Afros, Aboriginals and Amateur Sport in Pre World War One Canada

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The English Gentleman and Sport

History provides many examples of the division of society into upper and lower classes with their respective rights and exclusions. Sport is among them. In Book 23 of Homer's Iliad, games are held in honour of the fallen Patroclus, in which chiefs and leaders compete while their followers are interested bystanders. Among the Hellenes, the Olympic Games were reserved for freeborn Greek males. Others, with the exception of women who were barred from watching, were spectators. During the Renaissance the politically powerful and socially privileged engaged in sports clearly distinguished from those of the common people. A fifteenth-century account of the Florentine game of calcio, for example, declared that there was no room for manual labourers, servants and commoners; the game was to be restricted to ranking soldiers, gentlemen, lords, and princes.

For purposes of this discussion, class connotes imbalances of wealth that translate into other kinds of inequalities. Such imbalances often give rise to the dominant belief that the lower classes and their practices are without worth. By the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a well-established connection in England between the upper classes and the public school in which sport was used as an instrument for teaching leadership,
fair play and coping with the unexpected. Activities such as cricket, boating, hunting, and riding were considered to be gentlemanly pursuits. An Etonian wrote in 1831 that he could not regard football to be at all gentlemanly since the Yorkshire common people played it. It was generally understood and accepted that certain sporting activities were suited to the elite and identified with them, while others were deemed fit only for manual labourers and farm boys.

This is not to say that competitions between the two classes never occurred. One famous example of social intermingling took place in 1682 when James II, then Duke of York, was allowed to choose any Scottish partner he wished to play against two English noblemen. John Paterstone, a Leith shoemaker, helped his future monarch win this first international golf match and in so doing, shared equally in the substantial sum wagered. Perhaps a better known example was cricket where annual matches were played between gentlemen and players (amateurs and professionals). Even though the two classes played together, they entered and left the field by separate gates. These examples illustrate the desire of some gentlemen to test their skill among all competitors, a practice the upper classes could well afford because of the leisure time available to them.

Industrialization gave rise to a more complex social structure in which a new class, the bourgeoisie, emerged with much wealth but no titles or culture. Social commentator Matthew Arnold differentiated among the three classes by referring to the landed aristocracy as “barbarians”, the bourgeoisie as “philistines”, and the working class as the “populace”. Both the barbarians and the philistines were active in their clubs, many of which had sport as a focus. Working long hours, the populace seldom had the leisure to take part in such activities. But this changed in the course of the nineteenth century. The traditional barbarian sports, those of the field, including hunting, shooting and angling were overtaken as the philistines imbued the traditional public school with their zeal for competition. Team games such as football, field hockey, athletics, lawn tennis, rowing, and cycling among others were codified and now moved to the forefront. The philistines were at first reluctant to include the populace in such sports until the latter agreed to conform to their code of etiquette and conduct during play. Some
philistines, however, introduced games and sport to the populace with religious fervour. At the same time, opportunities developed for the populace as their work day was shortened, more holidays were given, and more jobs became available in service-related activities. People such as footmen, water-taxi operators, sport instructors and groundskeepers who also groomed and cared for cricket pitches and golf courses, stable boys and trainers who cared for horses, bicycle salespeople, had opportunities denied others to engage in sport. This created the possibility for greater social interaction and challenged traditional conventions.

In class-conscious England all of this was threatening to the aristocracy whose tidy world of social conventions was under attack. The gentleman amateur perceived those who worked with their hands and therefore had the advantage of strength as threats to the established order. What had been “understood” and implicit, now had to be codified and made explicit. As a result, the prominent sporting newspaper Bell’s Life defined an amateur in 1835 as anyone who rowed and was not a waterman or otherwise engaged in rowing for a living. In 1861 the Rowing Almanack excluded tradesmen, labourers, artisans and working mechanics from its definition of amateur, as did the Amateur Athletic Club (track and field) organized in 1866. This was the same criterion used by the Royal Henley Regatta in 1871. Money was not the distinguishing feature of amateurism until much later; class and social status were. The gentlemen amateurs of nineteenth-century England singled themselves out as being above ‘trade’. Their numbers included factory owners, proprietors of businesses and creators of wealth. They kept those who got their hands dirty, however skilfully, at arm’s length.

In Canada: from Class to Race

Organized sport came to Canada after the conquest thanks to the British who constituted a powerful minority among the French majority. In Montreal especially, they formed clubs, framed the rules, and determined the suitability of players. The Scots, for example, created the Montreal Curling Club in 1807. Fortnightly meetings at four o’clock included dining on salt beef and greens. . .
the club dinner and events not to exceed 7s 6d a head. As a means of guaranteeing the correctness of the guest list, only the president and vice-president of the twenty-member club could invite friends to dinner; they were allowed two each. There were other attempts to control attendance and participation in the country's early years. Racing, known as "the sport of kings", was first organized on the plains of Abraham. But in order to avoid the disturbances of "rowdy elements", meets were moved some distance away to Ancienne Lorette. Later attempts to enclose race courses had only mixed results since the working class was as capable of climbing as it was of drinking.

Even after attaining nationhood at Confederation, Canada conformed to and emulated British standards of sportsmanship. The image of the gentleman, the concept of amateurism, the preoccupation with exclusion were inherited from the mother country and woven into the social fabric. Initially, amateur status in Canada was a matter of social standing: a sportsman was a gentleman of breeding, of independent means, with leisure time available, and able to afford to play. Sport was undertaken with passion and consisted of those old English games designed to display athletic skill and develop the muscular strength and nervous vigour which were thought to have contributed so much to making the English preeminent among the nations of the world. But soon it was ethnicity and race that replaced class as a distinguishing feature of the amateur. The closer one was to being white, Anglo Saxon, and protestant (WASP), the more likely one was to be recognized as an amateur; the farther one was from the standard, the more likely the exclusion.

While race is now considered by almost all specialists to be a mere social construct shaped by a mixture of prejudice, superstition, and myth, before the First World War the term encompassed not only people with observable differences in skin color, but those that today are called ethnic groups. In Canada a racial and ethnic hierarchy was established (reflected in its immigration and Indian policies) that relegated Blacks and First Nations to the bottom of the ladder. Although also regarded as inferior and unassimilable, Orientals and South Asians occupied a higher rung. Above these were the Europeans who were, however,
divided into two groups according to how close they came to the Aryan ideal. Southerners with their stocky build and dark hair, eyes, and skin were labelled undesirable. Northerners, depicted as being uniformly blonde and blue-eyed, were considered superior beings. Religion also played a role in these distinctions. Protestants were viewed as being self-reliant, enlightened, and entrepreneurial; while Catholics were seen as superstitious, ignorant, and backward.

Such attitudes were carried over into sport. The Irish, especially the Catholics, and the Scots, because the Caledonian Games awarded cash prizes later in the nineteenth century, had their amateur status continually questioned. But increasingly non-British immigrants were targeted. The hockey team in Berlin, Ontario, a town with a large German-speaking population, called itself the "Union Jacks" during the First World War apparently to offset the irritating fact that players were being referred to as 'krauts', 'Dutchmen', 'squareheads', or by some other ethnic slur. A member of the team, Albert Bialkowski, was continually taunted about his name and heritage by rivals (they called him 'a blankety-blank Polack'), while officials regarded him as a troublemaker and penalized him for his Polish ancestry. The solution was a name change. The Union Jacks were authorized by the Ontario Hockey Association to anglicize his name to 'White'. White was then recognized as a fine clean-cut young man who played splendid hockey and minded his business all down the line. Berlin, of course, underwent the same process: it changed its name to Kitchener. Such adaptation was not available to all, however, especially not to First Nations people and African Canadians.

Amateurism and the Afro-Canadian

By the nineteenth century Blacks had either come to Canada as slaves or more likely escaped their servile condition south of the border during the American Revolution, the War of 1812, or through the Underground Railroad. Despite the oft-proclaimed rhetoric of freedom, changes in their legal status did not automatically bring social acceptance. Prevailing general beliefs and
attitudes in popular culture, whether in sport, language, folklore, or theatre, represented non-white people as inherently inferior. It seemed that the white man’s aversion to blackness and the introduction of Blacks as slaves connoted that black skin was a sign of moral inferiority. Some thought it a natural extension to make. Just as there was a line between good and evil, so too there was a “colour line” which would serve to separate the whites from the blacks. That line would surface in all aspects of society, in employment, housing, schooling, and religious life. Sport was no exception to the rule.

When a new Turf Club was formed at Niagara in 1835, the racing program included the enjoiner that “no Black shall be permitted to ride on any pretext whatsoever.” The prohibition could not have been more specific. But we can only conjecture about the motives behind it since these were not provided. Was the prohibition based on race? Was a specific Black the object? If so, was he a former slave, a servant, a stable boy, a groom, who because of his work, stood a good chance of defeating his “betters”? Was he simply a manual labourer and because of this, barred from competing with the Canadian version of “gentleman amateurs”?

Some of these questions would apparently be answered later in the century. At the Toronto regatta of 1863 one of three entries for the championship race was William Berry later referred to as “Bob” or “Black Bob”, “the coloured giant” or because he was from Canada West, the “Western Canadian of African descent”. The other two competitors, both white, refused to participate. Yet at the same regatta, the Toronto Globe reported that in the “fishermen’s race, three pair sculls, open only to bona fide fishermen”, the White Fish with its crew of “R. Allen, R. Berry (coloured) and R. Hill... came in a long way ahead”, winning the purse of $5. To insure that unsuspecting persons not be misled by the anglicized name, the term “coloured” was placed after Berry’s name wherever the program was announced. It was not therefore that Berry was not allowed to row, but that he could not compete with “his betters”. The Black man could only participate with those in his own station in life.
Berry tried to enter the same regatta in 1867. Again he was barred. The Toronto Rowing Club had passed a resolution on 21 July 1867 "prohibiting any coloured man to enter in for any but the Fisherman's race at the approaching Regatta." This time the decision did not go unchallenged. A letter to the Globe on 9 August 1867 signed "Justice" wanted to know "how such an order (could be) passed in a Canadian club where justice and freedom is assured for all men. If the Coloured man is so much inferior to all other classes of men, why would our generous club admit one of the humblest of people in the fisherman's race and allow him at a former regatta to take some of the principal prize. And if such a frivolous distinction has been forced on coloured citizens simply on account of their colour, it should meet with the strongest disapproval by all logical men." The editor seemed to agree. "The Regatta Club has acted unjustly, illiberally and illogically. If the coloured men are not to run all the races, they are not fit for the fisherman's race. This is the first instance in our memory of a stigma being being attached in Canada to the colour of a man's skin in an open and public manner No injustice of this sort would be tolerated in England. It is an importation of one of the least excusable of Yankee prejudice." A letter to the editor concurred with this view, while another in the same issue signed "A voice from the bush" expressed "feelings of astonishment and indignation", contending that "the constitution, the Monarch, the laws and the people of Britain frown upon this miserable distinction of colour – a distinction which is nothing less than an insult to the Creator ... God grant that we have no repetitions of doings so unseemly and Anti-British."

The publicity given to the decision came too late to affect the race, but it forced the committee to reconsider its position the following year. In 1868 the entrants included the favourite Tinning, Loudon, Johnson and Roes from Montreal, as well as "Berry (a coloured man) – a powerful brawny fellow with endurance supposed to be almost unlimited." Berry won the contest. He was then challenged to a two mile race for $50 by Tom Loudon who apparently thought that the high stakes might cause Berry to become flustered and tighten up. He did not and won again. When Loudon complained about a turn that Berry made, the race was re-rowed and Berry again emerged victorious.
As newspaper reaction to the Berry incident indicates, it was generally believed that much of the overt discrimination in Canada was due to American influences and that if the country were left to itself it would be free from such prejudices. Yet there is no doubt that discrimination was present in both countries. Segregation based on perceived racial differences was the norm and was initially based on social consensus and practice rather than on legislation. Social attitudes showed through at all levels and in all sports. Baseball, for example, was as much Canadian as it was American in the nineteenth century. The sport, its athletes and ideas all passed freely across the border. When the Cincinnati Red Stockings showed that a baseball team could financially exist on its playing ability (they won sixty-five games without a defeat in 1869), the diamond became another avenue for Blacks to reach personal fulfilment and public acclaim.

Racist occurrences in the United States were publicized in Canada and seemed to reinforce local feelings. On their way to a baseball tournament in Watertown, New York, the Guelph Maple Leafs played several teams including one they beat at Oneida called the Ku Klux Klan, nicknamed the Klansmen, whose emblem was a skull and cross bones. In another incident Cap Anson of Chicago publicly announced that he would not play if the opposing Toledo team allowed the black Walker brothers to take the field. In 1887 Tip O'Neil, a Woodstock native with the St. Louis Browns, presented management with a petition signed by eight teammates, refusing to compete against the "Cuban Giants". Even on the same team it was not uncommon for whites to be suddenly and inexplicably prone to error when a black pitcher was on the mound. One athlete punched his manager rather than be photographed with a black teammate pitcher. In 1887 the Spectator described the pitcher and catcher from the rival winning team as a "coon battery" for which the black community of Hamilton demanded an apology. Toronto fans meanwhile shouted "kill the Nigger" at a black pitcher from an opposing team. In the same year the International League decided that it was contrary to its rules to award and process contracts with coloured players.

At the local level there was evidence of a deeper, more pervasive racism. De facto segregation occurred often and all-black teams became the norm. Included among these were the Fredericton
Celestials, the Halifax Victorias in 1891, the London Goodwills in 1869, and later the Coloured Diamond and the Amber Valley baseball teams of Halifax and Alberta respectively. The black athlete was accepted for his novelty value. An all-black team might "barnstorm" and play an all-white squad hoping to draw a good gate. A representative white team was just as likely to have a tiny bright-eyed Black as its mascot.

By the turn of the century attitudes had hardened and racism became institutionalized in Canadian sporting life. Bill "Hippo" Galloway, an Afro-Canadian born in Hamilton, had taken part in mixed neighbourhood-based teams as a youth. Playing for Woodstock in the Canadian Baseball League in 1899, however, he was regularly derided. A Hamilton player named McCann refused to compete on the same field with him. Galloway was released by his team and hired by the Cuban Giants, even though fans urged him to stay and continue to play hockey for Woodstock in the Ontario Hockey Association. Galloway and Stratford's Charlie Lightfoot had been among the first black players in the OHA. The reason traditionally given for the fact that hockey attracted so few Blacks was their abhorrence of the cold climate. (In fact, the first black player in the NHL was Willie O'Ree from Fredericton who played forty five games with Boston over two "call ups" in 1958). In hockey Galloway and Lightfoot regularly encountered the opposing fans' slurs. But the Woodstock paper was supportive of Galloway, calling him "a right good sport and a thoroughly game hockey player. He withstood all kinds of punishment in Hamilton and fairly won his spurs. The coloured player is proverbially cool and collected; so essential in hockey."

An incident in western Canada provided some insight into the pecking order among Afros and Aboriginals in sport. In 1910 a man in the Western Canada Baseball League named Brookins was declared ineligible as an "alleged black" to play for Regina against Medicine Hat. Although he did ultimately compete, the League supported Medicine Hat and awarded them the victory. In its defence Regina argued that Brookins was an Indian. But the League ruled otherwise. Its decision reflected "the one drop theory", a relic of slavery and segregation, that divided humanity into two main races based on skin colour.
The “unofficial” color line also applied to other sports. In football the Ottawa Rough Riders, then an amateur team in an amateur league, announced in 1912 that they were trying to attract Gordon Simpson, “a coloured athlete from Toronto” playing with the Ottawa Intermediates. “The Ottawa team,” it was reported, “may waive the colour line and use him because of his speed and punting.” While Ottawa officials declared that there was no colour line in football, the story was different in boxing. On 26 December 1908 the defeat of heavyweight champion Tommy Burns, born Noah Brusso in Hanover, Ontario, by Jack Johnson sent shock waves around the world. It was the first time that a Black held the prestigious title. The event immediately sparked a world-wide search for a “Great White Hope” who could recapture it.

Prior to the fight the Toronto Star printed the following: “Question: What chance will a coloured person have to live in Hanover, Ontario if Noah Brusso gets his? Answer: As much chance as a dog with tallow legs chasing an asbestos cat through the fiery furnace.” In talking about meeting the “Big Ethiopian” (also known as the “Husky Darky” and the “Big Negro” with the “Yellow Streak”), Burns told his followers: “I will battle for my life to defend the laurels against Africa, as Nelson did.” So intense was he about practising for the fight that his trainers cautioned: “slow up, Tommy, save your speed for the Big Smoke.” Even though Burns’ manager was the referee in the contest, Johnson emerged victorious. Police had to stop the bout in the fourteenth round because of the one sided beating Burns received. Australian fans carried the first black champion out of the ring on their shoulders. But some were not so ready to accept the new reality. Former titleholder Jim Jeffries from the United States affirmed: “If the coon comes around here I will take him by the neck and throw him out”. Jeffries came out of retirement to fight Johnson and lost in the fifteenth round. Many newspapers refused to show the picture of Johnson standing over the fallen white man. “Johnson’s victory,” reported the Star of 5 July 1910, “has caused the negroes of the United States to walk with a swagger and whites resent it.”

The resentment predictably spilled over into Canada at the City Boxing Championships held in Toronto in 1912. A “coloured gentleman” named J. Holland won the preliminary bouts in the middleweight and heavyweight divisions. Even though he was
from the west end, it was his first appearance in a Toronto ring. The heavyweight win was a surprise: Holland was much smaller than his opponent “Bill” Hanna who also happened to be the reigning Dominion champion. The report of the match by the Toronto *Daily News* was typical of the sentiments that prevailed when a “black and white” fight occurred. The 11 November issue stated: “(The) ‘dusky lad’ was pretty lucky to connect his punch ... (Hanna had a lead and rushed to finish him off). It was a bad mistake for without a doubt there was a ‘nigger in the woodpile’ and the aforesaid ‘coon’ landed a couple of wallops and another champion was defeated. At that, ‘Mistah Jack’ is not yet a champion and will have to show some more before he takes a title in either class.” Clearly implying that Holland’s victory was due to luck rather than skill, the article ended with the hope that someone would come along to “put him in his place”. The victory happened to be Holland’s second of the night. The report in the *Daily News* of the earlier, middleweight fight was given under the heading “Coon Wins Again”. Readers were told that “the coon forced the fight”. At the bottom of the page was an unflattering caricature of a black man over a caption which read: “As Mistah Holland Would Say: ‘No Sah, Dey Is Udders Besides Mistah Jack Johnsing!’”

The finals were held on the following evening. The reporter covering the event for the *Daily News* scarcely concealed his contempt for Holland whom he would have wanted soundly beaten. “After a number of strenuous contests, it was pleasing to sit back and see the little comedy enacted by Mr. A. Burke, of New York and Massah Jack Holland of the West End. Owing to the difference in colour, the contestants could not be considered relatives but were apparently boxing under New York State rules, with the sheriff at ring side to see that there was no hard hitting. After three rounds of tapping the decision was awarded to Holland.” Had the boxers both been white, the writer would not have hesitated to characterize the meet as a “kissing cousins” event!

Holland also won the heavyweight championship by default, no one having come forward to challenge him. Since that fight was always the main event of the card, officials enlisted Joe Burke, formerly of Boston before becoming a resident of Toronto, to confront
Holland in an "added bout". It would appear that Holland was set up in order to be "put into his proper place". The Toronto Telegram observed: "Now, Joe has given exhibitions before and Joseph's specialty is in tearing things loose and smashing the furniture. He wasn't in condition but that didn't matter. The mob wanted to see someone lick the colored youth." The Daily News considered Holland "a very lucky coon" for having won the title before the fight with Joe Burke which was described as "the hardest heavyweight battle ever witnessed in a local ring." The article reported that during the contest Holland "was having a hard time of it and was starting to turn white." It depicted Burke as adept at "dropping the chocolate drop" and implied cowardice on Holland's part. After the black boxer had been floored several times, "it was ... announced that the authorities would not allow the bout to continue and no decision was rendered. Burke was fully entitled to the decision and deserved to receive it as it looked as if the bout was being stopped to save the coon from being dropped outright as he was all but out when the bell rang. It is said that Holland had to be shut in his dressing room after the bout to keep him away from Burke, who wanted to finish off the battle outside the ring."

The Telegram was even more graphic. When Holland was dropped "by a terrific swing to the jaw ... the big houseful rose as one man shouting and cheering. That was what they wanted. Every man was on his feet mounted on chairs, anywhere to get near it." The fight took on the appearance of a brawl: "it was then swing and swing with a knockout threatening with each." Previously described as "cool" Burke was now said to have "lost his head." "Finally, the bell rang, but apparently neither heard it and Burke swung to Holland's jaw hard enough to fell an ox and it did drop him. Burke was like a crazy man and some of the spectators were little better. Pandemonium reigned and the 'exhibition' was stopped by the police. No decision was given. If you saw it, there is no need to describe it; if you weren't there no pen can picture the fun and you are not likely to see its equal again. Suffice it to say that the negro got the beating of his life."
Meanwhile in 1910 Jack Johnson was charged in the United States with having contravened the Mann Act because he had wed a white woman. That year the National Hockey Association contract was said to be as popular with the players as "Jack Johnson in the state of California." In a contemporaneous cartoon appearing in the *Daily News* a black boxer receives a knock-out blow from the white fist of the Federal Court. While Johnson is shown saying "Good Night", the caption reads: "At Last Here's A Real "White Hope."

Forced to flee the United States, Johnson made his way to Canada in 1913 where he was befriended by Toronto promoter Tom Flanagan. He continued to fight outside the United States until charges were finally dropped. In that year, however, the boxing committee of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada announced that "no coloured boxer will be allowed to compete in the Canadian championships ... Competition of whites and coloured men is not working out to the increased growth of sport." The following year the Ontario government declared it illegal for whites and blacks to box against each other.

**Amateurism, Sport and the First Nations**

From the Portuguese to the English, Europeans viewed aboriginals as a source of cheap, and at times slave, labor. The native people themselves, far from being a homogeneous group, made slaves of captured enemies, particularly the Pawnees west of the Missouri River. Some of the darker Plains Indians were called Panis Noirs by the French. Such slaves also existed in British Indian territory, as indicated by the treaty concluded on 18 July 1764 between the Indians and the British after the raid at Fort Michilimackinac. The clause stipulated that "... any negroes, panis or other slaves amongst the Hurons who are British property, shall be delivered up within one month to the commander of the Detroit."

While some Indians were slaves, however, the vast majority were not. They lived side by side with the white population.
The Brookins incident mentioned above suggests that aboriginals were treated less harshly than African Canadians; but they were still subjected to the same type of discrimination. An anecdote from a family history illustrates their plight. A stagecoach company operating out of Saint John in the late eighteenth century, the Turner Colonial and American Express, had a driver, John Turner, who also happened to be the son of the owner. One day he acceded to the demands of some passengers who refused to allow a Maliseet named Peter Loler to board the regular run from Fredericton to Woodstock. Loler responded by asserting that he would beat the stage to Woodstock. "It was still early in the afternoon," so the story goes, "when the quiet citizens of Woodstock were aroused in a manner entirely unexpected. The stagecoach came tearing into town at the heels of an Indian ... John Turner plying the whip in lively fashion [over] four very hot and tired horses galloping at their utmost speed."

Like all hunting and warrior societies, the First Nations had a physical lifestyle. They hunted, ran, paddled, roamed the woods and plains, moving over great distances. They had great respect for physical strength and any white person demonstrating speed or skill in corresponding activities was accorded great admiration. But Whites considered the outdoor life of Amerindians unworthy of emulation by the young since it was said to consist in doing and caring for nothing. In a word, it was regarded as irresponsible. This did not inhibit Whites from using the Indians' canoe, toboggan, sled, snowshoes, moccasins and from playing their game of lacrosse.

Lacrosse had many names, the main one being baggataway, meaning little brother of war. It was deeply enmeshed in the Amerindian culture and was played long before the arrival of the Europeans. The game was used to settle disputes, effect healing, prepare youth for the warrior life, and pay tribute to important people. There was an obvious religious significance to the ball and the various Indian names for the game described it in those terms. Europeans chose to name the game after the stick: "racket" in the United States and "lacrosse" in Canada, a word of French derivation, because it resembled a bishop's crozier or staff.
In 1844 the Montreal Olympic Club, formed two years earlier under the patronage of the Governor General, included lacrosse in its program at the St-Pierre race course. The next two decades saw a rise in white clubs. Occasionally they would test themselves with Amerindians and would invariably lose, even when given a manpower advantage by their rivals. In 1844, for example, five Amerindians played against seven white men who were still no match. In a game between natives and whites held in August 1860 in honour of the visiting Prince of Wales, a selected team of Akwasasne and Kahnawake Amerindians played a combined squad from the Montreal Lacrosse Club and the Beavers. Each team had two goals to their credit. But when the Amerindians scored a third, the winning one, the white umpire refused to accept it. Tempers flared and the future King Edward VII defused the situation by asking that the field be cleared for the scheduled demonstration of a native war dance. It was the prince's second intervention that day. Earlier he had asked that the previous games, including one between Iroquois and Algonkian players, be shortened in order to allow the Whites to play the selected native team. The latter were eventually awarded the Prince of Wales Medal.

The rules of lacrosse, published in 1860, were due in large part to seventeen-year-old George Beers, a goalkeeper for the combined white team playing before the prince. Indeed Beers wrote them under the pseudonym "Goal-Keeper". He regarded the promotion of lacrosse as a personal crusade, a means of fostering national unity in the era of Confederation. "As cricket, wherever played by Britons, is a link of loyalty to bind them to their home," he wrote, "so may lacrosse be to Canadians. We may yet find it will do as much for our young Dominion as the Olympic Games did for Greece or cricket for the motherland." Beers wrote a column in the Montreal Gazette under the title "National Game." His influence was such that for years many Canadians laboured under the misguided notion that lacrosse enjoyed that distinction by government legislation, something that only occurred on 12 May 1994. The Montreal Lacrosse Club adopted Beers' seventeen rules on 1 July 1867. These were then printed and sold through the Gazette. Enough clubs agreed to abide by the rules that the Kingston Lacrosse Club called a convention in that city on
26 and 27 September. Fifty-two delegates representing twenty-seven clubs attended and formed the National Lacrosse Association (NALA), the first sport-governing body to be formed in Canada. A banner was fashioned with the slogan "Our Country and Our Game" to be awarded in championship play. The "our", of course, was an exclusive term, reserved to whites only.

Despite the Amerindians' acknowledged physical prowess, barriers began to be erected first by social convention, then in writing, that restricted their competing with Whites. In any challenge games associated with the lacrosse championship banner, such as the City of Toronto Championship Medal or the Claxton Flags, symbolic of Montreal's supremacy, Amerindians were effectively barred. It was understood that the competition was for amateurs only and since aboriginals played for cash prizes, they did not fit that category. But apart from such reasons of social exclusivity, Amerindians were kept out because of the perception that they were superior players. They could not be seen to be performing better than their white superiors.

When and where they did, in approved circumstances as we have seen above, it was necessary for Whites to editorialize. On 2 September 1868, for example, the Toronto Globe declared native names to be thoroughly unpronounceable and, as such, a matter of 'merciful suppression' to omit them. As a result, at the lacrosse meet between the Six Nations "braves" and the Ontario Club held in Toronto the chief's name, Pi-Ka-Yen-da, was anglicized to William Bill Esq.. Although Amerindians were the originators of the game and played it with much skill and although each team was to have its own field officials, Captain Otter and Mr. John Henderson acted as umpires for the Whites and Captain Gardner and Mr. J. Campbell, for the First Nations. To the lineup of Amerindian players there was added a postscript that called for no wrestling and no rough or ungentlemanly conduct.

This was a typical Amerindian-White game: all the Amerindians on one side arranged to attract a crowd and demonstrate how Whites could play against the superior skill of aboriginals in an exhibition. The latter would dress up in their feathered finery and conclude the competition with a war dance, races, and perhaps
speeches. The concept was somewhat akin to the Gentlemen versus Players Cricket matches in England. The "braves" won this particular match which, the Globe reported, ended with a few words from Pi-Ka-Yen-da spoken "in as good English as possible". The chief stated that among his twelve were some magnificent actors and singers and that he was sorry that the lateness of the hour did not permit them to demonstrate "their histrionic and vocal abilities."

Government was not above using First Nations for its own purposes. Historian Don Morrow indicates that the Canadian lacrosse tours to England of 1876 and 1883 "portrayed in carefully contrived fashion, the Indianness of the game and the country, white superiority over the natives and a Canadianness that was used by the federal Department of Agriculture in the 1883 tour."

Maritime First Nations encountered similar restrictions in paddling events to those that prevailed in lacrosse. They were of course expert paddlers; but until 1904 there were separate races for them on the Dartmouth Lakes. Such events were considered "more of a sideshow than serious races" because cash prizes were used to attract competitors who, it was hoped, would in turn draw large numbers of spectators. According to Alexander Young, newspapers reported that some races were restricted to Amerindians in much the same way that there were special races for black men only.

The matter came to a head and crystallized in another sport, snowshoeing. There usually were a number of classifications at such meets: races for Amerindians, races for members, open races. It was understood that "open" races were closed to Amerindians. In any event, club members were more interested in social intercourse than competition per se. Because they were so good, Amerindians were used as a drawing card in an attempt to increase paid attendance. But there was an unintended effect to this: paying spectators were more interested in competition and in finding out who was the best. When the Alexandra Club announced its race program for 28 February 1869, the Amerindian race was said to be "interesting in that they have also added incentives. The two mile Indian Race first prize is $15., the second is $5. and $5 extra added if the first mile is done under 5 minutes and
50 seconds and $10 if the two miles are done under 12 minutes and 30 seconds.” The Montreal Gazette of 27 February 1869 noted “some dissatisfaction at the Indians being allowed to enter the dash and the quarter mile.”

Four years later, two Amerindians, Keraronwe and Peter Thomas, caused a stir when they decided to enter the eighth race of the Maple Leaf Snowshoe Club competition, listed as a two-mile open for a cup to be presented by the mayor. When they arrived at the starting line, the Whites protested. Supporters of the two white men, Farmer and Doyle, were upset, especially Farmer’s backers because they had bet heavily on him and had not counted on aboriginals running in the race. The officers of the club declared that the Amerindians could not run and attempted to remove them. But they were supported by spectators who had bought tickets to the event and were looking for a good race. The contest took place, but not without trouble. During the first lap, a crowd blocked the track as the Amerindians approached. The police moved in, cleared the track, and the contest continued. Peter Thomas won the event. The whites protested. Ten days later a group of officials from other snowshoe clubs ruled that since the race was advertised as open with no restrictions, all entries had to be treated as equal. As well, they declared irrelevant the fact that the contest was for a cup since once again no conditions had applied. In other words, Amerindians were entitled to compete for cups as well as cash prizes. As a result of this race, the board of judges ruled that Amerindians could enter events specifically listed either as “Indian” or “open” with no restrictions.

It now became necessary to spell out what had been tacitly understood when the Amerindian “knew his place” in Canadian society. In 1873 the Montreal Pedestrian Club became the first organization to frame a definition of amateur. Such a person was declared to be “one who has never competed in any open competition or for public money or for admission money, or with professionals for a prize, public money or admission money, nor has ever, at any period of his life, taught or assisted in the pursuit of Athletic exercises as a means of livelihood or is a labourer or Indian.” The results were predictable. At the annual races of the Olympic Club in October 1873, Keraronwe, Daillebout and White
Eagle, all noted Indian runners, were barred. They had won fame for a number of years until the strict definition of amateur barred them from competing with Whites. To warn Whites that an Amerindian had entered a competition, the term “Indian” was framed in brackets after the anglicized name. Such an indication virtually guaranteed that a White would not be shown up by the superior skill of an Amerindian.

In 1880 the Lacrosse Convention held in Toronto inserted the word amateur into the National Lacrosse Association, thereby automatically excluding Amerindian athletes. However, clubs were allowed to use them as trainers or to play exhibition matches. The clubs therefore had it both ways. The superior skill of the aboriginals could be used when large crowds were expected. On the other hand, whether the Amerindian had ever played lacrosse or had in fact ever played any sport, he was declared to be outside amateur competition by virtue of having been born an Amerindian. Open competition, it was feared, would leave the sport bereft of gentlemen.

Some, however, saw the increasing public demand for better lacrosse as an opportunity. Since the best players were on the sidelines, a way had to be found to include them. In 1887 a rival Canadian Lacrosse Association (CLA) was formed with twenty-seven clubs mostly from western Ontario. It adopted virtually the whole constitution of the NALA, with the exception of the clause barring Amerindians. Previously it had been expedient to bar them on the grounds of equalizing competition. Now it was equally expedient to return their amateur status to them, increase the pool of available talent, and upgrade the calibre of play. Suddenly a convenient rationalization appeared that for some reason had not been articulated earlier: Amerindians were citizens and as such were considered amateurs unless they did something to violate that definition.

Since segments of the public were showing their distaste for the racist aspects of the definition of amateurism, the criterion became money. It was, after all, the working classes that the elite wanted to restrict. The revised constitution of the National Lacrosse Association declared in 1876 that “no club in the Association shall play for a money challenge except with Indians. Any Club playing for money
(except as aforesaid) shall be suspended from membership in the Association." The new definition favoured by the CLA by which all were to be governed, including Indians, reaffirmed that amateurs could not participate in events involving bets, admission fees, financial inducements, or compensation for loss of time or services rendered. Nor could they compete against professional players or anyone making their livelihood from a sporting activity. In order to keep pace with its rival, the NALA adopted the same definition. Not all were pleased with the inclusion of Amerindians. After one particularly rough match between Montreal and the Brockville team that included aboriginals, the Montreal Gazette reported on 15 August 1888 that "Brockville brutality would become a byword in the civilized portions of Canada (It is) ... an outrage ... by a semi-civilized tribe. The professionalism now existing in the Brockville Lacrosse Club is injuring Lacrosse and will tend to force amateur clubs to play exhibition games among themselves." Even though Amerindians were now amateurs until proven otherwise, some sporting officials still felt that they should be restricted from competition. As soon as such athletes achieved a measure of proficiency, charges of professionalism were invariably levelled against them.

Tom Longboat serves as an excellent example of this. Born at Caledonia, Ontario, in 1887, he made his entry on the Canadian sporting scene in 1906 when he came first in the Hamilton Around The Bay Road Race. A short time later he emerged victorious in his second long-distance event, Toronto’s fifteen-mile Ward Marathon. After winning a third competition in Hamilton, the "Indian" as he began to be called, moved to Toronto in order to come under the "civilizing influences" of the YMCA and to prepare to run the Boston Marathon. He was given much publicity prior to the event and much more after the United States Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) questioned his amateur standing and announced that it was prepared to withhold the trophy if Longboat won. The Canadian Amateur Athletic Union reacted angrily to the threat.

Special editions of the Toronto Star and Telegram carried the news of Longboat’s victory. Preparations were immediately made to give "the dusky warrior" one of Toronto’s great welcomes. Longboat, who appeared with a Union Jack draped over his shoulders, was hailed as the "champion amateur long-distance runner of
America." On behalf of the city, the mayor pledged to express its appreciation more tangibly by making a substantial contribution to a fund begun by the citizens to assist Longboat in acquiring a thorough education. The $500 purse was immediately seized upon by the American amateur officials and their Canadian associate, the Federation of Canada, as evidence of Longboat's professional status. The Canadian AAU dismissed the charge and considered that its American counterpart was simply over-reacting for not being allowed to investigate Longboat's status. The runner was evidently being used for the first time as a lever in what became known as the "Athletic War" between rival amateur governing bodies in Canada.

In any event, Longboat was suspended twice in 1907 and was only reinstated after a three-month hiatus. On the first occasion he ran afoul of amateur regulations by failing to apply for the permission to compete in a meet in Buffalo. On the second, he was accused of having indulged in alcohol and smoking cigars. As a result of this charge, the "bronzed warrior" parted company with the Toronto YMCA, turning to Tom Flanagan and the Irish Canadian Club. It was under the latter's guidance that Longboat came under even more accusations of professionalism. Whether because of his association with Flanagan or for other reasons, the Montreal Star was really concerned that Longboat would forsake his amateur status and thereby become ineligible to represent Canada at the 1908 London Olympics. The newspaper's imperialist editor, Hugh Graham, offered him strong inducements to retain his status. "If at the end of five years," Graham announced, "you are still in the athletic field and it can be truthfully said of you that you have resisted temptation, kept temperate and arranged yourself always to be on the side of clean sport, I shall be most pleased to hand you a cheque for $2,000. If you should be selected to represent Canada at the Olympic Games in England next year, you may, if you choose, go at the expense of the Montreal Star." Longboat was much in demand for the remainder of 1907 and well into 1908. The noted English professional runner, Alfie Shrubbs, attempted several times to arrange a match race. In an effort to remain within amateur guidelines, various proposals were examined, but to no avail. Longboat seemed intent on representing Canada at the Olympics. As a result, the much publicized event did not occur until much later in his career.
Longboat was unable to attend the Olympic trials. Although invited to the games, he was not allowed to travel with the official Canadian team. The runner was told that if he were to go at his own expense, he would be reimbursed on condition that he won. In a promotional coup, Flanagan convinced the Irish Canadian Club to underwrite Longboat's expenses. As a result, the athlete was sent to Ireland for training prior to the Games. Meanwhile the truce worked out between the CAAU and the Amateur Athletic Federation fell apart, Longboat once again being at the centre of hostilities. The USAAU accused the runner, through its Canadian affiliate, the Athletic Federation, of being a professional because he had participated in unsanctioned American meets the previous year. The charge was investigated and dropped by Olympic officials, while the Canadian press mercilessly roasted the Federation for its "treachery". The Olympic Marathon race turned out to be a disappointment for Longboat and Canadians. At the twenty mile mark under a hot sun, the runner collapsed, unable to finish. Various people attempted to explain this failure: Longboat said that he suddenly felt like a log; Flanagan blamed the heat; a doctor pointed to sunstroke. Drugs were also mentioned. John Howard Crocker, the team doctor who attended him, announced that it was his heart and that he would never race again.

Canadian newspapers which had long been preparing their readers for victory turned on him with a vengeance. It was as if they refused to admit that they could be wrong; the fault had to be with Longboat. Many expressed a sense of betrayal and focused their comments on Longboat's ancestry. The Toronto Telegram of 25 July 1908 was particularly vituperative. "After yesterday's happening, we suggest Longboat's name be changed to Sitting Bull," the newspaper suggested, "And to think that Longboat had not the staying quality of a Philadelphia milk-fed chicken ... Who is this man Longboat anyway? Is he the latest demonstration of the fact education ruins the red man ...? Come to papa, remarked Flanagan, as he took Longboat on his knee (not over it) and wiped away the tears of the broken hearted redskin ... No longer will Tom Flanagan refer to Longboat as 'my man Friday' ... In fact, Longboat can now discard his citizen's clothes for the regulation war paint and the fine features of the reservation."
Longboat went on to a highly successful professional career as one of the premier marathoners in the world. As an amateur or professional, his status as an aboriginal was never far from the surface. Lou Marsh, a noted writer with the Toronto Star, was typical of the ambivalence expressed towards him. After Longboat won the Boston Marathon, he stated: "The man who says this Indian boy is not keen of wit knows not whereof he speaks. His head is full of ideas and he is one of the greatest 'kidders' who ever came down the line to fame." Yet the same Marsh was to describe Longboat on one occasion as "smiling like a coon in a watermelon patch" and "the original dummy". Terms such as "Injun", "Redskin", "Heap Big Chief" were commonly used. In effect he was depersonalized: he was seen as a "running machine" and as an Indian in need of the civilizing influences of white society. After the Boston Marathon win and before the Olympic loss, the Toronto Star affirmed on 20 April 1907: "His trainers are to be congratulated, not only for having such a docile pupil, but on being able to show such excellent results from their regimen. It is hoped that Longboat's success will not develop obstinacy on his part, and that he will continue to be manageable. If he does not lose his head or begin to break faith with the public, he has only triumphs in store and as much adulation as mortal men could wish. Canada makes no bones about gaining a little glory from an Indian. In other matters than foot races we have become accustomed to leaders from the Six Nations."

Longboat died in 1949 and was buried according to traditional Onondagan beliefs at the Six Nations Reserve. In 1951, the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union established the Tom Longboat Trophy to recognize an outstanding native athlete each year. The award is now administered by the national Indian Brotherhood and the Sports Federation of Canada. Not only was it a means of recognizing a great Canadian talent but perhaps it was an attempt to dim the memory of those days in the past when Longboat was, as Bruce Kidd noted, "loved and acclaimed whenever he won (and) people boasted he was a proud Canadian (but) when he lost he was a drunkard, wayward Indian."
Summary and Conclusion

British customs in all areas, including sports and games, were developed by the upper classes. The concept of amateurism was imported as a social instrument to ensure that members of the elite could compete on the sporting fields among themselves. In England, one’s class position was important in deciding who could compete with whom. In Canada the criterion was not only social, but ethnic and racial as well. The closer one came to the norm, defined as being white, Anglo-Saxon, and protestant, the more likely was social acceptance which in sport meant that athletes could accede to amateur status. Initially Catholic Quebec remained aloof from Anglo sport. Irish Catholics and Scots, for their part, ran afoul of the amateur code, the first because of their religion, the latter because the Highland or Caledonian Games offered cash prizes.

Gradually, however, the ethic of competition rather than the opportunity to socialize among one’s social peers gained the upper hand as commercial interests began to exploit the natural tensions between English and Irish, Catholic and Protestant, French and English. These groups began to participate more in Canadian sport. Just prior to the First World War they became part of the new reality of commercial sport. When the National Hockey Association (forerunner of the National Hockey League) was formed in 1909-10, it included a new team, the Montreal Canadiens, owned and funded by the Irish Catholic O’Brien family of Renfrew, Ontario. This was a business decision in which the Canadiens as a French Catholic team would compete with Irish and English clubs in the new league, much as in lacrosse.

This transition to the mainstream took much longer for Aboriginals and Afro Canadians. Both groups were perceived to be inferior and subservient to white society. Ways were continually sought to keep Amerindians from competing with Whites, even when activities intrinsic to their lifestyle, such as lacrosse and snowshoeing, were adopted by white clubs. At first social custom was enough of a deterrent. When more opportunities were created for competition, however, it became necessary to legislate such restrictions. Early definitions of amateurism in Canada specifically excluded Amerindians simply by virtue of their perceived racial characteristics.
Still their situation was better than that of Afro Canadians. Perhaps because of the legacy of slavery and the menial tasks Blacks continued to perform in Canada, white society was not prepared to admit them as equals in amateur competition. Later in commercial sport, lighter skinned Afros tried to pass as Amerindians or Cubans. The Amerindian was thus still somewhat higher on the pecking order. The First World War signalled the passing of this overtly racist era, although the characterization of Aboriginals and Afros as less than worthy lingered on well into the postwar period.

Frank Cosentino was born in Hamilton and comes by his interest in sport naturally. For ten years he was a quarterback in the CFL with Hamilton, Edmonton and Toronto. He was in five Grey Cups, winning two in 1963 and 1965. He also coached the Western Mustangs to two Vanier cups in 1971 and 1974. He obtained a Ph.D. in sport history from the University of Alberta in 1973. He taught for twenty-seven years at Western and York universities. He is Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar at York University and is currently teaching a graduate course (Sport in Canadian life) at University of Ottawa. He has authored or co-authored eleven books on Canadian sport.
Suggestions for further reading


The importation of British customs to Canada, particularly in sport, is illustrated in a number of theses and books. The University of Alberta PhD program in Physical Education has been the spawning ground for theses such as Peter Lindsay, “Sport in Canada, 1807-67” (1969); Allan Cox, “A History of Sports In Canada, 1868-1900” (1969); Kevin Jones, “A History of Sports in Canada, 1900- 1920” (1970); Keith Lansley, “The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism in Canada” (1971) and Frank Cosentino, “A History of The Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport” (1973). All of the above touch upon or deal in great detail with the subject.

The role of class and ethnicity in connection with the use of sport in Montreal constitutes a significant portion of Donald Morrow, Mary Keyes, Wayne Simpson, Frank Cosentino and Ron Lappage, *A Concise History of Sport in Canada* (Toronto, 1989); Sid Wise and Doug Fisher, *Canada’s Sporting Heroes* (Don Mills, 1974); Donald Morrow, *A Sporting Revolution: The Montreal
Amateur Athletic Association 1881-1981 (Montreal, 1981); and Alan Metcalfe, Canada Learns to Play (Toronto, 1987). Articles on class and sport can also be found in Morris Mott (ed.), Sport In Canada: Historical Readings (Toronto, 1989), particularly Alan Metcalfe, “The Evolution of Organized Physical Recreation In Montreal, 1840-1895”. On this theme Metcalfe has also written “Growth Of Social Sporting Clubs In Canada, 1867-1914” in Canada Learns To Play.

Afro-Canadians are covered in a variety of sources. Of most help in preparation of this work were: Leo Bertley, Canadians of African Descent: Achievements and Contributions (Pierrefonds, 1977); J.C. Hamilton, “Slavery In Canada” in Transactions of the Canadian Institute, Vol.1, (1889-90); Ida C. Greaves, The Negro In Canada (Orillia, 1929); Robin Winks, The Blacks in Canada: A History (Montreal, 1977); Jim Hornby, Black Islanders (Charlottetown, 1991); Pachai Bridglal, Canadian Black Studies (Halifax, 1979).

A number of sources look at Afro Canadian athletes and sport. In addition to some of the above, William Humber, Cheering For The Home Team (Erin Mills, 1983) and Diamonds of The North (Toronto, 1995), as well as Alexander Young, Beyond Heroes (Hantsport, 1988) have sections dealing with Afro-Canadian athletes in various parts of the country. Boxing and the tribulations of Jack Johnson, especially in Canada, is the subject of Jack Johnson Is a Dandy: An Autobiography (New York, 1969) and Michael Dinning’s mimeographed paper, “The Search for The Great White Hope: Boxing In Canada, 1908-1915”, The University of Western Ontario, 1973.

Aboriginals and their role in sport in Canada is the subject of some of the books mentioned above, particularly those by Frank Cosentino, Alexander Young, and William Humber; but the information is at best scattered. Michael Salter’s “Games in Ritual: A Study of Selected North American Tribes” (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1977), as well as his “The Effects of Acculturation on The Game of Lacrosse” in The Canadian Journal of Sport History (May 1972), and George Vellathotham’s “A History of Lacrosse in Canada to 1914” (MA Thesis, University of Alberta, 1968) combine
