

CLAS 0210

Sport in the Ancient Greek World

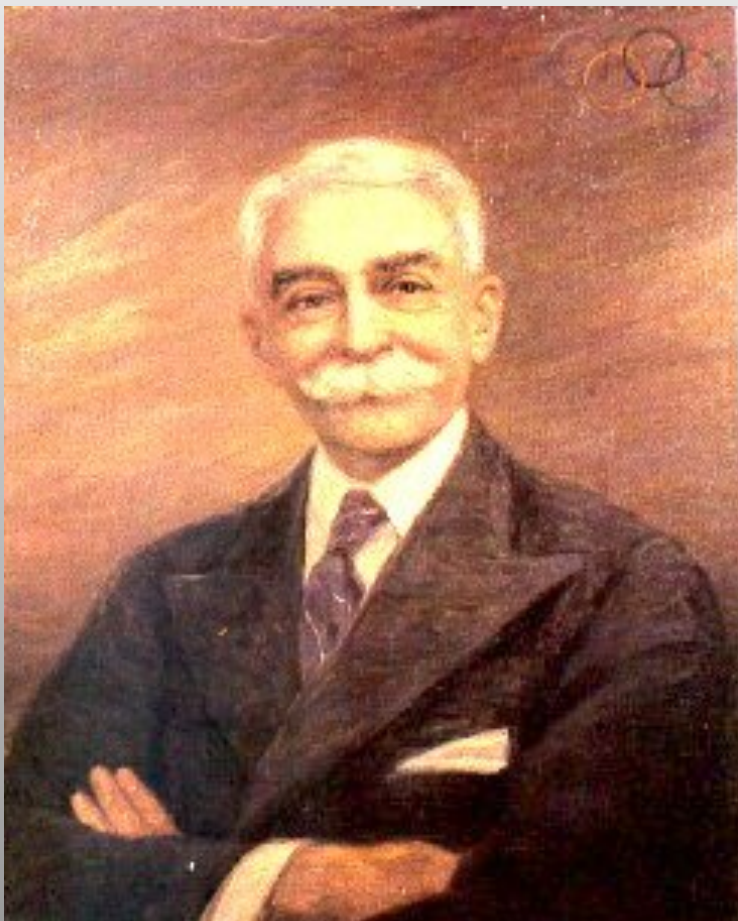


Class 35

Friday 23 April

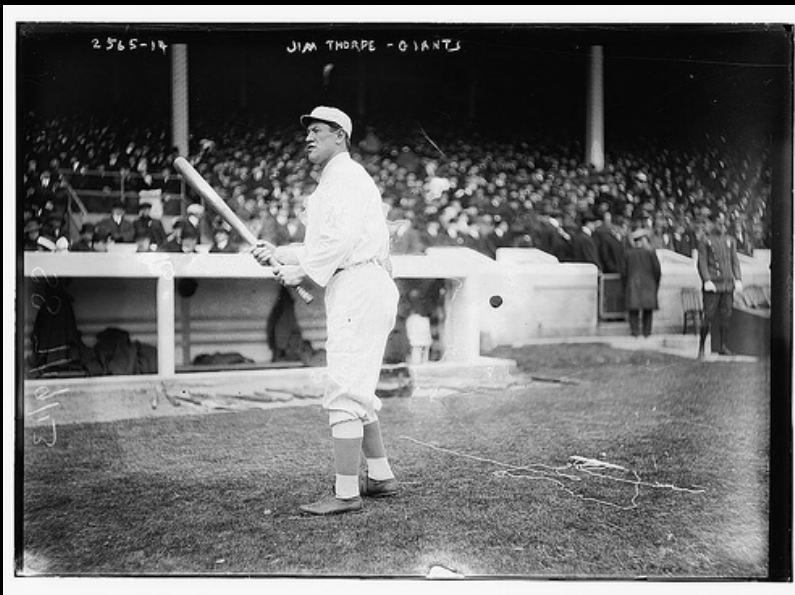
Into the modern era:
the myth of the
amateur athlete

Pierre de Coubertin



Jim Thorpe

1912 Stockholm Olympics



Pierre de Coubertin
[Founder and President, IOC]:

“It is enough to remember the careful way antiquity allowed participation in the Olympics only to those athletes who were irreproachable. Ought it not to be the same in the modern world?”



Avery Brundage
[IOC President 1929-1972]:

“The ancient Olympic Games were strictly amateur, and for many centuries, as long as they continued amateur, they grew in importance and significance. Gradually, however, abuses and excesses developed... What was originally fun, recreation, a diversion, and a pastime became a business...

The Games degenerated, lost their purity and high idealism, and were finally abolished... Sport must be for sport’s sake.”



Jim Thorpe postage stamp, 1980s

Start of semester question:

“Ancient athletes made no money from the Games, competing only for glory and an olive wreath.” True or false?

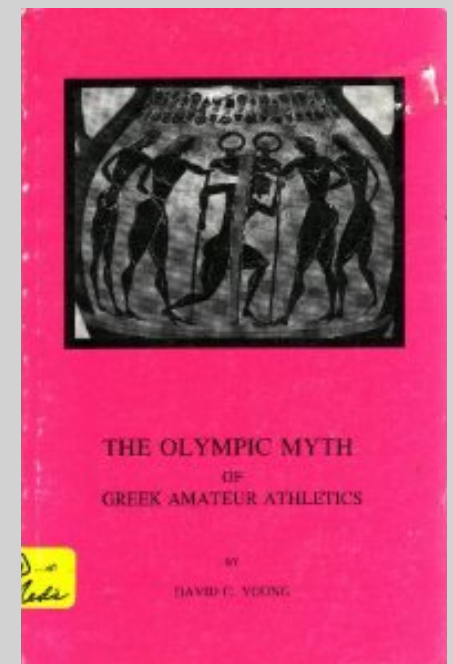
Two-thirds of you then agreed with that statement.

David Young, *The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics* [1984]

David Young,

The Olympic Myth of Greek Amateur Athletics [1984]

- Athletics as we know them today did not exist earlier in the 19th century
- Amateurism is itself a modern concept, a product of 19th-century ideologies
- Amateurism was introduced as a means to justify an elitist athletic system and to bar the working class from competing



E.N. Gardiner

Greek Athletic Sports and Festivals (1910)

Athletics of the Ancient World (1930)

- The long rise of Greek sport (Homer - 500 BC)
- The age of the ideal (500 - 440 BC)
- Specialization and creeping professionalism (440 - 338 BC)
- Outright decline of the games (338 BC - AD 393)

Overlooked questions...

- How much could a Greek athlete win?
 - How often, and from what sources, did an ancient athlete receive material gain?
 - How far back in Greek history do we see evidence of prize-money and the participation of non-aristocratic athletes?
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- Even in Homer, men competing in the funeral games for Patroklos are called *athletai*, because they're competing for *athla* [prizes]
 - The poet Hesiod, a peasant farmer, says that he won a tripod as a prize at a poetry context held at local games in 7th century BC
 - The tradition that the Pythian Games at Delphi originally offered valuable prizes (later replaced with the purely symbolic laurel wreath, but athletes richly rewarded by their home cities)

Prizes for the Warriors

Horse Race

- 60 1st prize: 16 amphoras of olive oil
2nd prize: 4 amphoras of olive oil

Two-horse Chariot Race

- 1st prize: 30 amphoras of olive oil
2nd prize: 6 amphoras of olive oil

65 **Two-horse Chariot Procession**

- 1st prize: 4 amphoras of olive oil
2nd prize: 1 amphora of olive oil

Javelin Throw on Horseback

- 1st prize: 5 amphoras of olive oil
70 2nd prize: 1 amphora of olive oil

Boys' Pyrrhic Dance

- 100 drachmas and a bull

Youths' Pyrrhic Dance

- 100 drachmas and a bull

Men's Pyrrhic Dance

- 100 drachmas and a bull

Tribal Contest in Manly Excellence

- 75 100 drachmas and a bull

Torch Race

- Winning Tribe: 100 drachmas and a bull
Individual Victor: 30 drachmas and a bull

Boat Race

- 1st prize: 300 drachmas, 3 bulls, and
200 free meals
2nd prize: 200 drachmas and 2 bulls

**Extract from text of
Arete #120**

**Age categories:
boys (12-16)
youths (16-20)
men (over 20)**

**prizes for
runners-up**

Arete #120 (Prize money for the Panathenaic Games)

First prize in mens' stade race: 100 amphoras of oil (each containing 1 *metretes* = 10.4 gallons)

Price of an amphora of oil = 12 drachmas (so the prize = 1200 drachmas)

In 5th century BC, a day's wage for a working man was 1 drachma (by 350 BC had inflated to about 1.4 drachmas/day)

So, 1200 drachmas = at least 847 days' wages (ca. 2.5) years

Dollar value? If based on an 8-hour day at \$10/hour, then first place in the stade race = \$67,000 as an absolute **minimum** figure

The Case of Croton

Between 588 and 484 BC:

Runners from Croton won 12 of the 27 stade-races (44%)

In the same period, Spartan runners won only twice, Athens never

In one stade-race, the first seven runners were from Croton

Croton's athletes won more than a fifth (23 of 109) of ALL recorded Olympic victories

BUT

After 480 BC, Croton never again won an Olympic victory in any event

Most likely explanation: Croton was recruiting, training, and paying athletes from other cities

Paul Shorey (1895):

“And here lies the chief, if somewhat obvious lesson that our modern athletes have to learn from Olympia, if they would not remain barbarians in spirit... They must *strive*, like the young heroes of Pindar, *only* for the complete development of their manhood, and their sole prizes must be the conscious delight in the exercise... and some simple symbol of honor...

They must not prostitute the vigor of their youth for gold, directly or Indirectly...

The commercial spirit is fatal, as the Greeks learned in their *degenerate* days. Where money is at stake men will inevitably tend to rate the end above the means, or rather to misconceive the true end...

The professional will *usurp the place of the amateur.*”

The Amateur Athletic Club (founded in London, 1866)...

"...to enable gentlemen amateurs the means of practising and competing versus one another without being compelled to mix with professional runners"

Rules of the Henley Regatta (1870):

"No person shall be considered an amateur who is or has ever been by trade or employment for wages a mechanic, artisan, or laborer or engaged in any menial duty."

The London *Times* (1880):

"The outsiders, artisans, mechanics and such like troublesome Persons can have no place found for them. To keep them out is A thing desirable on every account"

Caspar Whitney

(most influential American sportwriter of the 1890s)

“...I am more than willing to grant my laboring brother of lesser refinement some of my advice, time, and aid...

But I do not care to dine or play football with him”

Whitney became the second American appointed to the IOC (1900-1905)
and President of the US Olympic Committee (1906-1910)