
"If We Had Had Our Argentine Team Here!": Football and the 1924 Argentine Olympic Team

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ON NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1924, ARGENTINE SPORTSMEN began to dream of a glorious future. The year 1924 promised new and exciting challenges. The grand expectations were sparked by the creation of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (Argentine Olympic Committee) on New Year's Eve, 1923, an event that revitalized the old hope of securing Argentina's place on the Olympic map.¹ The optimism was in part justified as the new institution managed to send the first official Argentine delegation to the Games of the VIII Olympiad held in Paris in 1924. However, not all of the sportsmen's dreams were fulfilled. Argentina failed to send a football team to Paris, neglecting a sport that by the 1920s had a sixty-year history and was well on its way to becoming the nation's consuming passion.

The enthusiasm for football was not established overnight in Argentina. The institutionalization of the sport and the spread in popularity were gradual and did not progress rapidly. In 1893, three decades after football had been introduced to the country, educator

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Emilio R. Olivé lectured about the benefits of games. Olivé, sketching sports he thought should be included in schools, described at length "all those games that I consider less known among us"²—including football. Ironically, the game he described as football had more elements of rugby than association football. Fourteen years after Olivé's football confusion, Senator Antonio Del Pino referred to the increasing Argentine interest in football and other sports, stating that "it is enough to go out on a holiday to the suburbs of our large city and see a great number of our youth dedicated to the practice of these exercises."³ Football continued to bloom. After having been adopted by the elite, it seduced the poorer classes, giving to the sport a noticeable impulse. *La Nación*, a leading national newspaper, located the early 1900s as the time in which football "started to take root in the popular preferences."⁴ By the 1920s football had gathered in Argentina the indisputable title of "the most popular of our sports."⁵ The 1924 Olympic football tournament generated much interest in Argentina, which made the absence of an Argentine team sorely disappointing, especially after its South American rival Uruguay, which barely made it to Paris due to disagreements among sport officials, won the Olympic gold. In light of the coming Uruguayan and Argentine football glory in the 1928 Olympic games and the first World Cup in 1930, the Argentine failure to send a football team in 1924 was mystifying.

Given the significance of football in the fabric of modern Argentine culture and considering the academic studies concerned with the role of the sport in twentieth-century Argentina, it is surprising how little attention many histories give to the 1924 unsuccessful attempt to field a team in Paris. Most of the scholarly references do not even raise the issue. Those that do attribute the Argentine absence to a serious rift between football's ruling bodies in the early 1920s without exploring the complex negotiations involved in the attempt to include a football team.⁶ Therefore, the current scholarship locates the causes for the football absence exclusively in the dynamics of Argentine football and the discrepancies among football officials.

The rupture in Argentine football bureaucracies undoubtedly influenced the course of events, but larger forces played a decisive role in this story. Indeed, the possibility of fielding a team in Paris served as a terrain where the interests of different groups within the burgeoning Argentine sport structure were contested. The power struggles precipitated in the attempt to control Argentine football and, more generally, to dominate Argentine sport as well as the stubbornness of many sport leaders were equally responsible for the collapse of the football team. Significantly, this was an internal battle between members of the elite who agreed on most political and social issues but used sports to fight over prestige. In addition to the domestic difficulties, the international governing bodies in charge of the organization and supervision of the 1924 Olympic games and its respective tournaments disagreed about how to resolve the Argentine crisis. The disparities between these organizations, their lack of leadership, their pursuit of self-interest, and their double standards damaged any hope of Argentine football pacification.

In spite of the symbolic power that football already possessed in Argentina for the expression of national identity and the construction of a national community during the 1920s as well as the collective desire to participate in the Olympic football tournament, factional interests both within and outside football combined with international recklessness proved an insurmountable challenge. As is the case more often than not, the reality of

the situation in which the social actors were embedded rather than subtle metaphorical representations or potential symbolic victories drove the resolutions of their conflicts. In other words, the desire of certain elite factions to control the sport, a phenomenon that was increasingly becoming a profitable enterprise, and the conditions in which these power struggles unfolded were stronger than the football's perceived capacity to shape national identity. Perhaps, it was the realization by Argentine sport promoters that football was such a powerful narrative tool for the building and invigoration of national cultures that motivated the will to control and benefit from it.⁷

The history of the attempt to form an Argentine Olympic football team in 1924 is relatively short—it goes from January to April—but it involves a tangled network of political twists and turns and a considerable number of institutions and individuals operating in Argentina and abroad. Before exploring the details of this story, the state of football and Olympism in Argentina as well as the relationship between the relevant national and international sport governing bodies need to be summarized. This is crucial to understand the development, intricacy and significance of the failure to send a football team to Paris and its consequences for the embryonic sport structure in Argentina.

Football

The origin of football in Argentina is undeniably linked to its British community and can be traced back to the 1860s. The first match recorded was played in 1867, shortly after British settlers founded the Buenos Aires Football Club. In the next few decades the British community systematized football in their schools and clubs. Apparently, the novel practice did not cause immediate admiration among the native population. At the dawn of Argentine football the sport was referred to as "the game of the crazy Englishmen."⁸ Although it took some years for Argentina to accept the pastime, clubs eventually started to flourish outside the British community. By the end of the nineteenth century football had become an integral part of Argentine culture. Football's growing cultural power could be seen in the diffusion of the game over the country and in the transformation of British football discourses into an Argentine lexicon. After the turn of the century Argentine officials proposed that the language and the name of the existing governing body be changed from English to Spanish.⁹

The Argentine Association Football League was originally formed by the British in 1891 to establish a championship, but it lasted only one season. Two years later Alexander Watson Hutton, a Scottish educator and admirer of football who arrived in South America in 1882, created a second version of the Argentine Association Football League, securing the foundation of organized football in Argentina. In 1903 the governing body changed its name to the Argentine Football Association and affiliated with the Football Association in London. Two teams of the British colony, the Lomas Athletic Club and the Alumni Football Club, dominated the sport from 1893 to 1912. But the British domination of football would soon end. During the latter half of the first decade of the twentieth century the legitimacy of the Argentine Football Association's administration started to be questioned by the local elite, who had taken up the sport as a sign of social status. By 1912 some clubs felt mistreated and underrepresented. In an attempt to keep control, the leaders of the governing body changed its name to the partially Spanish *Asociación Argen-*

tina de Football and affiliated with the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA).¹⁰

Despite those efforts, a group of clubs led by Ricardo C. Aldao, president of the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires Gymnastic and Fencing Club) and a future International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, withdrew from the *Asociación Argentina de Football* and created a dissident association, the *Federación Argentina de Football* (Argentine Football Federation). Aldao presided over the new federation until 1914 when the differences between the two governing bodies healed and the dissidents return to the *Asociación Argentina de Football*. The reconciliation did not last long. In 1919 the *Asociación Argentina* was accused by many of its clubs of arbitrariness in the management of the several leagues under its control. As protests escalated, a group of clubs, including the most powerful, boycotted the meetings of the *Asociación Argentina* and considered disaffiliating themselves from it to create a new governing body.¹¹ The filibuster organized by the disgruntled clubs angered the *Asociación Argentina's* leaders. They expelled six of the protesting clubs from the organization.¹² The *Asociación Argentina's* refusal to reinstate the expelled clubs generated a chain reaction. Seven sympathetic clubs voluntarily left the organization.¹³ At the same time that the *Asociación Argentina* resolved to eject these seven clubs, the thirteen dissident clubs bonded together to create their own league under the name of *Asociación Amateurs de Football* (Amateurs Football Association).¹⁴ Aldao, who was the president of the *Asociación Argentina*, learned about the last developments as he returned from a five-month trip abroad. Obviously the new breakaway, which had no nationalistic overtones and was confined to the Argentine elite vying to control the sport, did not please Aldao.¹⁵

Instead of trying to make peace, Aldao immediately resigned his post as president of the *Asociación Argentina de Football*, making clear that the crisis arose during his absence and that he bore no responsibility for it. He resented that those who had begged him to continue serving the association not long ago in order to secure unity were incapable of living harmoniously. In his letter of resignation Aldao regretted that the events "verify that that the reasons that persuaded me to accept my reelection have disappeared."¹⁶ It seemed that Aldao not only took the rift personally but also thought that his colleagues in the *Asociación Argentina* were to be blamed for it. Aldao's attitude during the failed attempt to send a football team to the 1924 Olympic games would confirm these feelings. In a letter to Count Henri de Baillet-Latour, then the IOC vice-president, Aldao summarized the history of the conflict, clarified the nature of the underlying dispute, and provided his view of it. He recalled that in 1914

the *Asociación Argentina de Football* was, without any doubt, the most important representation of football in our country; however, five years later this situation changed as a consequence of a schism that produced the withdrawal of the great majority (16 out of 20) of the most important clubs, which formed a new institution denominated "*Asociación Amateurs de Football*." . . . According to the general opinion, this last Association is more important than the original.¹⁷

The Argentine press frequently discussed the football deadlock and its origins. Although the press agreed that an amicable solution would be the best for football, criticisms of both associations were evident. Indeed, it was not unusual for newspapers to write

editorials accusing the associations as responsible for the situation. For instance, *La Nación* insisted several times that there was a "need to reach an honorable agreement before a possible disaster obliged other attitudes" and asserted that "the most regrettable is that the division prevents the improvement of the sport."¹⁸ Similarly, *La Vanguardia*, a socialist newspaper, demanded "those who think in the desired union of the football family to call a general assembly, and thus we will know who they are and where is the disagreement."¹⁹ Both Aldao's as well as *La Nación's* and *La Vanguardia's* observations demonstrate the enduring character of the football wrangle. Unlike the previous rift, the 1919 disagreement was much more difficult to resolve.²⁰

In spite of the fragmentations and the institutional unrest, football continued to prosper in Argentina. During the 1910s Argentines took control of the sport not only off the field but on the field as well. Racing Club's 1913 championship, with a team comprised mainly of native stars and only few marginal players of British ancestry, marked the end of the British domination and, as cultural anthropologist Eduardo Archetti has noted, served as the mythological foundation of a national playing style.²¹ The process of native appropriation of football in Argentina involved a gradual departure from the style and qualities of play emphasized by the British. Throughout the 1910s, as Racing Club emerged as the dominant football power, Argentines increasingly recognized a style that was their own—one that left behind British values such as kick-and-run and physical strength and, according to Archetti, made a "cult of 'dribbling' . . . and the crystallization of a style defined as elegant, skilful, cheeky and lively."²² Argentines portrayed this technique as more artistic and effective than the British style. They claimed their new style embodied qualities inherent in the Argentine national character such as spontaneity, improvisation, and creativity.

The construction of a national playing style transcended the way in which footballers met and resolved the skillful challenges encountered in a football match. The native style functioned as a catalyst of larger cultural forces at play in Argentine society directly associated with the invention of modern Argentina. That is, borrowing from sport historian Mark Dyreson, this style of play was a narrative about the meaning of Argentine culture that Argentines would repetitively tell themselves.²³ In that sense football signified much more than a complex test of physical skills. Throughout the twentieth century football functioned as a social technology for advancing political and cultural agendas. Cultural analyst Pablo Alabarces has indicated that it is precisely during the 1920s that football started to exert a significant role in the construction of the Argentine national identity. The bonds tying together the nation and football worked hand in glove, or more accurately foot in cleat, with the different state narratives.²⁴ After the mythological foundation of the national playing style, football was used as a cultural form that could showcase a pluralistic, modern, urbanized, and westernized Argentine society. Juan Carlos Palacios, president of the exclusive *Club Universitario de Buenos Aires* (University Club of Buenos Aires), declared during the 1924 Olympic games that "sport will be one of our great means of international propaganda."²⁵ By the 1920s many Argentines believed that the national playing style, with its symbolic connotations, was ready to make a successful appearance in the football international arena.²⁶

While in Argentina football and nationalism were merging, the international governance of the game steadily advanced. Established in 1904 by representatives of seven

European countries, FIFA's beginnings witnessed a serious challenge by the British Football Associations to control the institution. In spite of this problem FIFA set firm roots and elected the French lawyer Jules Rimet as its president in 1921. Rimet, who led the institution for more than thirty years, faced the highly sensitive issue of amateurism versus professionalism and campaigned for a world championship. Both of these efforts produced visible tension within the IOC. Against this backdrop Argentina's attempt to send a team to the 1924 Olympic games unfolded. Significantly, Rimet did not favor the creation of continental associations "because it ran contrary to his notion of FIFA as a single 'family.'"²⁷ Contrary to Rimet's desires four South American countries led the creation of the *Confederación Sudamericana de Football* (South American Football Confederation) in 1916.²⁸ Uruguayan educator and politician Héctor Rivadavia Gómez envisioned the new organization "as a powerful governing center which would reduce the danger of the kind of breakaway currently seen in Argentina."²⁹ Clearly, the *Confederación Sudamericana* was created to keep regional football unified. However, despite lofty rhetoric, major splits continued to affect South American football throughout the 1920s and 1930s.³⁰

Olympism

The disorderly development of a national football organization and the construction of a football national playing style were contemporary with the diffusion of Olympism in Argentina. In 1894, José B. Zubiaur, an educator who was impressed by British sports, was selected for the original IOC's governing council. Zubiaur failed to incorporate the nation into the modern international Olympic games. That task was left to a group of genteel Argentine sportsmen. In the early 1900s, this group started to construct sports—especially football—as a technology that could display to the world what they considered the leading nation in South America, their own Argentina. In this context, the Olympic games were perceived as the stage upon which the progress of the vibrant nation could be exhibited. After unsuccessful attempts from 1908 to 1920 to establish a National Olympic Committee and send Olympic delegations, this aristocratic group finally established an effective *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (Argentine Olympic Committee) in 1923.³¹

The *Comité Olímpico Argentino* was born amidst a long and contentious dispute with the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* (Argentine Confederation of Sports) to control sport in the country. Early in 1920 a primitive *Comité* had been founded to try to send the first official Argentine delegation to the Antwerp Olympic games. However, the *Comité's* failure to send a team to Antwerp caused despondency in the Argentine sport community. This disillusion and the perceived inefficiency of the *Comité's* leaders led to the establishment of the *Confederación* in September of 1921. For several months the two institutions fought to erect themselves as the sole leader of Argentine sport. After vague negotiations, the *Comité* was dissolved in 1922. Despite the fact that the *Confederación* had become the supreme sport authority in Argentina, on New Year's Eve 1923, Marcelo T. de Alvear—an IOC member then serving as Argentina's president—forcefully altered power distribution in Argentine sport by establishing the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* by an executive decree.³²

Late in 1923 the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* was embroiled in a profound crisis; due to internal disagreements it had neither president nor secretary. It is not surpris-

ing that some disgruntled but well connected sport leaders found in the escalating criticisms to the *Confederación* a possibility to reclaim control of Argentine sport. Ricardo C. Aldao, the former football leader who had become an IOC member that year, wrote to Count Henri de Baillet-Latour that he had

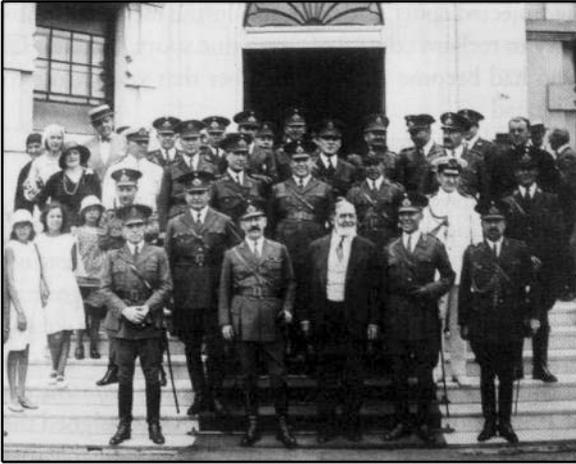
already had several appointments with Mr. President Alvear and prepared the bill and message that he [Alvear] will send to Congress during this week asking for the necessary resources to cover the travel and lodging in Paris of the Argentine officials and athletes that will participate in the next Olympics.³³

Aldao arranged with President Alvear the creation of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*. Coincidentally, the letter of the decree creating the *Comité* established that the governmental action was based on a request made by the leading sport institutions to take the necessary steps to secure a national representation in the upcoming Olympic games. It can be argued that the leading sport institutions meant those opposed to the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*. At the end of 1923, Aldao insisted that "R. Cullen has resigned the presidency of the Confederación Argentina de Deportes, and it seems unquestionable that this organization is not yet ready to assume the direction of the preparations relative to the Argentine presence at the Paris Olympics."³⁴ Alvear's decree put Aldao in charge of the *Comité* and charged it with the organization of an Argentine Olympic team, taking into account all institutions and athletes regardless of their affiliation in order to have the most genuine representation of amateur Argentine sport.³⁵

The *Comité Olímpico Argentino* was created as the IOC attempted to consolidate and globalize its Olympic games. By the early 1920s Baron Pierre de Coubertin, IOC founder and president, and his associates had embarked on a campaign to expand participation in the Olympic games and representation in the IOC.³⁶ To accomplish its goal the IOC decided to promote regional competitions with the hope that it would boost interest in the Olympic movement. One of the competitions that was recognized and placed under the patronage of the IOC was the Brazilian *Olimpiadas Latinoamericanas* (Latin American Olympics), an event held in 1922 to celebrate Brazil's centennial. The Brazilian organizers invited Coubertin to preside over the *Olimpiadas Latinoamericanas*. Although Coubertin could not attend the festival, Vice-president Baillet-Latour replaced him as the IOC representative. Baillet-Latour not only attended the games but also traveled as a goodwill ambassador throughout the Americas promoting Olympism.³⁷ His goals were to secure the creation of National Olympic Committees and participation in the 1924 Paris Olympic games. In the case of Argentina and Uruguay, Baillet-Latour's mission proved successful.

An Ephemeral Agreement for the 1924 Olympic Football Team

Under the leadership of Ricardo C. Aldao, the newly founded *Comité Olímpico Argentino* started the preparations to send the Olympic delegation to Paris. On January 4, 1924, the five-person institution held its first official meeting with five guest sport federations—boxing, rowing, fencing, polo and tennis.³⁸ During the meeting the federations were informed of the *Comité's* purposes, and it was decided that they could start trials in their respective sports. In the followings days the *Comité* requested the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*—which was in a state of astonishment due to the creation of the *Comité*—and all other sport federations to cooperate with its efforts to organize the Olym-



Event at the Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires, 1931. Ricardo C. Aldao, president of the club, is clad in civilian clothes in the front row surrounded by military men. To Aldao's right is Argentina's *de facto* President General José Félix Uriburu. Aldao was president of the following sporting organizations: *Federación Argentina de Football* (1912-1914), *Asociación Argentina de Football* (1918-1919), and *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (1923-1926). He also was IOC member in Argentina (1923-1949) and the first IOC honorary member (1949-1958). COURTESY ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN, BUENOS AIRES.

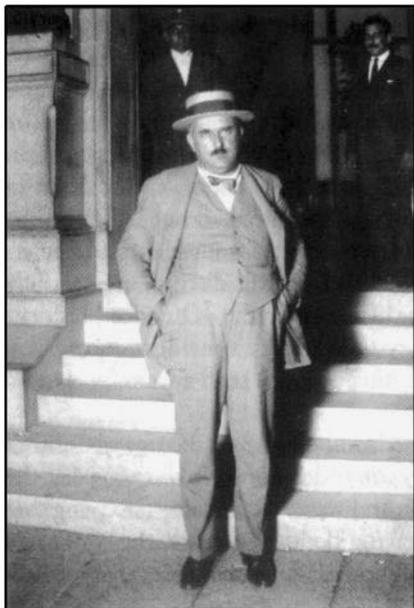
pic delegation. More importantly, Aldao was commissioned to negotiate an agreement so that the thriving but divided Argentine football would be represented in Paris.³⁹ Aldao's role in the old battles for control of Argentine football made him confident he could resolve the situation. Sport officials and aficionados expected that due to the popularity that football had gained in the country, Argentina would field a team that could display its superior style. Argentine participation in the Olympic games was supposed to launch the nation toward international recognition as a football power. An editorial from *La Nación* declared that the Olympics offered "a beautiful opportunity to establish a paragon with the teams of other countries."⁴⁰

The fractious voices of the football community demanded control of the efforts to create a national team. The *Asociación Argentina de Football* announced that it had received an invitation to participate in the Olympic games through the French Olympic Committee, which was in charge of the organization of the Olympic games, on behalf of the French Football Association. But instead of informing the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* of the invitation, it took the news to the rival *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*.⁴¹ Overlooking the *Comité's* plea for cooperation, on January 17, 1924 the *Asociación Argentina* expressed its willingness to accept all resolutions taken by the *Confederación* in relation to the Olympic excursion.⁴² The next day, reinvigorated by the support of other federations, the *Confederación* reorganized itself and constituted a new executive board. Benito Nazar Anchorena, a boxing official and member of the *Comité*, was chosen as the new president.⁴³ The election of Nazar Anchorena was intended as a goodwill gesture to build a fluid channel of communication between the two rival organizations. In the meantime, the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* declared its intention to cooperate with the *Comité*. Knowing that the *Asociación Argentina* wished the arrangements of the Olympic team be made through the *Confederación*, the *Comité* wrote the latter on January 24 asking if it would accept the formation of a special commission to select the Olympic team with players from both associations.⁴⁴

February began as the football factions waited for the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*' answer. If positive, the response would make possible "a faithful representation of the relevance and development that football has acquired in the country."⁴⁵ The silence was broken on February 5, but the news was not good. The *Asociación Argentina de Football*, which was recognized by FIFA, declared that the rules of the latter specified that only players from its affiliated clubs could participate in the Olympic games and that it would control the selection process. During a meeting of the *Confederación* Aldo Cantoni, president of the *Asociación Argentina*, announced that the Olympic football team would not include players from the rival *Asociación Amateurs de Football*. Aldao replied that the French Olympic Committee "will not allow athletes or teams to participate in the Olympic games that have not been authorized by the Comité Olímpico Argentino." Aldao insisted that "we will not send to Paris but the best, who will qualify through open trials."⁴⁶

The tension between the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* and the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* and its affiliates was clear. The former, following the decree by which it was established, maintained that the Olympic delegation had to include the best athletes regardless of their affiliation. The latter was convinced that national and international affiliations could not be overlooked and, more importantly, that the *Comité* was illegitimate—in spite of the fact that it had been created by a presidential decree. Consultations with the

Benito Nazar Anchorena with a background of fencing equipment, 1921. Nazar Anchorena was a member of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (1923-1924) and president of the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* (1924). COURTESY ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN, BUENOS AIRES.



Aldo Cantoni in 1932. Cantoni was twice president of the *Asociación Argentina de Football* (1922-1924 and 1926). COURTESY ARCHIVO GENERAL DE LA NACIÓN, BUENOS AIRES.

IOC, the French Olympic Committee, and FIFA determined that all Olympic teams had to be approved by the *Comité* and that when federations with international recognition existed the teams should be limited to its members. This meant that the *Confederación* could not send teams on its own and that the *Comité* was forced to send a football team endorsed by the *Asociación Argentina de Football*. With the powers of each party clarified, on February 12 the *Comité* insisted on forming a special commission "constituted by delegates of the two governing bodies, [and] presided over by someone who offers the necessary guarantee of capacity and impartiality" to secure Argentine football "the success that it deserves in the upcoming Olympic Games."⁴⁷

The *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* rejected the *Comité Olímpico Argentino's* plan and on February 13 decided to send a commission led by Cantoni to negotiate a solution to the football situation with the *Comité*. If the negotiations failed, the commission would seek the intervention of the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction—which the executive decree that had created the *Comité* designated to arbitrate if problems arose.⁴⁸ The two parties met the next day but the many hours of talk—during which there were mutual accusations of a lack of patriotism—did not resolve the struggles. The *Comité* promised that it would announce a definitive solution in the following days.⁴⁹ Alleging that it had not received a list of potential Olympic footballers promised by the *Asociación Argentina de Football*, the *Comité* cancelled its February 15 meeting and delayed action until February 20.⁵⁰ The stalemate was all the *Confederación's* commission needed to visit the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, Antonio Sagarna, to submit a letter expressing surprise that the government had created the *Comité*, complaining about the *Comité's* actions, and asking Sagarna to intervene in order to find a solution.⁵¹ Aldao replied to the *Confederation's* visit to the minister by personally informing President Marcelo T. de Alvear about the disputes between the *Comité* and the *Confederación*.⁵²

Apparently President Alvear told Aldao to put an end to the disagreement. Although on the next day, February 20, the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* reprimanded the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* because it "should not have resorted to the Minister before receiving our pending answer,"⁵³ it also requested the *Asociación Argentina de Football* to organize and supervise the football selection process. The *Comité* believed that this procedure could obtain "the cooperation of all interested in the success of the Argentine participation in the Paris Olympic Games."⁵⁴ The proposal advanced by the *Comité* was the result of domestic as well as international pressure. Aldao, who apparently had not informed the IOC about the latest developments, received a confidential letter from Henri de Baillet-Latour letting him know that the IOC was aware of the football discord and tactfully suggesting that Aldao find a way to make peace. In his letter the IOC vice-president implored Aldao "to make use of all your diplomacy to flatten this incident and, if you cannot achieve it, [I] advise you to decide that Argentina does not send a team."⁵⁵ Under the IOC pressure, the *Comité* gave in.

The *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* reacted exuberantly to the news; Cantoni was especially pleased with the *Comité Olímpico Argentino's* decision. On the same day, the *Confederación* expressed to the *Comité* its satisfaction and wrote to the minister saying that the conflict was over. In accordance with the changing political climate, the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* also accepted the *Comité's* resolution. It appeared, then, that football

trials would soon be conducted. The media quickly spread the news; the next day's sport pages announced the rapprochement.⁵⁶ Argentines began to dream that they would be represented by a national football team in Paris.

Unfortunately, the agreement lasted just twenty-four hours. While the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* was satisfied with the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes'* acceptance of its proposal, the former also expected a gentlemanly gesture from the latter—the withdrawal of the *Confederación's* February 18 letter to Minister Sagarna. The *Confederación's* reluctance to do so prompted a reactionary response by the *Comité*, which wrote to the minister. Aware of the potential consequences, Nazar Anchorena had proposed to his colleagues in the *Confederación* that they dismiss their letter. At the same time he tried to dissuade Aldao from retaliating. Nazar Anchorena's parley proved futile.⁵⁷ On February 21, the *Comité's* letter was dispatched. It attacked the *Confederación's* alleged attempt to monopolize sport.⁵⁸ The letter shocked the *Confederación*, forcing Nazar Anchorena to resign his post in both the *Comité* and the *Confederación*.⁵⁹

Nazar Anchorena blamed Aldao for the collapse of the agreement, stating that "the harmony and concordance so difficultly reached have been affected . . . with the note of the president of the Olympic Committee."⁶⁰ Aldao might have thought that if the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* did not reply to the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes'* accusations, it could be an implicit acceptance of the charges against it. Such an admission could risk losing power. But Aldao's reaction might have also been motivated by a refusal to grant the right to form the football team to the *Asociación Argentina de Football*—from which he had resigned as president four years earlier. In an attempt to straighten things out, a week later the *Confederación* wrote back to the minister accusing the *Comité* of intransigence and clarifying that it was willing to find a solution to the football crisis.⁶¹

Given Baillet-Latour's instructions to Aldao, it seemed logical that the IOC would scorn the *Comité Olímpico Argentino's*, and particularly Aldao's, behavior. However, a letter by Baillet-Latour to Frantz Reichel, secretary general of both the French Olympic Committee and the Games Executive Committee, reveals the IOC's lax attitude towards Aldao's *Comité*. Baillet-Latour explained that "this is a ridiculous situation, which has to be solved in the future. Prisoners of the current rules, we have to act with prudence, without hurting the feelings of the interested federation, always protecting the dignity of the National Olympic Committee."⁶² Baillet-Latour saw Aldao's *Comité* as Argentina National Olympic Committee. For Baillet-Latour the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes'* refusal to withdraw the letter to the minister after the *Comité* had agreed to a solution was an unnecessary affront. Therefore, in the eyes of the IOC, Aldao's response had not been out of place. The French Olympic Committee did not appreciate the IOC's patronizing of Aldao and the Argentine *Comité*, and this favoritism led to an international disagreement about the method to resolve the Argentine football situation.

If a solution could not be reached in Argentina, the French Olympic Committee hoped that the IOC would vigorously push the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* to support the *Asociación Argentina de Football*.⁶³ In other words, the French Olympic Committee did not see any reason not to twist the arm of the *Comité* and secure one more entry in the Olympic football tournament. On the other hand, the IOC thought it inappropriate to

impose a solution if an agreement was elusive. The IOC decided that Argentine football participation was not possible. In a note distilling his Eurocentric biases, Baillet-Latour repeated his protection of the *Comité's* interests explaining that

I have seen the South American [National Sport] Federations in action; they cannot be compared to the European [National Sport] Federations and it would be very imprudent to force by any means the National Olympic Committees to blindly bend in front of them; it would also be to take away from them all authority.⁶⁴

Baillet-Latour's paternalistic attitude towards the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* was typical of IOC's policies of expansion in Latin America. The IOC was hoping that after Baillet-Latour's extensive 1922-1923 Latin American ambassadorial tour, regional participation in the Olympic games and active involvement in the Olympic movement would increase. To accomplish that it needed operational and stable national Olympic committees as well as loyal and efficient IOC members. Therefore, there was no reason to alienate Aldao and President Alvear, who had been IOC members for a short time and, more importantly, had created a new national Olympic committee. Although Baillet-Latour indicated that he could not understand why the *Asociación Argentina de Football* did not belong to the *Comité*, the inclusion of an additional sport in the delegation, even if it was the most popular in the country, was not worth risking the whole project. Forcing the *Comité* to submit to the *Asociación Argentina*, the IOC understood, was beyond what could be reasonably asked. The goal was to plant Argentina on the Olympic map—football was expendable.

All Prospects of a 1924 Olympic Football Team Collapse

Despite their mutual accusations, the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* turned a blind eye to the recent developments and continued working under the spirit of its February 20 proposal. On March 1, it requested from the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* a list of footballers to be presented to the *Asociación Argentina de Football*.⁶⁵ Ten days later, on March 12, the *Comité* forwarded the list and reminded the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* that due to the April 3 deadline to register the Olympic football team, it was expected that a definitive Argentine roster would be ready on March 31 at the latest.⁶⁶ In the meantime, in response to the last *Confederación* letter, President Marcelo T. de Alvear had by fiat resolved all problems between the two institutions. His decree demanded "everybody to have a spirit of concordance and cooperation for the best success of the Argentine participation in the world championship."⁶⁷ For the second time in two weeks, the Buenos Aires newspapers announced that the conflict was resolved.⁶⁸

President Alvear's attempt to pour oil on the troubled waters of Argentine football failed. On March 20 the *Asociación Argentina de Football* insisted that the players proposed by the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* through the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* had to first officially join the *Asociación Argentina* to be considered in the trials.⁶⁹ The conflict not only reappeared but also escalated. After numerous telegrams between Buenos Aires and Paris, the French Organizing Committee concluded that if a football agreement was not possible, the only solution would be for Argentina to refrain sending a team.⁷⁰ The IOC's interests and the hope that a solid *Comité* would solve this type of conflict in the

future prevailed over arguments of principle. The French Organizing Committee only accepted the IOC's take on the issue because it prevented "an incident with some [National Sport] Federations that are not in a hurry to second the Olympic power."⁷¹ The IOC and the French believed that they were steering a neutral course. However, neither the IOC nor the French Organizing Committee wanted to be the one informing the Argentines about the news and risk being seen as responsible for the exclusion of Argentina's football team.⁷² Once again the IOC was more convincing than the French Organizing Committee. On March 21 Frantz Reichel telegraphed Ricardo C. Aldao specifying that "we beg [you] with sadness to give up the football tournament."⁷³ In Europe this policy was considered as the best strategy simply because it minimized the risk of producing more harm to the Olympic team. However, as could be expected, in the eyes of the Argentines it was problematic—especially for the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*.

What the French Organizing Committee proposed for the football crisis intensified the dispute over affiliation affecting other Argentine sports and greatly angered some officials within the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*.⁷⁴ On March 24 the *Confederación* accused the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* of authoritarianism and made a radical decision: it cabled the IOC denouncing the irregular constitution of the *Comité* and requesting to be recognized as the sole Olympic authority in Argentina.⁷⁵ The news had international repercussions. The *New York Times* reported that the split "threatens to prevent Argentina's participation in many of the Olympic events in Paris."⁷⁶

The *Confederación Argentina de Deportes'* ploy for Olympic recognition ignited a reaction from the *Asociación Amateurs de Football*. On March 26 it severely criticized the *Confederación's* action and gave its support to the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*—which they claimed understood the "true aspirations of our people." In addition, inspired by "healthy principles of patriotism" the *Asociación Amateurs* offered its players to form the Olympic football team.⁷⁷ The next day, the *Asociación Amateurs* cabled FIFA praising its achievement and asked it to investigate the state of football in the Americas.⁷⁸ The *Asociación Argentina de Football* also wrote to FIFA, claiming that the *Asociación Amateurs'* arguments were false.⁷⁹ More importantly, hoping that the *Confederación* would obtain IOC recognition, it organized a trial game on March 31 to select its own Olympic squad. At kick-off time the teams were not complete, and the game ended in failure.⁸⁰ But the *Comité* was not tormented by the latest developments since it knew that the IOC would back it up. On April 3 the *Comité* wrote the *Confederación* that the time to register the Olympic football team had expired and took the opportunity to blame it and the *Asociación Argentina* because they had not taken steps

for the most popular sport in our country to have the participation that so legitimately corresponds to it. . . . This *Comité* deeply deplores that the *Confederación* and the *Asociación Argentina de Football* have wasted the efforts made in order that our 'footballers' participate in the tournaments of the VIII Olympiad.⁸¹

Three days later, on April 7, the *Asociación Argentina de Football* responded that it had always provided its "most ample and determined patriotic and sportive cooperation."⁸² The *Asociación Argentina* disregarded the *Comité Olímpico Argentino's* accusations and held the *Comité* responsible for the failure to field a team in Paris. After its declarations, the

Asociación Argentina wrote a letter to the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* saying that it would provide provisional affiliation to non-affiliated footballers to solve all disagreements and not to be seen as uncompromising. Ironically, during the *Confederación's* meeting in which the letter was read, the *Asociación Argentina* considered all negotiations to send a football team to Paris closed.⁸³ At this point, words were only meant to wash hands of the football failure.

After Argentine officials realized that sending a football team would not be possible, the French Organizing Committee complained to the IOC about Aldao's and President Alvear's management of national Olympic affairs and its permissive attitude towards them. The French Organizing Committee feared that if rules continued to be overlooked it would lose all South American cooperation. The French organizers also resented being considered responsible for the situation. In a letter to Henri de Baillet-Latour, Reichel complained:

It is inadmissible that the Olympic rules are not respected by those who must enforce them, and it is even more irritating that this state of affairs creates a situation of conflict, extremely grave, extremely unpleasant, and for which we are held partly responsible. . . . I estimate that it is necessary that from the high international Olympic direction, that is upon yours and Coubertin's initiative, a true intimation be made to M. de Alvear and Aldao, to follow, in the Olympic interest and the interest of the sporting cause, the rules.⁸⁴

Baillet-Latour agreed that the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* should respect the rights of the Argentine Sport Federations affiliated to their international counterparts. However, he defended the *Comité* stating that "the value of these National Federations is null and is on this basis that it has been judged impossible in the first place to trust them the organization of the Argentine participation in the Olympic Games."⁸⁵ Moreover, Baillet-Latour argued that the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* had not behaved any better. To appease the French Organizing Committee, the IOC Executive Board sent a letter to Aldao and President Alvear clarifying, once again, the rights and duties of the National Sport Federations to prevent further complications. Not surprisingly, the IOC Executive Board, albeit not happy with the situation, recommended preventing the *Confederación* from pointing out that the *Comité* had been established by a process that contravened the rules of the IOC. Finally, the *Comité* was encouraged to include all the National Sport Federations in its structure and make every effort to instill in them the Olympic spirit.⁸⁶

It could be argued that the IOC did not practice what it preached. From this view the creation and development of Olympic structures in the region were goals that allowed, although grudgingly, these kind of contradictions. Conversely, it could be argued that the IOC learned too late about the way in which the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* was created and that its best option was to call for reform after the 1924 Paris games. Maybe the IOC's response to the football situation in Argentina reflected a compromise between these two poles. The pressure mounted by the IOC accelerated the transformation of the *Comité* as the IOC's rules stipulated.⁸⁷ In the meantime, Aldao felt compelled to justify his role in the football crisis. After summarizing his account of the events he claimed that "the Asociación Argentina de Football imposed upon us the need to decide the elimination of that sport in the next Olympic Games in Paris. We are very sorry."⁸⁸ Placating the IOC, Aldao promised that he and President Alvear would in the future spare no effort to orga-

nize Argentine sport—including football—in conformity with the precepts of the IOC. That reorganization occurred in time for the next Olympic games at Amsterdam in 1928.⁸⁹

Conclusions

The prospect of the participation of a football team in the 1924 Olympic games created great expectations in Argentina. By that time English influence had waned in Argentine football, and the sport had been appropriated as the national pastime. The process of appropriation, which included a shift in power to the local elite and a massive cultural transformation, generated a different way of conceiving football—one that was embodied in a national playing style. This style was believed to be not only different from foreign styles but also of superior quality. Moreover, it served as a narrative tool that helped shape the rise of Argentine self-awareness as a unique people and thus nurtured a growing sense of nationalism. The Argentine playing style was meant to showcase the changes in Argentine society, including economic development, the assimilation of immigrants, the progressive inclusion of the masses in the political life of the country, and the decline of political conservatism. In short, football was constructed as a story that reflected a modern Argentine society—one that followed the precepts of, and belonged to, the "civilized" Western world. For many in Argentina the absence of a team in Paris was disappointing. The disappointment grew greater after Uruguay not only managed to send a team to Paris in the eleventh hour but also won the Olympic football tournament.

In the mid 1920s Uruguayan football was as much divided as Argentine football. The two rival governing bodies were the *Asociación Uruguaya de Football* (Uruguayan Football Association), which was recognized by FIFA and the *Federación Uruguaya de Football* (Uruguayan Football Federation). The prospect of Olympic football participation generated similar power struggles to those that raged in Argentina. The *Comité Olímpico Uruguayo* (Uruguayan Olympic Committee), which had been created upon the initiative of the IOC member in the country, Francisco Ghigliani, in October of 1923, wished to form a team with the best footballers irrespective of their affiliation. When this proved impossible because of the *Asociación Uruguaya's* refusal to include players from the rival *Federación Uruguaya* on the Olympic team, the *Comité* voted not to be represented in the Olympic football tournament. Although a team of the *Asociación Uruguaya* had been shipped to Europe a few days before this decision, it looked like Uruguay would not make its Olympic football debut.⁹⁰

The decision taken by the *Comité Olímpico Uruguayo* infuriated Ghigliani, who believed that international affiliations should be honored. To secure the participation of the team en route to Europe, he made a radical decision. Ghigliani dissolved the *Comité* and registered the team with the French organizers, who quickly accepted the registration a few days before the April 3 deadline. The IOC member's authoritarian behavior horrified the constituency of the Uruguayan *Comité* as well as the Uruguayan media but not the IOC. In spite of the *Comité's* letter to IOC president Pierre de Coubertin, complaining about Ghigliani's contravention of all Olympic and moral principles, the Uruguayan football team proceeded to Paris as if nothing had happened—another proof of the contradictory nature of the IOC's politics in South America.⁹¹ In Paris, the Uruguayan side dominated the Olympic tournament from start to finish, scoring twenty goals and allowing only two.

Although the press unanimously acclaimed the Uruguayan feat, the maneuvers that allowed the presence of the team in Paris were hardly mentioned.⁹²

The Uruguayan victory was widely praised in Argentina. In fact, the Argentine press portrayed it as a *rioplatense* achievement—an expression that originates in the fact that Uruguay and Argentina share the shores of the River Plate and refers to a shared identity. Argentines interpreted the Uruguayan Olympic gold as the manifestation of a playing style that represented their common way of playing and living football. The Uruguayan victory was seen—one could even say appropriated—as Argentine. An editorial in *La Nación* made this clear, proclaiming that “we would not be totally sincere if we would not also subscribe to the pride that involves us when thinking that the name of our country is associated . . . to the notoriety that the victory . . . gives to our neighbors.”⁹³ Likewise, an editorial in *La Vanguardia*, announced, “From today on, South America, and above all the countries of the [River] Plate, will be known in the world for the proficiency, tenacity, and physical vigor of their sportsmen.”⁹⁴ However, in spite of the fraternal rhetoric, the widespread feeling in Argentina was that an Argentine representative could have seriously challenged the Uruguayan side. After all, the Argentines reasoned, five of the seven South American Championship played until 1923 were dominated by either Uruguay or Argentina. In four occasions Uruguay won the championship while Argentina was second. Moreover, the argument went, the fact that the Uruguayans footballers traveled to Paris while the Argentines remained at home was to some degree fortuitous.

Argentine footballers agreed that they could have done well in Paris. They also condemned football officials, venting their disappointment with the whole affair. Américo Miguel Tesorieri, goaltender of both Club Atlético Boca Juniors and the national team, declared:

The campaign carried out by the Uruguayans is magnificent and it rejoices me. I would have liked to be in Paris with the Argentine team to play the Olympic tournament's final match. . . . It is essential that our officials learn once and for all. They have to choose a team in due time without thinking of useless factions in order to reach the unity of action.⁹⁵

Respected retired footballers such as Jorge Brown, who had a long history with the Argentine game and was a star during the early era of organized football in the country, also blamed the football officials. Brown lamented that

there are too many factional preoccupations, too much passion for their own things and it is difficult that those who have in their hands the general direction [of the sport] to lay down their weapons in order to achieve the constitution of representative teams with the clearest sporting notion and the best nationalistic sentiment.⁹⁶

Frustration was also manifested internationally. Jules Rimet, president of FIFA, warned, “I trust the Argentines will reflect about the inconveniences of being absent in a sporting tournament of this nature.” Rimet declared that a victory in Olympic arenas “is the best propaganda for any country, specially for the new countries little known in Europe.”⁹⁷ After 1924 the Argentine elite agreed with Rimet that an Olympic victory would advertise the nation as a progressive and modern culture that deserved a place as the leader of a vibrant and developing South America in the global political universe that existed before World War II. In their view, the international success of a nation's athletes—especially

football teams, with their capacity to amalgamate collective dreams and aspirations—would also produce a discourse of belonging and legitimize this cultural form as a catalyst for common identity. Argentine Minister of Agriculture Tomás Le Bretón gave expression to this idea when before the Uruguay-Netherlands semifinal match at the Paris Olympics he exclaimed, "if we had had our Argentine team here!"⁹⁸ Le Bretón, who was negotiating better prices for Argentine staples,⁹⁹ lamented the lost chances to make political use of potential Argentine football success in Europe.

If the Argentine elite agreed with Rimet that an Olympic victory in football would have advertised the nation to the rest of the world, why it did not field a football team in Paris? It was not simply due to incompetence. The *Comité Olímpico Argentino* managed to set up Olympic teams in eleven sports and even harvest its first gold medal—in polo. The shattering of the Argentine footballers' 1924 New Year Day's dreams partly lies in the bitter struggle between the *Asociación Argentina de Football* and the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* to control the sport after the 1919 split. In spite of the several attempts to pacify the situation, the distance between the two organizations grew bigger over the years. When the chance to participate in the 1924 Olympic games presented itself, the rival bodies saw an exceptional opportunity to legitimize themselves locally and internationally as the sole leader of Argentine football. That led to the *Asociación Argentina's* insistence that its affiliation with FIFA had to be respected and the *Asociación Amateurs'* claim that due to the number of clubs under its wing and its outstanding league it constituted the true representation of national football. Not surprisingly, the latter solicited FIFA to investigate and reevaluate the situation with the hope that it would be granted FIFA's recognition. The players themselves, as their testimonies indicate, simply wanted the rift fixed so they could play on the world stage.

The creation of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, seen by its rivals as illegitimate, and consequently resented and contested by the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*, is also partly responsible for the inability to send a football team to Paris in 1924. The tension between the *Comité* and the *Confederación* created a scenario within which the differences between the rival football organizations could vie for national supremacy. But in turn, the football discord became the contesting terrain in which the *Comité* and the *Confederación* fought to govern Argentine sport at large. In a sense, when the football organizations pledged allegiance to either one of the two competing structures the differences were even more difficult to negotiate. In fact, when the *Asociación Argentina de Football* and the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* seemed to have reached a compromise, the relentless intransigence of the *Comité* and the *Confederación* scuttled the negotiations. It appears as if Ricardo C. Aldao and the different leaders of the *Confederación* were convinced that, in spite of their public rhetoric, the football team would be selected their way or not chosen at all. Supposedly, it was the refusal to withdraw a letter sent by the *Confederación* to the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, which the *Comité* wanted withdrawn because of its alleged falseness, that made the football agreement collapse. Interestingly, although the letter was not withdrawn, eleven other sport teams found their way to Paris. This suggests that Aldao never forgot the circumstances under which he resigned in late 1919 as president of the *Asociación Argentina*. Once it was officially known that football would not field a team, plans to organize the Olympic delegation began to gain ground.

The football controversy was also influenced, if not constrained, by the IOC's 1920s project of globalization. Arguably, in the attempt to secure the first Argentine Olympic team in Paris and with the hope of stabilizing a new and needed national Olympic committee, the IOC endured the *Comité Olímpico Argentino's* overlooking of the rules. Whether or not the *Comité* would have accepted fielding a team made up only with footballers affiliated to FIFA's recognized *Asociación Argentina de Football* if forced by the IOC is only speculation. The fact is that despite the French Olympic Committee's and the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes'* complaints about the method followed to create the *Comité* and President Marcelo T. de Alvear's and Aldao's disregard for Olympic rules, the IOC did not compel the Argentines to enforce those rules. Most probably, the IOC thought that the Argentine situation called for special treatment. To their credit the IOC later asked Alvear and Aldao to comply with the IOC constitution. However, when added to the football imbroglio in Argentina, the IOC's protection of the *Comité* made the chances for a football team in the Paris Olympic Games even slimmer. The fact that Rimet was a vice-president of the Olympic Games Executive Committee and had to balance the interests of the Olympic games with those of his own sport might have prevented him from advocating more diligently the presence of an Argentine football team in Paris.

An Argentine football team was not present in Paris because of the tension between the two national governing bodies, the long dispute between the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* and the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes*, and the contradictions of the IOC's politics of expansion. In a sense, football was also a victim of its own success. By the 1920s many Argentines had already realized the relationship between football and political culture. The notion that football, with its mass popularity and relationship to the construction of national identity, could be used to advance all kinds of social and political agendas was increasingly accepted among the elite. No wonder then that the *Comité* and its allied *Asociación Amateurs de Football* accused the *Confederación* and its allied *Asociación Argentina de Football* of unpatriotic actions, and vice versa. Presumably, the side perceived by the public to be responsible for the Olympic football failure would lose their favor. The motivation for state involvement in sport matters—specifically football—is clear. It was beneficial, directly or indirectly for sport officials, individual politicians, and the state to establish control over Argentine sports—and especially over the national pastime of football.

To control Argentine sports meant to no small degree to control football. It is no coincidence that President Alvear decreed the establishment of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, chose members of his ruling party—the *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union)—to administer it, and inaugurated a state policy of financial support for the *Comité*. At this juncture of Argentine political history, even with the advent of universal suffrage during the 1910s—a political reform pushed for by the *Unión Cívica Radical*, there was no clear opposition between President Alvear's party interests and the elite's interests.¹⁰⁰ However, the overwhelming presence of President Alvear's party members in the *Comité* raises questions about whether some of the animosity in this story is based on partisan or personal politics rather than class location. Although some political infighting could have played a role in the battle to send an Argentine football team to Paris, there is no evidence that factional politics drove or dominated the dispute. The lack of a direct and overt

political overtone in the affair could be attributed to the prevailing ethic in sport circles of the time, stipulating that general political conflicts should not intrude into the realm of sport.¹⁰¹ The attempt to control the sport structure was an elite fight among factions for prestige rather than an ideological or populist issue. Like other presidents of his era, President Alvear was not an all-powerful president and was often caught in battles among the powerful elites. However, the 1924 Olympic episode could be seen as the embryonic stage of a political practice that would progressively gain momentum in Argentina—the manipulation of sport to conquer mass support.¹⁰²

Domestic disputes to control football did not disappear in the 1920s, but Argentina would be present in Olympic and World Cup tournaments after 1924. The popular and nationalistic outbursts that the 1924 respective football and polo gold medals prompted in Uruguay and Argentina convinced politicians and football officials that international victories were advantageous. Rimet's words after Uruguay's Olympic victory in 1924 were prophetic. "Once again I deplore the absence of the Argentines in the Olympic football tournament, and trust they will be present in the IX Olympiad,"¹⁰³ the FIFA president declared. Everybody in Argentina understood the message. In 1928 Argentina and Uruguay met in the Olympic final; in 1930, the two nations had a rematch in the first World Cup final. Both were won by Uruguay. With the Olympic and World Cup clashes between the *rioplatense* rivals came popular and nationalistic demonstrations as well as new power struggles.



¹For an account of Argentina's early hope to participate in the Olympic Games see Cesar R. Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements: The Early History of Olympism in Argentina," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18 (2001): 59-92; and idem, "Ideas encontradas: la educación física y el deporte en el debate parlamentario sobre la participación argentina en los Juegos Olímpicos de 1908," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 11 (2002) : 117-142.

²*El Monitor de la Educación Común* 236 (1893): 366.

³*Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Senadores— Año 1907* (Buenos Aires: La Patria degli Italiani, 1907), tomo 1,470.

⁴*La Nación* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *La Nación*), 2 July 1924, p. 6.

⁵*La Prensa* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *La Prensa*), 6 April 1924, p. 24. For a description of this process see Julio Frydenberg, "Redefinición del fútbol aficionado y del fútbol oficial: Buenos Aires, 1912," in *Deporte y Sociedad*, eds. Pablo Alabarces, Julio Frydenberg and Roberto Di Giano (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1998), 51-65.

⁶See Tony Mason, *Passion of the People? Football in South America* (London: Verso, 1995), 34-35, 46-47; Eduardo Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo and Tango in Argentina* (London: Berg, 1999), 61-63; Héctor Chaponick, *Historia del fútbol argentino*, 3 vols. (Buenos Aires: Eiffel, 1955), 1: 139, 2: 283-286; and Jorge Iwanczuk, *Historia del fútbol amateur en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1993), 143, 145, 387.

⁷The following excerpts by football officials exemplify this realization. The use of nationalistic language as well as the emphasis on the power of sport to promote moral values is revealing. In mid 1924, Virgilio Tedín Uriburu, then president of the *Asociación Argentina de Football* (Argentine Football Association), declared in relation to football victories that they "are the real expression of a vigorous youth, animated by lofty purposes, and by an ample vision of the future, forged based on sport." Tedín Uriburu also claimed that in addition to being energetic, determined, and vigorous, Argentine footballers "had one more thing, that in the sporting language is called 'heart,' that is to say enthusiasm and an irrevocable faith in the triumph." See *La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 3. Likewise, in 1919, Ricardo C.

Aldao, who among his many positions in Argentine sport also served as president of the aforementioned football association, said that the work of the association must have a real impact "in the moral and physical education of our youth" (*La Prensa*, 22 September 1919, p. 12).

⁸See, for example, Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sport and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 57-58; Osvaldo Bayer, *Fútbol argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1990), 18; Eduardo Galeano, *Football in Sun and Shadow* (New York: Verso, 1997), 26-27; and Juan José de Soiza Reilly, "Recuerdos del fútbol del tiempo viejo," in *Literatura de la pelota*, ed. Roberto Jorge Santoro (Buenos Aires: Editorial Papeles de Buenos Aires, 1971), 34-36.

⁹For the development of football in Argentina see Eduardo Olivera, *Orígenes de los deportes británicos en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: L. J. Rosso, 1932), 21-37; Ricardo Hogg, *Yerba vieja* (Buenos Aires: Julio Suárez, 1945), 264-272; Andrew Graham-Yooll, *The Forgotten Colony: A History of the English-Speaking Communities in Argentina* (Buenos Aires: L.O.L.A., 1999), 180-182; and Mason, *Passion of the People?* 1-26.

¹⁰See Ariel Scher and Héctor Palomino, *Fútbol: pasión de multitudes y de elites* (Buenos Aires: CISEA, 1988), 19-26; Olivera, *Orígenes*, 30-34; Mason, *Passion of the People?* 1-7, 46-47; Chaponick, *Historia del fútbol argentino*, 1: 29, 38-39; and Iwanczuk, *Historia del fútbol amateur en la Argentina*, 33-37, 55-56, 99-101.

¹¹*La Prensa*, 14 July 1919, p. 11; 18 July 1919, p. 14; 20 August 1919, p. 15. The clubs that met to consider disaffiliation were: Racing Club, River Plate, Platense, Independiente, Estudiantes, Defensores de Belgrano, San Lorenzo de Almagro, Tigre, Sportivo Barracas, Estudiantil Porteño, Huracán, and Atlanta.

¹²*La Prensa*, 31 August 1919, p. 12; 10 September 1919, p. 14. The clubs expelled were: Racing Club, River Plate, Independiente, Estudiantil Porteño, Platense, and Tigre.

¹³*La Prensa*, 11 September 1919, p. 14; 17 September 1919, p. 13; 18 September 1919, p. 13. The clubs were: San Lorenzo de Almagro, San Isidro, Atlanta, Sportivo Barracas, Defensores de Belgrano, Estudiantes, and Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata.

¹⁴The new association was created on September 22, 1919, but its definitive constitution was approved in late December 1919. Other clubs, most notably Vélez Sársfield, joined the *Asociación Amateurs de Football* after its creation. Despite the word "amateur" in the name of the new association, it is not clear whether the rift had its origin or any relationship to the amateurism-professionalism dilemma. See *La Prensa*, 19 September 1919, p. 12; 20 September 1919, p. 13; 25 November 1919, p. 13; 23 September 1919, p. 14; 8 October 1919, p. 13; 10 October 1919, p. 16; 14 October 1919, p. 14; and 23 December 1919, p. 13.

¹⁵*La Prensa*, 22 September 1919, p. 12.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 1 April 1924, "Jeux Régionaux. Correspondance, conférences et documents. 1924-1928" (hereafter "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928"), *Le Comité International Olympique Archives* (hereafter IOC Archives), Lausanne, Switzerland.

¹⁸*La Nación*, 27 January 1924, sec. 2, p. 1.

¹⁹*La Vanguardia* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *La Vanguardia*), 30 July 1924, p. 6.

²⁰See Mason, *Passion of the People?* 46-47; Chaponick, *Historia del fútbol argentino*, 1: 417; Scher and Palomino, *Fútbol*, 25; and Iwanczuk, *Historia del fútbol amateur en la Argentina*, 141-143, 195.

²¹For an insightful account of the development of this style of playing see Archetti, *Masculinities*, 46-76; and idem, "Argentina and the World Cup: In Search of National Identity," in *Host and Champions*, eds. John Sudgen and Alan Tomlinson (London: Arena, 1994), 37-63.

²²Idem, "Argentina and the World Cup," 42.

²³See Mark Dyreson, "Globalizing the Nation-Making Process: Modern Sport in World History," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 20 (2003): 91-106.

²⁴See Pablo Alabarces, *Fútbol y patria: El fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2002).

²⁵*La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 3.

²⁶See Archetti, *Masculinities*, 56-76; and idem, "Argentina and the World Cup," 41-43.

²⁷John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson, *FIFA and the Contest for World Football: Who Rules the People's Game?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 28.

²⁸The countries were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay.

²⁹Mason, *Passion of the People?* 29.

³⁰For a history of FIFA see Sugden and Tomlinson, *FIFA*; Bill Murray, *Football: A History of the World Game* (Aldershot, U.K.: Scholar Press, 1994); and idem, "FIFA," in *The International Politics of Sport in the 20th Century*, eds. Jim Riordan and Arnd Krüger (London: E&FN Sport, 1999), 28-47.

³¹Cesar R. Torres, "Mass Sport Through Education or Elite Olympic Sport? José Benjamín Zubiaur's Dilemma and Argentina's Olympic Sports Legacy," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 7 (1998): 61-88; and idem, "Tribulations and Achievements," 59-92.

³²Idem, "Tribulations and Achievements," 72-84.

³³Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 21 August 1923, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives.

³⁴Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 21 November 1923, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives.

³⁵*La Nación*, 8 January 1924, p. 6; *La Prensa*, 7 February 1924, p. 15; 15 February 1924, p. 16; 6 April 1924, p. 24.

³⁶See *The International Olympic Committee—One Hundred Years*, 3 vols. (Lausanne, Switz.: International Olympic Committee, 1996), 1: 285-286; Otto Mayer, *A Travers les Anneaux Olympiques* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1960), 94-100; and Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (Lausanne, Switz.: International Olympic Committee, 1997), 170-171, 201, 203.

³⁷See Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements," 79-80.

³⁸The members of the Committee were Ricardo C. Aldao, Benito Nazar Anchorena, Francisco Beazley, Arturo Goyeneche and Carlos A. Martínez. In 1923 Aldao and Goyeneche were president and vice-president of the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* respectively. Nazar Anchorena had served the executive board of the club in the past. Alvear had presided over the club in the year 1900. Except for Martínez, who was a general in the army, all of the Committee's members had a close association with the *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union)—Alvear's ruling party. See Jorge Alemandri, *Cincuentenario del Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima, 1880-1930* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1931), 111, 135-140.

³⁹*La Nación*, 5 January 1924, p. 8; 13 January, 1924, sec. 2, p. 4; *La Prensa*, 13 January 1924, p. 20; *La Vanguardia*, 13 January 1924, p. 8.

⁴⁰*La Nación*, 6 January 1924, sec. 2, p. 1.

⁴¹*La Nación*, 11 January 1924, p. 6; *La Vanguardia*, 12 January 1924, p. 3.

⁴²*La Nación*, 18 January 1924, p. 6; *La Prensa*, 18 January 1924, p. 16; *La Vanguardia*, 18 January 1924, p. 5.

⁴³*La Nación*, 19 January 1924, p. 7; *La Prensa*, 19 January 1924, p. 15.

⁴⁴*La Nación*, 25 January 1924, p. 6; *La Prensa*, 25 January 1924, p. 14; *La Vanguardia*, 26 January 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁵*La Nación*, 25 January 1924, p. 6.

⁴⁶*La Prensa*, 8 February 1924, p. 15.

⁴⁷*La Prensa*, 13 February 1924, p. 16. See also *La Vanguardia*, 18 February 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁸*La Nación*, 14 February 1924, p. 7; *La Prensa*, 14 February 1924, p. 16; *La Vanguardia*, 18 February 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁹*La Nación*, 15 February 1924, p. 6; *La Prensa*, 15 February 1924, p. 16.

⁵⁰*La Prensa*, 16 February 1924, p. 15.

⁵¹*La Nación*, 19 February 1924, p. 7; *La Prensa*, 19 February 1924, p. 14.

⁵²*La Prensa*, 20 February 1924, p. 15.

⁵³*La Prensa*, 21 February 1924, p. 14.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* See also *La Vanguardia*, 22 February 1924, p. 5.

⁵⁵Henri de Baillet-Latour to Ricardo C. Aldao, 12 February 1924, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives.

⁵⁶*La Nación*, 21 February 1924, p. 7; *La Prensa*, 21 February 1924, p. 14; 23 February 1924, p. 13.

⁵⁷*La Prensa*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

⁵⁸*La Nación*, 22 February 1924, p. 9; *La Prensa*, 22 February 1924, p. 15; *La Vanguardia*, 23 February 1924, p. 5.

⁵⁹*La Nación*, 23 February 1924, p. 7; *La Prensa*, 23 February 1924, p. 13.

⁶⁰*La Nación*, 23 February 1924, p. 7.

⁶¹*La Nación*, 28 February 1924, p. 9; 29 February 1924, p. 9; *La Vanguardia*, 29 February 1924, p. 6.

⁶²Henri de Baillet-Latour to Frantz Reichel, 20 February 1924, "Baillet-Latour, Henri de. Correspondance. 1915-1925" (hereafter "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925"), IOC Archives.

⁶³Frantz Reichel to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 22 February 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁶⁴Henri de Baillet-Latour to Frantz Reichel, 24 February 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁶⁵*La Prensa*, 2 March 1924, p. 20; *La Vanguardia*, 2 March 1924, p. 6.

⁶⁶*La Prensa*, 13 March 1924, p. 18; *La Vanguardia*, 14 March 1924, p. 5.

⁶⁷*La Nación*, 7 March 1924, p. 8; *La Prensa*, 7 March 1924, p. 14; *La Vanguardia*, 7 March 1924, p. 5.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹*La Nación*, 21 March 1924, p. 10; *La Prensa*, 21 March 1924, p. 15.

⁷⁰*La Nación*, 19 March 1924, p. 3; 22 March 1924, p. 2; 23 March 1924, p. 4.

⁷¹Frantz Reichel to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 15 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁷²See *ibid.*; and Henri de Baillet-Latour to Frantz Reichel, 16 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁷³Frantz Reichel to Ricardo C. Aldao, 21 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁷⁴See Cesar R. Torres, "A Time of Conflict: Argentine Sports and the 1924 Olympic Team," in *The Global Nexus Engaged: Past, Present, Future Interdisciplinary Olympic Studies*, eds. Kevin B. Wamsley, Robert K. Barney and Scott G. Martyn (London, Ontario: International Center for Olympic Studies, 2002), 162-166.

⁷⁵See Frantz Reichel to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 27 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives; *La Prensa*, 25 March 1924, p. 15; 30 March 1924, p. 20; *La Vanguardia*, 29 March 1924, p. 5.

⁷⁶*New York Times*, 27 March 1924, p. 14.

⁷⁷*La Prensa*, 27 March 1924, p. 14. See also *La Nación*, 27 March 1924, p. 9; and *La Vanguardia*, 28 March 1924, p. 5.

⁷⁸*La Nación*, 28 March 1924, p. 10; *La Prensa*, 28 March 1924, p. 16; *La Vanguardia*, 29 March 1924, p. 5.

⁷⁹*La Prensa*, 30 March 1924, p. 20.

⁸⁰*La Prensa*, 31 March 1924, p. 15; *La Vanguardia*, 28 March 1924, p. 5. The game was played in the stadium of Sportivo Barracas before the 1923 championship final between Boca Juniors and Huracán.

⁸¹*La Prensa*, 4 April 1924, p. 16. See also *La Vanguardia*, 5 April 1924, p. 5.

⁸²*La Prensa*, 7 April 1924, p. 14. See also *La Vanguardia*, 8 April 1924, p. 5.

⁸³*La Prensa*, 10 April 1924, p. 10. Due to internal disputes apparently unrelated to the football discord Cantoni had resigned as president of the *Asociación Argentina de Football* earlier in April. The *Asociación Argentina* chose Virgilio Tedín Uriburu as his successor. See *La Vanguardia*, 2 April 1924, p. 3; 10 April 1924, p. 5; 16 April 1924, p. 6.

⁸⁴Frantz Reichel to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 27 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁸⁵Henri de Baillet-Latour to Frantz Reichel, 31 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁸⁶IOC Executive Board to Ricardo C. Aldao and Marcelo T. de Alvear, 31 March 1924, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives.

⁸⁷See Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements," 83; and idem, "A Time of Conflict," 165-166.

⁸⁸Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 1 April 1924, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives.

⁸⁹See *Memoria y Balance: Período 1 de Noviembre de 1927 al 31 de Octubre de 1928* (Buenos Aires: Confederación Argentina de Deportes—Comité Olímpico Argentino, 1928), 1.

⁹⁰*La Nación*, 17 March 1924, p. 10; 29 March 1924, p. 3; *La Prensa*, 27 March 1924, p. 14.

⁹¹*La Nación*, 30 March 1924, p. 3; *La Prensa*, 29 March 1924, p. 15; 31 March 1924, p. 15; 1 April 1924, p. 19; 4 April 1924, p. 16; 8 April 1924, p. 17; *El Diario* (Montevideo) 30 March 1924; Comité Olímpico del Uruguay to Pierre de Coubertin, 31 March 1924, "Jeux Régionaux, 1924-1928", IOC Archives. Apparently Ghigliani decided to dissolve the *Comité* after Frantz Reichel telegraphed him confirming that the football team en route to Europe was legitimate. See Frantz Reichel to Francisco Ghigliani, 27 March 1924, "Baillet-Latour, 1915-1925", IOC Archives.

⁹²See for example *La Nación*, *La Prensa*, *La Vanguardia*, *La Mañana* (Montevideo), *El Día* (Montevideo) and *El País* (Montevideo), 10, 11 and 12 June 1924. See also *L'Auto* (Paris) and *New York Times*, 10 and 11 June 1924. Buried in the myriad of news, articles, and telegrams about the Uruguayan triumph, *La Nación* briefly informed on June 11 (p. 2) that the *Asociación Uruguaya de Football* had sent a congratulatory note to Ghigliani for making the presence of Uruguayan football in Paris possible.

⁹³*La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 8.

⁹⁴See *La Vanguardia*, 11 June 1924, p. 1.

⁹⁵*La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 3.

⁹⁶*La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 3.

⁹⁷*La Nación*, 9 June 1924, p. 3.

⁹⁸*La Nación*, 4 June 1924, p. 3.

⁹⁹Le Bretón attended an international conference of immigration and emigration held under the auspices of the Italian government at Rome in May. In addition to his duties in the conference, Le Bretón discussed in Europe the prices of Argentine staples. *La Vanguardia* severely criticized the governmental decision to send him to Europe. See *La Prensa*, 19 June 1924, p. 10; and *La Vanguardia*, 16 April 1924, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰See David Rock, *Politics in Argentina, 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 218-240; idem, *Argentina, 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 199-213; and idem, "Radical Populism and the Conservative Elite, 1912-1930," in *Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Rock (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), 66-87.

¹⁰¹The relationship between partisan politics and the realm of sport in this particular juncture of Argentine political history is worthy of more study. For the purposes of this study it is important to highlight that the evidence does not support a direct connection between different political parties or even factions within a political party and the outcome of the 1924 Argentine struggle to send a team to the 1924 Olympics. Even the socialist newspaper *La Vanguardia*, which spared no criticism to President Alvear and the *Unión Cívica Radical*, frequently located the origins of the sporting wrangle in personal

disagreements rather than political or ideological disputes. However, *La Vanguardia* condemned the method by which the *Comité* was created and disapproved of the approaches taken by the *Comité* and the *Confederación* in the attempt to form the 1924 Olympic team. In spite of its analysis, *La Vanguardia* did not mention the involvement of different political parties or factions within the *Unión Cívica Radical* in this story. See for example *La Vanguardia*, 1 May 1924, p. 13 and 13 June 1924, p. 4.

¹⁰²Ariel Scher has traced the linkage between politics and sport in Argentina in his *Lapatria deportista* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1996). Scher devotes one chapter (pp. 80-108) of his book to the role that sport occupied in President Alvear's personal and political life. Unfortunately, Scher's book does not contain notes identifying sources. In spite of that substantial flaw, I believe that the book is a most useful Argentine survey of sport and politics.

¹⁰³*La Nación*, 10 June 1924, p. 3.