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On with the game

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ON WITH THE GAME!

BY

A. F. S. TALYARKHAN



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This publication is only a token response to the coaxings of many kind friends who have always wanted me to write *books* on Sport. But in this little book I have done no more than reproduced—and somewhat revised—several of my contributions, which apparently attracted much attention at the time, and which, I am told, still occasion interest, and my only object in presenting them under one cover is the hope that they may help to while away an odd hour.

Much of what appears here has seen the light of day in the columns of newspapers, magazines and other publications to which I have had both the pleasure and privilege to contribute from time to time and my thanks for the permission to reproduce them are due to—

The Sunday Standard
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A. F. S. T.

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1. BRAIN OR BRAWN ?

True, there was a time, now almost forgotten, when it was said even of Kipling that 'he poured out his soul on the oaf in the goal and the flannelled fool at the wicket....'

Those were the days when tennis was a *casus foederis* of every vicarage tea-party, when badminton was the swiping of a shuttle-cock with a battledore and when ping-pong was yet unmated to science to give birth to the lusty table-tennis infant of today. Yes, those were without doubt times when the playing of games was not the deadly serious business it is these days.

But a tremendous change has completely overcome sport and all that pertains thereto. Youth has taken a hand and that has been one of the chief reasons why most games have been speeded up to an extent that would have been considered impossible years ago. To combat this vastly enhanced tempo and to be able at least to keep up with the times, the playing of games now calls for a great measure of thought and scientific study. In fact the acute speeding up of almost all sports is in itself due to careful study—apart from the invasion of youth. It is now no longer a question of merely running or walking, or kicking or hitting or pushing a ball. The days when muscle alone counted are past ; it is now the day of intense concentration and study—a day when *brain* must control muscle, limb and wind. It should not be thought that I am merely outlining



the requirements of world champions. For active participation in everyday games, for the thorough enjoyment of these pastimes, it is now necessary to bring one's intelligence to bear on one's physical movements.

And can anyone hope to control one's body, to build up stamina, to learn anticipation and concentration, without using one's *brain*? I will even go to the length of stating that it is easier to pass the most difficult literary test than to master the numerous intricacies of modern sport. If there is one sphere of human activity and endeavour in which theory is one thing and practice is another—it is sport. An individual may have learned by heart every move and law of a certain game. But that is no indication of his actual sporting worth. He will have to apply a hundred different methods according to opponent, time, place, climate and many other eventualities. Surely adaptability to such conditions calls for the keenest intelligence, a quick brain, a body ready to respond to the indication of that brain.

A footballer is by no means good or even a footballer—just because he can kick a ball hard and true and far; rather will he be an asset, will he himself enjoy the game more, if he is able to control his kick, his pace and his movements to suit each particular occasion. Is it possible to do this without his mind being master of his muscle? Take the case of a fast bowler. What is he worth without a brain? But give him the power to think out his line of attack, to harness his physical prowess to his mental reactions according to the batsman facing him and you have a Larwood. Is a good batsman merely the product of sinewy muscle and a love for the game of cricket? Or will it be admitted that he has to co-ordinate footwork, temperament, anticipation, and scientific knowledge of swing and swerve with his ability to hit the ball hard and often? Is it possible that he can continue to play unless he has carefully thought out and studied all these matters? Can he think or study without *brain*? No! These pre-requisites have to be worked for

with every ounce of mental energy that it is possible to exert. It is the *brain* alone that can make one play these days—even for the sheer fun of playing. The vast majority of mankind has no desire to develop into Bradmans or Budes or Larwoods. The great majority of us can never hope to emulate the efforts of a Joe Louis, a Wooderson or a Jesse Owens. But the fact remains that we have to use our intelligence—our *brain*—if we are to indulge in any pastime if even for pleasure. Pleasure can only come with some measure of accomplishment and physical effort ; and neither can be achieved unless there is even a semblance of fusion between muscle and brain, between eye and mind, between brute force and intelligence.

But quite apart from games as they are played today, there is yet another side of participation in them that calls for intelligence. So great is the value of sport and games today that, in spite of the high technical knowledge involved, there is also the essential quality of true sportsmanship without which nobody can hope for anything from sport. Sport leads to other valuable contacts and associations more than ever in these days and the ability to play must also go hand in hand with the ability to 'play the game'. The ethics of sport are more often than not violated off the actual field of play than on, and it is here that only breeding born of intelligence can hope to win praise and honour. But even in the days of Kipling there was resentment shown at his outbursts and it would be fitting to recollect that

'There was violence feared
When his verses appeared,
But the poet was hardly a dreamer;
When the oafs in the mud
Came to look for his blood,
He was off to the Cape on a steamer !'

I have no intention of sailing.....

2. INDIA'S HOCKEY ON THE DECLINE

Over a hundred and fifty picked players were on view in Bombay in the course of the 1944 Hockey Championship of India. Eleven picked teams representing almost every corner of a country which holds the world title. But looking to the form displayed—of team and individual alike—I have formed the opinion that Indian hockey is definitely on the decline.. . .

I admit that it is hardly possible to assume that just because India has won the world's Championship twice



she should permanently have available players of the dazzling standard of past years. But I am not thinking in terms of a dozen Dhyani Chands ; I am just trying to work out how and why it is that the standard—the *all-round standard*—of play we watched in the last National Championship should have fallen

so comparatively low. Right up till five years ago we could have fielded at least three teams able to compete with a more or less equal chance for world honours. But today, although it appears that we would still be whacking the rest of them by a wide margin—I say this as there have been no signs of any country taking to this game as they do to most others—we have not a single combination that could put up a fight with such sides as the old Lusitanians, the Railways, the Bombay Customs or Tikamgar at their best. I am, mark you, comparing with past form, that

high standard of years ago when hockey was an art—and an Indian art at that.

I dare say that it might be possible to get together a really first-class Indian team today, given careful selection, training and sufficient practice playing together. But basing my observations on the last Championship and carefully watching players who must be the foremost exponents of the game in India today, I noted the standard of play, position by position, like this :

It looks as if nine out of ten of our *goalkeepers* have either never learned their job or else have forgotten all that they ever learned. There is complete lack of anticipation, faulty use of the stick when the pads should operate and *vice versa*. Then there is this new-fangled business of doing a sliding tackle every time an opposing forward is about to shoot or gets to within shooting distance. Very fortunately for the game, most Bombay umpires set out this year to kill this undreamed of method of defence ; but the fact that so many goalies adopt this procedure today is proof that eye, anticipation, correct footwork, is at a discount. Over and over again I saw this year that goalkeepers could only cope with an advancing forward by falling down and thus obstructing his path. The whistle has been going of late for numerous penalty bullies as a result of this unwarranted mode of defence and the sooner the horizontal goalkeeper is exterminated as a species the better for the game in the country. All in all, there is a tremendous falling off in this most important position.

Coming to the *full back* position, we still have, thank heavens, a Phillips, a Gentle, an Owen Ferreira. But apart from these outstanding deep defenders, how many full backs from the last Championship would any veteran selector even consider for what used to pass for a first-class Indian hockey team? For one thing, the *art of hard clearances appears to have vanished*. Full backs, *who should clear nine times out of ten as quickly as possible*, today join in the jumble that passes off as

defence ; *they push—and push—and push.* Where did they get this method from ? Watch Phillips today ; the masterly anticipation apart, there is *hard, immediate, well-directed contact between stick and ball.* Phillips judges in the twinkling of an eye whether he should clear and feed, or just clear. And his clearances bring instant relief to his sorely pressed team mates. Play is transferred to the other side of the field. How many of our full backs think of this these days ? Again, with the ball running favourably for his side, Phillips will play well up the field, *helping the pressure, leaving no gap.* All said and done, attack is the best defence, but the full backs of today only believe in stopping the man with the ball and invariably losing it to the next man who follows up his dispossessed colleague. Aslam, Abreo, and Nabi Shah of recent years have shone in this position. But today only Gentle of Delhi and Owen Ferreira of Bombay keep company with the great Phillips in this position.

In the *half-back* position, however, India still retains her high standard. *It is in this position that new stars are shining.* Throughout the last Championship the best talent—and the newest—was to be found in the half-back lines. Delhi, Central India, Gwalior, Bombay—all showed up well and if today Durga Prasad has gone off a trifle, we have Middlecoat and Chote Babu and, above all, Kailas of Gwalior. There are many others, too, who are first-class in this position but who did not find a place in the Championship teams ; Gama, Maxie, Vaz, and a host of the younger crowd.

In our half-back lines we do still see brain and brawn working together ; anticipation, interception, stick-work ; defence and attack and speed and wind. In the half-back line India has nothing to fear today. The old tradition has been well and truly handed down : it looks like holding for a long time.

Which brings me to the line of attack, to the *forward line.* Ah ! here's the ruddy trouble, the mess, the bag

of Indian tricks gone wrong ! Don't throw a Gurbachan Singh in my face, for I concede his class. True that old Pinto and Roop Singh still weave their way through a host of defenders. *True that Hakim and Munir are wizards of the stick ; but they are the last of that grand old school which had made a fine art of change of pace, of last-minute distribution, of delicate flicks of the wrist, of footwork which invariably had defence on the wrong foot, of shots at goal which left goalkeepers dazed as the umpire pointed to the centre of the field.* I say that the greatest decline in the standard of Indian hockey is noticeable in the forward lines of today.

Originality is at a discount ; you can tell the pattern a forward line is going to weave after watching a team for five minutes these days. The attack has become mechanical—forward run—push to the right—flick to the left. Either an attempt to break through by virtue of weight with speed behind it or else dodging round in circles. Wingers running down the line instead of cutting in, pure and simple sprinters who might as well be without sticks. Then think of Tellis ; a new generation of wingers will have to arise before we shall get anywhere in these outside positions.

As for shooting at goal ! This is almost forgotten ; one hardly ever sees a crack at goal, first-timers. Today's forwards want to walk the ball in to the goal. When I watch the forwards of today, I feel I want to ask them if they ever saw a Johnny Pinto, a Clive Milne ? To ask them if they ever heard of what a Nelson and a Cyriaco D'Souza did to the ball when they got in to the circle ? If these alleged attackers had seen that instantaneous flash of the stick and the ball behind the goalie, in the net, they would want to go away and play marbles. *For the future of Indian hockey, I sincerely hope they do.*

Even with good-as-ever half-backs and a mere handful of really first-class full backs, we see that the Indian attack has almost wilted, whilst at the other extreme goalkeepers prefer to lie down rather than stand up to

the ball. It is a strange picture which I see but it is not of my painting. Anybody who watches Indian hockey today and who has watched Indian hockey of the past will have to admit that *we are far behind the standard, the class which thrashed the world.* Combination is lacking; tactics are not worked out in the dressing rooms; goalkeepers do keep... *falling.* It is push and pant, not hit and run. It is now a story of body-work, obstruction, handing a man of the ball, *defending at all costs.* Scooping has become the last resort of players who have forgotten how to hit a ball hard and true. Surely we want half-a-dozen teams, world-beating outfits, not one? For that was the high standard of the past. That should be the ideal of tomorrow. . .

3. THE AMARNATH INCIDENT

No single event of recent years so profoundly stirred the mind of the Indian public as the enforced return of Amarnath to India whilst the 1936 cricket tour to England was in progress. As is general in matters which are likely to throw opprobrium on officialdom, efforts were made in many quarters to white-wash not only this incident, but all the then happenings in Indian cricket. It was urged that enquiry and publicity would lead to the washing of much dirty linen in public, and that such action was only likely to reflect on the fair name of India in the world of Sport. But no considerations of prestige, power, or position should have been allowed to inveigh against a thorough clean-out of what was at that time nothing but a cricket scrap-heap.

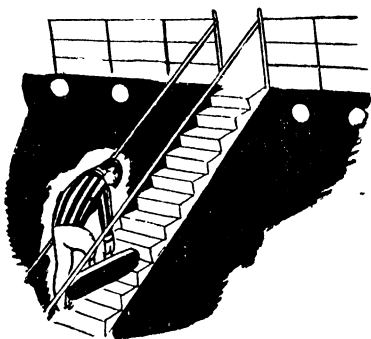
To only those who are given to the blind support of anything that smacks of royalty or social position did it appear that the all important question of the selection of the Captain and Manager was the right one. To the rest—to the vast majority of sportsmen in this country, if not also in England—it was evident from the very start that a foundation had been laid, so fragile and so insecure that not even would it bear the weight of the proverbial house of cards. That too many players were selected and taken abroad, was only a secondary matter. But the initial trouble was that the Maharajkumar of Vizianagram had never been anywhere near the front line of cricketers. That his pathetic mistakes on the field should be touched on would be to give him the credit of having expected something from one with a deep knowledge of the game. As for the Manager, it is of the utmost importance to note that nobody was willing to say how or why this ex-comptroller of an ex-vice-roy's household came to be appointed manager of a team of Indian Test cricketers. His cricket qualifications were

as great a mystery as his appointment and it was unfortunate for him that the mistakes he made had nothing to do with the actual cricket played. Had it been so, he would long since have been absolved of any responsibility. You cannot blame a man for something about which he knows nothing. The whole disaster, not gauged by the victories or losses only, was based on the clash of personalities—the clash of leaders who were not cricketers with cricketers looking for leaders.

No enquiry of any sort would have been or could be justified if the issue was only one of judgement of errors on the field. And the ignorance and colossal lack of knowledge of first-class cricket is one point on which public opinion must definitely acquit the Maharajkumar and the Manager. The Board of Enquiry that was set up could, therefore, only have come into being due to the pressure of the public which rightly wanted to know all about certain things reported to be deeper and more deadly than the unfortunate faulty placing of the field or the putting on of a bowler at the obviously wrong end.

The cause of Amarnath's dismissal is now history, but in a general survey of the many incidents that lead to this extraordinary incident, it is necessary to refresh our memories with what actually took place and whether there was some excuse for the loss of temper. In Amarnath's own words : 'When our first batsman went in I was told to be in No. 4 or 5, but Amarsingh went in No. 4. Then I went to the Captain and asked him when I was to go in. He replied that he did not know when he would send me in. Two others followed Amarsingh, and ten minutes before the end I was sent in No. 7. In the meantime, when one of the players asked the Captain why I was sent in so late, he replied that he wanted "faster scorers". I played out time and while undressing threw about my pads, etc. near my bag in the corner. I felt quite disgusted and talked to several friends in Punjabi. What I said was slang, but meant that I had

not wasted four years uselessly but had learned cricket. Similar slang has always been used without meaning any offence among Punjabi players. The Captain asked: "Are you talking to me?" I replied that I was not talking to anybody in particular.' There are numerous cases of loss of temper in the dressing room and almost every first-class cricketer must remember many occasions on which he has vented his feelings; but there is no single instance in first-class cricket where captains and/or managers have fallen over each other in their anxiety to enforce discipline by dismissal. Yet in the case of Amarnath an action was taken that has no parallel or precedent in the annals of cricket. It is singular that questions of discipline and prestige never crop up on the English village green nor on the maidans of India, but evidently only in an atmosphere where the true spirit of the King of Games was made subservient to the game of princes and potentates.



When the Board of Enquiry was mooted, it was pointed out in certain quarters that the disclosures would do Indian cricket no good and that the fair name of Indian sportsmanship would be dragged in the mud. *Was not the dismissal of Amarnath a disgrace to Indian cricket? Was that not in itself enough dirty linen? Why was it that only when it came to an investigation of all sides of the question that this plea was urged? Why was Amarnath made the scapegoat? If there were others who had erred they could also have been punished. Nor does the fact that one is a Captain or a Manager preclude such person from facing the music.*

Things have a queer way of leaking out and in time it was known that the words used by Amarnath were such as are repeated and laughed at in every teashop in India. There are many words in the English language not generally used in school-books but very often used by schoolboys which are referred to as 'good old English' ones, and Amarnath probably used a few 'good old Punjabi' words of which the Northern language is full to overflowing, as indeed, are all Indian dialects. I am sure that even the highest ecclesiastics must sometimes ease the mind by similar vocabulary when they top a ball on the fairway—good handicap notwithstanding. Amarnath had definitely stated that he was talking to nobody in particular. Why did the Maharajkumar in particular take such great offence at the words used? The Manager, an officer with probably extensive service in India, must have heard similar expressions countless times during his career.

At the time that the matter rested with the Board of Control and was therefore *sub judice*, it was up to those in charge of affairs to preserve a dignified silence and await events. It came, therefore, as a bombshell when it was learned that at the Surrey County Club Dinner to the Indian players, Lord Willingdon made open reference to the matter. And this when Amarnath was only two or three days out at sea. 'I have been in very close touch with all that is going on during the Indian team's tour here, especially with the Manager. I would like to observe with a full knowledge of all the circumstances, that the Manager was justified in taking the action he did. I think he was perfectly right and the matter now rests with the Board of Control in India to take what action they think fit,' said the ex-Viceroy, and in doing so set the seal on what seemed to be an unwarranted disclosure by the Manager of matters that he had no right to disclose to anybody, let alone one whose support might easily have influenced the future deliberations. The moral code of sport should know no distinctions

and though Lord Willingdon had taken much interest in Indian cricket affairs since his association with this country, the fact remains that he had certainly no official status in Indian Test circles. This disclosure by Brittain-Jones was worse than his handling of the dismissal of Amarnath and it is imperative that he should be condemned for this. Further, it is significant that the London cricket correspondent of *The Times of India*, one Sewell, should have been so certain of the fact that Amarnath was in the wrong, or rather that the step taken was right, that in support of this view he cabled on the 25th June (Amarnath still being on the high seas with *sub judice* as a cabin mate) : 'I am confident that nothing has been hidden from me.' Now if this was not another Sewellism, and together with the established disclosure to the ex-Viceroy, what conclusion is to be arrived at? It appeared that everything in support of the step taken by the Manager was to be had for the mere asking. Only Amarnath, *bound by his contract*, was to keep silent while all kinds of persons were enabled to say that the punishment did fit the crime! Since *sub judice* had already become a lopsided creature, then why did not the whole world's press have the story? Why was Bombay more or less left at the mercy of the news and views unfortunately emanating from a source distinguished for its cricket inconsistencies? If the case against Amarnath was clear and the matter was *sub judice* then why this indecent haste to tell India before he had even reached these shores?

Another important point that I commend to notice is the fact that the document testifying to the incident in the dressing room was signed by Prince Victor of Cooch Behar. What status had he in official Indian Test circles? What was he doing in the dressing room? Was his evidence considered important? Evidently it was, because we were again indebted to Sewell for the statement : 'I felt that the powerful evidence of a non-member of the team which I knew had been given in support of

the Captain and Manager was likely to clinch matters.' I say that this completely invalidates any evidence against Amarnath. He had admitted loss of temper and had explained his words. What more was needed and why?...

Although the Captain accepted Amarnath's apology and explanation, it is now a matter of cricket history that the decision of Brittain-Jones had to be upheld, with the result that Amarnath found himself an unwilling passenger on the *Kaiser-i-Hind* on the 20th June. In spite of several players pleading with the Captain to persuade the Manager not to take such an extreme step, and in spite of the fact that the Captain agreed to this, the Manager had his way. This dismissal was not final, because at that time the Manager is reported to have said: 'The matter now rests with the Indian Board of Control.' That several members, or all members—it is really immaterial—testified to Amarnath's outburst is beside the point. He himself admitted having lost his temper. On the 15th July came the welcome news that the Nawab of Bhopal had, under his emergency powers, sent the Manager a cable that from both statements Amarnath was certainly not deserving of the extreme punishment of dismissal for 'alleged insubordination and insolence'. I was further informed that the decision had been firmly worded. Every sportsman heaved a sigh of relief and it seemed that justice would be vindicated. The next day such belief was further consolidated by the publication of the news that Amarnath's return had been confirmed. It came, therefore, as a bombshell when it was known that after all Amarnath was not to rejoin his team. Who made that statement to the Press regarding his return? Surely a statement purporting to emanate from the President of the Board of Control could not have seen the light of day unless it had been sanctioned? If not, why did not Bhopal issue a disclaimer? The matter had gone so far that Amarnath's baggage had already been booked. Could this have been done unless he had been told that he was to return

and rejoin the team? Everything seemed set for one of those meteoric flights for which Indian cricketers were then becoming world famous. Then, suddenly, something went wrong.

A tremendous sensation was created at this time by the publication by a local paper of the rumour that the Nawab of Bhopal had received a cable from Lady Willingdon. Whether it was His Highness's birthday or not we shall never know, but I mention this because at that time even a revolution in Guatemala would have found its origin in the Amarnath affair. Twelve of the seventeen cricket associations, it was reported, were in favour of Amarnath's return to England. Somewhere developed a flaw that will have to be explained some day.

Sub judice having ceased to have any meaning or value whatsoever in the Amarnath affair, universal satisfaction was manifest at the time that the Lord Chief Justice of Bombay was to officiate as Chairman of the Committee. Owing to the fact that most of the players were in service of different kinds, it was agreed that nothing disclosed would ever find individual identification. But it was amazing that certain matters soon became common property and that the same questions were soon to be asked on all sides. Since the Board of Enquiry had not been appointed to deal with the actual mistakes said to have been made by the Captain on the field of play, it was obvious that matters of a personal nature were placed before Sir John Beaumont. This meant only one thing, that in spite of signed documents and inspired articles—lunches and dinners—glowing tributes paid to the Captain and of course curses slung at the English weather, *there was something radically wrong somewhere*. To give an idea of the lengths to which British hospitality and backing-up could go, only the words of Lord Zetland need be quoted. He talked of 'the splendid leadership of the Indian Captain who had such a perfect knowledge of the game'.

To come back to the point about the persistency with which people were asking the same questions over and over again, it may be of interest to repeat what they were. They read like a comic strip now ; at that time they were poisoned arrows.

‘Was Amarnath told not to “mix” with C. K. Nayudu ?’

‘Why did Nayudu suddenly stop talking to Amarnath ?’

‘What had cross-channel flights to do with cricket ?’

‘Was Nayudu ever openly insulted by any player ?’

‘On what performance was Baqa-Jilani included in the second Test ?’

‘Was Mushtaq Ali asked to run Merchant out ?’

‘Was Bannerjee, together with the tail-end batsmen, asked to get out quickly so that Jai would not be able to put up a good score that would make his selection in the Tests inevitable ? What did Bannerjee reply ? What did he do ?’

‘Why was Jai dropped ? Was he really incapacitated when he was reported to be on the injured list ?’

‘Was Jai a senior member of the team ?’

‘In what order of seniority was he presented to the King ?’

‘Was the same order of seniority borne in mind when he was asked to sign the document affirming confidence in the Captain ?’

‘What was wrong with Hindlekar’s eyesight ?’

‘What was the story regarding Meherhomji’s injured finger ? Was it attended to ? Who paid the expenses of injured players ?’

‘What was the Maharajkumar’s reply to Merchant’s request to relinquish the captaincy for a certain Test match ?’

‘Did Merchant apologize ?’

‘Would the Board of Control publish all cables and correspondence which passed between London and Bhopal regarding the Amarnath affair ?’

'Was it true what Sewell said about Amarnath (*Times of India*, 20th July) "nobody wants him"?''

'Was Amarnath told that if he did not leave the hotel he was staying at the time of the incident, he would be thrown out? Who threatened him with this action?'

'Did Amir Elahi give his evidence in Urdu? Who was the "oriental translator"?''

'Did the Indian team present the Manager with a gold cigarette case, duly autographed? If so, was this not a gesture of appreciation? If not, who gave it to him and who paid for it?'

'Who proposed Brittain-Jones as Manager?'

'Who voted for him?'

'Who proposed the Maharajkumar for Captaincy?'

'What was the majority?'

For many years to come the story of Amarnath's dismissal will be discussed and it will be many a long day before it is forgotten. But once and for all it is up to every Indian, whether cricketer or not, to see that no occasion arises for such a deplorable state of affairs as obtained at the time of the 1936 Tour. That wasn't cricket. . .

4. WHY NOT, MRS NAIDU ?

I am plunging most deliberately into another Naidu controversy. Only this time it has nothing to do with test matches or captaincy, but with the advice given by the Indian poetess to the girl students of the Benares Hindu University three years ago that *they should not play like boys*. Coming from so distinguished a quarter it is a matter of importance to all lovers of sport in India.

What are the games—what is the play—which the Indian girl indulges in today? Basket-ball, badminton, tennis, quite a bit of hockey, swimming, running, jumping, cycling and many other forms of athletics. Here and there, for a bit of fun more than anything else, cricket. Most of these games are played by boys ; not only that, but these are the pastimes which the whole world enjoys—men and women, girls and boys, old and young—black, brown, yellow, white and off-white. As the poetess did not define ‘play’ I think it is fair to infer that she was asking the Indian girl not to play these very games or indulge in such forms of physical exercise as they provide. I do not know of female Indian footballers, boxers, weight-lifters and I therefore take it that Mrs Sarojini Naidu would like the Indian girl to keep away from the important and pleasing pastimes which she is in fact taking to so rapidly today—the games that are played by boys.

According to the report of her lecture, the poetess said: ‘You should rid yourselves of the inferiority complex which is the bane of your life today. You must try for freedom side by side with men. We must develop individual freedom. We have the right to be unorthodox. We must fight along with men for our freedom.’ And then there was the advice to eschew all eccentricities, not to try to ape men and not to show the so-called modern touch in gait and gesture.

I am glad that Mrs Naidu did not touch on the physical side of recreation, for had she done so I would have been left without any material on which to build my case, because it is futile attempting to have to teach most Indian parents that sport makes for healthy bodies and healthy bodies make for healthy minds. There are people who still refuse to see this, but surely Mrs Naidu cannot be one of them ? She has fought long and hard for the emancipation of Indian womanhood and she has never been afraid of the consequences. But I would like to ask her this one question: *Is there any single day-to-day activity which has so brought out the Indian girl, as sport ?*

Mrs Naidu talked of the inferiority complex of the Indian girl. May one ask what that is due to ? Customs ? Usage ? Tradition ? Ignorance ? As a mere man I would say that this inferiority complex is due to all these blasted nuisances rolled into one, preventing the Indian girl to move freely, think freely, mix freely. Have politics broken down these barriers to any appreciable extent ? Has our infernal variety of education broken the shackles ? Have the great social workers done any great good in this respect ?

It may be my madness to say so, but I find that nothing has so helped to pave the way for the shedding of that inferiority complex as has the playing of games, the participation in sport, by our girls. I say that the same games as played by boys—to which Mrs Naidu takes exception—are more responsible for bringing the Indian girl out of her dark and dingy mental and physical environment than any other activity.

The Indian girl is fettered by a great, big 'THOU SHALT NOT'. It means you must not move about freely—in the sense of healthy exercise ; it means you must not dress healthily—in case you appear immodest by the exposure of a thigh, an elbow, even an ankle. It means that the innocent mixing of the sexes is taboo. The man still walks paces ahead in our streets, his

female family members straggling behind like so many lame sheep ; the men look up, the women are to look down. The time-honoured custom of India dictates that woman is not the equal of man, that she belongs to an inferior order. Sonnets and songs and minarets and mausoleums dedicated to women have not changed the general outlook of the Indian. We may be a gallant nation, but we keep our gallantry behind the purdah, together with our women.

What alone has been responsible for some little change? What alone has brought the Indian girl into the open? What alone allows her some freedom of dress, freedom of movement, freedom of company? *Sport, Mrs Naidu, just sport.*

It is when the Indian girl steps on to a tennis court, a badminton court, a running track, that she finds herself. Gone are the yards of clothing without which no Indian woman is supposed to preserve her modesty ! Gone the mincing, slithering steps which are said to denote femininity ! Gone the fear of talking to men, to boys, gone the dread fear of mixing with the opposite sex ! It is when the Indian girl tears



round a track astride a cycle, when she flings herself at the tape, when she throws herself in the air to make a smash, when she dives off the board, that she becomes a normal human being. It is really then that she takes her place alongside the women of the world of today, it is only then that she learns to throw off those handcuffs which keep her an unnecessary prisoner in kitchen, classroom and what is known as society. She slips on a pair of brief shorts and bares her arms ; is she any the

worse of for it ? She throws her limbs about in the sheer joy of physical effort ; is she better or worse for that ? She sweats and pants and turns and twists, breathing the fresh air that God has not presented to the Indian male alone. She does what women of other countries are doing and the shackles are off! That inferiority complex has vanished, she is doing *the very things that have been taboo, the very things that give her 'the right to be unorthodox'*.

Think it out for yourselves and tell me if I am wrong, if there is anything like sport to help the Indian girl cast off all those worn-out age-old customs and usages ? Not all the lectures and text-books and social welfare work can do what sport is doing for the Indian girl. Mrs Naidu wants our girls to cast off the inferiority complex, to stand shoulder to shoulder with men, to fight for freedom side by side with men, to be unorthodox—all of which obviously implies that the Indian girl must make a change in her past mode of living. *Only sport is doing that and only sport will succeed where all else fails.*

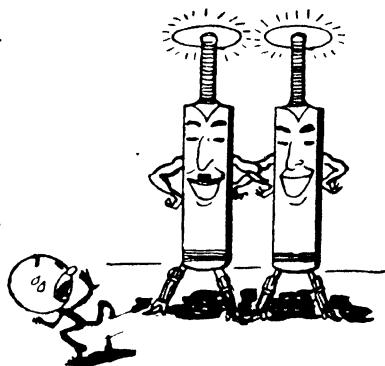
One of the greatest stumbling blocks to the advancement of Indian womanhood has been—and still is—this nonsense that if she does things like men, plays like men, she is unwomanly, is becoming immodest. All this has prevented our girls from growing up healthily, facing facts and looking men in the face without thinking of sex. It is this curse that has kept Indian women backward, physically and mentally; it is this that accounts for that inferiority complex which Mrs Naidu is so anxious to eradicate. No human being can expand his or her mental and physical outlook unless he or she behaves normally as others do. *Is there anything in the world more normal than innocent exercise, healthy competition, the use of wind and limb ?* This modesty business is all boloney. Does the Indian girl or her mother or sister mean to say that all the women of other countries who have progressed so much are all immodest and unwomanly ?

Nothing so brought Western women into the open as sport. Nothing so breaks down barriers of custom and worthless tradition as does the playing of games. There is no better medium for the meeting of men and women than on the playing fields. Our girls who play games, know this. Those who don't should ask those who do.

They might also—those who play like boys—tell Mrs Sarojini Naidu about it. I could go on and tell of the value of sport to face and figure ; but that is for a Don Juan to anticipate. This is only the viewpoint of a sports commentator on the undoubted psychological reactions of Indian girls to the playing of games. Yes, the same games as 'boys play', Mrs Naidu... .

5. MERCHANT OR HAZARE ?

Although it is now clear to most students of Indian cricket that Hazare no longer occupies the position he did in 1943, when his exploits with the bat electrified the country, it is interesting to compare his batting with that of Vijay Merchant, who, many even now believe is not superior to Vijaya Hazare. As one who tries to—and has to—view sporting performances, whether of teams or individuals, in a dispassionate manner, let me say that in my opinion Vijay Merchant is India's Number One batsman today. I say this because of many factors indicative of the difference between the two batsmen, pointers which one cannot expect everybody watching our cricket to note and appreciate.



In the matter of *temperament* both Merchant and Hazare are equals. Merchant has scored at critical periods as often as Hazare. Merchant, if anything, has had greater responsibility in recent years, for he has been burdened with the cares of captaincy in addition to the worries of a batsman on whom nearly everything depends for a respectable total. During a certain lean period—which great batsman does not pass through this?—it was mooted that Merchant could not do justice to his bat because of the mental strain attached to leading a side. How he soon exploded that theory of wishful thinking may be found in the Bombay scorebook which

tells the tale of Bombay's victories and defeats in quest of the National Championship.

Hazare in the 1943 Pentangular matches played with much the same cares, but I attach much greater value to the worries of a cricketer in a serious national championship than I do to his worries in what is purely festival cricket. But I repeat that both batsmen shoulder their batting burdens with equal calm and credit.

I feel that Merchant has the better *stance*: body weight appears to be more evenly distributed than in the case of Hazare. This is borne out by the superior footwork which Merchant is able to produce and which enables him to make those forcing strokes off the right foot, strokes which meet attack with counter-attack. In back play, Merchant has few equals anywhere. I have seen only Hammond play more vigorously and productively off his right foot. It must be remembered that there are probably more scoring back shots than there are forward shots and Merchant's eye enables him to watch the ball on to his bat and then make a punishing stroke. To shorten the length of a ball by playing back, one has to be able to judge the length very quickly and move in accordance: the batsman who can do this is right there. Merchant is a master of back play and in this respect far above Hazare.

Then let us take *defence*. I must say that in the last few years—and don't forget that I have done running ball-to-ball commentaries on most of the best innings of both batsmen—I have seen Hazare in greater difficulties against bowlers like Amir Elahi than I have seen Merchant. Hazare has been often beaten in these duels—the last time he turned the tables on Elahi—but I have never seen Merchant thoroughly bottled-up by a googly bowler and a close-set field. I think that Merchant's control over the bat is greater than Hazare's under these circumstances. He loosens his grip of the handle to perfection, meeting the ball with what is known as a 'dead' bat, giving no possible chance for any deflection,

or for the ball to pop up for the men close in to catch him—as the phrase goes—off his bat.

I feel that Merchant is better able to judge the swinging of a fast bowler than Hazare. He appears to be the better judge of the line of flight of the ball; watching them carefully, I have found Merchant surer of a ball pitching just outside the stumps than Hazare and I say this because I have seen Merchant leave balls to pass behind harmlessly where Hazare will meet the ball, if even to block it.

When we come to *strokes behind the wicket*, I am certain that Merchant is the better late-cutter and leg-glider of the two. His bat meets the ball with better timing than Hazare's. Again, this is due to that foot-work and that poise which makes all the difference in the fraction of a second. Hazare often has to hit a ball to make a scoring stroke against a well-placed field; Merchant uses the push to greater advantage, getting so well over the ball that only the turn of the blade is required for him to place the ball where he wants to and steal a run. Hazare does lift the ball occasionally, particularly towards mid-on; Merchant hardly ever does that. Merchant's dead bat enables him to get more runs to a close-set field than Hazare's, for, as I have pointed out, he slows down the ball on its path to the fielder, thus giving time for a quick run to be stolen.

I am not much concerned who has hit more fours or has the higher batting average. I am only concerned in making a comparison in the light of my observations and I say that Hazare has improved his run getting abilities—he was always a great run getter—but it is Vijay Merchant who is undoubtedly India's Number One batsman today. All observations, however careful, are matters of personal opinion and judgement and I dare say that if you watch closely in future you may find that I am not far out. So many radio listeners remember that I nicknamed him 'The Great Hazare' about four years ago and I distinctly remember having said *once*

during a running commentary, that there was then some doubt in my mind as to who was the better batsman. I have watched even more closely since then and I have now given you my findings. To the average cricket fan the world over, talent is invariably judged by the number of runs in the scorebook and although it is the batsman's main business to get runs, there is such a thing as *technique* to be considered when making comparisons in the matter of class.

For instance, I remember receiving numerous letters from cricket fans who watched the late Amarsingh in Bombay, saying that since he did not get many wickets here, it was hard to agree that he was really the great bowler he was reputed to be. It is not always the scorebook that can tell the tale of class ; that you have to find by using your eyes and by studying the technique of a cricketer. Anyway, Hazare made history in 1943, though Merchant lowered his colours in the Bombay-Maharashtra Ranji Trophy match. If one wanted to take sides—though I have always been a Hazare fan—one could say. 'Well, you people call a man number one as soon as he establishes a batting record ; what about Vijay Merchant's 359 not out, unsurpassed in the annals of first-class cricket in India ?' But I, for one, do not use that sort of argument as my remarks and comments are always directed to those who study the game without the grotesque hysteria that has become the fashion every time a batsman sets up a record individual total.

6. GAMA COMES TO TOWN

So he's here at last—Mr Ghulam Mahomed, aged 63, or, if you like it the other way, Gama Pahelwan—Rustom-i-Zaman, Wrestling Champion of the World ! On the first occasion that I met Gama, a few days ago, he looked neither wrestler nor 63 to me—just a kindly and elderly Muslim gentleman, somewhat reserved. The first thing I asked him about was his age. 'Are you really over sixty years?' I asked. He smiled slightly and added, 'No, I am 53.'

Although Gama certainly looks this side of sixty—judging by his face—I think he is making a mistake. Nearly all the authoritative publications make him sixty or slightly over, today. Who is right? It is an interesting controversy.

But one thing I soon learned about Gama. He is—unconsciously, I'm sure—inclined to underestimate age. I learned that Mansur Hussain, Imam Bux's son and hope, is actually 18 years old. Yet, when I happened to ask Gama about him, he said the lad was 15. I suppose that the great physical fitness of these men makes them forget time. I can think of no other reason. Can you?

Gama tells me that the secret of his sustained strength and agility is plain living. He admitted to a special diet when in training, a diet in which milk, butter, eggs, ghee and certain valuable compounds played an important part. Gama tells me that it takes him about three months to get absolutely fighting fit. I asked him whether he was this now, and he rather hesitatingly shook his head and said that he had not trained for the last month, due to a septic wound just below the right knee. He bared the spot for my inspection, and as he did so I noticed that the leg was definitely that of a man well past his prime !

'If you are not in strict training owing to this injury, what will happen if a challenge is thrown out to you in the coming tournament?' 'I have said that I will accept the challenge of any man who beats Hamida, Imam Bux

and Chota Gama. I will fight. It is our business. Injury does not matter. Do you understand?’

* * *

I had to say I did because the supreme confidence of Gama is a factor that weighs very heavily with one when talking to the champion. Yet, raise that question of a possible contender and a change overcomes the placid features of Rustom-i-Zaman. Twice in the last few days I have had occasion to notice this.



The first occasion was when I took him to the microphone. He was asked whether he would fight if he was challenged, and as he replied that he would

I noticed the suspicion of a sneer on his face. When that Federation was formed in the Governor's Pavilion of the C.C.I. I asked him whether he was really going to fight for his title if he was challenged, and again that somewhat disdainful look betrayed his feelings as he said he would defend his title.

Either Gama does not like being reminded of his title, or else he thinks nothing of other wrestlers. The only other alternative is that he is supremely confident that no man will break through that magic circle of his three musketeers, Hamida, Imam Bux and Chota Gama.

On the subject of Indian wrestling Gama is most emphatic. He thinks that Indian wrestlers, taken as a whole, are better than foreigners, and when I asked him about certain details regarding what is known as the Indian Style, he made a weighty utterance.

‘I think that wrestling as we know it, the Art of the Ustads, has been spoiled by too many restrictions in the matter of holds. I believe that wrestling means

any hold from ankle to head, a fight to the death, not half-wrestling.'

He was insistent that the real art meant using one's strength and brains to get out of locks and holds and he simply refused to agree to any sort of compromise. I suggested that, as he had agreed that the strangle hold should be debarred, it was not quite consistent for him to say now that wrestling was a fight unto death, but he shook his head and said, 'You would not understand.'

Then I came to the question of fake fights. Gama had heard all about the past troubles and knew everything. He mentioned certain names to me and he told me priceless secrets, but he swore that the Camp of Gama could never wrestle except genuinely. That was why he did not come before, and he had at last thought of this tour so that India might witness the real thing.

'The way to treat fake fights is to expose them ruthlessly,' said Gama. And when he uttered these words I could have jumped with joy. He agreed with me that Bombay, perhaps, did not quite understand the finer points of the art. When I told him what I knew about past happenings here, he laughed and laughed, but he frowned when I mentioned All-In and the dose that Bombay got. 'A wrestler, being agile and fit, can also be an acrobat. But we do not do that sort of thing; we respect our profession,' said Gama.

All this time I was wanting to get a certain something off my chest, and at last I ventured it.

'Gama Sahib, don't you think that this ideal of not fighting with the members of one's own family or camp is all wrong? Don't you think that titles should be given every chance to be contended for? Would you not fight Imam Bux for your title?'

For one moment I felt that I had put my foot in it. Gama fired a sharp glance at me, and I thought that the interview was at an end. He did not relish this question—take my word for it—but he recovered his composure and very slowly but deliberately he gave me his answer.

'No, that is not done. We have our wrestling traditions, and what you suggest is unthinkable. We do not, cannot, will not fight like that. Yay nahi ho sukta, jee. Kubhi nahi.'

But this is a point that, to my mind, must inevitably crop up. It must. There may be traditions to uphold and there may be things that are not done, but the public, when it pays, wants to see the best men matched. In all sport there must be qualification and, sometimes, seeding, but I am afraid that some method must be evolved to get Gama to defend his title in the ring. He says he is ready to fight, and I think he means it. But if titles mean something, if talent is measured by actual and ultimate effort, if a challenge is to be a challenge—something to be readily accepted—I say that Gama must fight the next best man.

If there is none to beat Hamida and Imam Bux and Chota Gama, I say that they must fight it out amongst themselves, and the victor must meet Gama.

Anyway, the Champion had his revenge for my disquieting question. He offered me, and I accepted, a long silver tumbler full of some special almond-milk. He smiled as I gulped it down, and I knew why, the next day! The food of pahlwans is not for us poor mortals—take it from me.

Well, Gama is in town at last, and Gama will be seen at least in Exhibition bouts. Gama has signed allegiance to the Federation, and Gama rarely signs anything. Gama has stated his terms for defending his title, and I daresay he awaits the vanquisher of his stalwarts. He has become almost a legendary figure. There is a halo round him where the man in the street is concerned. But the more I see of Gama Pahlwan, Rustom-i-Zaman, Champion of the World, the more I feel inclined to call him just plain Mr Ghulam Mahomed. Just a kindly, elderly Muslim gentleman. Somewhat reserved. But try and avoid the mention of defending the title. I don't think he likes that.

7. ON THE COMMUNAL WATER FRONT

Ye Gods and little fishes ! No, that's wrong, there couldn't be fish around 'cause it's a nice, new, modern, luxurious vegetarian swimming pool I'm writing about, opened in the year 1942, in the city of Bombay, that stronghold of Congress politics (that Congress which will die rather than allow Mother India to be operated on by a Muslim surgeon), the Congress which stands for Akhand Hindusthan, for unity, brotherhood, love and Nation. So, just to be thoroughly logical, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel declares the pool open ; after all, wasn't it a Congress Ministry that afforded the facility to a community to lay the foundation ?

If I tell you that I have been waiting for this pool to open, you may be surprised, knowing my views. But then, if you think carefully, you will understand why I have been waiting. I have been waiting because it would afford to the whole of India yet another example of the rank communalism which obtains in a certain part of this otherwise fair city, amongst a certain class of citizens, on a certain communal water front.

More than that, what with the war on and thousands of young Indians in the forces hurrying and scurrying through Bombay, men from Mount Everest to Cape Comorin—Indians all—it would serve to open their eyes to the evil that I have made more noise about than, possibly, any other man. It would serve to show, and is showing, that you cannot preach one thing and practise another. I have spoken to all sorts of these young men and with one accord they have said, 'You are right, this sort of thing must be stamped out once and for all.' And most of them add, 'Why does all this happen in your Bombay, which is so pro-Congress in its policy ?'

Ah ! I could give quite a few reasons for that and I could ask a few straight questions which might even

be worth the while of a Mahatma to reply to through the columns of the *Harijan*. But we shall let that pass for the moment. Something has occurred in our midst that is the concern of every decent Indian—I said *Indian*—and it is well to discuss the implications of the opening of this new swimming pool, one more eyesore on the communal water front.

Whenever I have criticized the principles involved in the perpetuation of communal institutions, I have been told that these came into being years ago and that they would die out in the course of time. Yet, in the year of grace 1942, we see that a very highly placed Congressman, one who is said to be the right hand man of Mahatma Gandhi, gleefully opening a Hindu pool, a communal pool, paid for by Hindus, permitted by a Congress Ministry, in the year 1942!

This, you will recollect, was the fateful year when a chap called Cripps was accused of playing off this party against that, of deliberately dividing India. This was the year when Congress rose in wrath at the very suggestion that India is not one, not *akhand*, not *Hind mata*. This was the year when a Pandit stomped the country, flourishing a non-violent sword, for the defence of India, for the glory of the Nation. This was the year when India's danger was greatest, when a ruthless enemy was at the gates, at the gates of that blessed, beloved India of ours, which stands as one, thinks as one, acts as one, is asked to sink as one! Yet it cannot even swim as one. Ye Gods and small shoots of bhaji. . . . Yes, and this was the year when the building up of a national war front was said to be of the utmost urgency. In this very year the majority community, a section of it which affords Congress every support in devious ways, deliberately opened a purely communal institution, in the name of 'sport', and 'recreation' and 'health'. At least that is what I presume it is meant for.

'I am utterly opposed to communalism in everything but much more so in sport.' These are the words of a

man whose sincerity the world has learned to respect. If it is true that the Sardar remarked that those who heckled him at the opening ceremony—whether one student or a thousand—were ‘hired’, I ask him the straight question, ‘Was Mahatma Gandhi hired, too?’

I challenge the consistency of Sardar Patel and I challenge those who are the followers of the Mahatma

and who are also the sponsors of this pool, to say how they can maintain their position. The greatest

Indian of all time has clearly expressed his views against communalism—‘much more so in sport’—and it is up to somebody to explain the present position. The Sardar cannot fume at C. R. for backing the Pakistan idea and then, willingly declare open, give his blessings to, a large, communal institution.

Politics and Indian sport are, I have always maintained, closely allied. One looks for the national ideal from those who profess to be nationalists.

You will ask, many of you, what is the great harm when the Parsee and the European have their own swimming pools in Bombay? I will tell you.

The Parsee baths have at least done this, that they have been open for years—at certain hours—to other communities. It is to the lasting glory of this other communal enterprise that it has at least extended its amenities to others, however small the facility. As for the European baths at Beach Candy, have I not been



hearing for years now that it should be scrapped, that Congress itself would see to that when the time comes? Have not we Indians—and we all appear to be Indians when it comes to picking on the European!—have we not fumed and fretted that Indians are not allowed within the sacred walls of Beach Candy? Shall I tell of the numerous requests I have had in the last few years to take up this matter and try and force the issue, drag it out into the open so that the European may look foolish and open the pool to men of colour? My answer all this time is the same as I make now.

Why rile at the foreigner for debarring you from his pools and his clubs and his gymkhanas, when you yourselves cannot tolerate the presence of your own countrymen in your pools and clubs and gymkhanas? Why not put your own house in order first? Why debar your own brothers from even swimming in the same God's water as yourselves?

With what face can we Indians talk about racial discrimination and aloofness, when, particularly in Bombay, no sport is sport unless it is religion against religion, community against community? What right have we to worry about the European's behaviour towards us when we are as yet incapable of resisting the temptation to eat, drink, think, play, as exclusive entities, amongst ourselves, we who belong to the soil of the country, to whom the country belongs?

The harm is this. . . . that lakhs of little Hindu boys will pass along the Marine Drive every day and will be reminded of the fact that they are Hindus, that a Hindu must swim amongst Hindus, *that God's water turns muddy when a brother Indian bathes in it.* It will serve, on the other hand, to show lakhs of youngsters of the other communities that, after all, the communal leader is right, that the major community doesn't want unity, so why should we strive for it? There is no propaganda so powerful in this country as visual propaganda; that is why I always say that a stadium full of youngsters can

learn or unlearn great and lasting lessons ; and that is why I say that the erection of this communal pool, any communal institution, is a sure way to perpetuate those sad and wholly unnecessary differences which have kept India bound hand and foot—bound, not by foreigners, but bound by our own bonds. Teach the youngster (to hell with us older people) to learn that there is no such thing as Hindu, Parsee, Muslim, Christian, Harijan, Anglo-Indian. Teach this, demonstrate this, bang it in, slam it in, and the miracle will be performed in one decade. And who can do this in India? Those who preach unity, the *akhand* policy, the leaders. Who has stressed this most? Congress! And what can bring about this unity, what can make a nation? Don't laugh at me when I pin my faith to sport! Has religion done it? Has politics done it? Will economics do it? Literature? Art? The screen, the stage? No, Sir. The only time that India meets willingly and unwittingly is in sport, for sport—to play or watch. Sport can teach the lesson and sport is teaching it. If not, why are the sponsors of communalism so afraid of a lone voice that drums the message of 'national sport' into the ears of young India?

But that is another story. For the moment, let these rich, big supporters of such institutions ponder; let them at least throw open the gates to brother Indians, without reserve. Otherwise, that greatest of all Hindus, who also claims to be the most sincere of all Indians, must hold his kerchief to his nose when he next passes along the Marine Drive. To use his own words, he will find something that 'stinks in the nostrils'.

All communalism stinks; I do not know if the water in a communal swimming pool gets dirtier if brother Indians bathe in its waters.....

8. MERCHANT



To Merchant the Master this tribute I pay ;
To the Wizard whose wand over bowlers holds
sway ;
To the merchant whose wares are batting's last
word ;
To the warrior whose blade is as sharp as a sword.

* * *

Not to runs nor records does he owe his prowess,
He seeks not mere fours and sixers still less ;
He faces all bowling with calm and with grace,
His bat can be paint-brush, a rapier, a mace.

* * *

For him neither in-swing nor out-swing holds fear ;
The new ball the old ball are both just a sphere
Meant to toy with and tame ; as he wants, at his
will ;
Always there when wanted, he's in at the kill

* * *

Serve him googly, top-spinner, the off-break, the
other—
The short one he'll hook, the good length he'll
smother ;
Bring your lefthanders, righthanders, pace
bowlers, bumpers ;
The fielders get nothing—not even the stumpers.

* * *



THE MASTER

Bring your short-legs and long-legs and
set your leg trap ;
He'll hook and he'll pull and the theory
will snap ;
Set your covers close—deep—bring your
off-break to bear ;
But the fielders will chase as the hound
does the hare

Bring your crisis,^{*}^{*} your troubles, your
worries and woes—
The scoreboard looks brighter as on-
ward he goes ;
He'll move in an hour the finger of fate ;
As he glances and drives and cuts the ball
late

A glance to fine leg^{*}^{*} and a push to mid-on,
A crack through the covers and all the
gloss gone ;
Defeat disappears as the fielders all tire,
And Vijay pulls chestnuts out of the fire.

Now Bombay's on top!^{*}^{*} One day India
will be ;
Where India should be—at the top of
the tree ;
And when India's bat will beat England's
ball,
That bat will be Vijay's—*the greatest
of all !*



9. AMATEUR PROFESSIONALS OR PROFESSIONAL AMATEURS ?

Once again the question of the *shamamateur* is to the fore and this time the Honorary Secretary of the All-India Lawn Tennis Association has taken the lead. He has addressed a letter to an official of one of the provincial associations in which he makes a suggestion as interesting as it is revolutionary.

Brooke Edwards, don't forget, has a most intimate knowledge of the workings of our tennis and all that he has to say must be most carefully weighed before arriving at a decision. I will quote those passages from the published report of his letter which appear to me to be most relevant.

Says Brooke: 'The rules that we are supposed to work under were framed when players who played in tournament tennis were either of the leisured class, or had jobs that let them play or practise every day. Nowadays one either works and gets a little tennis, or plays and does not work. In the latter case, how to live?'

First of all let me ask the reader to carefully note the expression 'rules that we are supposed to work under'. I say that this expression by the Honorary Secretary conveys that, though the rules are there, they are not being adhered to in the fullest sense. What does this denote? Failure of authority to assert itself? This is important when we come to weigh up the entire matter. Then we have the assertion that times have changed and with them the economic side of things. It is undoubtedly true that there are not so many leisured players in these days and it is equally true that if one has to keep up a high standard, work has to be sacrificed to a certain degree.

But I find that Brooke Edwards appears to be thinking of tennis only in terms of big tournaments.

He is, to my way of thinking, obsessed by the headliner and only the effect on the gates. Can it be that B.E. has forgotten that tennis is *only a game* and that everything does not necessarily depend on those in the first flight ? Stars cannot keep in the sporting heaven for long without practice, but what about the rank and file of players who are content to play for the sake of the game, its interest and the exercise it affords ? The majority everywhere must be the average player—man and woman—and if they are to be brushed aside and the game thought of and organized for gates alone then it is clear that big tournaments will only survive as commercial propositions and therefore professionalism is to be hastened.

Now I do not dispute that every game—as played today—receives its greatest impetus from the classic exponents ; it is the same the world over, that the great headliners are the star attractions. The average player will go to see the masters in action and generally derive interest, instruction and encouragement by doing so. So far as this goes, therefore, big events are the spice of sport and to stage these big events the financial side has to be rightly considered. If there is no other way to attract the day's best players to an event except by paying them or making other financial facilities available, let this be done by all means. It will boil down to what I have stated earlier, that the biggest shows will be purely professional in character. As such there is nothing wrong in India following on the lines of the U.S.A. and having its own tennis circus.

But there is another most important point in connexion with star players which has to be considered. Not only does watching benefit a country's sport, but—and this is imperative—the average and the budding talent must actually have opportunities to play with and against such great performers. Tennis coaches and professional schools for tennis may one day solve the riddle as it confronts us, but at the moment as world tennis is constituted, the amateur and the professional simply do

not play in the same events. I am not here concerned with the ethics of this tradition, but since we are still under the spell of time-honoured custom, we must tackle the problems accordingly.

If, as Brooke Edwards suggests, 'tournaments invite certain players on the basis of actual expenditure incurred, plus a certain percentage of the net profits to the winner, a lesser percentage to the runner-up, and a percentage also to the semi-finalists who lose,' I think the whole question resolves itself into whether or not star amateurs should convert themselves into professionals. This is all that it boils down to and whether it is percentage or any other payment, once the existing status of an amateur is done away with, he or she emerges as a professional. We have not as yet changed the meaning of the words 'amateur' and 'professional' and it makes no difference whether payment is called by any other name.

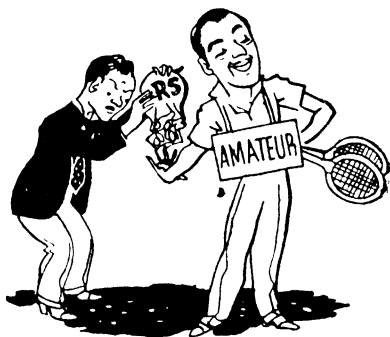
Later in that letter, B.E. suggests that such tournaments could be limited to sixteen players and goes on to work out the number of rounds, etc. That again proves that any such arrangement as suggested by him will only form the basis for a professional tennis *tamasha*, in which, though there will be interest, there can be little or very little benefit for the average exponent. This is why I rather dislike the suggestions and I am sure that I am voicing the opinion of all those who delight to play with and against star players now and then and who benefit thereby.

I would say that the first thing to do is for the A.I.L.T.A. to carry out the rules and regulations now existing in their entirety. If then there is attempted camouflage or definite disinclination on the part of our star performers to abide by the ruling of authority, either the players concerned openly and unashamedly turn professional or else the parent body must resign and admit that the problem is beyond it. In any case, when that arises, the many evils that now lie below the surface will be evident for all to see and Indian tennis may then be better able to tackle the problem.

I am afraid that the shamamateur is having it all his and her own way and that rather than tackle the problem of payment openly, attempts are being made—in all good faith—to gloss over the difficulty. Brooke Edwards should tell India openly of what is going on—I could say a mouthful myself—and we could then approach the players and have a heart to heart discussion. They have their difficulties and skill in sport must have its reward as anything else. But the world has not yet accepted any new interpretation of the words ‘amateur’ and ‘professional’ and till that day dawns, we shall be literally putting ourselves out of court with the world if we monkey about with accepted custom and ruling.

I am one of the keenest advocates of professionalism for India in all sport. But I am not prepared to lose the chance of competing with the rest of the world—and beating it—just for the sake of setting up a new interpretation so that certain headliners can find it convenient to perform for the others.

I do not think that breaking away from the present world-accepted tradition is any good; rather should the whole question be brought up in more peaceful times. India has entered the world arena of sport and we cannot expect other nations to accept our interpretation of status without hear-



ing and adopting our methods. We should be without a Wimbledon entry if we now adopt some new-fangled system of approaching the problem of the shamamateur. This position of the secretly-paid (and sometimes-not-so secretly !) amateur is present in all places, it's true, but there must be a world-wide tackling of the problem, a

world-wide acceptance of the new approach. For the moment, then, let every endeavour be made to make the star player comfortable ; let every facility be afforded to him and her. *In the end, with nowhere to play and nobody to play for, it is clear that the shamamateur will toe the base-line again.*

Let us wait till the end of the war and carry on as best we can now. I am one of those who firmly believe that peace will bring in its wake a great big upheaval of many things that are accepted standards at present, things like whether or not an amateur can play against a professional. But let the world of tennis decide that ; no one country is bigger than the globe. That all this will go, I am confident and I am with the revolutionaries. But till this is accepted, we must play according to the game as it is interpreted today—with all its shortcomings, its hidden vices, its shamamateurism.

In the meantime, to those stars who are patriotic enough to place the tennis of the country before personal gains and comfort, let me say that they should ask for everything in the way of facility, but preserve their amateur status and not for any consideration deprive Indian tennis—our somewhat lowly Indian tennis—of their partnership and play. When the day of settlement comes, I am sure that all sporting skill will be willingly paid for. But for the present, till the war is over, let us carry on and then thrash the matter out with the rest of the world. I repeat that I am certain that many oddities will be swept away in the New Order of Things—and with them will go the strange shamamateurism of today.

10. THE PASSING OF AMU

Amarsingh dead! Like thousands and thousands of others on that fateful day in May of 1940 I was unable to believe the truth of the untimely tragedy that had dimmed one of the brightest lights of Indian cricket, and it was with a heavy heart that I took up pen to write about Amarsingh—great cricketer, versatile sportsman, dynamic personality.

Amarsingh and I came together after that tragic tour of 1932, from which time commences the story of the most unhappy incidents of our big cricket. It is because of this and what followed, right up to the time of his death, that I have chosen to commence with the last phase of that hectic career and I do so also with a deliberate purpose. Amarsingh was at first genuinely annoyed at my remarks about his performance in the Bombay Test against Jardine's England side and when, on certain occasions, I pointed him out as a 'non-trier' and took him to task for 'incidents', he took the matter keenly to heart. But, strange though it may seem, it was just this that brought us closer together. I have often had occasion to comment on his listless play when under the captaincy of C. K. Nayudu, and often stressed those irritating mannerisms he then indulged in and which everybody noticed. I was his severest critic.

In fairness to him let me say that he denied any deliberate want of effort but he admitted to me over and over again that he did not—simply could not—put his heart into certain matches because of bitter memories of the past. The reader may think that it is rather ungracious of me to write an obituary note the opening lines of which refer to matters that may well be left unsaid. Not at all; it is only right and fair that I should take the opportunity of stressing that Amarsingh kept the promise he made to me at the end of the 1938 Bombay

Pentangular ; at that time, for obvious reasons, all I could and did broadcast to the public was that matters between him and C. K. Nayudu had at long last been patched up. The sceptics and the wishful thinkers may have remained unconvinced, but when Amarsingh came up to Nayudu—with whom I was sitting just before the last Pentangular he played in—and shook him by the hand, asking with a broad grin, ‘how are you, Major?’ I knew that the problem which had agitated the mind of the sporting public and had almost spelled ruin for Indian cricket had at last been solved. That is why I am most anxious to impress on the public that Amarsingh cleared his outstanding account with Indian cricket and that is why I commenced this contribution with that unfortunate personal squabble. When we think of Amarsingh in the years to come, we owe it to his memory that he died a sportsman and gentleman. I am sure the first person to acknowledge the fact will be C. K. Nayudu

.....

Of Amarsingh the cricketer enough has been written to fill many volumes and it is sufficient to repeat that the best judges of the game placed Amarsingh in a class by himself. Here it is interesting to note that both Tennyson and Macartney disputed any comparison between O’Reilly and the Indian trundler, insisting that Amu in his class was supreme. Amarsingh did not relish being sent low down in the batting order and after the affair between him and Nayudu had been settled, he came to me one day—I think it was in the final match of the last Pentangular in which he participated and suggested, half-jokingly—that I should sound C. K. about sending him in earlier than usual. Feeling that the granting of this request might help to improve the changed atmosphere, I passed the suggestion on to C. K. and he at once complied. Amu was sent in earlier but he came back soon and always regretted not having made good his promotion in the order. I may say that this little incident impressed Amarsingh very deeply and made him certain

that the past was forgotten. It is a thousand pities that India will now never have a chance to benefit by that gesture.

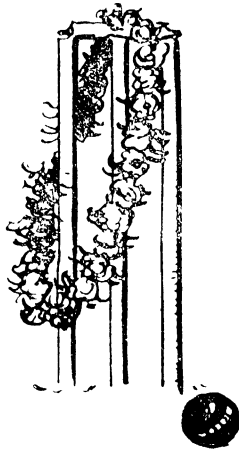
Speed in everything he did, was Amu's great characteristic. He was quick and clean in his movements and I, as a commentator, often found it hard to finish my comments on one ball before he had started to bowl the next one. His panther-like movements were always the focal-point of all attention and he was a great cricket personality, from his towering, magnificent physique to his immaculate attire on the field of play. He had that care-free and happy disposition which stamped him a true lover of the game he adorned and there is no doubt that Amarsingh played cricket, not only because it was his business, but also because it gave him much pleasure. He hated too serious an approach to the game and insisted that cricket was a game and not a bloody battle. When I asked him once how he could hope to give of his best with such an outlook, he replied that he was always at his best, provided the atmosphere was that of real cricket, when spectators and players alike did not look upon results as a matter of life and death. Many persons have felt that Amarsingh was a not natural cricketer, lacking the right temperament, but I dispute this contention. He liked the game according to his lights and that was certainly not what so many people in India look upon cricket—as a game that must produce record-breaking scores and hat-tricks to be interesting.

Amarsingh looked a cricketer, every inch of him, and he was a cricketer. He hated communal sport and loved the national composition of the National Championship which is the Ranji Trophy. But above all he loved his Lancashire League variety. To Amu must go the everlasting credit of having flown India's flag high in that charmed territory of some of the world's greatest professionals—the Lancashire League. Every report I received during the years Amarsingh was there testify to his having played the game in every sense of the phrase.

And now Amarsingh is dead. India may produce another bowler, another all-rounder, as great, but it will be difficult. It will be more than that to re-introduce to the game one who so dominated the scene, one whose very presence on the field galvanized spectators into enthusiasm. We shall miss him, but the game will miss him even more. Highly strung, but at heart a schoolboy cricketer, Amarsingh passes into the history of the game. It is terribly difficult even today to imagine an Indian XI without him and I am certain that he would have been of the utmost service to Indian cricket for many a long year. His name was enough to strike terror into the heart of any batsman ; his giant's physique was enough to undermine the morale of any defender of the stumps. His art was the art of a master, he was the great juggler of modern Indian bowling.

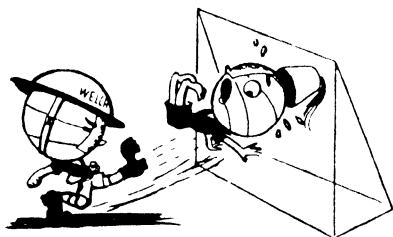
Never again shall we eagerly await the deadly period of his opening overs. Not a man who understood cricket but would wait with baited breath as he sent down those first few overs, the deadly leg-trap keyed to fever-pitch in a semi-circle near the batsman, those amazing variations of flight and swing and pace which hypnotized the best batsmen of his day. I can see Amu now, hear the thud-thud of those big feet, as he takes his short but springy run to the wickets. I can see that giant left arm shoot out straight in front of the body, the fingers spread as if in warning to the batsman of the danger of the missile to be launched a split-second after by the other arm. I can see the back-kick of that right boot as the leather leaves those massive, magic fingers and I can see that sporting though disgusted grin on his face as the ball beats the bat but just misses the bails. No longer shall we clap and shout with joy even as he swung out of the pavilion, that broad grin on his face, the keen step which told us that he, at least, knew that the ball was meant to be hit and would hit it true and hard at the first possible opportunity. Forty thousand spectators will never again rise to their feet even as Amarsingh

jumped out to a half-volley and sent it soaring into the blue. These things are only a memory now and whenever I look at a cricket pitch being prepared for some match, I feel that all is so futile. Yes, Amarsingh is dead. But his cricket and the spirit in which he played it, will live for ever. When, at some future date, India is in a tight corner, we shall turn to each other in the stands and say, 'Ah! if only we had Amu.' But Amu will always be there in the spirit if the game is being played as a game, as he played it—for the love of it, the fun of it, for its sheer joy. As for me, I shall never forget the man who kept his promise and who forged a friendship from the white-heat of a critic's anvil....



11. WHEN MOHAMMEDAN SPORTING WERE BEATEN TO A FRAZZLE

You have seen an odds on favourite pipped on the post but have you ever witnessed the favourite crack under a challenge from start to finish? That is what I



saw on Wednesday afternoon, seated behind the microphone at the Co-opage, when Mohammedan Sporting—the great Mohammedan Sporting, the Soccer Champions of India—were well and truly beaten by the Welch

Regiment in the finals of the Rovers' Cup, beaten by two clear goals, two goals to nil, in one of the fastest, cleanest finals it has been my good fortune to have enjoyed.

There is little or no time for reflection when commenting on games as fast as football and the Welch were determined not to give a single breather to me on Wednesday; what really made the difference, though, was that they had made up their minds to hand out the same treatment to the holders of the Trophy. It was not Hill's well-judged, cool, left-footed placing which put the Army one goal up that so enthused me; it was not this point notched in the seventh minute that shook my confidence in Mohammedan Sporting. I have seen them recover in the last few minutes of a needle match, I have seen them do many wonderful things. What stuck out a mile after the first ten minutes was a definite, well-planned mode of defence—particularly that of the Welch half-back line-tactics that told me that either the Holders' attack would have to pull out something superlative or

else wait for the line to crack through sheer physical exhaustion.

The Sporting's plan was clear. Feed the winged gingers, wait for the lofted pass across the goal mouth and then leave Rashid, Sabu or Taher to do the rest. For several minutes the Sporting swung the ball out to Noor on the right wing, particularly to Noor. And nine times out of ten these accurate, determined passes were intercepted by the Welch's left half, Bailey.

Try as they would, the Sporting could not get past Bailey. He used his head—in more ways than one—he used his chest, he used his right foot, his left foot, he slid, he swerved, he jumped. Watching the ball like a hawk, straining every nerve and expending every breath to spoil the winging tactics of Noor, Bailey bottled up and sealed that classic right wing. At the other end, Taj waited and waited for a pass, one of those clever forward thrusts from Masoom that spell danger to opponents. Taj waited whilst Jones served.

Here again was a half-back playing all he knew, going all out to stop any semblance of a dangerous movement on the flank. And when, rarely, either outer half failed, up came Evans from the centre to steal the ball.

I tell you that Welch half-back line was colossal. I have yet to see a booted defence outpace, outmanœuvre as fast, as classy a forward line as the Sporting's. In nine cases out of ten, the Welch were on the ball first; they jumped first, jumped higher, kicked hard and booted quickly. They were superbly clever, they played as a gland-injected trio and it was here, to my way of looking at it, against this Maginot-cum-Siegfrid line that Mohammedan Sporting cracked. You have heard of defenders winning matches. This was such a match and the honours go to Bailey, Evans and Jones. The laurel wreath to Bailey....

But goals count, after all, and that early lead established when the game was only seven minutes old

made a world of difference. It put added punch into the formidable Welch attack, it seemed to slow down the Mohammedan defence. I have seen Jumma and Sirajuddin play better. I have seen Bachi—five feet odd of booted dynamite—play worse. Masoom was as cool as ever, defending, feeding, clearing at his best. Sidu was subdued. The Sporting's great defence played well, played all-out, but here they were up against the scheming, the wizardry of Langton and his front line colleagues. The Sporting defence held on to Langton for dear life.

A marked attacker, marked by a seasoned, tough, fast defence like that of the Sporting is out of luck. Not so Langton on Wednesday. He knew, perhaps, that his left boot would not get a chance of that wallop that means a roar, a goalie flying through the air, the ball crashing into the back of the net. He knew that and he played accordingly.

Langton paved the way for almost every good move ; he swerved, back-passed, slipped out to the wings, drew the defence. He had that ball tied to his boot with an invisible string and he made rings round Jumma and Company. I am told that Langton had his men well rehearsed for the occasion, that every possible move was thought out, planned in advance. I think there must be a lot in that, for Thomas, Stone, Hill and Moore were always there to pick up the threads, always about to fill the gap made by that roving, weaving Langton. It took me back to Wembley, to White Hart Lane, it put me in my mind of the best I have seen in the Home of Football.

At the end of the first half, with a goal down, Mohammedan Sporting were not as yet beaten. When the second half commenced, for a few moments, for a brief period, they put all they knew into the game. Twice Sabu broke away and the great chance came when Rashid slipped through and took a flying half-volley at point blank range. But in the Welch goal was a little bloke called Williams. He saw that one coming, saw it

all the way. He jumped at the ball, jumped into the air and met and kept it out.

It was a perfect save, a great shot at goal and a greater save. I think that saved the match from a climax that none would have dared to forecast. Williams anticipated like a veteran. Once, when Taj had picked up a long, low forward pass and darted for goal, Williams came right out and flung himself at the feet of the attacker, smothered what might have been a sharp bit of side-stepping and then that flick into the corner of an open goal.

It was grand, it was great work. I think the Welch should have carried Williams home in the Cup, he is small enough to have got a free ride, which makes his performance all the greater that day. The second goal was superbly clever, Langton slipped past Masoom, Moore trapped and passed forward to Langton in front and then Langton did that turn that gets the defence on the wrong foot, he sort of hooked the ball right into the goal mouth and Stone flung his head at the ball to send it into the net for the second goal of the match. Was the Army happy? I'm a simple civvy, but I fairly jumped with joy. Not because the Sporting looked beaten, but because it was a lovely bit of work, the perfect ending to a classic movement.

And all this time, don't forget the Welch defenders: James and Brady, too, were watching still all out—almost all in—never letting a pass be got hold of, never giving any rope to that quintette that has slipped past the best defenders in India, not once, but for years. As the end neared, the Mohammedans were out of breath, gone that speed, that ball control, that perfect understanding. Jumma was limping, Sidu was a passenger, Bachi just kicked away. Rashid roamed about like the Thief of Baghdad—he does look like old Doug—and Noo wondered what sort of football this was without a ball. The match ended with the Welch forwards just playing about. They had still speed and breath and after all

they had that cup, they were on top, were within seconds of having lowered the colours of the greatest Indian soccer side. Mohammedan Sporting was a spent force, out of breath, out of the game. They just could not get the ball, could not break away, could not settle down.

At last we saw the smoothest, most accurate football machine in the country out of gear, the oil run out, cylinders missing, just a spluttering chug-chugging where once there was a rhythmic, even roar. Two goals to nothing ! Actually the board might well have been five to one. I have mentioned the Welch more than Mohammedan Sporting here : my eye on Wednesday saw two Welch men on the ball to one Mohammedan player. The Welch had eighty-five per cent of the finals. Surely I must keep the ratio as correct as possible.

That was a grand win, Welch ! They were at it from start to finish, all the way, in every way. It was football at its best, its cleanest, its fastest. It was a triumph for the booted player over the barefooted star, a victory under perfect conditions, before a great crowd, under grand supervision. Attackers score goals and goals win matches; but I give the palm to that half-back line, to Bailey and Evans and Jones and I take my hat off to Bailey.

12. C. K. NAYUDU AS WE KNOW HIM

A great and enthusiastic crowd packs a cricket ground. A needle match is in progress. The supporters of the fielding side are in high dudgeon ; the rest sit in sullen silence, as they gasp at the tale the scoreboard has to tell—three wickets down for a paltry total. Three wickets have fallen so cheaply. Three wickets down! And then a great cheer gathers strength all round the ground as a tall and stately figure emerges from the pavilion and strides majestically to the wickets. This the batsman for a crisis—this crisis—this the wicket to be got cheaply if the match is to be won by the fielding side. But also, this the batsman all have come to watch. C. K. Nayudu. . . .

* * *

He takes guard, a glance at the pitch, and he looks round the field before facing the bowler, who has caused all the damage. A ball is bowled to him and the bat just flicks as C. K. Nayudu opens his account with that characteristic stroke towards third man. He then watches, he studies—now and then allowing the ball to pass the bat, but only now and then—he pushes the ball with ease to a point between mid-off and extra cover : a run here and a run there. Are the bowlers tying him down? Are those fifteen runs against his name in the scorebook an index of his patience or are they proof that the bowling is on top?

* * *

The answer comes swiftly, devastatingly, dramatically, as C. K. Nayudu suddenly employs in quick succession—just when you and I are wondering—those strokes of which he is a master. A ball is cut for 4, the next hooked round the corner, and even before we wake to a sense of appreciation, a rasping drive through the

covers leaves the field standing. C. K. Nayudu is nearing his thirty. The tiger stirs in his lair.

* * *

The bowling changes—off comes the gloss and on come the spinners—the field spreads fanwise round the boundaries. The spinners toss and tease and flight, as the fieldsmen rub their palms and tip-toe in expectancy. The spinners try to draw the batsman, the one batsman, who will accept the challenge of a bowler, but C. K. Nayudu pats a ball to the off-side for two easy runs, as the deep cover runs in ; another two runs to the on-side, as long-on runs into No Man's Land. In the meantime, the other chap at the other end, what about him ? He, trembling at first as his three short-lived partners left in a hurry, he has settled down : for with C. K. Nayudu at the wickets the greatest coward amongst partners has found his courage. He holds the fort, for he knows that C. K. Nayudu is getting on top.

* * *

Then the spin bowler at the other end. A flighted one that is meant to draw the batsman. And the batsman is drawn ! Even as the ball flights through the air, you see C. K. Nayudu take a step forward, the hands tight round the handle of that bat which is lifted to smite. A snap of those wrists of steel and a great roar as the ball soars over the heads of those men in the deep field ; they are there, it's true, but the ball is over the ropes. A glorious six. The tiger is out of his lair. C. K. Nayudu is on the move....

* * *

After that, those strokes for which he is justly famous, those fabulous shots which have placed C. K. Nayudu amongst the greatest hitters against the break the world has seen. As one critic wrote in 1932, C. K. Nayudu steps out of the past—a giant—to show us how to hit

the ball against the break. He flays the bowling—googly, leg-break, top-spinner come alike to him. He does not wait to see what the ball can do ; he makes it do his bidding. The pace bowlers come on again—the new ball. It makes no difference, for he is set. 70, 80, 90 ! He is on his way to another hundred and the scorers sweat like the fieldsmen, and the crowd roars and bellows and the scoreboard shivers as the figures revolve. It is the last over before lunch—that ticklish period—and his wicket counts; the thousands touch wood in case he does the wrong thing before the break. He does ; he hits the fourth ball of the last over for a six ! But then, that is C. K. Nayudu. That is the batsman who knows no time limit, no ticklish period—each ball on its merits and to hell with the pundits ! That is C. K. Nayudu as he reaches his hundred—the hunted turned hunter—the tiger no bullet can stop....

* * *

The scene changes and we see a team taking the field. The same tall, majestic figure—despite the politics of Indian cricket—dominating the scene. C. K. Nayudu the Captain. He will take the most dangerous position—silly mid-off even to a batsman who knows his drive. If there is a man wanted where it calls for nerve and eye and agility, C. K. Nayudu places himself there. He rings the changes like a master, he blocks the runs ; a word of encouragement here, a lightning dive there as he pounces on the ball and makes it look a marble ; an over himself—always a wicket. That flick of the wrist as he passes the ball to a new bowler—'I know you'll do it ; you must do it,' it seems to say. A wicket falls and a batsman comes out. C. K. Nayudu, master strategist suddenly changes the attack ; he knows the incoming batsman has studied the bowling for a long time from the verandah of the pavilion ; he has read his mind. He changes the tempo of the attack and he forces the loss of a wicket on the other side. He knows

a batsman, for he is amongst the greatest. He knows the attack, for he is an attacker himself. His very presence inspires awe and he trades on it. Batsman, bowler, fielder, captain—C. K. Nayudu—most discussed, most disliked, most idolized of Indian cricketers, stands out in his fiftieth year—his Golden Jubilee—as the greatest all-round cricketer India has ever produced. Long after cricket has become the record-breaking medium of pygmies, those who knew cricket as it was meant to be played—as it was once played—will remember C. K. Nayudu.

13. WILL THERE BE AN INDIA ?

If ever India is divided politically and geographically, what will be the future of sport in the country? This question often agitates the mind of sportsmen and though I boggle at the very idea of such dire possibility, the answer may well have some bearing on what is in store for us if Pakistan and Hindudom materialize.

Following on the lines of the arguments advanced by those who want the partition of India, it is logical to assume that even our sporting affairs will be divided according to politics and religion. Since the propaganda for both Hindu-Muslim communalism is based on the need for separate cultural, lingual, economic and political entities—why should not sport be also a plank in the two platforms? Anything that provides a chance to flaunt the superiority of one community over another has ever been used as a weapon by communal leaders—*this is the story of communal cricket in the raw*—and I have no doubt that the hideous advent of Pakistan and Hindudom will mean the complete disruption of the country's sporting unity and strength.

For, all said and done, if India is partitioned into water-tight compartments, India—as a whole—ceases to exist. That being the case, how can this country be represented by one team or one individual in international sport? Today, an Indian side is an Indian side—we do not calculate in terms of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Anglo-Indian, Parsee—and we do not talk either of the Punjab or Madras or Bengal when it comes to picking a national side. An athlete who represents India in a World Olympic series is just an Indian; his community or his province count for nothing. How, if India is carved up, will the difficulty be overcome? There will be a Pakistan and there will be a Hindudom and it is a thousand-to-one odds on bet that these two separate

states will desire to be recognized as such abroad in the world of sport, for India—as India—will have ceased to exist. *Who, if the crime of partition is perpetrated, will be an Indian? What will be India?*

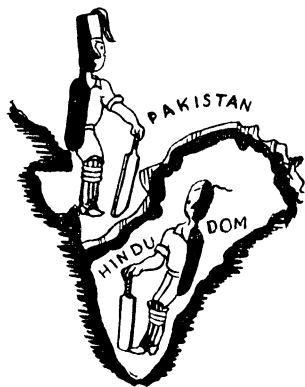
That, to my way of thinking, is the problem that we shall be confronted with and I am certain that those who gloat over partition will desire to prove their sporting superiority over each other and will insist that since Pakistan and Hindudom are two separate nations, they should find separate representation in international sport. This must lead to the dissolution of what are known as our national sides, for where there is no nation, there can be no national representatives. No one knows better than I do the importance that certain communalists attach to sport and if they have waked up to the potency of the weapon as a subtle means of propaganda, I claim it is in large measure due to my own deliberate use of it as a medium for nationalization. The rank communalist has seen that a great deal of harm can be done to his cause by inculcating the young with the virtues of sport on national lines. I make this little prophecy, that there will soon be no India in the world's sport, but merely two states from this country, calling themselves Hindudom and Pakistan. The leaders of communalism will see to it—must see to it—that the hated word 'India' disappears from every sphere; do you think they will miss sport, the one great human activity which brings different peoples together in the most distant places? With what face would Pakistan and Hindudom permit a joint team to represent the country they have torn apart? How would their propaganda fare if they played as one before the nations of the earth, and against them, but in all other matters deliberately remained apart? They would be the laughing stock of the world and, mark my words, the first thing that would happen under any partition would be notice to the M.C.C. that there was no longer any India in cricket and that Pakistan and Hindudom would in future claim Test recognition as two

separate nations ! You may laugh that out just now but that is how the logic of communalism will dictate. . . .

But supposing, for argument's sake, that the picture I have smudged over this page is far too messy and that 'representative' sport is not interfered with for some time to come—what then will be the position of India in the international arena ? My reasoning, backed by what already takes place behind the scenes, is that we shall be in a hell of a state—two states, if you get my meaning. How, for instance, is the alleged Indian XI to be selected for a Test series ? If the great Muslim minority claims equal representation round legislative tables, will it not also claim proportionate weightage in sports teams ? Whether that would mean five Hindus and five Muslims and the one remaining place to be filled by some bastard whose imagined parentage satisfies the other remaining communities, I will leave to the imagination of the reader. Work it out for yourself ; but I am deadly serious that this will happen, if not openly, at least covertly. As for the vexed question of Captancy—can you imagine a better incentive for a real, good, hundred per cent communal riot ? I should not be surprised to learn that the appointment of the Captain would lead to all manner of tub-thumping and, according to the community of the skipper, we should be regaled with laments that Hinduism or Islam were in danger. Seriously, though, once communalism rules the roost in our sport, an end to the dream of beating the world at any game. *The best team or the best individual can never be selected where communal and political and religious considerations play a part in selection. This has already done much harm in the past ; its open acceptance by virtue of the partition of the country would kill Indian sport.*

Of course Hindudom will play Pakistan with even more delight than it does today ; but it will spell good-bye to the whole concept of sport on a national basis, as a nation, and we shall merely point to Hindu caps

and Muslim caps and the foreigner will enjoy the spectacle of communal maniacs using sport as an outlet for their feelings. I mean that the foreigner will enjoy it even more than he does at present. Only the older generation will remember that a country once known as India swept the world's hockey off its feet ; only those who revel in the clean past will sigh at the mention of names like Ranji and Duleep—names that once meant all that was



the cricket of India. It may be that Pakistan will one day win the Ashes and another day, Hindudom may bring them back to the banks of the Ganges. But can such victories over foreign nations give us the same thrill as if we played as one, cheered as one, even lost as one? I would rather end my days in a country like England, in a country where the whole populace thrills to the one word 'England' and does not cheer in terms of Pro-

testant, Roman Catholic or even Christianity ; where at least one could capture some of that national enthusiasm without which sport, in its final analysis, can have no meaning or interest. A spectator like myself would rather watch sport where nations cheer as one, instead of as two and I would frankly join in their glory, however second-hand that satisfaction may be. For, if one who has shouted 'India !' as long as I have, has to forget the music of that proud word and shout instead such unnatural cries as 'Pakistan' and 'Hindudom', one would rather not shout at all. No sportsman can chant the obsequies of his country, perhaps that is best left to the funeral orations of such exalted beings as mahatmas and quaid-e-azams.

14. IF ON THE PLAYING FIELDS OF ETON

The cricket bats of Eton were *not* the implements of war which won the battle of Waterloo for England. But playing fields alone produce that joy of contest, that search of adventure, that will to win, without which all battles are lost before they are fought. To glory in a dearly bought victory because it has been snatched from the jaws of defeat in a fight that was fair and square ; a modest smile under a laurel wreath and a last fixed defiant grin if the wreath is one of the lilies. Only sport creates this type, for this is the meaning of sport. England has saved herself, not once, but often, by the spirit of her playing fields ; India is today finding her soul on her *maidans*, to the innocent sound of bat against ball, boot against leather spheroid, to the roar of a new young country which is learning that sport—and sport alone—can forge that chain every link of which spells the word ‘Nation’.

India has still to fight a Waterloo, but Indian playing fields today are the arenas in which other battles are being fought and won. These are not to be found in record-breaking feats or in world-beaters ; not in titles nor in trophies nor in tests will these victories be discovered ; these are points outside the pages of scorebooks, not chalked up on the scoreboards. But the points are piling up. . . .

For today the fight against custom and creed and caste and community is being fought and won on our fields and courts and tracks ; as if by the wave of a magician’s wand we find a miracle being worked. What time has made ugly tradition is being uprooted, slowly but surely—without effort or stress—through the acceptable offering of sport. The average spectator does not mark these currents in the tide ; but if he looks closely he will find the phenomenon.

For where can be found untouchability on an Indian field of sport today? What the saints and the sages have striven to eradicate, by book and word and even fasts-unto-death, and which they have failed to extirpate, sport has shattered. Today, in the dressing rooms of sport, men stand under the same shower, use the same water—God's water. In sport there is no tap marked 'harijan', no basin marked 'for Hindus only'. When one thinks of the age-long battle waged to open even a few wells for the use of harijans, it is then that one sees the miracle of sport. Out in the middle of the field, during a break for drinks, there is no glass for one and a mug for another; no question here of community or caste. Yet, on the railway platforms of India may still be heard the shrill cry of race and communalism—'Hindu Tea', 'Muslim Tea'. Where sportsmen eat, they eat together; the vegetarian does not break bread in a corner far from the eater of flesh. Where will this be found save where sport is the sole consideration? The foreign commentator who tells the world about India's customs would do well to compare these problems in the light of sports; it will be found that the young are forgetting these things, killing them, uprooting them, because the playing field does not cater for creeds. Millions are doing this today—what holds good amongst two teams holds good amongst the thousands packed together in a stadium, sportsmen all, watching sportsmen.

Gone is the inferiority complex of Indians, through sport! Today on the soccer fields, the lowly office peon and the barefooted chokra meet the white man shoulder to shoulder; fair charge against fair charge, strength against strength, brain pitted against brain. Colour clashes against white, but the code has to be followed. India vs. England *on equal terms*! Can politics produce better propaganda?

The sweeper and the caste Hindu play together today; their temples may be different, but their faith is

the same—it is sport. The communalists wrangle for power while the masses mingle together, playing together, eating together, cheering together—that is sport. Where they thought in terms of community yesterday, they revel in 'country' today. It is province, not Parsee that matters; in sport, hockey means more than Hindu; a maidan over more than Muslim. That is sport.

Only the enemies of India note these things with dismay. For here, through sport, goes out that message that none can proscribe, no act of a foreign power can prohibit, in the transmitting of which none need fear the consequences. Neither the stage nor the screen nor the written word nor the spoken has done what sport is doing for the country



—welding it into a whole, cementing the communities together, compelling crowds to think in terms of country, breaking down the barriers, nourishing the ideal of a nation. Not a million Amerys can cope with this surge, for the spirit that is bred on the playing fields of India will one day manifest itself in a great, big, final, united demand. Just like a stadium full of Indians rising to cheer an Indian victory in a cricket Test. That is the logical outcome of the spirit of playing fields. For, if England can boast of winning a Waterloo on the playing fields of Eton, India can vaunt her victories of today, the victories of unity through sport. With this spirit she will not meet her Waterloo. India, too, has playing fields.....

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