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Intangible cultural heritages

British sports coaching and amateurism

Dave Day

Introduction

Adopting a very broad and inclusive definition of ‘coach’ and ‘coaching’, a 2017 National Coaching Foundation survey suggested that nearly fourteen million British adults had coached sport or physical activity at some point in their lifetime with over three million having coached sport or physical activity in the previous year. On the downside, the vast majority coached less than three hours a week, mostly voluntarily, and one in five did not coach on a regular weekly basis. Tellingly, lower social grades were under-represented, over half of coaches had no formal coaching qualification, and only around half of all coaches felt appreciated for their efforts. Many coaches struggled to find opportunities to coach, and they had little choice in deciding when and where they coached, while others found it hard to balance their coaching commitments with their work and home-life.¹ Crucially, the survey highlighted a considerable disparity between the availability of coaches and relevant employment opportunities, reflecting the widespread perception that coaching might be a suitable hobby but that it was not a route to a professional career, an attitude formulated initially in the nineteenth century under the influences of the principles of amateurism and the national preoccupation with social class.

Social classes constantly seek to accumulate capital in different forms, economic, cultural, and social, and it was inevitable that sport would be employed as a vehicle to reflect status and prestige. While there are cultural variations in how ‘strategic elites’ have been selected, recruitment through heredity has dominated British history with an aristocracy, a minority of the population composed of families bound by kinship, monopolizing key social and political functions.² These upper-class status groups, characterized by a reverence for tradition and a tendency to conservatism, preserve their dominant position by converting economic capital into social and cultural wealth. They stress manners, deportment, disinterestedness, refinement, self-control, and social distance, and their sports encompass strict rules of etiquette and ethical imperatives that reflect their aesthetic tastes. For the middle class, social capital is sparse, because social connections require economic capital and time, while cultural capital is scarce because it takes time, money, and social connections, to train, educate, and cultivate elite

lifestyles. As a result, the middle classes generally focus on rising economically and socially and tend to discipline their lives, allocating precise amounts of time to work, play, and family, and adopting utilitarian values, such as self-restraint, discipline, and frugality.³

These socialization patterns characterized the nineteenth-century educated middle classes who shared attitudes to speech and modes of dress, while control of the body was manifested in their cult of health and an adherence to the amateur doctrine of active participation. Upwardly mobile individuals invariably adopt the sociability patterns of the class into which they move and amateurism was an ethical moral value system that represented an extension into the public arena of the 'athleticism' of the public schools and universities, places where middle-class sports participants and administrators interacted with their social superiors. Education at Oxford and Cambridge Universities (Oxbridge) has long been identified as a prime marker of establishment status and Rubenstein noted their role as the 'nursery of Cabinet ministers and the Whitehall-City elite'. In the twentieth century, 60% of all cabinet ministers were products of Oxbridge, as were most senior civil servants, judges, Anglican bishops, and a disproportionate percentage of Britain's intelligentsia.⁴ Public schools remain influential in gaining entrance to Oxbridge and of the twenty-six Prime Ministers since 1885, nine have come from Eton, fifteen went to Oxford (including eleven out of the last fifteen) and three to Cambridge. The current British Cabinet is the most privately educated for over a generation, with almost two-thirds having attended private schools, and of the twenty-six ministers, half of whom went to Oxbridge, 31% went through a 'pipe-line' from fee-paying schools to Oxbridge.⁵

Education at public school and Oxbridge became the chief defining characteristic of the expanding middle and upper-middle classes after 1850,⁶ leading existing elites to retreat behind their cultural boundaries and to devote considerable energy to the creation of 'high' cultural institutional development in all areas of their life, including sport. Elitism, and the elite culture it produced, drew up a cultural drawbridge to distinguish itself from, and exclude, 'others' by predicating aesthetic values, refinement, the attainment of virtuosity, and educated reflection; 'techniques of distinction' based on a rejection of the vulgar, simple, primitive, or popular.⁷ 'Elite culture', the cultural forms and institutions that were exclusive to, and a distinguishing feature of, social elites, was subsequently referenced to the cultural tastes of the established aristocracy, the commercial bourgeoisie, educated bureaucrats and political power brokers, and the professions.⁸ Secure in their social and political status, this constituency used its cultural power to marginalize other social groups and to impose their own hegemonic version of how sport should be played and administered, resulting in a long-lasting heritage in which class attitudes and the philosophy of amateurism remain powerful determinants of elite sports participation.⁹ A study of over 1,400 elite athletes at the beginning of the twenty-first century identified that 20% had been educated in private schools and that the proportion of elite athletes emerging from higher social class families was much higher than from any other groups. In the 2012 Games, 35% of British medallists had attended an independent school and in 2016

this figure was 31%. The contribution of independent schools to British success at ‘sitting down sports’, such as rowing, cycling, sailing, and equestrianism, which are sports historically associated with higher social classes and involve special-ized and frequently expensive equipment and facilities, is reflected in the fact that an Old Etonian has won a medal in these sports at every Olympic Games since

1992.¹⁰

A class legacy continues to exert its influence despite government intervention in the late twentieth century, which signified a critical shift in influence from the cultural elite to a centralized bureaucracy, epitomized by the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organizations (‘quangos’) established to resource elite performance.¹¹ At the 2008 Olympics, Britain finished fourth in the medal table, a major turnaround from 1996 when Britain finished thirty-sixth, before going on to finish third in London in 2012 and then second in Rio in 2016. This upwards trajectory can be directly attributed to a change in the British State’s attitudes towards inter-vention in elite sport, not least to its decision in 1997 to invest heavily through the National Lottery, which has benefited more than 4,600 athletes, resulting in the winning of 633 Olympic and Paralympic medals.¹² These achievements signalled the abandonment, outwardly at least, of several long-held traditions, such as Britain’s volunteer coaching heritage and its relationship with amateurism, which had informed coaching discourses for over a century. This transition is considered here through an analysis of the power relations that underpinned this coaching heritage as a cultural transmission process.¹³ The chapter draws on an extensive range of sources, including the oral testimonies of some twentieth-century pro-fessional coaches, who reflect on the struggles they had in contending with the accepted, but often unspoken, heritage of British coaching and the patrimonial dynamics of the organizations that employed them.¹⁴

Sports coaching and amateurism as intangible cultural heritages

Since 2000, there has been an upsurge of interest in Britain’s sporting heritage, highlighted by a growth in the number of sports-related museums and statues as well as publications such as English Heritage’s *Played in Britain* series.¹⁵ The variety of sporting artefacts available is extensive, ranging from buildings and facilities, to equipment and sportswear, and documents produced by the sport community, while oral testimonies play a key part in the heritagization of sport, emphasizing that heritage narratives can be understood in many different ways.¹⁶ When visitors to heritage sites and museums were asked to define ‘heritage’, their responses highlighted the idea of heritage as memory, workplace skills, family histories, oral histories, or ‘traditions’.¹⁷ These ‘intangible cultural heritages’ (ICHs) embrace a wide range of ideas, ranging from oral traditions and expres-sions to the social activities that ‘people practice as part of their daily lives’.¹⁸ These are transmitted from generation to generation and constantly re-created by communities in response to their environment and their history, providing them with a perceived sense of identity and continuity.¹⁹ Sports coaching, it is argued

here, represents a typical example of an ICH since it is a social practice that has been shaped by its cultural context and developments in coaching practice represent a cultural response to wider public discourses and attitudes.

Those involved in the transmission of heritage narratives act as agents in the heritage enterprise itself,²⁰ and any attempt to understand the historically contingent and embedded nature of a British coaching heritage means engaging with debates about the production of identity, power, and authority, including the impact of ‘cultural patrimony’, the things considered as being of cultural, traditional, or historical importance that are passed down through the generations.²¹ The propagation of cultural heritage is often performed by actor groups that operate in selective and exclusive networks, be they ‘power’ elites²² and/or ‘cultural’ elites,²³ although this chapter considers these actors more as ‘cultural heritage elites’, hegemonic functional groups who specifically use an ICH to set symbolic boundaries, define ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, and establish parameters for repertoires of inclusion and exclusion.²⁴ Through the selective creation, preservation, interpretation, and suppression of cultural narratives, these ‘circles’ of cultural heritage elites are able to direct the production of ICH in a way that satisfies their own purposes and philosophy.²⁵ This cultural patrimonialism is a powerful form of elite privilege that allows its holders to appropriate resources from, and to exercise authority over, nonelites, and facilitates their efforts to co-opt, undermine, or override potential alternatives.²⁶ Patrimonialism is both dynamic and durable,²⁷ and the cultural heritage elite who established a hegemonic grip on sport at the end of the nineteenth century, subsequently imbuing it with their philosophy of amateurism, established a British view of sport that became universally adopted as part of the nation’s heritage.²⁸ Crucial to understanding Britain’s coaching heritage, then, is to appreciate how it was shaped by the ICH of amateurism, which was an active agent in determining the legacy and meaning of coaching as a social practice.²⁹

Amateurism as a sporting ideology emerged during the mid-nineteenth century and subsequently dominated the administration of British sport, playing a major role in shaping British cultural identity and remaining ‘tenacious and influential’ long after 1945.³⁰ As a philosophy for sporting behaviour, it was an ethical moral system framed by the social elite who ran British sport, most of whom had been educated at private schools, and when they subsequently established sporting bodies they inculcated them with values of modesty, loyalty, self-restraint, and sacrifice. In rejecting the excesses of professional sport, amateurs emphasized playing for the love of the game and notions of *esprit de corps*, ‘sportsmanship’, and ‘fair play’.³¹ It is important that the ethos and spirit of amateur sport, such as ideals of honourable, dignified, and respectable behaviour, not boasting in victory or complaining in defeat, maintaining self-control and dignity, and regarding the manner of victory as being more important than the margin, should not be confused with its basic principles. These ways of playing the game were all about being a gentleman rather than strict compliance with amateur principles, and, in many respects, amateur sport integrated aristocratic and bourgeois cultures. The spirit or ethos was essentially aristocratic while the principles and structures reflected

middle-class preoccupations, a combination that had a significant impact on the development of British coaching, not least through its emphasis on voluntarism.³²

The coaching landscape

British sport had had a long history of coaching reaching back at least until the early days of the eighteenth century and by the mid-nineteenth century there was a large cohort of professional coaches and trainers who were employed by both professional athletes and amateurs in rowing, cricket, boxing, athletics, and swimming.³³ It has to be noted at this juncture that coaching was, as it continues to be, an almost exclusively male domain, especially at professional and elite level. While female instructors were an important feature of the swimming landscape in the nineteenth century, given concerns over men teaching women,³⁴ it was not until 1912, when Clara Jarvis accompanied the women's team to the Stockholm Olympics, that they were officially recognized as being able to contribute at a performance level, and it was only in the early twentieth century that women coaches gradually emerged in sports such as golf, tennis, and athletics.

As a patrimonial elite graduated from the universities during the latter stages of the nineteenth century, their desire to extend their games into their post-university lives led to a radical change in the sporting environment. These men had no desire to mix with their social inferiors, so they structured their organizations and framed their sporting rules around their ethos of amateurism in all sports during the 1880s. Although they enjoyed winning, amateurs had to win with style, an effortless superiority that contrasted with the trained bodies of working-class professionals, an attitude reflected in the decision of the Amateur Rowing Association (ARA) in 1882 to exclude manual workers, partly because amateurs were unable to compete with watermen or those who been professionally trained. Central to amateur rules was the exclusion of professionals, both as players and as coaches, and the amateur hold over British sport was firmly established by the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1902, for example, the Henley Regatta stewards resolved that no crew would be allowed to compete if they had been coached by a professional during the four weeks leading into the regatta.³⁵ This aversion to specialization and, by association, coaching, remained powerful among patrimonial elites with rugby union rules in the Edwardian period specifically forbidding clubs from employing a paid coach or trainer.

In lawn tennis, professional coaches began to be employed from the 1880s in a small number of clubs, where their duties ranged from court and clubhouse maintenance to instructing club members in basic stroke production, training ball-boys, and stringing rackets.³⁶ These mainly working-class men tended to be referred to by their surnames, as were their counterparts in cricket, and they were expected to behave deferentially towards club members. Since they were rarely in a position to publish coaching manuals, these were generally written by amateurs, who invariably promoted self-learning ahead of coaching and recommended playing in moderation in the belief that excessive coaching through repetitive stroke practice and over-strenuous play led to 'staleness' or 'slackness'. In a cultural environment

where players were not supposed to take games too seriously, it is unsurprising that coaches were marginalized, but, as in rowing, the rhetoric often differed from the practice. William and Ernest Renshaw, schooled at Cheltenham College, dominated Wimbledon in the 1880s and established a winter training facility in Cannes from 1883, while the Westminster and Cambridge educated Doherty brothers, winners of seventeen Wimbledon titles from 1897 to 1906, also based themselves in the French Riviera during the winter, adopting 'professional' training methods and engaging professional Tom Fleming. However much these leading British players trained, engaged professional coaches, and received expenses and gratis travel, accommodation, and equipment, they were always regarded as quintessential amateurs since an appropriate 'amateur spirit' was assumed on the basis of their class backgrounds.³⁷

The cultural heritage elite dominated the British Olympic Association (BOA) from its inception in May 1905,³⁸ when the committee was made up of members from seven National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs), the majority from the privileged classes. Status differences became apparent from the start as the upper class assumed the leadership roles while educated middle-class representatives acted as their administrators. Nine of the sixteen members, whose schooling had included Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Westminster, and Radley, had been to Oxbridge, five were Members of Parliament (MPs) and career paths favoured the Law, the Military, Education, and the Civil Service.³⁹ In 1908, an expansion of the committee, partly to facilitate the organization of the London Games, created the potential for democratization, but that never materialized because the cultural elite always retained control of key committee positions with the first six presidents and ten of its first thirteen chairpersons holding aristocratic titles.⁴⁰ This elitism was reflected by the large proportion of university men, including twelve Oxbridge 'Blues',⁴¹ in the track and field team at the 1912 Olympics leading one critic to observe, 'Caste rules the world of athletes and all is snobbery . . . At present the whole tendency seems to be that only public school and university men shall have all the chances. Those who control the British contribution to the Olympic Games would like to see Britain represented by nice young men with nice pedigrees and splendid educations'.⁴²

Between 1908 and 1912, there had been little reflection on the state of British sport or any review of coaching standards, as amateur administrators remained convinced that their approach, including their preference for amateur rather than professional coaches, would inevitably ensure success. A. B. George argued that only amateur coaches had been responsible for innovations in competitive sport and that the recruitment of internationals and Oxbridge Blues as coaches was critical since their experience inevitably qualified them to coach.⁴³ Because of their fundamental belief in voluntarism, British organizations resisted the 'importation of American coaches and trainers for the purpose of teaching us what we had originally taught them',⁴⁴ and cultural elites continued to claim the moral high ground by emphasizing the purity of their sporting philosophy, untainted by specialization or serious preparatory regimes. That did not prevent them taking professional trainers with the team to Stockholm in 1912, mainly for their skills

in massage or in specialist areas such as maintaining bikes, although their knowledge and experience also proved valuable in coaching the amateur participants.⁴⁵ The important thing was that any man chosen had to know his place. In many ways, the status of professional coaches across most sports ‘differed little from that of a servant or labourer’,⁴⁶ mirroring the master-servant relationship characteristic of upper-middle-class life. Wilding considered the tennis professional ‘an excellent type of man, capable, intelligent, and courteous’⁴⁷ and this way of viewing the professional coach as a respectable artisan was commonplace across all sports. Among those accompanying the Stockholm team was professional swimming coach Walter Brickett, who had also attended the team at the 1908 Games and whose links to the amateur community through his teaching and his generally deferential attitude made him an acceptable choice for the controlling elite.⁴⁸

Poor performances at Stockholm led to an outcry at home as further proof of national decadence while an anti-coaching rhetoric was evident in the condemnation of the coaching and training practices of other, more successful, countries who clearly misunderstood the traditions and heritage of British sports.⁴⁹ The *Saturday Review* complained that although Britain had taught the world to play games for fun, other nations now made it a business.⁵⁰ The failures in Stockholm did, however, stimulate a debate about coaching, reflecting the tensions caused by a desire to be competitive in the international arena set against an adherence to the values of ‘pure’ amateurism. One *Times* correspondent argued that, while some believed that giving professional coaching to an amateur turned him into a professional, everyone outside the ‘charmed circle of the public school’ should have similar opportunities.⁵¹ The *Daily Express* proposed establishing an expert committee, independent of NGBs, to recommend athletes for coaching from professionals in dedicated training centres.⁵² These criticisms of both public school and NGB approaches to coaching suggest that it was generally acknowledged that it was within a certain social class that the ICHs of British sport were most entrenched, a situation that remained unchanged twenty years later when one commentator observed that

[b]oys and girls in elementary schools should be given the same opportunity as the children whose parents can afford to send them to public schools, if the governing body are sincere in their wish to make lawn tennis really democratic.⁵³

Interwar period

The interwar period saw English culture animated by attempts ‘to ally preservation and progress, tradition and modernity, city and country in order to define Englishness as orderly and modern’.⁵⁴ Harold Perkin described interwar society as being in a ‘transitional stage, a sort of halfway house in which remnants of Victorianism . . . co-existed with harbingers of the future’,⁵⁵ and this applied to all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life, including sport, where class dynamics continued to exert a powerful influence. Negative attitudes to

professional coaching were ingrained among administrators in all British sporting constituencies and their social and cultural status allowed them to dictate how coaching would be viewed across time and space. Amateur officials, who believed that Britain had little to learn from foreigners and that the British sportsman was inherently superior, continued to laud their way of playing sport, of seeing sportsmanship as a distinctively British characteristic, a moral value that could be extended to all spheres of conduct.⁵⁶ Aristocratic leaders of the BOA, as the aristocracy had always done, continued to use acceptable middle-class individuals as servants to administer their Olympic project,⁵⁷ and for both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, amateurism continued to be their underlying philosophical imperative. Writing on rugby in 1927, W. W. Wakefield articulated many of the key concerns of the amateur elite about contemporary sport. As a past captain of Cambridge University and a rugby international, he emphasized that 'Rugger' was first and foremost a team game, and, though it should be played to win, the game must never be subordinated to the result, especially in International matches, 'lest they should become gladiatorial contests rather than friendly trials of strength between two countries'.⁵⁸

Swimming coaches like William Howcroft, who produced four of the six women on the 1920 Olympic team while amateur coach to Garston Swimming Club in Liverpool, were constantly faced with a difficult choice between amateurism and professionalism. As an amateur, Howcroft contributed to the national and regional organization of swimming as a member of the Northern Counties Amateur Swimming Association executive and the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) Council,⁵⁹ but the ASA reiteration in 1923 of its definition of an amateur as 'one who has never taught swimming for pecuniary gain',⁶⁰ prompted him to review his status, despite his appointment as Olympic coach. In July 1924, he resigned all his positions because 'he was joining the professional ranks at the conclusion of the Olympic Games'.⁶¹ He subsequently became a swimming journalist and commentator, critiquing both the progress of British swimming and the state of swimming education. He contributed his own instructional texts and was active throughout the 1930s, coaching both Cambridge and Oxford universities simultaneously.⁶² British Olympian Joyce Cooper later described him as the best coach in the world,⁶³ but, despite his expertise, Howcroft was not allowed any input into the administration of the sport after he turned professional.

Coaching professionals were increasingly engaged in lawn tennis and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) began employing them to instruct children in schools and clubs, although Dorothy Round's assertion in 1934 that 'it is possible now for a promising novice to obtain professional coaching quite cheaply'⁶⁴ ignored the fact that only public schools and elite clubs were visited by LTA professional coaches. Professionals still suffered from 'second-class' treatment in many clubs, and they were hampered by claims that they suppressed originality and discouraged individuality. For one observer, they were a 'wholly incompetent class of self-styled instructors whose only concern in life is to take money from beginners while giving an entirely inadequate return'.⁶⁵ In 1925, an autonomous professional

coaches' association was created to work alongside the LTA to improve coaching standards, but its impact was limited by the exclusion of coaches from LTA boardrooms. In 1928, Queen's Club professional Dan Maskell, whose unfaltering respect for authority and coaching talents made him acceptable to the amateur establishment, was invited to become the All England Lawn Tennis Club's first professional, which afforded him opportunities to coach the nation's best players in preparation for the Davis Cup.⁶⁶ In 1933, when Britain won the trophy after years of failure, Maskell's input was considered decisive and he was later lauded as 'that excellent sample of a professional who . . . learns to impart his knowledge to the team rather than fill his own pockets'.⁶⁷

In athletics, some professional coaches continued to operate successfully, such as Cambridge University coach Alec Nelson, Oxford University coach Bill Thomas, and veteran Harry Andrews, who accompanied the British team to Paris in 1924. In 1937, however, the Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) reiterated that they were concerned with 'exercise for the multitude, rather than competition for the specialist',⁶⁸ reflecting their ongoing efforts to develop volunteers from their own social class, such as the amateur coaches appointed to the Loughborough summer school for athletics in 1935.⁶⁹ Several of these men appeared again later that year in a list of athletes and officials willing to give talks, lectures, and demonstrations to clubs and schools. As keen amateurs and volunteers, 'no fee was to be charged for their services' and the composition of this list reflected the traditional profiles for amateur coaches in this period with representatives from educational institutions (49%), the armed forces (6%), medicine (6%), law and finance (14%), as well as other middle-class occupations (17%).⁷⁰ For these men, coaching was a hobby and they lacked the resources and knowledge to be able to match their professional counterparts, while many of them also acted as administrators, diluting further the time that they could devote to coaching.

Although Britain won only two track gold medals in 1936, much of the subsequent discourse maintained that the British approach to sport remained superior and Bevil Rudd praised those amateur coaches who 'nobly tackled the spade-work that an army of paid coaches undertake in America and on the Continent'.⁷¹ Apologists for the British team argued that other nationalities employed different interpretations of amateurism and that 'our own particular amalgam of work and play expressed a better philosophy of life than those other codes which have reaped superior honours at Berlin'. British athletes had competed as a 'gentleman' should, while foreign athletes 'kept by their gov-ernments' clearly had an advantage,⁷² having adopted practices incompatible with amateurism.⁷³ Another writer observed that the definition of 'amateur' had always divided British and Continental opinion.⁷⁴ Following discussions with the newly formed National Fitness Council between 1937 and 1938, the AAA was awarded funding to employ professionals specifically to develop amateur coaches rather than coach elite athletes,⁷⁵ but, although they subsequently engaged Austrian Franz Stampfl,⁷⁶ they continued to concentrate on developing amateur coaches.

Post-World War II

Although post-War Britain had the potential to be a more egalitarian society, volunteer sport administrators retained control over the direction of coaching and continued to promote amateur values by focusing on creating cohorts of 'honorary' (meaning unpaid coaches, rather than on developing Olympic athletes. In many ways, amateurism acted as a form of nostalgia for an earlier age, highlighting how an ICH, through memory and received wisdom, can act as a powerful agent in perpetuating traditions and social practices, despite growing anxieties over international performances. At the Helsinki Olympics, Britain's first gold medal came on the last day, leading critics of the 'ghastly failure' of the British team⁷⁷ to focus not only on the tangible structures and financing of sport but on the more intangible aspects of the nation's sporting and coaching heritage. A *Picture Post* correspondent declared that the only solution was to get rid of this 'absurd smugness about amateurism',⁷⁸ while another observer argued, 'What's the use of 'being British' and saying, 'the game's the thing – not the result'?' No other country enters in that spirit. No other country comes off so badly. Either we should go fl at out to win – or not enter'.⁷⁹

In fact, there had been some, albeit inadvertent, coaching developments following the passing of the 1944 Education Act, which empowered a newly created Ministry of Education to assume control of the 1937 National Fitness Council and Grants Committee and to fund 80% of the salaries of professional coaches appointed by NGBs.⁸⁰ By 1950, the LTA had initiated a nationwide talent identification programme, led by Maskell, started a training school for promising juniors, and, with Ministry of Education and Central Council for Physical Recreation funding, instituted a tennis training scheme for schoolteachers. The LTA also appeared to be encouraging coach development by reconstituting their Professional Contact Committee (PCC, headed by Maskell, although the class-based 'professional' and 'money-grabbing' stigmas remained with coaches being routinely subjected to dis-crimination in clubs. Coaches also suffered from poor job security and this was only partially resolved through their unionization in 1954 with the formation of the independent British Professionals' Association, which established and maintained links with the PCC. It was only during the 1980s and early 1990s, however, that the LTA granted coaches a degree of institutional recognition and even in the twenty-first century, many clubs continued to exclude coaches from their committees.⁸¹

The AAA engaged Geoff Dyson in 1947, and Tony Chapman, Dennis Watts, and Allan Malcolm in 1948, specifically to produce 'professional and amateur coaches conforming to standards to be laid down by the AAA',⁸² not to develop specialized coaching programmes for elite athletes. While a growing interest in the pursuit of excellence did emerge in the 1950s and 1960s, any developments remained contingent on their being acceptable to those whose sporting lives had been dictated by their allegiance to amateurism and voluntarism, such as AAA secretary, E. H. L. Clynes, who said in 1953,

Too much emphasis cannot be given to the fact that amateur athletics is primarily and always a recreation. This is the foundation on which the

association has been built, and the sole reason why thousands of old athletes are prepared to give voluntary service to the active members as honorary coaches, honorary administrators or club officials. Without this unpaid service amateur athletics could not exist.⁸³

British athletics team manager, Les Truelove, referred to coaching as ‘90% kidology’ and expressed the view that he did ‘not believe in coaching’,⁸⁴ a common attitude among amateur administrators and one that caused frequent disagreements between them and their national coaches.⁸⁵ Geoff Dyson observed that the ‘average British person wouldn’t be able to explain the difference between a trainer and a coach’ and even those who did understand the coaching role, still felt that it was ‘unimportant’ and considered the coach ‘a sort of hanger-on’.⁸⁶ Speaking in 2012, Hamilton Smith, National Technical Officer for the ASA from 1963 to 1967, reflected on the ‘aristocratic’ and altruistic attitudes of amateur officials. There was an upper-class element controlling amateur sport and he believed that ‘if you understood that relationship then everything was fine as long as you were positive and respectful’. However, if you questioned their authority or the way in which they managed the sport that is when problems arose. Amateur officials ‘recognized that they didn’t know an awful lot’ about the technical matters of their sport, so they needed to appoint coaches, but administrators saw themselves as the ‘masters’ and the national coaches ‘as a serf, a sort of creature’.⁸⁷

Government attitudes and bureaucratic rationality

Effective challenges to the legacy left to British sport by the nineteenth-century patrimonial elite came not from coaches but from government.⁸⁸ Since participants typically represent social organizations or communities, their victories are often taken to be an indication of group superiority and the outcomes of sporting contests, particularly at international level, are frequently interpreted politically.⁸⁹ In a twentieth-century world consumed by concerns over national identity, sport became a way of asserting national status, so it is not surprising that many countries industrialized their approaches to international competition. Even though British administrators resisted adopting practices that they considered as being inconsistent with their sporting heritage, the British State was not entirely ignorant of these developments and in 1959, the Foreign Office acknowledged that the Olympics had ‘immense prestige and offer a unique stage for the demonstration of national prowess’.⁹⁰ The 1960 Wolfenden Report argued that international sporting contacts had the potential to ‘yield rich dividends in international understanding’,⁹¹ and a growing realization of the potential benefits of international sporting prestige eventually persuaded the British government to intervene more directly in elite sport through a process of bureaucratic rationalization. ‘Rationalization’ refers to the replacement of traditions, values, and emotions as motivators for behaviour in society with concepts based on rationality and reason. Weber argued that bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and rational way to organize human activity and that systematic processes and organized hierarchies are necessary to

maintain order, maximize efficiency, and eliminate favouritism. For Weber, an ideal bureaucracy covers a fixed area of activity, governed by rules and based on written documents, is organized as a hierarchy, requires a degree of expert training, and its officials devote all their time to their work within an office environment that follows general rules that can be learned.⁹²

Ostensibly, the patrimonial control of British sport, which had perpetuated amateurism and ensured that sports coaching as an ICH continued to follow traditional precepts, became diluted as bureaucratic structures were imposed on sport by a government increasingly keen to include sport in its agenda. In the 1990s, government reports and strategic documents started to make an impact. UK Sport, a government organization responsible for directing the development of elite-level sport, was established in January 1997 and later that month it was authorized to distribute Lottery funding. Terry Denison, chief swimming coach in 1992 and on the coaching staff at six different Olympic Games, commented ‘I remember we had a budget of £100,000 a year for British swimming, international swimming, once we got into Lottery funding that went up into the £2 million bracket so suddenly there was a whole different game’.⁹³ UK Sport now focuses on around thirty sports and has adopted a target driven agenda whereby sports are funded according to whether or not they achieve medal targets. From 2017 to 2018, UK Sport received £139.9 million, the bulk of which came from a government grant of £62 million and National Lottery Fund funding of £74.9 million. The total expenditure that year was £157.7 million, nearly 94% going in grants to NGBs, athletes, and major events.⁹⁴

Despite criticisms of this level of expenditure, and indeed of the whole process of rationalization, there is no indication that the British government is prepared to abandon its commitment to achieving Olympic results (and the status that comes with success. The focused investment of the last twenty years has resulted in a marked change in British fortunes and formal reviews of the elite sporting agenda in the wake of the Rio Games show no signs of deviating from the established template.⁹⁵ In England, UK Sport is supported by the English Institute of Sport (EIS, funded by a grant from UK Sport for each four-year cycle and income generated by providing services to NGBs. The EIS worked with 93% of the athletes and thirty-one out of thirty-four sports that won medals in Rio and its support for elite coaches is supplemented by UK Coaching, which develops coaching pathways and oversees coaching awards. This underpins UK Sport’s elite coaching programme, the aim of which is to ‘enhance and develop current world class coaches working within the British system’.⁹⁶ The result of these initiatives and the bureaucratic rationalization of the last twenty years is that a new breed of elite coaches has, on the surface at least, been freed from patrimonial constraints and has little allegiance to Britain’s traditional ICH of coaching practice.

Reflections

Sport is both a cultural and political manifestation and material and intangible sporting heritages, such as coaching, represent a vital link between the past and

the future. Although it is true that the traditional British approach to coaching has been refined by recurrent responses to wider social and cultural changes, such as the increasing demands placed on sport by the government, the public and the media, it remains rooted on a bedrock of amateurism and an association with class. Throughout the twentieth century, British administrators consistently resisted adopting practices such as professional coaching that they considered as being inconsistent with their sporting heritage and, while this amateur hegemony could become more pliable when placed under pressure, suggesting that ICHs are not immutable, it remained relatively static for much of the century. Poor performances in Stockholm in 1912, combined with increasing concerns over national decadence, did generate discussion over adopting a more pragmatic approach to coaching but change was never going to be uncontested and coaching in the inter-war period continued to be dominated by the amateur rather than the professional. Similarly, sporting authority after 1945 remained with these adherents of amateurism,⁹⁷ and the coaching programmes that emerged focused on developing 'honorary' coaches rather than on improving elite athletes.

However, although British sport continued to be dominated by the amateur into the 1980s, the transition of rugby union into a professional sport in 1995 signalled that 'amateurism' as a sporting philosophy was losing its traditional hold on elite sport. Several factors contributed to this process. An increasingly professionalized society began to reject the notion of the 'amateur', which soon became a derogatory term, and there was an accompanying decline in the number of top-class amateurs in sports like cricket. In addition, during the second half of the twentieth century, the possession of an education, which had previously distinguished the social elite, became more commonplace through mass secondary education and the expansion of the universities. Hitherto, the cultural heritage elite had been a relatively closed and circumscribed social group, sharing not only culture in common but also background, schooling, social networks, and experience.⁹⁸ Alongside these developments, the media became more strident in its criticisms of the failures of British teams, putting the question of elite coaching firmly in the public spotlight,⁹⁹ and the BOA increasingly found itself struggling to fulfil its core commitment to provide the funding and organization for British Olympic teams. Traditionally, financial support had come from public appeals but, after the Government pressured the BOA to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics, the BOA was forced to subsidize the team from its own funds leaving it virtually bankrupt. The result was that government involvement, albeit not on the Soviet scale, became acceptable and this led to increasing resources being devoted to coaching, particularly in the pursuit of Olympic success.¹⁰⁰

On the first night of the 2000 Games, cyclist Jason Queally won gold in the men's 1-km time trial, marking the beginning of a turnaround in Britain's Olympic fortunes, a revival that had its roots in growing state intervention in sport and the availability of National Lottery funding, which brought with it much greater investment in elite coaches. In this respect, Britain finally joined other nations in its approach to sporting excellence and some of the outward vestiges of amateurism were removed. Where specialization had previously been condemned, this

was now admired, a view later reflected in the rhetoric framed within the bidding process for the London Games, which emphasized the concept of ‘legacy’ not only in terms of structures but also in terms of ‘soft’ outcomes such as future developments in coaching. The problem is that the ICH of coaching, shaped by the patrimonial elites of the late nineteenth century, for whom voluntarism was an essential feature of their ethos, has become so deep-rooted in the British psyche that, despite the government interventions of the last twenty years, there remains a reluctance to embrace the concept of the professional coach. ICHs such as coaching practice can be highly resistant to change, and the accompanying ICH of amateurism was so ingrained into the sporting culture that, according to Tom McNab, AAA National Coach from 1963 to 1977, it left a ‘vacuum’ that would inevitably impact on any future coaching developments.¹⁰¹ A continuing reliance on the volunteer has made it hard for professional coaching to establish itself as a worthwhile and acceptable occupation in Britain, where three-quarters of the estimated total of 1,109,000 coaches remained unremunerated in the first decade of the twenty-first century.¹⁰² There is no evidence that the rhetoric of ‘soft’ coaching legacies that accompanied the 2012 Games has significantly altered this heritage of coaching practice. As a result, any vision for a professional coaching future may well prove unachievable in a nation whose cultural coaching heritage remains rooted in the century old values of amateurism and the principle of voluntarism as espoused by a late-nineteenth-century patrimonial elite.

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