

## An Address on the Athletic Situation

Hammond Lamont of the New York Evening Post on "The Desirability of Maintaining the Uncompromising Amateur Standard in Athletics."

"The root of trouble with athletics is that we act as if a college, instead of being an institution of higher learning, were an athletic club with incidental opportunities for study. The press and its readers too often assume that athletics are the be-all and the end-all; that the destiny of Harvard and Yale depends on its record in football; that the progress of education and religion in Rhode Island is wrapped up in the Brown hockey team. Who's who in America? When Professor Mannat falls ill, neighbors say, 'Mannat? Mannat? Oh, yes, he teaches Greek or mathematics; writes magazine articles and books. Too bad he's down.' But when Smith, the fullback who kicked a goal from the field, turns his ankle, the news is telegraphed throughout the country, pictures displaying the distinguished sufferer adorn our newspapers, and bulletins from the sick room plunge fifty university clubs into gloom. Presidents Faunce, Harris, Elliot and Hadley might resign tomorrow, and with unruffled front we should remark cheerfully, 'Plenty more where they came from.' But Cutts, the Harvard tackle, is disqualified, and we are prostrated by the shock, and lament as if President Roosevelt had been assassinated.

"In such a diseased state of public opinion, all of us, young and old, are seized by this delirium of athleticism. Yet if we could shake off the hallucination, we should realize that any or every college could disband its nine this spring without any great damage to its true efficiency. In an ideal university, of which we may conceive by a wild flight of fancy, games would be reduced to the level of a recreation, that helps to develop sound bodies, and the students of our imagination would no more hire men to take this exercise for them than to eat for them. As a matter of course, they would play in opposition to other colleges in the spirit of amateurs rather than of professionals; that is, they would make their contests the mere amusement of scholars. It is on this theory, which under present unhappy conditions is incomprehensible, so fantastic, that all regulations against professionalism are drawn. To keep college sport in proper tone and subordination we must bar men who make a business of what, for students at least, must be simply diversion. Whatever the difficulty in isolated instances, athletic boards of all colleges, including Brown, admit that there must be a strict rule or none. Your professional or semi-professional may often be a capital fellow, but teams open to professionals will inevitably become professional in tone. Genuine amateurs, the fit representatives of a college, will never have a fair chance to get on; they will be crowded out by men who are used to playing for a business, and who will dominate by either force or skill; they will be crowded out by men who are nominally paid for summer ball, but really for college ball. In a college such a semi-professional team is a glaring incongruity.

"One of the objections raised everywhere against the amateur rule is that it unjustly debars students who earn an honorable livelihood by summer baseball. Perhaps the rule is a hardship to a very few, who would like

to be professionals in the summer and amateurs in winter, but their careers are not blasted by its cruel insistence on amateurism. Membership in a university team is not necessary to success in this world or salvation in the next. If the welfare of athletics as a whole demands exclusion of professionals, they are not more oppressed than scores of good men who fail to 'make' the team, and who, for its welfare, are also kept off; they are less to be pitied than thousands who have never had the least chance to get on. The professional has the pleasure of playing in summer he can obtain enough exercise on scrub and practice nines. For the sake of the larger interests of the college he stays off the team, but he still has the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"The chief objection is that the rule cannot be enforced and breeds hypocrisy. But the rule is as easy to enforce as that against cheating in examinations or theme writing. Because a few students get drunk and yet pretend that they do not, a faculty would not encourage honesty by declaring drunkenness one of the cardinal virtues and establishing a college grog shop. If the present rule be defective we might specifically amend it by shutting out players on hotel nines and nines that take gate receipts or sell programs. In case such players are not paid, the college athlete can afford to remain off the team; in case they are paid, he may choose between being a professional or an amateur. Were all colleges to pull steadily together for a few years and make clear to graduates and undergraduates the necessity of maintaining strict amateurism, of preventing the athletic tail from wagging the intellectual and moral dog, both the serious work and the pastimes of our American youth would be more wholesome.

"But, whatever happens, of this you may rest assured: A general reaction will set in against the excesses of athletics the reckless expenditure of money, time and energy on them. This folly can not run on forever, reason will have its turn again. We are feeling the reaction already, for just in so far as Harvard, Yale, Brown or any other college is letting body triumph over mind, in so far it directs its appeal to the noisy, the thoughtless, the sporting element of the community, just in so far it is killing the confidence of the sober, reflecting, solid men, who may not shout on the bleachers Saturday afternoon, but who back their alma mater with their fortunes and their characters and who are the ideal product of a university."

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