fine morality.

As a rule, hard training day after day for years has produced energy, power of endurance and a spirit that does not shrink from great effort.

Many hard competitions have created a great capacity for controlling the nerves in difficult situations, for producing one's best under oppressive conditions. Competitions have also taught youngsters what honesty and "fair play" mean, as sport cannot function without a foundation of these concepts.

Sportsmen of course gain much pleasure from training and competition. This makes them happy which is also important. A happy man works better and is

more able to cope with bad experiences.

The veteran therefore knows that sport makes young and old people better prepared to meet the "struggle for life".

He knows that the valuable advantages of sport are not to be found in the purely physical aspect, but to an overwhelming extent in the spiritual and moral sphere.

His experience nevertheless shows that it is possible to find dark shadows even in the sports movement—as in all other movements on this earth—outrages against ideals, principles and laws. He knows however that this is the fault of weak human beings and not of the sports movement, which continues to do good to all its hundreds of millions of loyal devotees.

With the above background one may understand that the veteran's dream

would be for every man—whatever his age—to train in any sport for one hour every day—if possible in working time; and competitions—according to age—to be organised from time to time for everyone.

Results should very soon be apparent—at offices, factories, etc.

Firstly, people would be healthier and able to bear effort.

Secondly, there would be a better spirit, fellowship, enthusiasm for work, nervous energy, ability to take decisions, not to mention a happier and relaxed mood.

The third and most astonishing result—better output in spite of the possibly reduced time for work.

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London 1948

