

The Untold Story: Avery Brundage And Television Money, 1948-1960

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Given [his] obsessive desire to defend the purity of the Olympic Games from the stain of commercialism, Brundage was not enhanced by sugarplum dream of television revenue.

Allen Guttman

In his biography of Avery Brundage, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* historian Allen Guttman was far from correct in his analysis of the former IOC President's approach to television revenue. During the 1948-1960 period, Brundage served as President of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The time frame also witnessed a massive expansion of the television industry. Television networks in the United States and Europe paid significant fees for the right to televise marquee sport events such as the World Series, Rose Bowl, and the World Cup. As President of the USOC (1948-1952), and later the IOC (1952-1960), Brundage devised a number of schemes to capitalize on the revenue potential of television.

Brundage has been popularly perceived as a vociferous opponent of individuals and groups who threatened to expose the Olympic Movement to commercial influences. It is an inescapable conclusion based upon his numerous public pronouncements with respect to the evils of commercialism. However, the minutes of USOC meetings and IOC Sessions, as well as personal correspondence, betray Brundage's marked attraction to commercial television as a source of revenue for these two organizations.

Today, the sale of television rights to the Olympic Games provides critical funds for the members of the Olympic Tripartite (IOC, General Assembly of International Sport Federations, and the Association of National Olympic Committees). The perusal of these primary sources provides illuminating evidence concerning the early involvement Avery Brundage and the IOC with television.



Bob Barney passes the hat to new President Joan Paul