

INTERVIEW WITH VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

Which Concluded the NBC-TV Documentary: --
"The Russian Sports Revolution"
Televised May 22, 1966

Q Mr. Vice President, as you have seen on the program, the Soviet Union has a consistent, unified attitude towards sports. Now, in the United States we seem to be fighting -- the AAU, the NCAA. Are we ever going to get a national attitude towards sports?

A Well, Sandy, there is, of course, a long-term conflict that has been waged between the Amateur Athletics Union and the National Collegiate Athletics Association, the AAU and the NCAA.

But even if these two great organizations were able to resolve their dispute -- and I think they will -- it still will not resolve the basic difficulty that we have in America in terms of placing proper emphasis upon amateur sports.

Q What's going to cause us to place proper emphasis on national sports?

A Well, first of all, I think we ought to keep in mind that Americans do like sports and we like sports activities primarily for the fun of it, for the joy of it. We also like to win when we go into competition. And in recent years we have, of course, found out that it's not as easy to win as it used to be.

In fact, as the show has depicted, the Soviet Union is picking up many of the gold medals and coming out with substantial victories.

Therefore, we want to win, but we want to do it within our system, with the emphasis upon private activity, voluntary activity, with the emphasis upon sports at the local level and not any central control at a governmental level, making sports activities in the United States a role of the Federal Government.

It is, however, sensible, it seems to me, that more attention be paid to the amateur sports field, and at the highest levels of government today there are those that are giving attention as to how we can improve the amateur sports activity program throughout the United States, how we can bring together the multiplicity of groups that we have.

I think we have over thirty different groups in the United States, voluntary groups, organized in the field of amateur sports. Now, they all go their own way. Seldom do they have any money, and frequently amateur athletes who were called upon to participate in international competition have no funds with which to travel. Or, if they are able to get to the point of competition, little or no funds with which to maintain themselves while they are there.

Now, this is an incredible situation for a nation as wealthy as ours. So we're going to have to do something about it.

Q Well, Mr. Vice President, without accepting the premise that it doesn't matter how you play the game, it's whether you win

or lose, the fact is the Soviet Union says -- and is quite blunt about it -- that this is a triumph for the Socialist revolution. It says that this matters internationally.

Now, have we accepted that? Do we buy that argument?

A Theirs, of course, is a state system. The state is in control. The individual is there to serve the state and not the state to serve the individual. They have an entirely different premise upon which they build their society.

Ours is a society of individualism, of individual freedom, freedom of choice. Ours is a pluralistic society. Theirs is a monolithic society.

Now, let's make it quite clear. We like to win the Olympics. There isn't any doubt about that. And we can have within our pluralistic, our free society, our democratic society -- we can have a national goal of winning Olympics.

I think we ought to be first in as many things as we possibly can, Sandy, and to win is no sin. In fact, to lose is sometimes unpardonable and inexcusable.

Q Mr. Vice President, the Olympics are only two years away. What, I am asking, is the Federal Government going to do now about it?

A Well, as I have indicated to you, the White House is giving very serious consideration right now to this whole problem

of amateur sports and how we can encourage considerable improvement in the amateur sports field. It isn't a matter of vast sums of Federal money. It is, however, a matter of organization and the obtainment of the necessary funds that the different organizations need from private sources.

It surely is also a matter of our private employers in this private economy of ours seeing to it that when a fine athlete is called upon to participate in international competition that he has his job rights protected, that he doesn't lose everything that involves his security in order to represent his country. We can manage this. We can find some answers.

But, Sandy, there's another problem that we haven't touched on in reference to amateur sports. Actually, let's take bobsledding. This is a fascinating sport. We have only one bobsled run in the United States that is of Olympics standard. Just one.

Q Why is it? Because it's a rich man's sport?

A Well, it's been called that. But this is a rich country. I mean if it is a rich man's country, this is one country in which it ought to flourish.

Then we have but one skating rink of Olympic size for speed skating. Terry McDermott, who was the Olympic medal winner, never had a chance to train really in an Olympic-size rink.

We have -- well, we have really given very little attention to some of the facilities that are necessary.

Really, what we need to do is to take an interest in what some people call these minor sports and which I think we are beginning to call underdeveloped sports.

Q Which the Soviets win in?

A Yes, in which the Soviets come out with all of these medals. And I don't want to downgrade this performance. As a matter of fact, what the Soviets are doing is a challenge to us, just like Sputnik was a challenge to us; and we met that challenge of Sputnik and we met it by going ahead at the local level, at the state level, at the Federal level, at the private level, and saying we have to do something about space exploration and research.

Now we are just going to get cleaned in every one of these international competitions. We are going to be humiliated as a great nation unless we buckle down to the task of giving our young people a chance to compete.

We have got wonderful young people. They are the healthiest young people in the world. And, by the way, our women -- we ought not to be satisfied with just having the most beautiful women in the world. We also ought to have active women. But ordinarily when women participate in intramural sports activities or amateur athletics, they are looked upon as not being --

well, in the "in" group. Well, let's make athletics a part of the "in" group.

If the Soviet Union, a socialist state, can be competitive, I want to know what's happened to a free enterprise country that's supposed to be competitive. We ought to win every competition. We live on competition. This is our whole way of life -- individual competition. We brag about it. We praise it. We almost worship competition when it comes to business.

Now, what about having a little competition when it comes to sports?

Let's have every county in America -- or if you don't want it on a county basis, the size of certain cities, 15 to 25,000, 25 to 75,000, different groups -- organize their own kind of junior olympics, and let's go to bat. Let's see what we can do. Let's get everybody into the act.

That's the way we produced a great economic system, by vast numbers of participants. That's the way we produced a great agricultural system, by millions of farmers.

And that's the way we are going to produce a great athletic program in America, by wide participation and knowing what we are competing for and knowing what the sports program is all about.

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MR. VANOCUR: Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President.

You have been listening to the Vice President of the United States, Hubert H. Humphrey, discussing how the United States can meet the challenge of the Russian sports revolution.

Jim Simpson was in Moscow.

I am Sander Vanocur saying good evening for NBC News.

THE FIRST POINT:
AMERICANS LIKE SPORTS FOR
FUN NOT JUST FOR OLYMPIC
PRIZES

Sandy, let's make 1 point clear at the outset: The U. S. isn't going to re-make amateur sports just to win Olympic prizes.

We Americans are not going to imitate Soviet dictatorship. We do not believe that sports are "an instrument of the State" to be used to regiment "the masses." We do believe in a private, amateur -- I EMPHASIZE genuinely AMATEUR -- sports. We would like every American -- boy or girl, man or woman -- to reach highest individual potential. That means developing mind, body, character, skill. But for what purpose? For fun, for enjoyment, for leisure, for the excitement of wholesome competition. Yes, for the pleasure of doing one's best -- and winning if possible.

THE SECOND POINT:
WE ARE GOING TO MAKE A NATIONAL
DECISION TO COME UP WITH A
"NATIONAL ANSWER"

But we don't like to lose. We don't
have to lose. We can win. We will win.

I can assure you that THE WHITE HOUSE
IS GIVING VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO
THE PROBLEM OF HOW AMATEUR SPORTS IN THE
UNITED STATES -- CAN BE ENCOURAGED TO MEET
THIS PROBLEM.

President Johnson is determined that
the American people shall be physically fit
-- that Americans shall be a vigorous,
strong people and that the world will
respect us for our vigor. He is well aware
of Communist propaganda, charges and claims

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THE THIRD POINT:
WE ARE GOING TO PATCH UP THE
FAMILY QUARREL IN AMATEUR SPORTS

An outstanding group of 5 private citizens is hard at work to end the feud between the Amateur Athletics Union and the National Collegiate Athletic Association.

Solving the problem isn't easy. But I am hopeful that if any group can succeed, this group will -- by means of voluntary arbitration.

But EVEN IF the AAU-NCAA were to restore complete harmony tomorrow, that would ONLY remove a negative factor; it would not add greatly to our strength.

We need positive steps -- by all the sports groups, working together in fine teamwork.

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THE FOURTH POINT:
WE NEED TO RALLY EVERY GROUP IN
AMERICA WHICH CAN ADD TO OUR SPORTS
STRENGTH

America needs -- and is going to have--
a call for a supreme breakthrough in amateur sports.

Our strength is our diversity. We are not a centralized society. But this strength can also be our weakness, UNLESS we all pull together.

Our mass media can help rally our country (as television is doing so constructively by this very program.

American business, labor, church, fraternal, Veterans, outdoor and other groups can look at what they are now doing and can double and triple their effort.

BUT WE WILL NEED A NATIONAL VOLUNTARY PROGRAM -- PLAN -- AND THAT'S WHAT VARIOUS GROUPS ARE NOW PREPARING.

FUNDS We need money -- private money -- to support amateur sports. Of the over 30 governing bodies in various sports, many have virtually empty treasuries, many don't have a single full-time employee, much less a training program. They don't even have the funds to cover transportation expenses to send athletes abroad to participate in competitions. Imaginative new fund-raising is essential.

FACILITIES We need more, better Olympic-type sports facilities, such as for speed skating (For example, our Olympic gold medallist, Terry McDermott, had never trained in an official speed skating facility in the U. S. Why? Because there hasn't been a single one in the nation. In the whole U. S., there is only one bobsled run. We need more facilities, too, for cycling and other sports.

COACHES: We need many more highly-skilled coaches to train students in every sport, especially those which are "UNDER-DEVELOPED in our country such as:

-- women's gymnastics -- soccer
 -- canoe-ing -- water polo
 -- or a sport called "luge" (which is like tobaggon-ing, but which probably 99 % of our people never heard of.)

OFFICIAL Every Governor -- through the State Board of Education -- and every Mayor with the local school board -- will have to take a new look at physical education in our schools. We need to strengthen -- many fold -- in-school, as well as after-school -- training in competitive sports.

PARENTS In the final analysis, it is up to us as parents and as grandparents to help our youngsters achieve their sports potential.

ATTITUDE We need to develop a new appreciation of amateur sports --not just professional sports -- not just the glamorous sports with big gate receipts like football or basketball



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