

The Demise of Olympic Lawn Tennis in the 1920s

A Case Study of Shifting Relations between the IOC and International Sports Federations

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The Olympic Movement underwent a period of profound change in the inter-war years. A generational shift occurred as Pierre de Coubertin's reign came to an end, and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) under the presidency of Comte Henri de Baillet-Latour, embarked on a renewed mission to create a more standardized amateur definition. The IOC also took a tougher stance on the involvement of, and the authority it afforded to, its affiliated international sports federations (ISFs) for Olympic event preparations. Relations between the IOC and the ISFs inevitably grew strained. The case of Olympic lawn tennis presents an interesting lens through which to view shifting organizational relations. Frustrated by the dogmatic approach of Baillet-Latour and the IOC, the International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) sought to reassert its authority over Olympic tennis. In the years leading up to the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, the ILTF demanded representation on the IOC, and also imposed a definition of an amateur that directly contravened the more stringent amateur standards imposed by Olympic officials in Lausanne. Both sides refused to concede ground, culminating in the eventual removal of lawn tennis from the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic program and thereafter for over sixty years.



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