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WHAT IS AMATEUR SPORT?

Branch Rickey

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Sport in America is important. It must not be chucked.

What is sport? What is amateur sport? When does an amateur become a professional? Is money necessarily in the answer? Does personal gain in goods or well being as a direct result of athletic effort have anything to do with one's amateur standing? Should contest motivation fix the eyes of an amateur on a goal instead of a contract? Is this general subject involved in the present program facing the colleges and universities? Should there be a *quid pro quo* anywhere in the playing life of intercollegiate athletics?

Less than 150 years ago in England, a man who worked with his hands could not be classed as an amateur. A man who received a daily wage could not play cricket with gentlemen. The athletic organization of that time and place had the caste system in its definition of amateurism. Great Britain was the sport indulging and sport loving nation of the world for years. Its competitive sports and games from bow and arrow and soccer to guns and war have been an integral part of the British national life for centuries and the British concept of an amateur is, or was, at least, an American inheritance.

The law of cause and effect as connected with the playing of summer baseball in North Carolina in 1910 on the one hand, and pole vaulting and foot running and leaping in 1912 has no more sequence or relationship than the law of causality has in bringing about a bad conscience from unknowing wrong, and yet the great Jim Thorpe was an exact victim of that very illogical treatment. Is money in itself a vile thing or is indeed the use of money subject to inquiry or apology or explanation if its purpose is highly worthy? What constitutes membership in an amateur organization? When is a man a bona fide member of his college or university?

Assuming that character is an integral part of the definition of education and assuming that scholarship is a prerequisite also for admission to the field of formal education, and assuming that a person comes to the college or university without being paid to do so either directly or indirectly, and assuming that the man stays a year without competing, takes the full required work and passes it all creditably, who stands up to say that the boy returning the second year with high approval of the administrative authorities is not to represent

the university in any or all of its activities,—extra curricular or otherwise? Is there to be a black mark on the escutcheon of the college diploma which says to the world, “this man is truly a representative of this educational institution simply because he enabled himself to attend the institution by work?”

Two dollars a day out of which came expenses left little but that little enabled the youngster, “Thorpe,” to return to college at Carlisle.

I am in a business called professional baseball where no quarter is asked and no quarter is given,—highly competitive, where we put the dollar mark on the muscle, and try to keep it clean. **AND IT IS CLEAN.** You are in a business where there should be no dollar marks on the muscles. I am in a game that we can scarcely afford to lose. In your business, you are playing a game which you ought not play if you cannot afford to lose. I am in a game to win, where eyes are on the gate receipts. You are in a game where your eyes are on the achievement of excellence in the formative age of young men. Yours is a game of ideals. Mine is one of ideas holding on to the skirt of good sportsmanship as tenaciously as we can. You are directly concerned and should be exclusively concerned with the educational process as related to the functional development of young men and women. We fight for honors. You are ideally controlled by honor.

What are the correct qualifications of a candidate to represent his college on the debating team or the football team? When does a boy become a member of the school? What did he have to do to become a member, and can he remain a bona fide member of the school and at the same time lose his right to represent it? Is he now an alumnus? A worthy alumnus? What was his status for four years before he became an alumnus? A student in good standing? Specifically, why did he come?

What is AN education? What is EDUCATION? The word has been defined differently over the centuries and even now there are wide disagreements. However you define it, when in pursuit of it, what can cause a man to forfeit the bona fides of his college relationship so that he can no longer go to a chemistry class or a football practice? What is the rationale upon which the right to represent the college depends? What, indeed, were the prerequisites for admission? What is required work? What is a curriculum? Who said so?

Physical education as we know it has no place in Continental colleges or universities. Why not? What is the European definition of education? Even with the variable definitions of education, who in any given case determines the purposes, the procedures, or courses, or activities of the student? Where is authority? What is the source

of that authority? What is the purpose and what are the effects of its exercise? In other words, who tells whom what? Does football run the college? Should the tail ever wag the dog? If it wants to and doesn't, should the cure be to cut it off? And if it does wag the dog, is not then the cure to cut it off?

School authorities, by and large, I am sure, do not, at all, oppose physical education or intercollegiate sports. They may take a sort of judicial notice of what seems to be proselyting here and there. They may feel that there is an over-generosity of handling of athletic scholarships here and there. It is possible that in more than one college, soft courses have been made beseechingly available to some promising athlete. It is possible that some colleges through their administrative family and particularly their athletic employees have been noticeably strenuous in seeking free agent talent. There is a current belief held by many folks that the college athlete receives greater opportunity to "make his way" than the non-athlete. It is a fact that in some schools athletes receive substantial inducements over and above what they reveal to their competitors. Surely college presidents and high school superintendents interested in some kind of worthy definition of education should be concerned about these facts or even these indicated tendencies. And, too, the athletic authorities should be pleased to have the presidents of the universities and Boards of Trustees interested in the good health of their sports.

Sometimes people in my game, where competition is tense and urgent, need rules and regulations to save them from themselves. Likewise, colleges and universities may, at times, need a "Commissioner" who can stand at a distance on "Jordan's stormy banks and cast a wistful eye" on what he thinks his college athletic program should refuse or accept. In retrospect, some years from now, surely all of us in this country will be glad to know that the university administration and department of physical education were in fact completely cooperative.

Our competitive games offer diversion and recreation to many of our people who go, and to millions who do not and cannot go. They help to keep up public morale, also public health, and these are important possessions,—with taxes and Russia and politics constantly in our "hair".

If, however, the educative process in your school says "no" to your present athletic program or a part of it, the athletic heads must adjust. The college authority must control its athletic courses just as it does all other courses.

Now a word on proselyting. That is out. Talent scouting,—that

is done and always will be done. That's difficult to control or define. What do you mean scouting? Every college in all departments wants good boys and tries to get them. In my definition of scouting, you should do as much of it as you can and you will, and no rules or regulations SHOULD TEND TO MAKE IT HARD FOR HONEST MEN TO OBEY THEM, but no "quid pro quo" arrangement. Then it becomes secret and dishonest.

Almost never talked about is the harm done to the boy by making his entrance into the college and his continuance in it completely effortless to himself. The chance to earn is one thing, no need to earn and relief from it is entirely another matter. This thing of making it so easy for Joe Doak to enter and attend college on flowery beds of ease is not always good.

Things worthwhile generally just don't happen. Luck is a fact, but should not be a factor. Good luck is what is left over after intelligence and effort have combined at their best. Negligence or indifference or inattention are usually reviewed from an unlucky seat. The law of cause and effect and causality both work the same with inexorable exactitudes. Luck is the residue of design. A boy gets out, therefore, what he puts in, not much more, certainly not less. "Thou shalt earn bread by the sweat of thy face" was a benediction and not a penalty.

If things come easy, there is no premium on effort. That's the great, deep fault of the "bonus" in my business. There should be joy in the chase,—zest in the pursuit, and if character is a part of education, then you should put the boy in professional athletics and keep him honest rather than definitely professionalize him in fact or even in deceit on your own team. College athletics must get the beam out of its own eye before it recommends surgery on the moat in your professional brother's eye.

It is possible for a boy to shift his ethical foundations both in the field of economics and morals by creating at his tender age a life of confident expectation of something for nothing. That's a bad philosophy to start with. Such a course stultifies his ambition and will kill his aspirations as he comes to know that the "quid" is given to him for a "pro quo" very different from any definition of education he has ever thought of.

While I know so well that the school authorities throughout the country realize that the athletic coaches by and large not only have been and are in the closest relationship with the undergraduate,—closer, indeed, than in any other department, they must also be continuously in full realization that the college coach, has, over the

years, made a very great contribution to the education of these boys entirely apart from any technical instruction. His contributions to the health program and definitely in the moral field have been tremendous. The coaches get the boy in all his impulses,—really in the nude, and they carry him all the way through, continuously critical and then finally they lead the applause when he dons his cap and gown. The bona fide student reflects the teaching of his college coach forever and usually beneficially.

May I add one final observation or suggestion :

It seems to me that the point most important and most to be sought by all colleges and universities is uniformity in admission requirements. That is the springboard of fair competition in inter-collegiate athletics. From what I have read in the press, the college presents have not sufficiently stressed uniformity of entrance requirements.