

総合英語レベル7④ An Olympic struggle

予習課題 次の英文の内容を理解しなさい。

Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympics, would not have approved of the Sydney 2000 Games: When the modern games were first held in 1896, women were not allowed to compete. In 1912, when officials first approved female competition in the Olympics — in one diving and two swimming events — Coubertin was not amused. The controversial decision prompted him to utter this infamous remark: “ Tomorrow, there will probably be women runners, or even women football players. If such sports are played by women, should they be a proper spectacle to offer the audience that an Olympiad brings together? We do not think this maybe claimed to be so.”

It is easy to be critical of Coubertin today, but his attitude was the product of an age when gender roles were more strictly defined and most countries had yet to give women the right to vote. At that time, there was even a debate about whether competitive sports would turn women into men! In the early 1920's, the pace of official acceptance of women's sports was so slow that female athletes felt compelled to try to form their own Olympics. Although the level of women's participation increased more rapidly after the Second World War, the first female International Olympic Committee official was not elected until 1981.

Today, the official International Olympic Committee policy has undergone a complete turnaround, with the Committee acknowledging that “sports belongs to all human beings” and can “help build girls’ and women’s physical and psychological well-being and awareness and, hence, their role in society.” In the Sydney 2000 Games, women’s participation levels were the highest ever.

Despite this progress, the struggle for fair recognition of women’s sports is far from over. However, most people—with the exception of those like Coubertin—would agree that the Sydney Games were another step in the right direction.