
Artists and Athletes, Beware of Claws, Even your Own

By: Victor Joaquín Ortega / Special for CubaSi

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Rolando Pérez Betancourt expressed in Granma newspaper, in relation to the premiere of Avatar in 2010: «But will this cinema be the one that comes at us in overwhelming numbers from an industry that has always defended the concept that making movies is business, show, tickets sold-out, money, a lot of money...? and afterwards everything you want, including art». That has not changed in its core, although we must not deny the role of not a few true creators, themselves wounded by the business. How different from our Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry! Art above all else since its beginning.

Rolando's analysis can be applied to another creative, forging, popular field: physical culture, damaged at the base and at the top in physical education and recreation, hindered by pocket differences, racism, machismo, and commercialization, with knockout punches in the competitive side. Its tournaments, without leaving Olympism intact are also used to torn, sicken the conscience of participants and followers, increase the differences between developed and underdeveloped countries, the vast majority of the former living at the expense of the latter and imposing muscle theft at the height of brain theft.

Pierre de Coubertin stated, regarding the great event in 1925: "...it would be very childish to believe that the ancients did not care about the prosperity engendered by the Games and that the movement of traffic around Olympia did not interest them." But he opposed mercantilism "that threatens to invade sports circles" and to prioritize the show, logical, and unfair facts, "...as sports have developed within a society that threatens to rot the very core because of the passion for money» (1894).

In 1912 he revealed the damage that "...luxury, its vulgarity..." would inflict on the competition, since "it would make it sterile and would only tend to disable the forces of the average type and make social contrasts more irritating. More simplified and mediator organizations at the same time, fewer celebrations and above all more intimate and more frequent contacts between athletes and leaders without politicians and opportunists to divide them.

Communist Julio Antonio Mella coincided with the outstanding humanism in several of these aspects when he published in the Mexican newspaper El Machete (10-23-1927): «Anyone who cannot pay because they aren't millionaire or rich, or in a comfortable position content with watching of great athletes. On the other hand, the great boxing matches and soccer or baseball matches can compete as a commercial power, with any business in a banana plantation or even in an oil field.

In 1919 the rescuer of Olympism said: "...athletics renewed in the nineteenth century has long been nothing more than the pastime of rich and semi-idle youth. Our (Olympic) Committee has fought harder than anyone else to make it the usual pleasure of petty-bourgeois youth and now it must be made fully accessible to the proletarian adolescent. All sports for everyone. This is the new formula in a utopian way and to whose vision we must devote ourselves». In 1928 he adds: «there's nothing to reject in cooperative tendencies (...). I have seen with joy the workers' organizations instructing themselves in the Olympic ideal».

In Cuba, after the victory of the revolution, we turned sports for all into the most advanced slogan followed to the letter, especially by the masses. Despite the blows from the blockade, the collapse of a sister field of so much weight in the progress, and internal errors, it still stands tall. However, we must find ways on a stranded planet where physical culture is torn apart by an anti-human system. Sports family must take into account the current situation and that unhuman offensive of perversity, grown from the U.S. siege and its external and domestic allies.

With a sense of the historical moment and the necessary change of everything that must be changed — Fidel, thanks again— the branch is struggling in a very difficult time when blows are felt. In so many places, in so many souls. Let alone think about ignoring the essence of what we build: love for your country fellow, solidarity, internationalism, social justice... Remuneration, contracts have been welcomed from the viewpoint that sport is a profession like engineering, painting, mechanics, teachers, medicine... Of course: everyone should receive what they deserve for their achievements. No to unjust egalitarianism: fairness.

Being professional is not the same as professionalism with its goal of profit. But in a very deterred environment it's essential to vaccinate the spirit of those who walk through it. Coaches must know how to form their disciples beyond speed or endurance. Let's remember that Martí also warned: in life you have to do many times like the long jumper: go backwards to gain momentum and go forward. I say on top of that: we must be careful of those who want to stay behind or drive the spikes to the right. Feet on the ground does not mean soiled wings.

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