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## Seven-Inning Baseball?

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Not the first time the topic is approached, and by the same person, because the chairman of the World Confederation of Baseball and Softball, Italian Ricardo Fraccari has been long pleading for changes in the rules so that, baseball especially becomes more attractive in countries where is not practiced regularly, and stays in the official program of the Olympic Games.

After appearing uninterruptedly since Barcelona-1992 until Beijing-2008, this sport will return to the Olympic games of Tokyo-2020, but Fraccari wants it to stay for good. Fraccari has considered vital the introduction of a few changes to do it more attractive and especially, shorter in time-consuming.

He insists, and he is certainly right about it that the dynamics of current times is that the youth worldwide is not willing to spend more than three hours watching a ball game, when at the same time other sports are on.

That is the main reason for which he has promoted changes, and the most polemic and radical is to downsize the baseball to seven innings.

Purists fall off their seats, but the question here is to be or not to be. Do we prefer to respect rules but remain on the sidelines of the Games? Those who wish to be in the Games must adapt, and the most radical measure is in fact the one of reducing innings.

In his condition as member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Fraccari realized that doping cases or the lack of the most upper-class professionals was not a big problem, because that also affects other sports. However, in a board of European majority, from countries that don't play baseball massively, the time used is a key factor. Also, other sports have made important modifications to their rules, but not baseball, and that is also seen as an expression of willing to adapt.

On the other hand, baseball keeps the same rules of its origins, and the little changes done to shorten the time of

the game (base on balls with a pitch, chronometer for pitchers, etc.) have not produced a remarkable change in the duration of matches, as it would certainly do to play only seven innings.

I particularly like baseball as it is, but as I mentioned at the beginning, it's to adapt or die, and I'd rather like the Olympic tournament to be played to seven innings, before none is played. Boxing has different rules in its Olympic style, soccer has age limit, basketball also modifies its rules regarding professionals, however, they are included in the Olympic Games, and it's enjoyed with its variants.

Baseball could do it too, and keep these regulations only for the Games and its classificatory tournaments. In the end, statistically most challenges are decided before the eighth inning, although to the eye what's left are the spectacular plays of the ninth inning, or beyond.

It would be a remarkable change, actually, but less traumatic than the other variants on the table, as to leave the count in two strikes and three balls, or similar proposals.

It's to be or not to be in the Olympic Games, and I'd rather be, although that's the price to pay for it.

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