

Pierre de Coubertin

A Man of Sports

Disappointed by the French defeat in the 1870/71 war, Coubertin saw the reasons for this breakdown in the *"physical weakness of the French people"*. He himself refused a military career that was expected of him and discovered in sports *"the source for an inner improvement to strengthen the youth..."*

Coubertin's main reasons for endeavouring to introduce sports into society, were:

- his struggle for integrating sports in schools,
- the development of his "useful gymnastics"
- the realization of the motto "Sports for all",
- the initiation and founding of numerous clubs and sports associations,
- the publishing of numerous articles concerning sports pedagogics.

"All sports possibilities for all..."

Coubertin developed a new social concept of sport: sport receives a social and moral task and athletic training becomes a training for social and moral life.

Pierre de Coubertin recognizes:

"In the past sports was occasionally a pastime for the rich and idle youth. I have been working for 30 years to change to let it become a regularly done amusement of the petty bourgeoisie. It is important that this amusement finds its way into the workers' class." (Lettres Olympiques - Gazette de Lausanne 13.08.1919)

"The utilitarian gymnastics"

Inspired by the new industrial age and the new pragmatic way of thinking Coubertin tried to integrate athletic exercises in a natural way and without pressure into human life. The most important criteria for this were:

- sufficient motivation,
- low costs,
- easy way of learning,
- and the capacity to maintain the acquired achievements over a duration of time.

"A football team in every parish - a gymnasium and a playing field with shower facilities in every village - a swimming pool in every town - individual horse-riding and boxing events whenever possible - a choral section in every gymnastic society - the least possible number of rules, hierarchy and badges - no politics, no camps, no "leaders" from outside the sporting world."

"Sport - No Luxury"

"Sport is neither a luxury object, nor an activity for the idle, nor even the muscular compensation for cerebral work. Rather, it is, for each and every one of us, a casual source of inner betterment not determined by labour activities. It is, at the end of the day, the patrimony of each of us alike, and its absence cannot be substituted by anything else."

Pierre de Coubertin was one of the first persons in the world to theorize the topic sport and to estimate it as a non-exchangeable value of education.

Therefore he deserves praise.



Father Didon (1840-1900)

He converted Coubertin's ideas in his college in Paris into practice.

Founder of the motto:
<<Citius - Altius - Fortius>>
(faster-higher-stronger)



1892-Playing soccer in a club: novelty, with not much initial support

Water colour by Coubertin's father Charles, that shows the birth of sports practice for the young: rowing on the Seine, soccer in the Bois de Boulogne

