

## Olympic retrospective

# The eligibility question

By LISA TIMPF and MARGO GEE

*"Edwin Moses made \$500,000 in endorsements last year.  
"Edwin Moses also competed in the 1984 Summer Olympics.  
"Not bad for a guy with a part-time job at a TV station."*

So said Vancouver sports columnist Jim Taylor in commenting on the amateur-professional eligibility problems currently plaguing the Olympic movement.

At present, amateur athletes in sports such as track and field are allowed to benefit from commercial endorsements through the establishment of "Trust Funds." Theoretically, the athletes are not allowed access to this money until they retire from amateur sport competition, but many find ways to circumvent the rules. Yet, they are allowed to continue to compete as "amateurs" despite, in some cases, having bank accounts in the hundred thousands.

It was the nineteenth century British upper class who gave the world the codified form of many of the sports currently played today, among them rugby, field hockey and cricket. They also left as part of their sporting legacy the concept of "amateurism."

The sporting ethos of the upper class inferred that a man who earned his living primarily by playing a given sport, or, for that matter, primarily in manual labour which in some way seemed to give him an advantage in sport, should not be allowed to compete against the true "amateurs," as they perceived themselves.

Times and definitions have changed as we near the end of the twentieth century. Many feel that the original concept of amateurism as it evolved in nineteenth century Britain is no longer appropriate. However, traditionalists battle any attempt to alter the concept despite the changing tides of time.

Both the Summer and Winter Games of 1984 showcased the amateur versus professional dilemma. The winter games saw some Canadian ice hockey players sent home since they played in more than ten NHL games. Indeed, couldn't they be deemed professional if they had even once played even once for the NHL? But that was not the issue in question. Many believed that some European and Eastern bloc countries were equally "professional" and should have been disqualified as well.

Compare this to the Summer Games, specifically the sport of soccer. Most, if not all, teams included professional players. This was deemed appropriate by their international federation, F.I.F.A., who stipulated only that World Cup players were ineligible.

Would it then be unreasonable to suggest that only hockey players who participated in the Canada Cup or World Cup be barred from the Olympics?

According to Dick Pound, Canada's junior representative to the I.O.C., their stance on the issue of amateurism is "gutless, illogical and inconsistent." Rather than confronting it head-on, the I.O.C. has chosen to do an "ostrich act," burying their heads in the sand until they are forced to take action by escalating controversy.

The Olympic charter no longer contains the word "amateur" in its guidelines, and, according to C.O.A. president, Roger Jackson, has not done so for the past several years. International sport governing bodies determine their own Olympic eligibility criteria, and this adds to the apparent inconsistency of enforcement of eligibility requirements from sport to sport.

It seems that the pendulum has swung from, "you must be an amateur" to "you must not be a professional" over the past two decades.

Pound envisions the Olympics eventually will be open to all athletes, be they amateur or professional. If this change were to occur, what merits would it have? Obviously, it would eliminate controversy and confusion surrounding eligibility. Secondly, the best athletes in the world could compete with one another.

However, the opening of competition would also change the face of the Olympics as they exist today.

There are three basic problems confronting those who believe that sport competition in the Olympics ought to become more open.

One is the conservative nature of the International Olympic Committee itself. Composed largely of older men who have a certain commitment to tradition, the I.O.C. tends to be a conservative body in terms of change.

Secondly, resistance from the Eastern bloc countries might be expected to any proposed loosening of "amateur" definitions. After all, most of their athletes are able to participate under the current rules. Any changes would only favour their traditional Western rivals.

A third problem is that some international sport federations who have no professionals at present might fear that more open competition would threaten their continued status.

The Olympic movement clearly must make some decisions in terms of eligibility. Clearly, the problem will not go away. A more consistent and coherent policy will only add to the credibility of the Olympics.

Then the critics will have to find something else to complain about.



## Crews dig up football field for long lost chemicals

**MONTREAL (CUP)**—Apart from several islands around the bases of trees, Concordia University's football field is now six feet lower than it was last spring.

The university's administration dug the field up this summer, looking for chemicals buried there by the Concordia chemistry department in the early 1970s.

After a crew dug up about the entire field, billing the school \$15,000, and found no chemicals, Concordia vice-rector academic Graham Martin assured reporters the chemicals are not a health hazard.

But considering the efforts and precautions, many spectators were not reassured. According to a report, the diggers wore astronaut-

type suits and came accompanied by representatives from Environment Quebec, and Environment Canada and a fire truck and police car.

The Concordia Stingers football team are currently playing home games on the school's soccer field, while waiting for the football terrain to be filled in and re-turfed.