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## ***The 1942 Pan-American Games: The Olympic Alternative That Never Took Place***

Pan-Americanism is an ideology stating that the countries of the Western Hemisphere stand in a special relation to each other and share a similar set of interests—interests that include international sports contests. The idea of hemispheric unity and systematic cooperation was introduced to the continental political scenario in the early 1880s. Since the beginning of the Pan-American movement, Argentina has refused to accept the United States' (US) hegemonic role and leadership in Latin America. Indeed, Argentina vied for a hegemonic position in the region. The rivalry between Argentina and the US for leadership of the American republics gained momentum during World War II. Argentina's insistence on war neutrality and its refusal to take collective action under Pan-Americanism irritated the US.

In spite of the tension between Argentina and the US, during mid-1939 the Argentine Olympic Committee (AOC) initiated contacts in order to organize Pan-American Games in case the Olympic Games scheduled for Helsinki in 1940 had to be canceled because of the European hostilities. After considerable efforts, the AOC called a Congress in Buenos Aires to discuss the possibility of organizing the Games and all problems concerning amateur sports in the continent. The first Pan-American Sport Congress met during August 28-30, 1940. The Congress created the Pan-American Sports Committee, whose first president was Avery Brundage, and resolved to organize Pan-American Games every four years starting in 1942. The rationale behind the organization was to develop closer athletic relations among the member countries. Buenos Aires was chosen to host the first version of the Pan-American Games.

In Argentina, the Organizing Committee set November 21, 1942, as opening day and started plans and works immediately. In the US, Brundage sought governmental approval, which he obtained. The support for the Pan-American Games came before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and the US declaration of war against the Axis. After these events that governmental support evaporated, forcing Brundage to announce in April 1942 that the US was withdrawing its entry for the Games. Other countries soon declined to participate as well. Although the Argentines tried to convince the US government and Brundage not to abandon the Pan-American Games enterprise, the Games collapsed. Officially, Brundage advanced that the main factor for the withdrawal was lack of transportation, since the goal of winning the war required the commitment of the entire air and sea borne transportation to that goal. However, the US withdrawal had deeper and more complicated origins. Certainly, the war years imposed many material restrictions but it could not have been an insurmountable difficulty to send a symbolic US delegation to Buenos Aires to satisfy the South Americans' dreams.

In this paper, I investigate the role that the complex Argentina-US relations tradition played in the attempt and subsequent failure to organize the first Pan-American Games. Special attention is devoted to Brundage's deeds and the power structure he established with the Argentinean sport officials. In short, the paper demonstrates how the Argentinean neutrality policy and US pressure on Argentina to join the Allies influenced the withdrawal decision, and how continental sport officials functioned within this rigid diplomatic arrangement. Although the AOC and the US Olympic Association were autonomous sports organizations with altruistic intentions, they succumbed to the broader political and economic forces at play in the Americas.

Primary source materials used in this paper come from the Avery Brundage Collection, 1908-1975; the International Olympic Committee Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland; and the Argentina National Library, Buenos Aires, Argentina.