

Professional versus Amateur Sports: A Short Comparative Analysis of Educational Values, Structure, and Impact

Victor MANOLACHI ^{1*}

Veaceslav MANOLACHI ²

¹ PhD habil., univ. prof. Cross-Border Faculty, “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati (Romania); State University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova; victor.manolachi@ugal.ro

² PhD, habil., univ. prof. Cross-Border Faculty, “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati (Romania); State University of Moldova, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

* corresponding author: victor.manolachi@ugal.ro

Abstract: *The issue of amateur and professional sports has been a subject of concern in the sports world for many decades, significantly influencing the careers of numerous athletes. It constitutes a fundamental question in the development of sport in the twentieth century. Despite the current practical solutions, attitudes toward professional sports remain complex, not only among officials and athletes but also within the academic community. The professionalization of Olympic sports has been a rather intricate process. A similar situation can be observed in Ancient Greece, where the history of the Olympic Games evolved in comparable ways. Although the ancient Olympic Games were, in many respects, different from the modern ones, a certain analogy can be drawn between the development of the ancient and modern Games in terms of addressing the issues of professionalism and amateurism. The peak period of Olympic complications in Ancient Greece falls within the so-called Panhellenic era (576–338 BCE). This was the time when professional athletes began to participate in competitions. The widespread view in the former USSR, which interprets the history of the ancient Olympic Games as evidence that professional sports pose a serious threat to modern global sports and the Olympic movement, is mistaken.*

Keywords: *olympic movement; amateur sport; professional sport; sports training; professional athletes; amateur athletes; social values; ideological attacks.*

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Introduction

First and foremost, the emergence of professional athletes historically coincides with the golden age of the Ancient Olympic Games, which continued for over a century. Secondly, the Games, in which professionals participated, lasted for nearly 800 years. The reasons for the gradual decline and eventual suspension of the Games are complex and are not directly related to professional sport in Ancient Greece. Rather, they stem primarily from socio-political changes in society: the weakening of the Greek economy, the reduction of state financial support for gymnasts, athletes, and the Games, shifting social values, and ideological attacks from the Christian Church, among others.

Public recognition and the tradition of honoring Olympic victors in their hometowns served as a powerful motivation for athletes to improve their athletic performance. This factor contributed significantly to the development of professional sport, a process further facilitated by the gradual transformation of the Olympic competitions—events that evolved into spectacles, with audiences increasingly captivated by the thrill of athletic rivalry combined with elements of brutality.

As Olympic sport acquired a professional character, it underwent a qualitative transformation: foreign athletes, usually professionals and individuals from lower social classes were allowed to compete, and winners began to receive monetary rewards. The professionalization of Ancient Greek sport was not an accidental phenomenon, but rather a natural consequence of political, economic, and social developments, as well as the internal evolution of sport itself. This thesis is, to a certain extent, supported by the history of modern Olympic sports in the twentieth century.

For many years, only the negative aspects of professional sport were acknowledged in our country, while its positive dimensions went largely unrecognized. In the context of Ancient Greece, professional sport not only contributed to the spread of Greek culture beyond its borders, starting from the fourth century BC, professional wrestling competitions began to be held in the Ancient Near East, but also played a significant role in the development of global physical culture.

Main Objective: This article analyzes the distinctions and interactions between professional and amateur sports, highlighting differences in approach, values, and social impact. The aim is to clarify the role of each type of sport within society and to explore how they complement one another.

Nature of the Analysis: Theoretical: The study examines fundamental concepts (definitions, abbreviations, conceptual frameworks) and the values associated with professional versus amateur sport. *Empirical* (where applicable): Comparative data are included regarding participation, motivation, and public perceptions.

Primary Purpose of the Paper: to differentiate between professional and amateur sports by outlining their respective characteristics, objectives, and values; to analyze the social, economic, and cultural impact of both types of sports; to explore the ways in which professional sports influence amateur participation, and vice versa.

Research methodology

This paper employs a mixed-methods approach, combining theoretical analysis with empirical investigation:

Theoretical (Qualitative) Analysis: It examines existing definitions, classifications, and theories concerning professional versus amateur sport. *Conceptual Analysis:* Key notions such as “Professional Sport,” “Performance,” “Amateur Sport,” *health, socialization, pleasure,* and domain-specific abbreviations are explored in depth. *Systematic Comparison:* The study identifies similarities and differences between the two types of sport.

Empirical Research: Statistical data are presented, including figures on participation, funding, and popularity of professional and amateur sports. Concrete examples—such as sports clubs, events, and policy frameworks are analyzed. *Surveys/Interviews* (optional): The study may investigate the perceptions of athletes, fans, and policymakers.

Complementary Methods: Comparative Analysis: Evaluates structural and functional differences between the two forms of sport. *Critical Debates:* Assesses arguments for and against the professionalization of sport.

The paper is grounded in a solid theoretical synthesis, supported by empirical data, to offer a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics between professional and amateur sport. *The findings aim to inform sports policy and support the promotion of a balance between high performance and accessibility.*

The results obtained

The emergence of the coaching profession is closely linked to the personalization of sport, a process that led to improved training methods, enriched techniques for performing physical exercises, the development of athlete-specific nutrition plans, and the creation of therapeutic gymnastics. The professionalization of sport prompted the search for new training methods and technological aids. For instance, professional boxers began using the first training devices leather bags filled with sand of various

weights. The integration of professionalism into Olympic sports also led to the narrow specialization of athletes, which contributed to enhanced performance outcomes and increased the spectacle of competitions. Ultimately, professionalization played a significant role in elevating the importance of sport in society.

With regard to the modern Olympic movement, the search for a solution to the amateurism-professionalism dilemma, a challenge the movement faced like no other lasted for approximately a century. During that time, humanity replaced horse-drawn transport with modern vehicles, ventured into space, invented the internet and mobile phones, built and dissolved the socialist bloc, and managed to address this issue. The delay in resolving the problem cannot be attributed solely to the conservative attitudes of generations of International Olympic Committee (IOC) members or their desire to uphold the classical ideals of Olympism from Coubertin's era; the causes are far more complex.

The objective basis for the professionalization of Olympic sports lies in the fact that, at an advanced stage of athletic development, professionalism becomes a necessary condition for achieving exceptional results (Matveev, 2010; Vizitei & Manolachi, 2015; Manolachi et al., 2021, Platonov, 2015; Bulatova, 2011; Budevici-Puiu, 2020). Professionalization in sport is a natural law of its evolution, much like in other domains of human professional activity. Indeed, to keep pace with Olympic records, sport must begin to dominate the lifestyle of an Olympic athlete, initially as a significant source of income, and eventually as the primary one. Thus, even while upholding the ideals of pure amateurism, the leaders of the Olympic movement effectively paved the way for professionalism by consolidating the position of Olympic sport (Reid, 2020).

To be fair, despite the efforts of 19th-century aristocrats to separate professional and amateur sports, both share many features, as they represent different facets of the same global phenomenon, sport. While the role of professional sports in ancient times has already been discussed, modern professional sports have also made substantial contributions to cultural development. In Russian academic literature, professional sport was not previously recognized as a motivating factor in the emergence of the modern Olympic movement. However, it must be acknowledged that the development of professional sport at that time surpassed that of amateur sport. This also reflects the condition of amateur sport at the end of the 20th century. As early as the 19th century, Pierre De Coubertin remarked, "*true amateurism in France is still in its infancy...*". The contradiction between amateur and professional sport emerged even before the revival of the Olympic

Games, which is why it inevitably became the central issue in shaping the modern Olympic movement.

The main goals of the Olympic Movement were formulated by De Coubertin. More than likely, he could not assume that, by officially prohibiting professionals from participating in the Games, the Olympic Charter, if we analyze its text in detail, was opening the way for them. In the document it was stipulated that "the main purpose of the Olympic Movement consists in the fact that, through the activity of the elite (our emphasis - A.P.), it arouses the interest of public opinion, peoples and governments so that they provide the necessary means and possibilities for the participation in sports of the entire population" (Platonov, 2015). But the elite of the sport was and is made up of professional athletes. Thus, their participation in the Games, starting from the 80s, 20th century, is fully argued from the point of Olympic philosophy view.

The official demarcation of amateur and professional sports in the Olympic Movement took place at the International Congress for the Study and Propagation of Amateur Principles (Paris, 1894). The Congress, which founded the IOC and which renovated the Olympic Games, began its work by discussing the question of "Amateurism and professionalism", which, apart from being the first item on the agenda, occupied an important place in the work of the meeting. Of the 10 issues discussed, only three directly related to the "restoration" of the Olympic Games. The others were devoted to the contradiction between amateur and professional sports. In particular, the following aspects were discussed:

- determination of amateur status;
- can an athlete be professional in one sport and amateur in another?
- is it correct to maintain the distinction, from the point of amateurism view, in some sports events, especially in horse riding and shooting at moving targets;
- the value of art objects intended for prizes;
- can the general definition of amateur athlete be applied in all sports events?
- are bets compatible with amateur sports?

The list of questions demonstrates that the members of the IOC in its first composition had knowledge about professional sport. De Coubertin saw in the Olympic Games not only a revival of ancient ideals, but also a form and a way of self-expression of a wealthy person, for which the reason for sports activity lies in the joy caused by the harmony of movements, the festivity of competitions. Olympic sport is being reorganized as the best means of propagating such values as internationalism, the healthy way of

life, overcoming discrimination based on religion and race. These conceptions of Olympism were largely shaped by the image of English amateur sportsmen, who called themselves "gentlemen" and who considered sporting activities as hobbies and winning a prize as a distinction, but not as a means of existence.

The Congress adopted the definition of amateurism, which continued to have a great influence on the development of world sport. "Amateur is the one who has never taken part in competitions for monetary rewards, or for a prize that has material value, regardless of its origin, especially if this money comes from the sale of entrance tickets, the one who has not been in competition with professionals and who does not fulfil the function of a teacher or coach" (Budevici – Puiu, 2024).

Thus, Olympians were prohibited from fighting professionals, even as training partners. At the Olympic Games, the athlete could not be an amateur in one sport event and a professional in another. The adopted conception remained steadfast as long as aristocrats dominated Olympic sport.

The fact that the Constituent Congress failed to solve the problem of amateurism and that of professionalism was seen at the Olympic Games, ed. II (Paris, 1900). The organizing committee of the Games established, in accordance with the existing practice, monetary and material prizes for the winners in some sports events, primarily in those that, at that time, were on the professional development path (cycling, rowing, sailing, tennis, shooting). The reward amounts ranged from 50 to 1000 French francs. For example, the Doherty brothers from England received 500 francs each for winning the doubles tennis tournament. The fencers were divided into separate and mixed tournaments for amateurs and professionals. The protests of De Coubertin and those of his followers, who were fighting for the respect of the amateur status, were rejected.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the first attempt by the IOC members to revise the regulation on amateurism was undertaken in 1901. A more detailed discussion of the matter took place in 1909, when the proposal was discussed that each International Sports Federation (IFS) independently determine the status of the amateur in the respective sports event. Gradually, the question of amateurism was reduced to the admission of athletes to the Olympic Games. But, there have always been skeptics who questioned the Olympians' amateur status. In 1900, at the Olympic Games, 2nd ed., academician Marey managed, with the help of chronophotograms (advanced method in those times), to find that some fighters used prohibited procedures in amateur sports. The press also contributed to the creation of

public opinion regarding fake amateurism, which often publishes materials about the involvement of amateurs in stories related to money sums.

Attempts to introduce various systems for evaluating team results, using the results of the Games to strengthen national prestige or judging them in case of failure as a national tragedy (as happened in Russia after the Stockholm Olympics in 1912) gave birth to a new status of the Olympians. This situation recalled the development of the ancient Olympic Games.

De Coubertin (1913) felt that the positions of amateurism began to waver. It was obvious that the efforts, time and material expenses for achieving sports results at the Olympic level are too high, for an athlete, even a very capable one, to be able in his free time, on his own, to train and evolve, demonstrating the necessary results. In 1913, De Coubertin wrote: "Olympism gave birth to a special professionalism, which can be called patriotic. This was also known to the ancient Greeks... The growing Olympic enthusiasm, the honours with which the Olympic champions were rewarded, forced the athletes to ask their governments for important fund means for the formation and delegation of the Olympic teams to the Games... Will such maintenance of the athlete at the expense of the nation not open the door to all kinds of abuses? A real revolution in the world of sports is possible. Athletes under state insurance are neither professionals nor amateurs. They are soldiers" (Bulatova et al., 2021).

The period of transition from "pure amateurism" to "patriotic professionalism" proved to be rapid. If in Ancient Greece it lasted several centuries, then, for example, in the Republic of Moldova this stage occupied only few years.

The definition of amateurism was generally approved only at the IOC Congress in 1914. However, the next congress (Losanne, 1921) demonstrated that there was still a long way to go before the final solution of the problem. After a long discussion, Congress empowered the IOC itself to determine the status of the amateur athlete. Congress from 1925 (Prague) resumed discussion of the issue, allowing athletes to be paid during preparations for competitions (2 weeks). This decision generated dissension between certain federations and the IOC. Finally, in 1925 tennis was excluded from the Olympic program and the Football Association of Great Britain refused to participate in the 1928 Olympic Games.

The reason for taking that decision was the permission given to footballers by FIFA (1926) to receive salary compensation for the period of participation in the Games. Due to disagreements over the question of professional and amateur status, football was excluded from the program of the 1932 Olympic Games (Los Angeles).

In September 1930, at the IOC (Geneva) meeting, the Statute of Sports Reforms was approved, in which the increase in commercialization was mentioned. Participants in the forum introduced a ban on boxing matches, among amateurs, for prize money and adopted demarcations between an instructor for the sport and a professional. The instructor could be considered an amateur in all events except the one he was teaching. Mentioning the transformations taking place in Olympic sports, P. de Coubertin wrote in 1937 that absolute amateurism is not possible, and the main thing in Olympic sports is the sporting spirit, and not "the ridiculous English concept, which allows only millionaires to practice sports, deviating from dogma". But the disciples of the second president of the IOC Henri Baillet Latour (1925-1942) Z. Extreme (1946-1952) and E. Brundage (1952-1972) were followers of the Olympic Games for amateurs.

That is why the IOC continues to defend the amateur status. In 1947 a special commission (chairman E. Brundage) elaborated the definition of the amateur athlete, the essence of which is that the amateur is an athlete, whose sports activity is not related to obtaining fund profits. The 1995 IOC session confirmed this definition. But in 1957, at the session in Sofia, the IOC returns to this issue, introducing changes in the admission rules. It has been established that athletes will be considered amateurs if:

- participated in competitions for money or goods that are easily converted into money or for prizes greater than 40 US dollars;
- worked as paid coaches;
- received financial aid to secure the necessary equipment;
- received compensation for unsanctioned expenses;
- announced their intention to become professionals after the Games;
- abandoned the workplace in order to train for more than 30 days.

At the same time, after the Second World War, a qualitatively new stage begins in the development of world sport, which is characterized by the inclusion of countries with different political orientations in its sphere and the increasing role and importance of the Olympic Movement in the world. It is primarily about the USSR and the USA. As for our country, from 1946 to 1948 the national sports organizations became part of 11 FSI, in 1952 (the year of the USSR team debut at the Olympic Games) the representatives of 9 more sports events became their members (Vizitei & Manolachi, 2015).

The Second World War became a dividing line not only in the history of mankind in the 20th century. The new conditions after the war changed the conceptions of sport and Olympism. The idea that the Olympic

Games should be competitions between the world's best athletes is being heard more and more often. At the same time, it became immaterial that they were or were not amateurs. And although for a long time the question of preserving the principle of amateurism still persists as a central issue in Olympic sport, life itself has made the choice. According to Matveev, (2010) all this did not happen by chance or with bad intentions, but by force of objective legalities to obtain the highest sports results.

The political opposition of the two systems, which expected heroics from the athletes, the opening of new ways to the limit of human possibilities inevitably led to the professionalization of the sports activity of the Olympians, the pivot of which became the annual trainings and multiple daily trainings, fundamental means, as well as the numerous competitions. The process of professionalization changed the face of Olympic sport and served as the cause for the transition to early sports specialization.

In many sports events – sports and artistic gymnastics, swimming, figure skating, etc. - practicing sports started at the age of 4-6 years.

Professionalization has caused an increase in the material stimulation of amateur athletes (scholarships, prizes, fees for commercial starts, rewards for records and prize places). At the same time, it contributed to false claims about the amateur nature of the Olympic Games and the amateur nature of the Olympians' practice of sport. Such a situation contributed to the emergence of the "double standard" in the Olympic Movement, whose influence was felt in our country. The professionalization and commercialization that accompanied this process, together with the appearance of the young heroes of the Olympics (Juravschi; T. Casapu etc.) contributed, as a whole, to the increase in the age of the champions and prize-winners of the Olympic Games (Manolachi et al., 2021).

Under the pressure of some objective realities, the CIO had to give up, one after another, the positions. Serious changes in the evaluation of professionalism were required, so that some popular and spectacular sporting events, whose International Trade Federations far exceeded the IOC in solving the problem of professionalism, would not be mentioned outside the Olympic Games program. This fact would have led both to the decrease of interest towards them, and to the appearance of other large international complex competitions alternative to the Games.

Amateurism in sports was determined, in those times, according to the following criteria: independence from financial incentives; practicing sports for pleasure; not participating in "open" competitions with people who received money for it; the consent to reach the limits of its possibilities (Bogdanova, 2010).

A gap was introduced in the solution of this problem by the actions of certain FIS, who had a more radical view on it. Namely, tennis became one of the first sports that, at that time, was not included in the program of the Games and, therefore, had greater independence in solving this matter. On March 30, 1986, at the Federation Assembly, representatives of 47 countries voted to admit professional tennis players to all tournaments.

Gradually, a new conception of amateurism crystallizes. The intention to financially support performance athletes has manifested itself differently in certain countries. In the USA, Olympic athletes began to receive scholarships at the place of study. In the Federal Republic of Germany, the financing of the teams for participation in the 1972 Games was undertaken by the non-governmental organization "German Sports Aid"; in Scandinavia and the socialist countries, financial support was provided by the state.

These processes coincided with the advancement of professional input in Western countries. Actively obtaining resources from Olympic sport (in particular, victory at the Olympic Games authorized entry into professional sport), which in turn exerted an influence on many aspects of the Olympic movement, including the transformation of traditional Olympic values.

The main rules of amateur sports, continuing to remain in force, turned into an obstacle to the development of the international sports movement. E. Brundage proposed to put an end to the professionalization of Olympic sports by suspending the Olympic Games. He made this statement at the opening of the Sapporo Olympics in 1972 [0, p.98] with the change of IOC president (1972), some changes took place. The new leader, Lord M. Killanin, intended to prepare the conditions for solving this problem in the future.

Around the Olympic Games, 20th ed. in Munich (1972) it was clear that several significant problems regarding the rules of admission to the Games had gathered. The preparation and participation in the competitions, the sports uniform, the equipment required expenses that were no longer within the powers of the national Olympic committees and national federations, even more of the athletes. The 10th Congress (Varna, 1973) returned to discussing the problem of amateurism. The Congress recommended the IOC to review the approach of amateur and professional sports, to bring the so-called 26th rule closer to the realities of the time.

The position of the Congress contributed to the adoption by the IOC of a decision regarding the creation for each sports event of the Athlete Admission Code, elaborated by the respective federation. In this way the

rule no. 26 of the Olympic Charter was born: "To be admitted to participate in the Olympic Games, the athlete must comply with the rules of the IOC, the rules of the International Federation approved by the IOC, even if the rules of the federation are stricter than those of the IOC, not to receive fund rewards or other rewards for participating in competitions, except for the cases provided by the rule explanations".

In 1974, the 75th session of the IOC again introduced changes to the Olympic Charter: the "stipulation on amateurism" was replaced by the "stipulation on admission". More than 80 years after the adoption of the Olympic Charter, the word "amateur" was excluded from the text. Participants in the Games were allowed to receive, through the NOC, material support in the form of scholarships, food expenses, pocket money, salary compensation during absence from work. This decision nullified the claims made primarily against the Soviet and American athletes, because the former were supported by the state, and the Americans received a scholarship at the place of study.

With the election of H.A. Samaranch as the president of the IOC (Moscow, 1980), a new stage of rapprochement between amateur and professional sports began. In a. 1981, at the Session of the IOC Executive Committee in Baden-Baden (Germany), Samaranch stated: "We cannot risk, prohibiting the admission to the Olympic Games of athletes who have participated in continental and international competitions organized by international federations". A resolution was taken on the creation of a permanent commission for admission, which began to deal with the given problem.

In September 1982, the International Amateur Athletics Federation adopted a regulation on the creation, in addition to national federations, of funds for athletes. The athletes got the opportunity to win, but the money was not transferred to the athletes, but to the funds. Athletes were compensated only for their expenses, and the rest of the funds were intended for the development of the sport. This decision contributed to the formation of the sports elite and became a step towards the professionalization of not only athletics, but also world sports. Similar funds also appeared in gymnastics, skiing and other events. A special role was played by FIFA's decision, adopted in the early 80s, regarding the classification of players by age and skill level: professional footballers up to 23 years old gained the right to participate in the Olympic Games.

Table 1. General figures on participation, funding and popularity of professional and amateur sports in different regions (approximate data from public sources):

Sport	Participation (amateur)	Funding (professional)	Popularity (TV/online audience)	Examples of key events
Football	~300 million	~\$30-50 billions (global)	~4 billions (World Cup)	World Cup, UEFA Champions League
Basketball	~450 million	~\$10 billions (NBA)	~650 million (NBA Final)	NBA, EuroLeague
Tennis	~60 million	~\$3-4 billions (global)	~1 billions (Wimbledon)	Wimbledon, US Open
Athletics	~50 million	~\$500 billions (global)	~1 billions (Olympiad)	Olympic Games, World Championships
Rugby	~10 million	~\$5 billions (global)	~500 million (World Cup Rugby)	World Cup Rugby, Six Nations
Golf	~60 million	~\$1.5 billions (PGA Tour)	~500 million (Masters)	Masters, PGA Championship
Cycling	~50 million	~\$3 billions (global)	~300 million (Tour de France)	Tour de France, Giro d'Italia
eSports	~250 million	~\$1.5 billions (global)	~500 million (LoL World Championship)	LoL Worlds, Dota 2 International

Participation (amateur): Estimated number of people who practice the sport casually or organized at an amateur level. Funding (professional): Revenue generated from TV rights, sponsors, tickets, etc. Popularity: Maximum audience at major events. *Source: FIFA, Nielsen, Forbes, Statista reports (2022-2023).*

The new admission rules, with the preservation of the ban on receiving material rewards for participating in competitions, were applied in 1984 at the Games in Sarajevo and Los Angeles. At these competitions, professionals were allowed to participate in some sports events (football,

basketball, tennis and skating). At the 92nd session of the IOC (Istanbul, 1987) the decision was adopted on the admission to the 1988 Games of professionals in 5 sports events: tennis, football (up to 23 years), athletics, horse riding, hockey. At the Olympic Games, 25th ed. (1992), professional basketball players were admitted.

Professional and amateur sports are interdependent, but there are major differences in terms of funding, participation, and social impact. Here is a structural comparison:

Table 2. Structural comparison between Professional and amateur sports. Funding, participation, and social impact

Aspect	Professional Sport	Amateur Sport	Interdependencies
Purpose	Elite performance, high-level competitions, profit	Recreation, health, socialization, local competitions	Amateurs provide the talent base for professionals
Funding	Sponsors, TV rights, ticket sales, merchandising	Participation fees, public funds, local sponsors	Professionals inspire and attract investment in grassroots sports
Participation	Dedicated athletes, specialized coaches	Passionate participants, volunteer coaches	Amateur clubs train future professionals
Infrastructure	Modern arenas, top training centers	Public fields, community sports halls	Investments in professional sport help improve amateur infrastructure
Media Coverage	Global coverage, TV contracts, social media	Local events, regional channels	Success of professionals increases interest in amateur sport
Regulations	International organizations (FIFA, IOC, etc.)	Local associations, simplified rules	Professional standards influence amateur regulations

However, not all FIS and NOCs unanimously voted in favour of the professionalization of Olympic sport. At the Meeting of the General Assembly of the National Olympic Committees (1986), the majority of delegates voted for the revision of the Olympic Charter. Innovations that will lead to the discrimination of certain sports that do not enjoy the support of business, will destroy the ideals and values of Olympism, will turn the Games into a commercial show served as arguments. Some FISs continue to establish various barriers to professionalism. The word "amateurism" exists in the name of some federations (basketball, boxing, wrestling, cycling, athletics, swimming, etc.). For example, the International Amateur Boxing Federation established that the boxer who took part in matches of more than 6 rounds, cannot be considered amateur.

Towards the end of the 80s, the position of the IOC found expression in the statement that the best athletes must participate in the Olympic Games, regardless of whether they are amateurs or not. Restrictions on training funding were lifted and admission requirements were reduced to "respect for fair play, non-violence, adherence to the IOC medicinal code". The requirement for participants not to use their names during the Games and sporting results for advertising purposes was retained. One of the arguments regarding the adoption of the new rules was the increase in the sports level of the competitions and their spectacularity.

A special role in increasing interest in Olympic sports, its proximity to professionalism was played by television, which turned it into a commodity, the price of which suddenly increased after the admission of professionals. The increase in the cost of broadcasts has strengthened the role of television. The latter began to intervene in matters related to the program of the Games, the determination of the time regarding the beginning of the starts, etc.

Table 3. Differences and Similarities between Professional and Amateur Sport

Aspect	Professional Sport	Amateur Sport	Similarities
1. Purpose	Maximum performance, winning competitions, profit	Recreation, fitness, socialization, hobby-level competition	Both involve competition and the desire for improvement
2. Funding	High income (sponsors, TV, tickets, salaries)	Low budgets (participation fees, public funds, small sponsors)	Both require financial resources for organization
3. Participation	Dedicated athletes, intensive training, strict schedule	Occasional participants, flexible training	Involves passion for sport and regular training
4. Competitive Level	High pressure, world-class standards	Local competitions, non-professional priorities	There is a desire to win and develop
5. Infrastructure	Expensive arenas, top equipment, advanced technology	Public fields, accessible equipment	Need for spaces and tools for practice
6. Media Coverage	Global coverage, huge audiences, media contracts	Local visibility, small social networks	Dedicated communities that follow the sport
7. Rules	Strict regulations, anti-doping controls	Adapted rules, less formal	Adherence to common standards (e.g., FIFA rules)
8. Social Impact	Major cultural and economic influence	Community ties, health promotion	Sport as a tool for social cohesion

Today, when enough time has passed since the adoption of the decisions regarding the professionalization of the Olympic Movement, the following questions must be answered: What have these decisions given to world and national sports? What influence did they exert on the development of the Olympic Movement? Has the proximity of Olympic and professional sports contributed to their joint progress?

Let's remember that Olympic sports adapted very quickly to the admission of professionals. A few years after the decision of the IOC,

historic for the whole sport, discussions on this topic stopped, and the fight for the ideals of Olympism was transferred to another area: the issues of fair play, those of objective refereeing, the fight against doping, those regarding Olympic education, etc. became paramount. Olympic sport, becoming professional, was able to keep, basically, all the values of Olympism, which attract people like a magnet. The Olympic Games did not turn into a commercial show. They continue to remain the grandest sporting celebration of Dombrowski (2020).

The progress of the Olympic Movement, after the admission of professionals, can be observed according to several criteria. It increased the number of sports events and sports disciplines, the number of countries and athletes, there was a significant expansion of the Women's Component of the Games program, the improvement of sports equipment and inventory, the intensification of the incandescence of sports fighting (a fact demonstrated by multiple Olympic and world records), the increase of the number of countries, whose athletes win medals. In connection with the separation of the Games into summer and winter ones, the intensity of the competitions, starting with 1992, increased 2 times. This increased interest in the Games. At the same time, we cannot fail to notice another detail: commercial professional sport activates its role in Olympic sport by dictating and enforcing its own rules (Mahoney, 2007).

The hockey regulations at the Salt City Games (2002) can serve as testimony to what has been said. In order for the legionnaires to participate in the Games, the League suspended its championship. However, the permission to participate in the Games referred only to hockey players from the USA, Sweden and Finland. The athletes who were part of the selected teams of other countries had to agree with the administration of the clubs. As a result, the Slovenian national team found itself without several athletes, and failed to reach the quarterfinals of the Games, while in 2000 had placed the second in the world championship.

Conclusions

The participation of professionals in the Olympic Games has increased the material rewards of Olympians, including Moldovans. Since 1992, there has been a steady increase in cash rewards.

Amateur sport is the basis of professional sport, providing talent and dedicated communities.

Professional sport provides resources and visibility, which can be reinvested in the development of grassroots sport. Public and private funding play a crucial role in maintaining the balance between the two levels.

But the professionalization of Olympic sport also has negative aspects. Thus, the leaders of the national teams and federations clashed with the problem of forming the selections for participation in the Games, because the professional clubs were mostly not interested in allowing the leading players; some professionals began to refuse to participate in the Games, being afraid of injuries and the decrease of the rating in case of failure; the sporting value of certain sports (basketball) has depreciated.

Major Differences between Professional and Amateur Sports:
Purpose (profit vs. recreation) Resources (massive funding vs. limited budgets) Level of involvement (full-time vs. hobby)

Key similarities: - competition and progress (both pursue performance, even at different levels) - passion for the sport (from amateur to professional, motivation comes from love for the game) - role in society (promoting health, education and team spirit) - amateur sports are the foundation of professional sports, providing future talent and supporting a healthy sports culture. At the same time, professional sports inspire amateurs and bring resources to the entire ecosystem.

The professionalization of Olympic sport exerted a strong influence on the development of world sport. The decision to admit professionals to participate in the Olympic Games radically changed the attitude towards professional sports and served first as the reason for its official recognition, then as one of the important factors in the stabilization and development of commercial professional sports.

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