



On The Corinthian Spirit: The Decline of Amateurism in Sport

D J Taylor

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In January 1929, before 20,000 spectators, Norwich City of the Third Division South went down 0-5 in the third round of the FA Cup to an amateur side composed of ex-public school boys who disdained professional tactics in favour of instinct and teamwork. Within a decade, the Corinthians, the club that for forty years had supplied the entire English national side, had all but ceased to exist. The world was changing. By the time of the last 'Gentleman vs. Players' cricket match in 1962 a whole era in English sport had come to an end.

But the passing of amateur sportsmen - footballers, cricketers, golfers, tennis players - had implications beyond the playing field. A century ago 'amateur' was a compliment to someone who played a game simply for love of it. A hundred years later it is a byword for cack-handed incompetence. In this brilliant study of the patterns of sporting and cultural life, D J Taylor examines the process that led to professionalism's triumph and the long rearguard action fought by sportsmen - and literature - on amateurism's behalf.

On the Corinthian Spirit has many heroes - from 'Charlie Bam', the legendary Corinthian defender, who once played a game with a broken leg, to the boys' school story hero Strickland of the Sixth, Old Etonian cricket-lover George Orwell and the 14th Norwich Cub Scout XI of the early 1970s. Drawing on his own experiences of 'amateurism', D J Taylor describes a changing moral universe with profound consequences both for sport and the world beyond it.

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