

**Western University**

---

**From the Selected Works of Donald Morrow**

---

1986

## A Case Study in Amateur Conflict: The Athletic War in Canada, 1906-1908

Don Morrow



# A Case-Study in Amateur Conflict: The Athletic War in Canada, 1906–08

Don Morrow

The major objective of this article is to examine the issues prominent in Canada's amateur 'athletic war'. Officially, the schism boiled down to a disagreement between two groups over whether or not amateurs could be allowed to participate with and/or against professionals in team sports while still retaining their amateur standing. The two warring factions were the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union (CAAU) and the Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada (AAF of C); in reality it was an ideological power struggle between the emerging centre of sport in twentieth-century Canada, Toronto, and the revered hub of organized sport in nineteenth-century Canada, Montreal. The struggle lasted from 1 February 1907 to 6 September 1909, or just over two and a half years.

By comparison, Canada's athletic war was enacted structurally along parallel lines to the amateur conflict in the United States between 1886 and 1889. This schism resulted in the formation of the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States in 1889.<sup>1</sup> A similar controversy took place in Great Britain in 1895 when the Rugby Football Union split into two groups with the Northern Union adopting the concept of 'broken time' payments.<sup>2</sup> All three countries, Great Britain, the United States and Canada, underwent bitter struggles to preserve the *ideal* of amateurism. The protection of an ideal – amateurism – was the issue, even though the three countries approached the problem from different directions:

To comprehend the principles which underlie the development of the amateur ideal in Great Britain, and especially England, it must be clearly understood that British amateurism has always been much more the concern of the representative bodies governing and legislating for individual sports than of any one central organization.<sup>3</sup>

Centrality of management was a key factor in the amateur conflicts of both the United States and Canada.

The critical period in defining amateur status dates from 1879 when the Henley Stewards '... promulgated their very strict definition of an oarsman'<sup>4</sup> which prohibited competitive sport entrants who were mechanics, labourers, artisans and in general anyone who worked with his hands for a daily wage. The issue of amateur exclusivity became more acute during the 1880s and 1890s in rugby football and rowing, respectively, as payments to athletes rather than social status became the significant amateur criterion in Britain.<sup>5</sup> The extension or development of amateurism erupted so strongly in British association football during

1907–08 that the very existence of the sport was threatened.<sup>6</sup> Both Savage and Guttman interpret the amateur rule in late nineteenth-century Britain as an ‘instrument of class warfare’<sup>7</sup> that had its roots and meaning in an ‘individual consciousness’ concept of pure sport among British sportsmen imbued with the persistent traditions of the British public school.<sup>8</sup>

In the United States, the early amateur definitions emanated from the National Association of Amateur Oarsmen (1872) and were more ‘legalistic’ than the earliest British amateur distinctions. The 1879 amateur definition of the NAAA of America was:

An amateur is any person who has never competed in an open contest, or for a stake, or for public money, or for gate money, or under a false name, or with a professional for a prize, or where gate money is charged; nor has ever at any period of his life taught or pursued athletic exercises as a means of livelihood.<sup>9</sup>

This definition is couched in negative phrasing; it is really a definition of a non-amateur in that it particularizes the circumstances in which an amateur becomes a professional. By implication, amateurism was the absence of professionalism. This negative concept of the amateur permeated all attempts to define amateur status over the next 30–40 years in both the United States<sup>10</sup> and Canada. More significantly, these negative definitions invited obeying the letter but not the spirit of the amateur law<sup>11</sup> and were more the source than the cure for amateur abuses.

# I

The first amateur definition in Canada was thought to be that listed by the Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen in 1880:

An amateur is one who has never assisted in the pursuit of athletics exercises as a means of livelihood, who rows for pleasure and recreation only during his leisure hours, and does not abandon or neglect his usual business or occupation for the purpose of training for more than two weeks during the season.<sup>12</sup>

More negative than positive or affirmative, the exclusivity of this supposedly first Canadian Amateur definition was softer than one framed by the Montreal Pedestrian Club in 1873:

[An amateur is] 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 laborer or an Indian*.<sup>13</sup>

This 1873 amateur definition is a perfect *ménage à trois* of American legalistic or negative stricture, of the British social criterion for amateurism and of the Canadian ethnic twist pertaining to Indians. Decidedly, the

definition is of a non-amateur and is a negative and more characteristic of the flow of amateur distinctions leading up to the athletic war than the 1880 Canadian Association of Amateur Oarsmen definition. The exclusion of Indians was derived from their superior skill in lacrosse, snowshoe racing and, to a certain extent, in footraces as well as their perceived inferior social status.<sup>14</sup>

The first parent-body or custodian of the amateur ideal in Canada was the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada (AAA of C) formed in 1884 at the instigation of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association.<sup>15</sup> The increasingly powerful MAAA had been affiliated with the American National Association of Amateur Athletes but the Montreal group was seeking unified regulation for track and field. Delegates from cricket, rugby, lacrosse and cycling who attended the formative meetings of the Amateur Athletic Association of Canada in 1884 did so 'under the misapprehension that the Association was to cover all sports.'<sup>16</sup> There was a void of leadership in Canadian sport that was waiting to be filled; by accident, then, a track and field control group assumed governing dominance of Canadian sport. Instead of encouraging or promoting or fostering the development of sport, the AAA of Canada was a regulator, a *custodian* of the amateur principle which it defined in 1884, in parallel fashion to the American 1879 NAAA:

An amateur is one who has never competed for a money prize or staked bet, or with or against any professional for any prize, or who has never taught, pursued or assisted in the practice of athletic exercises as a means of obtaining a livelihood. This rule does not interfere with the right of any club to refuse an entry to its own sports.<sup>17</sup>

Obviously, the definition is of a non-amateur, is negative and legalistic and noteworthy for the touch of absolute right of exclusivity of the last line which gives the definition a patented British-Canadian flavour.

The prevailing concept of the professional athlete in Canada during the 1880s and 1890s was equated with prostitution;<sup>18</sup> the term professional was used to characterize an athlete who would sell his athletic talent to the highest bidder, fix the outcome of contests and generally dupe the public for personal profit. A commercial basis for sport had been developed in baseball due to American influences. Lacrosse followed suit in order to attract fans who learned quickly to enjoy good baseball over poor lacrosse. Rowing was openly professionalized and respected in Canada because of the phenomenal success of the world champion, Edward Hanlan; however, baseball, lacrosse, rugby football and ice hockey (in the 1890s) were semi-professional or covertly professional.<sup>19</sup> Popular individual sports such as bicycle racing and speedskating contained distinct, open categories for professionals and for amateurs, but no mixed races of the two classes or categories were sanctioned by the AAA of C.

As senior leagues in team sports became more competitive, with greater and greater emphasis on winning championships, the more



concentrated and numerous were the efforts to build quality teams while pretending to adhere to the amateur strictures of the national governing body. *Charges* of professionalism were rampant in the 1890s in team sports; even paid referees were banned from playing amateur sport of any kind and were fixed instead with the professional label.<sup>20</sup> Jobs or placements, sponsorship, end-of-season performance bonuses and outright payments to athletes were made under the guise of amateurism; two-year residence rules were agreed among leagues in a pre-reserve clause era. The AAA of C was monopolized with the arduous and complex tasks of investigating charges of professionalism, suspending proven violators of the amateur definition (or, in perverted jurisprudence, suspending athletes whose only guilt was that they could not prove their amateur innocence) and reinstating athletes who had been suspended but were ready to repent and were willing to follow the lines of *simon pure* amateurism.

Because of the trend towards international competition and because of the importance placed on US competition for Canadian athletes and even more because the MAAA recognized the crowd-drawing features of American athletes competing in Canadian track and field championships, the AAA of C formed an alliance with the AAU of the United States in 1898 and became the Canadian Amateur Athletic Union (CAAU).<sup>21</sup> In so doing, the CAAU claimed 'jurisdiction' over some 17 sports inclusive of the increasingly commercial and popular team sports. Jurisdiction implied the assumed custodial role of control in applying the letter of the amateur law.<sup>22</sup> Even though the CAAU sought national control in amateur sport, most affiliations were from sports clubs as compared with national sport governing bodies.<sup>23</sup> While the CAAU preached ironclad opposition to professionalism, team sport clubs paid lip-service adherence only to the idea. Prestigious trophies such as the Stanley Cup in hockey and the Minto Cup in lacrosse were controlled by trustees outside the realm of the CAAU. Despite all kinds of suspensions and regulations in the name of amateurism, professional or non-amateur, commercial lacrosse, hockey and to a lesser extent, rugby football,<sup>24</sup> were flourishing by 1905. The situation in these sports (and in the administration or policing of the amateur concept) was ludicrous. The preservation of the amateur ideal reached the proportions of mummification. Further, its application was inconsistent and at times, catch-as-catch-can. Trends and pressures towards commercial sport created an athletic bubble waiting to be burst.

Between 1901 and 1905, the Executive Committee of the CAAU, its board of governors, dealt almost exclusively with allegations, suspensions and questions concerning the issue of amateur athletes playing with or against professionals and not losing their amateur status.<sup>25</sup> In lacrosse, team members accused of professionalism were forced to file affidavits of innocence as *bona fide* amateurs before a judge<sup>26</sup> or be suspended. The National Amateur Lacrosse Union made a formal request to the CAAU in 1903 to allow amateurs to compete with or against professionals.<sup>27</sup> The

CAAU's response at first was unalterably negative, but one year later, the organization voted unanimously to permit any athletic union in Canada to become a subscribing member of the CAAU within the next six months in return for the concession that all athletes suspended as professionals in these unions would be automatically reinstated as amateurs if the unions agreed to abide in future by the CAAU amateur definition.<sup>28</sup> The CAAU was quite conscious of what its representatives termed the 'present unsettled condition of athletics in Canada'<sup>29</sup> yet its solution of reinstatement with affiliation was band-aid in effect, treating only the symptom, not the causes, of the problem. In 1905, the NALU forced the CAAU to make a direct decision on the issue of amateurs competing with or against professionals. In a lengthy and heated meeting amid threats of resignation from CAAU executives including the president, the CAAU voted 'not to enforce the penalties provided for in the event of amateurs competing with or against professionals'<sup>30</sup> in the sport of lacrosse only.

## II

This concession for the good of the 'national' sport<sup>31</sup> was relatively radical and quite unconstitutional. At the next annual meeting of the CAAU in September 1905, President Gorman attempted to rescind the concession but he was not supported by the delegates.<sup>32</sup> One year later, at the 1906 annual meeting, the CAAU members voted overwhelmingly to annul the concession to lacrosse.<sup>33</sup> Unless the CAAU disbanded or changed its role and constitution completely, it was the only possible method available to manage the problem. Meanwhile, that bastion of amateur ideals and prime mover in the organization of Canadian sport, the MAAA, was caught in the continuing dilemma. Net gate receipts for its lacrosse team had reached \$5000 by 1904 while travelling costs, accident insurance rates and facility maintenance costs were increasing rapidly.<sup>34</sup> Its arch rival, the Shamrock Lacrosse Club, was in the Minto Cup in 1904 while playing with and against known professional athletes, and the Ontario-based Canadian Lacrosse Association was siphoning off the best players in open professional lacrosse.<sup>35</sup> Trembling on the precipice of professionalism, the MAAA, hailed by Toronto organizations as the Montreal *Almost* Amateur Athletic Association, retrenched momentarily at its semi-annual meeting in November 1905 to reaffirm its position in support of the principle of pure amateurism in the face of the 1905 CAAU concession to the NALU to allow amateurs to remain amateurs while competing with or against professionals. Unanimously the membership of the MAAA declared 'unreserved adhesion to the letter and spirit of the amateur law embodied in the MAAA constitution'.<sup>36</sup> But the lure of lacrosse victory and attendant benefits were too great. Exactly five months later,<sup>37</sup> the Directors passed a motion to allow amateurs to play with or against professionals without jeopardizing their amateur status. The motion was ratified by the membership in a 250-12 vote.<sup>38</sup> It was a

significant change from the single most powerful sporting agency in Canada at the time. The Montreal press gushed its admiration with headlines such as: 'The M.A.A.A. to Cut the Gordian Knot'.

The prevailing rationalization from the MAAA was something like: it is better to have the professional element openly recognized than to continue under various disguises as has been the practice over the past three years. A veritable parade of MAAA founders rose to the stage before the press to support the new motion arguing that the disguised professional athlete was the 'road-agent of sport because his work is in the dark and in hiding' and that the professional evil must be faced courageously or else the 'canker (would) flourish beneath the surface.'<sup>39</sup> The only vocal opponent among MAAA members quoted scripture to the audience and proclaimed that calamities like the Johnstown flood and the San Francisco earthquake would be visited upon Montreal if the amendment was adopted.<sup>40</sup> Adopted it was and the MAAA was committed. Before the end of the same month, April, 1906, the NALU followed the lead of the MAAA by adopting the same resolution and changing its name to the NLU.<sup>41</sup>

With the combined powers of the NLU and the MAAA directed towards a practice that was openly touted as commonplace in cricket and football in the mother country,<sup>42</sup> royal sanction and divine blessing seemed imminent. By August 1906, the public press published betting information:

... in one well known restaurant on St. James Street, there has been 3,000 dollars lying about since yesterday afternoon for Montreal supporters to cover. Last night the betting was even, this morning the Shamrocks were willing to give ten to eight.<sup>43</sup>

By the autumn sentiment prevailed to follow the same course in rugby football and ice hockey.<sup>44</sup> Non-Montreal, non-team sport, devout amateur idealist executives of the CAAU recognized the delicacy of the situation and dragged their heels through the month of September, the normal annual meeting time of the CAAU. It was just too much cognitive dissonance for amateur idealists. Finally, the CAAU met on 27 October 1906, and passed the motion (in an almost perfect Toronto sport versus Montreal sport vote) to annul its year-old motion to support the innovation of amateurs playing with or against professionals in lacrosse. The course of the amateur sport river had been successfully redirected and was not blocked by a CAAU dam, at least as far as team sports, in particular lacrosse, and the MAAA were concerned.

For years, the MAAA had dominated the CAAU. An MAAA member had been CAAU president for half of its 23 years of existence and the annual meetings of the CAAU were held traditionally in the Windsor Hotel, Montreal. On several occasions, MAAA members filibustered or block-voted to get their way in the CAAU. There was a decided Montreal sport nepotism led by the MAAA, and the CAAU annulment of the concession to allow amateurs to play with and against



professionals was a bold, locked-horns position between Toronto and Montreal. Ironically, the new president of the CAAU amateur policing body was the Toronto police force deputy-chief, Stark. The MAAA did not back down and withdraw its new constitutional position; the CAAU posture officially was to allow the MAAA to re-think its position and 'if they are determined to embrace professionalism', let the association resign honourably.<sup>45</sup> Stark concisely encapsulated the CAAU's perspective on the MAAA situation:

If they find that they cannot change the laws of the Union to suit their view, and if they intend to follow those views in defiance of the Union's laws, then they should withdraw voluntarily.<sup>46</sup>

The *Toronto Globe* was convinced that the MAAA would be expelled from the CAAU and that no more 'shilly shallying' of the earlier days of the CAAU would take place.<sup>47</sup> Finally, after many 'secret' meetings, the Montreal press blurred the news:

Revolution in Canadian Athletics  
M.A.A.A. Burns Its Bridges

An open letter to the Montreal public announced the MAAA's withdrawal from the CAAU over the amateur playing with or against professionals issue.<sup>48</sup>

Logically, the Montreal press praised the courage and foresight of the MAAA while Toronto papers proclaimed that the MAAA was merely avoiding a professional investigation by the CAAU<sup>49</sup> and that its action showed that gate receipts and championships were being put ahead of the amateur principle on the road to the ultimate extermination of amateur sport.<sup>50</sup> The CAAU's first action against the MAAA was to discredit the races of the Amateur Skating Association of Canada by writing to the National Amateur Skating Association in the US to warn them to decline competition or risk suspension as professionals,<sup>51</sup> and by advertising speedskating races in Toronto on the same day as the Montreal championships. This move backfired when the two American skating associations and the Canadian one defied their respective national amateur governing bodies to form the International Skating Union in 1907.<sup>52</sup> It was the first in a long series of labyrinth manoeuvres on the part of athletes, sports clubs and sporting organizations to weave their way through the barriers of amateurism. It was also a catalyst that stimulated the MAAA to call a meeting, via mail, to form a new governing body of sport in Canada. Along with the letter went a copy of the proposed constitution and by-laws which followed those of the CAAU except for the with and/or against professionals clause. Characteristic of the MAAA, the letter must have been distributed only locally since the only representatives to attend the meeting were sports clubs in Montreal.<sup>53</sup> Yet, when the new Amateur Athletic Federation of Canada was formed on 1 February 1907, the constitution read: 'This union recognizes and claims jurisdiction over all athletes and all athletic sports in Canada'.<sup>54</sup>



It was a mistake, ultimately, to remain localized and the presumptuous jurisdictional claim provided ammunition for the Toronto press to state that the 'Funny Federation' was a burlesque of professional promotion, 'making about the 23rd bubble of the kind that the Montreal jokers have passed off in the last 3 to 4 years'.<sup>55</sup> The 'athletic war'<sup>56</sup> had begun, officially, with the formation of the AAF of C.

### III

It is significant that the AAF of C by its actions was not merely breaking away from the CAAU; it was in fact a usurper,<sup>57</sup> an earnest pretender to the Canadian sport governing crown in the same manner as the NYAC-stimulated AUU of the United States had been in 1888. The battleground between AAF of C and the CAAU was sport, the quest was national control of amateur sport and the persons who suffered most during the two and half years war were the athletes. The athletic war itself was a battle of wills and obstinacy on both sides. Each faction actively campaigned and recruited prospective members. The AAF of C issued circulars to explain its aims and objectives that were directed towards eliminating the nonsense of 'thinly veiled professionalism'.<sup>58</sup>

... it is the aim of the Federation to have affiliated with it all clubs, leagues, unions and associations devoted to the promotion of clean sports and the maintenance of the amateur spirit.<sup>59</sup>

Claiming national scope, the Federation remained a circle of wagons around Montreal throughout most of the athletic war years. Some provincial sport associations, such as the Maritime Provinces Amateur Athletic Association, at first pledged allegiance to the new sport governing body<sup>60</sup> but the CAAU intervened with a crushing and unsuspected coup; the prestigious Canadian track and field championships were awarded by the CAAU to Halifax in 1908 thereby breaking the 23-year tradition of selecting Montreal as the site of the games and instead, currying the favour of the Maritimes Association to keep those provinces in the CAAU.<sup>61</sup> The circle of wagons tightened around Montreal.

Accusations of shady practices in the conduct of amateur sport flew back and forth between Toronto and Montreal during the spring and early summer of 1907. The AAF of C would recognize CAAU athletes in their sports but the reverse could not be tolerated by the CAAU, for to do so would be conceding to play amateurs with and against professionals. The *Toronto Globe* kept publishing what the Federation perceived as 'malicious rumours' that the AAF of C was the home and central promotional agency for professional sport.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the Toronto papers implied indirectly and delightfully that the Federation was doomed since the Michigan- and northern Ontario-based professional hockey teams all lost money in 1906-07.<sup>63</sup> The AAF of C tried to dispel the myth of alleged professional athlete jurisdiction by publicly stating: 'We simply look upon them as paid employees. If they misbehave themselves, however,

we will prevent them from playing with or against our amateurs.'<sup>64</sup> If the CAAU stood to benefit by Montreal-based athletes competing in their events, it simply compelled the athletes to compete under a different club name,<sup>65</sup> but only at the Union's discretion.

The AAF of C, led by the MAAA, believed it was just a matter of playing a waiting game. At its first annual meeting in 1907, the MAAA president, Victor Buchanan, was elected president of the AAF of C. He strongly recommended that the AAF of C move quickly to establish representatives in each province to acquire national status. No action was taken; instead the collective and arrogant perspective of the Federation members was that sport clubs across the country were '... occupying a neutral stand, pending only the necessary display of strength on our part to induce them to come in'.<sup>66</sup> Ottawa athletic executives recognized the AAF of C weakness and advised the Federation to 'wake up and start a vigorous campaign in support of its principles ... There must be work and plenty of it to put the Federation in proper perspective'.<sup>67</sup> The public press in Montreal called the CAAU a 'mollycoddle' organization that was at complete fault in setting

... brothers against brothers, and friends against friends in an athletic war that would if permitted to go on destroy the entire usefulness of athletics in Canada.<sup>68</sup>

Far from being dormant, the CAAU campaigned actively in all provinces and upheld its strict amateur principles whenever it deemed necessary. To the CAAU's credit, it faced the AAU of US head-on in withdrawing sanction to the NYAC in a matched track race featuring Toronto runners in Madison Square Gardens in March 1907.<sup>69</sup> Once bitten, twice shy, the American AAU retaliated in July when the Federation attempted a smooth manoeuvre at the Ottawa summer sports festival. MAAA athletes were sent to the games carrying amateur registration cards of the AAU of US but wearing MAAA colours. If the CAAU accepted the cards, it would mean acceptance of AAF of C athletes in a CAAU-sanctioned meeting. The AAU of US cards were not recognized.<sup>70</sup> The next day, 31 July 1907, the *Montreal Star* announced that the 'dread athletic war is over'<sup>71</sup> since the AAU of US pledged immediate affiliation with the Federation and would no longer recognize the CAAU. Leslie Boyd of the MAAA and James E. Sullivan of the AAU of US had engineered the Federation/AAU of US agreement in Jamestown, Virginia; the Ottawa fiasco served to speed up the process.<sup>72</sup> The Boyd-Sullivan entente was significant to the future of the athletic war machinations. The Federation claimed victory but announced magnanimous generosity to the wayward sports clubs in the CAAU in reaping the spoils of war; it would accept them with open arms rather than follow the 'dog-in-the-manger policy of the CAAU'.<sup>73</sup>

The Federation really did expect that if it held up the banner of AAU of US support, athletes and clubs across Canada would march eagerly under its umbrella. But the CAAU was unruffled by the vaunted power of the

## AAU of the US:

We will try standing alone ... Surely we are strong enough to stand alone now when we have been standing for many years with such support as the A.A.U. has proven. Twas a broken reed we were leaning upon. What sort of cowardly work is this anyway? Here we have an ally in fair weather, in foul, just when we might need him, he deserts to the enemy.<sup>74</sup>

The weak link in the AAU of US/Federation chain, was that all AAF of C athletes had to observe the amateur definition of the AAU of US which did not permit amateurs playing with or against professionals.<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, the CAAU had 16 organizations representing 16 sporting clubs; by September 1907, it boasted the continued strong affiliation of 37 organizations representing 479 clubs.<sup>76</sup> One year later, in 1908, the CAAU embraced 900 sporting clubs and an athletic membership of some 60,000 athletes representing every province in the Dominion.<sup>77</sup> The key to the success of the CAAU was directly attributable to its hard work in dividing the whole country into provincial, self-governing amateur bodies, all allied to the central agency;<sup>78</sup> the CAAU actively and persistently recruited<sup>79</sup> while the Federation retreated to its special circle of wagons with US reinforcements at the ready.

## IV

The war did not rage but dragged on. The Montreal press recognized the futility of the situation and pleaded for cessation for the good of the sporting public and the athletes.<sup>80</sup> Neither governing body relented. Looming on the athletic horizon was the spectre of the 1908 Olympic Games in London. The Olympics were the very symbol of unification and purification in international amateur sport. For the good of the Games in the mother country and for the good of Canadian Olympic athletes, a temporary truce in the war was effected by Colonel Hanbury-Williams representing the British Olympic Committee in Canada. He called a meeting of CAAU and AAF of C representatives in the Governor General's office in Ottawa for 30 November 1907.<sup>81</sup> An eight-item truce was drawn up with two major features: any disputes over amateur status of potential or actual Olympic athletes were to be left to the Canadian Olympic Committee whose membership would contain CAAU and AAF of C representatives; secondly, in all athletic competitions bearing on the Games, the two bodies would '... mutually withdraw and abstain from all disqualifications, rulings and penalties enacted in consequence of or depending upon the differences between the two associations.'<sup>82</sup> It was a guarded hands-off-the-Olympics-policy. As if to underscore their good will, both organizations published Christmas greetings to all amateur athletes in the Montreal and Toronto press beginning in 1907<sup>83</sup> and continued to do so each year of the athletic war as peace gestures befitting the season.

Both sides observed the truce within reasonable bounds until ten days



before the Olympic marathon in July 1908. The feud intensified when Leslie Boyd, president of the MAAA and a representative of the Canadian Olympic Committee in London, lodged a protest on behalf of the AAF of C against the CAAU-sanctioned marathon runner, Tom Longboat, an Onandaga Indian whose fame was international in scope since his victory in the 1907 Boston marathon.<sup>84</sup> The AAU of the US attempted to have Longboat declared a professional as early as one week after that achievement.<sup>85</sup> In effect, Longboat became a political pawn in the Canadian athletic war, but not necessarily its victim.

As the story unfolded, it was revealed that Boyd spent most of his time at the Olympics with the American contingent, particularly with Mr James E. Sullivan. The latter registered a protest against Longboat on behalf of the AAU of US.<sup>86</sup> The CAAU received advanced warning of the protests pending and worked to block their success by publishing a lengthy document explaining the CAAU's intensive investigation of Longboat's amateur status before the Olympics and outlining, often in bold type almost dripping with venom, the reasons why the US was determined to prevent Longboat from running.<sup>87</sup> The letter was given to the associated press and circulated to all the major newspapers of the world by the CAAU.<sup>88</sup> Upon publication of this document, the protests were denied by the AAF of C and the AAU of US for the next ten days.<sup>89</sup> When the protest was made public, the CAAU screamed treachery and the *Ottawa Journal* labelled Boyd's action as nationally disloyal and dishonourable.<sup>90</sup> The point was that the precise terms of the Canadian Olympic truce had been directly violated by Boyd.

The protests were overruled by the British Olympic Committee after assurance of Longboat's amateurism from the other two Canadian Olympic representatives.<sup>91</sup> Ultimately, Longboat collapsed at the 20-mile mark,<sup>92</sup> the Italian Dorando Pietri was disqualified and the American, Hayes, was proclaimed the Olympic marathon victor. As for the athletic war in Canada, Boyd's actions in protest broke the Federation's circle of wagons. It was the beginning of the end, the major tactical error of the AAF of C. The MAAA published its support for Boyd's actions<sup>93</sup> but neither Montreal or Toronto was buying the arguments of the MAAA due to its obvious vested interest in its own president. Even Canadian athletes such as Bobby Kerr, the 1908 Olympic gold medallist in the 200 metres, referred to Boyd as a 'cat's paw for Sullivan',<sup>94</sup> and the *Toronto Globe* ran an article under the huge headline: 'Mr Boyd's United States Chums and Associates'.<sup>95</sup> The Toronto theory was that US coach Murphy and Sullivan were known to love to '... sow a few seeds of disruption (and) ... irritation' to upset Longboat and throw him off before the race.<sup>96</sup> Even the *Montreal Star* expressed its shame at Boyd's perceived collaboration with Murphy and Sullivan.<sup>97</sup> Boyd's 'weak-kneed' excuse was that he was protecting Federation athletes from possible professionalization, but the *Toronto Daily Star* noted that there were ten other Canadian athletes in the exact same status as Longboat at the Olympics:

Why didn't Boyd protest them all? Why make fish of one and flesh

of the other? To protect his men? Fudge! Longboat had a grand chance, and Sullivan simply used Boyd as a puppet to try and lay Longboat in his athletic grave.<sup>98</sup>

By late August 1908, the same Montreal press that one year earlier had breathed a heavy sigh of athletic war relief with AAU of US affiliation, was making pleas for peace on the strength of splitting off from the AAU of US.<sup>99</sup> To quote a founding member of the MAAA, A.W. Stevenson, in 1908:

... they have been scallowagging around too much with these Americans and just as long as they have anything to do with these people they are going to have trouble. They are a bumptious lot running a crowd of professional athletes.<sup>100</sup>

The CAAU taunted the fractured Federation with:

[The AAF of C] has a legitimate sphere laid out for itself in governing the professional sports which they called into being.<sup>101</sup>

Peace, to the CAAU, was only possible if the Federation dropped the amateurs competing with/or against professionals' concession.

In September 1908 the Canadian Olympic Committee denounced Boyd's actions and the AAF of C's support for Boyd based on the 1907 Olympic truce agreement.<sup>102</sup> A press cartoon encapsulated perfectly, with hyperbolic licence, the athletic war situation.<sup>103</sup> The Federation tried one last ploy to gain public support. Together with the AAU of US, they plotted to discredit Longboat in the public view by attempting to get him to accept a material reward for a six-mile race in Williamstown in October 1908, but the trap failed<sup>104</sup> and Longboat openly turned professional a short time later.<sup>105</sup> On 20 April 1909, after six months of retrenchment, the AAF of C., represented by MAAA delegates, came to Toronto to appeal for athletic peace. The Toronto papers chided the MAAA delegates as the only ones who would be entertained by the CAAU since the AAF of C was 'Marathon Anathema'<sup>106</sup> to the CAAU. Negotiations were protracted right through the summer because the MAAA stubbornly refused compromise of its major amateur concession,<sup>107</sup> even though the AAF of C reinstated many transgressors at its third annual meeting that year.<sup>108</sup> In late August, both groups sanctioned a track meet in Montreal where CAAU and AAF of C athletes competed against each other.<sup>109</sup> This was the first jointly-approved athletic competition since the start of the war and a major gesture of goodwill by the powerful CAAU.

Finally, after a lengthy national peace conference over the Labour Day weekend in Ottawa, the athletic war was ended:

#### The Barriers Are Now Raised – Athletic Peace Comes At Last

The A.A.U. of Canada was formed here yesterday by the amalgamation of the A.A.F. of C. and the C.A.A.U. The hatchet was buried forever and neither side claims a victory, both declaring that they have acted for the betterment of Canadian athletics only.<sup>110</sup>

With a touch of political elegance, Sullivan published a large congratulatory letter on behalf of the AAU of the US in the Canadian press.<sup>111</sup> The CAAU ratified the peace and the new governing body at its last annual meeting in 27 November 1909,<sup>112</sup> and the AAF of C officially disbanded one month later.<sup>113</sup>

## V

The basis for peace was rooted in the newly-adopted definition of an amateur by the AAU of C and in administrative, constitutional and voting systems comparable with the federal-provincial government structure in Canada (i.e. provincial, autonomous amateur associations under the AAU of C umbrella). All athletic members were pledged to the strict enforcement of the amateur ideal with a general sense of having 'rescued' sport from professionalism. The new AAU of C remounted the pedestal of nineteenth-century amateurism with some minor alterations exemplary in its 1909 A-B-C amateur definitions:

Class A amateur – one who has never competed for a wager, taught or competed for a livelihood, received lost time payment, sold or pledged prizes, promoted an athletic competition for personal gain. 'Any athlete guilty of the above can never be reinstated.'

Class B – an athlete who has competed with or against a professional for a prize or where gate money is being charged, or has entered in any competition under a name other than his own, shall be ineligible for registration and competition as an amateur.

Class C – 'All others shall be considered eligible for registration in the C.A.A.U. and its affiliated bodies.'<sup>114</sup>

Class A was, clearly, a giant throwback to the blanket, non-amateur, negative definition of the 1870s and 1880s and was, once again, the focal point of the national amateur governing body. Class B was the 'guilt by touch' category of non-amateurism, and Class C was for all those who dropped through the fine mesh of the new amateur sieve, the vast majority, it was hoped, of clean-living, simon pure athletes. Guilty non-amateurs were not labelled with a professional tag; they were merely categorized. Significantly, there were three corollaries to Class C: one to allow amateur athletes to retain their amateur status in the face of competing with or against professionals in cricket, golf or indoor bowling; the other two concessions must have been appeasement for the AAF of C, since National Lacrosse Union athletes were granted the right to petition the AAU of C to be permitted to play with or against professionals 'until such time as the Board of Governors shall unanimously decide that strict amateurism can be satisfactorily established in the senior series of that game',<sup>115</sup> and the Interprovincial Amateur Hockey League was granted the same privilege for one year. The trophies of those two professional-like sports, the Stanley Cup in hockey and the Minto Cup in lacrosse, were regarded as 'money-making mediums for groups of



mercenary promoters.<sup>116</sup> New amateur trophies, the Allan Cup and Mann Cup respectively, were donated, with the AAU of C solicitation, within a year of the formation of the new Canadian amateur governing body. The theory was that the trophies would be AAAU of C-controlled and would provide incentives to wean the wayward sports back to the fold. Hockey entrepreneurs seized the moment to create the National Hockey Association, a declared professional hockey body and forerunner of the National Hockey League.

The athletic war in Canada was a very significant conflict in the history of Canadian sport because the war so firmly re-established the pure amateur ideal in Canadian sport. Unlike the NYAC/AAU of US situation, the usurping pretender to the amateur crown, the MAAA, did not bring significant change. The resolution of the war merely served to embalm and enshrine an outmoded amateur ideal. Amateurism was being pushed uphill against the twentieth-century direction of sport in general. The issue brought to a head by the MAAA was one of peaceful co-existence with professionalism; had the MAAA and the AAF of C elected to govern professional sport instead of tolerating it, the evolution of Canadian sport truly might have been altered. The 1908 Longboat protest issue brought the warring factions together by default; the AAF of C lost all credibility by Boyd's actions. Yet, because the Federation remained close-knit in Montreal, the result of the war was inevitable. The CAAU was masterful in its quest for national support. Adherents of the old amateur ideology re-sold its virtues and were supported by a parallel Olympic ideology. None of the problems in Canadian sport was solved by resolution – the victory was Pyrrhic. Great Britain, the United States and Canada each confronted, wrestled with and embraced the idea of amateurism between 1870 and 1910. In Canada, the athletic war was a significant conflict that brought sport to the brink of development beyond nineteenth-century ideals.

*University of Western Ontario*

#### NOTES

1. See, Arnold W. Flath, 'A History of Relations Between the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the Amateur Athletic Union of the United States (1905–1963).' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1963), pp.26–35.
2. Howard J. Savage, *Games and Sports in British Schools and Universities* (New York, 1928), p.195.
3. Howard J. Savage, *American College Athletics* (New York, 1929) p.46.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Savage, *Games and Sports in British Schools and Universities*, pp.194–6.
6. *Ibid.*, p.196.
7. Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York, 1978), p.31.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.31–32, and Savage, *Games and Sports in British Schools and Universities*, p.198.
9. Savage, *American College Athletics*, p.37.

10. Ibid.
11. This point is amplified in *ibid.*, p.49.
12. Cited in Keith L. Lansley, 'The Amateur Athletic Union of Canada and Changing Concepts of Amateurism' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1971), p.17.
13. Constitution and By-Laws of the Montreal Pedestrian Club, (Montreal, 1873), p.8, brackets and emphasis mine.
14. See Frank Consentino, 'A History of the Concept of Professionalism in Canadian Sport,' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1973), pp.28-36, for a full discussion of ethnic amateur exclusion in Canadian Sport.
15. Lansley, 'The A.A.U. of Canada', pp.26-9.
16. *Toronto Mail*, April 12, 1884, cited in Consentino, 'The Concept of Professionalism,' p.120.
17. Lansley, 'The A.A.U. of Canada', pp.30-31.
18. Consentino, 'The Concept of Professionalism' pp.134-5.
19. *Ibid.*, pp.146-75.
20. *Ibid.*, p.176.
21. Lansley, 'The A.A.U. of Canada', p.57.
22. *Ibid.*, pp.62-4.
23. There were eleven national sport governing bodies in 1901, only two of which, the Amateur Skating Association of Canada and the National Amateur Lacrosse Union, were affiliated with the CAAU.
24. Respective trophies for these three sports were the Stanley Cup, donated in 1893, the Minto Cup, donated in 1901 and the Grey Cup, donated in 1909.
25. Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Governors of the CAAU, 1901-05.
26. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1904, pp.124-5.
27. *Ibid.*, 13 August 1903, pp.116-17.
28. *Ibid.*, 3 September 1904, pp.141-4. The concession would have been attractive just on a short-term basis since athletes requesting reinstatement were required to pay the CAAU expenses in reinstatement investigation. *Ibid.*, p.127.
29. *Ibid.*, p.141.
30. *Ibid.*, 26 June 1905, pp.149-152.
31. The reasons for the concession were aligned with costs, public interest, professional precedents in Ontario and the desire to be competitive with Ontario teams. *Ibid.*
32. Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the CAAU, Montreal, 16 September 1905, pp.40-43.
33. *Ibid.*, Montreal, 27 October 1906, p.3.
34. Minutes of the Meetings of the Directors of the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association, Minute Book Number 7, 21 November 1904, pp.17-18.
35. The Canadian Lacrosse Association declared its professionals and was not affiliated with the CAAU.
36. MAAA Minutes of the Semi-Annual Meeting, 20 November, 1905, p.133.
37. MAAA Minutes of the Meetings of the Directors, 20 April 1906, p.193.
38. President Buchanan even pressured, without success, the 12 dissenters to alter their vote in order to be able to publish the decision as unanimous. *Montreal Daily Star (MDS)*, 30 April 1906, 2.
39. *MDS*, 21 April 1906, 22 (my brackets).
40. *Ibid.*, 30 April 1906, 2.
41. *Ibid.*, 27 April 1906, 2.
42. *Ibid.*, 21 April 1906, 2.
43. *Ibid.*, 4 August 1906, n.p. Single wagers of 75 dollars were covered on bets pertaining to whether or not a certain player, such as Howard or Hoobin, would be ruled off during the match.
44. *MDS*, 8, 11, 12 and 14 September 1906. The 14 September 1906 article is filled with arguments concerning the perceived benefits of the concept of amateurs playing with and against professionals.
45. *Ibid.*, 31 October 1906, 2. A motion to expel the MAAA was put on the floor of the 27

- October 1906 annual CAAU meeting, but no seconder was found. *Ibid.*, 29 October 1906, 2.
46. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1906, 2.
47. *Toronto Globe*, 5 November 1906, 8.
48. *MDS*, 6 November 1906, 10. The MAAA was careful to point out the concession to allow amateurs to compete with or against professionals without losing their amateur status was the only change to the CAAU amateur definition and that professional athletes playing for the MAAA would be paid for their services, but would never be entitled to club membership or MAAA privileges.
49. *Toronto Globe* 10 November 1906.
50. *Ibid.*, 16 November 1906.
51. *MDS*, 8 January 1907, 6.
52. *Ibid.*, 2 February 1907, 12. Both the Toronto and Montreal races were held on the same day. The Toronto races paled in comparison while those in Montreal attracted US amateur and professional skaters. *Ibid.*, 4 February 1907, 6.
53. *Ibid.*, 28 January 1907, 3.
54. *Ibid.*, 1 February 1907, 3.
55. *Toronto Globe*, 4 February 1907.
56. The term 'athletic war' was used frequently in the primary sources.
57. Lansley, 'The A.A.U. of Canada', 68.
58. *MDS*, 18 February 1907, 3.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, 12 November 1906, 1, and 7 May 1907, 11. This unfulfilled allegiance was due to the problems the Maritimes were encountering in commercial baseball leagues while trying to maintain strict amateurism.
61. Annual Report of the CAAU, 1908, 48.
62. For example, 11 March 1906, 8.
63. *Toronto Globe*, 2 April 1907, 8.
64. *MDS*, 29 April 1907, 3. If the Federation had elected to govern professional sport, there is no question that the organization of Canadian sport would have been altered radically.
65. The MAAA fencing team was allowed to register as the Montreal Fencing Club with the CAAU, for example. *Ibid.*, 11 March 1907, 8. For the Ottawa July sports festival, MAAA athletes were to be allowed to compete unattached, but not under MAAA colours. *Ibid.*, 26 July 1907, 3.
66. *Ibid.*, 29 April 1907, 3.
67. *Ibid.*, 27 July 1907, 25.
68. *Ibid.*, 25 July 1907, 3.
69. *Ibid.*, 12 March 1907, 3.
70. *Ibid.*, 30 July 1907, 3.
71. *Ibid.*, 31 July 1907, 2.
72. *Ibid.*
73. *Ibid.*
74. *Toronto Globe*, 2 August 1907, 7.
75. *MDS* 27 August 1907, 2.
76. *Toronto Globe*, 16 September 1907, 7. The *Globe* reported verbatim the minutes of the 24th annual meeting of the CAAU. These minutes have been lost in the papers of the collection of the Amateur Athletic Union of Canada.
77. Minutes of the 25th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 9 November 1908, 4. By November 1909, as the athletic war drew to a close, the CAAU boasted 1200 affiliated clubs and 75,000 registered athletes. Minutes of the 26th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 27 November 1909.
78. The annual reports of 1907, 1908 and 1909 all made direct, supported references to this policy and its success.
79. Letters were sent early in the CAAU campaign to all provinces soliciting support and adherence to its strict amateur principles. See, for example, the *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 13 October 1907.



80. *MDS*, 16 November 1907, 26.
81. *Ibid.*, 2 December 1907, 2, and Minutes of the 25th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 9 November 1908, 4-5.
82. *Ibid.*
83. *MDS*, 21 December 1907, p.28 and 19 December 1908, 26.
84. The *Toronto Daily Star*, 24 April 1907, contained extensive front page coverage of Longboat's victory parade in Toronto where Longboat was training under Tom Flanagan of the Irish Canadian Athletic Club.
85. *Ibid.*, 27 April 1907, p.20. The AAU of US claimed the Toronto City Council award of 500 dollars' 'worth of education' made Longboat a professional.
86. *MDS*, 24 July 1908, 3.
87. *Ibid.*, 9 July 1908, 2.
88. Minutes of the 25th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 9 November 1908, 7.
89. *Ibid.*, 8.
90. The *Ottawa Journal*, 24 July 1908.
91. Minutes of the 25th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 9 November 1908, 14.
92. There were rampant speculations on the reason for Longboat's collapse that ranged from knee injury to fatigue to the claim by the Canadian Olympic team manager, J.H. Crocker, that he had been given an excessive amount of a stimulant, perhaps strychnine. Crocker's report was reprinted in full in the *MDS*, 2 September 1908, 2.
93. *MDS*, 18 August 1908, 2.
94. *Toronto Globe*, 18 August 1908.
95. *Ibid.* Several times during the athletic war, the CAAU sought alliance with the British governing body of amateurism to counter the Federation's union with the AAU of the US. The British had no such articles of alliance.
96. *Ibid.*
97. *MDS*, 19 August 1908, 2.
98. *Toronto Daily Star*, 19 August 1908.
99. *MDS*, 25 August 1908, 14.
100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, 27 August 1908, 6. The *Star* quoted J.G. Merrick of the CAAU.
102. *Ibid.*, 8 September 1908, 6, and 9 September 1908, 2.
103. *Ibid.*, 1 September 1908, 2. The cartoon showed a very vexed person representing the public motioning two men towards the door of 'Dr. Sense, Anti-Foolishness Serum Inoculated.' The two men were in heated argument; one man symbolized the CAAU and was shouting, 'You shook hands with a man who knows a friend of a pro. The A.A.U told me - you are disqualified.' The other represented the AAF of C and was retorting 'I disqualify you for breathing the same air as professionals. The A.A.U. told me you did.' Mr Public stated, 'Will you gentlemen kindly consult this eminent specialist (Dr. Sense) as quickly as possible. I am very tired of this nonsense.'
104. *Toronto Daily Star*, 19 October 1908.
105. *Ibid.*, 2 November 1908, 11.
106. In short, excommunicated by virtue of Boyd's actions in the Olympic marathon. Cited in *MDS*, 21 April 1909, 2, and *Toronto Telegram*, 22 April 1909.
107. See, *MDS* 14 August 1909, 25, for an extensive review of the athletic war to that point, as well as *ibid.*, 2 September 1909, 2.
108. *MDS*, 26 April 1909, 2. These reinstatements were publicly popular and taken to be a secure sign of peace.
109. *Ibid.*, 23 August 1909, 3.
110. *Ibid.*, 7 September 1909, 2.
111. *Ibid.*, 10 September 1909, 2.
112. *Ibid.*, 29 November 1909, 3, and Minutes of the 26th Annual Meeting of the CAAU, 27 November 1909, 7-20.
113. *MDS*, 23 December 1909, 3.
114. Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Directors of the CAAU, 1 October 1909, 16-17. This A-B-C amateur definition corresponded to the prevailing Olympic amateur definition with the exception of the corollaries to part C. Minutes of the 2nd

- Annual Meeting of the AAU of C. 27 November 1911, n.p.
115. Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Directors of the CAAU, 1 October 1909, p.17.
116. Minutes of the 2nd Annual meeting of the AAU of C 27 November 1911, n.p.