

Arts & Ideas

"Amateur athlete" smokescreen

My favorite sports columnist is Stephen Brunt from the Globe and Mail, who, by the way, grew up in Georgetown. A top columnist is somebody you want to read, no matter what he or she writes about. Stephen Brunt is what I like to call a "sophisticate." He writes like a prince and he seems to understand that achievements in sport, are like achievements in art, only possible with enormous dedication on the side of the athlete or artist.

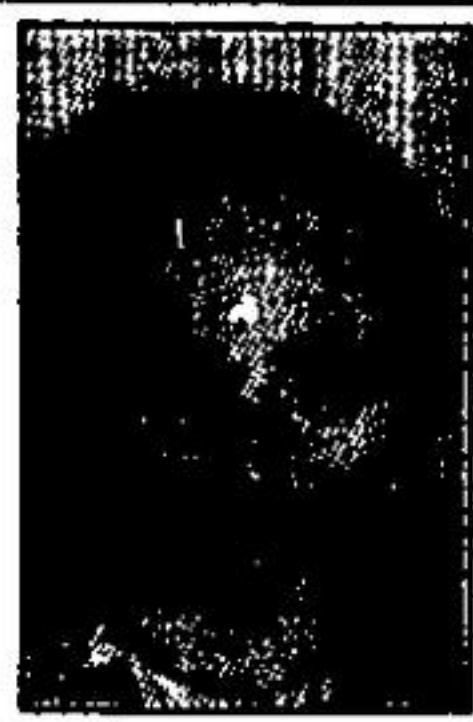
A few weeks ago he wrote a column about Ben Johnson, that I found a bit hard to take, however, Stephen Brunt went to Africa and discovered that the great sprinter is a hero there, in spite of his "betrayal" of the public trust.

Betrayal? Come, come Stephen, betrayal of whom? Surely, most of us didn't need the Dublin Inquiry to know that the records set by these fantastically single-minded athletes cannot be had without bending the rules. What we should ask, maybe, is, if these rules make sense.

I rather think our sports officials have betrayed the athletes they are supposed to serve. We all know that the term "amateur athlete" has been a smokescreen, behind which every country has done whatever they wanted.

In 1836 most German athletes went through full-time training for the Olympic Games in Berlin, and ever since every totalitarian country has selected and trained men and suggestedly doped it's top athletes practically from babyhood on.

By refusing to acknowledge this fact and by allowing the International Olympic Committee to gloss over the matter, we have put our athletes into a Catch 22 dilemma that had to, eventually, end in disgrace. We wanted them to win, of course, but we also kept



Ideas and The Arts
by
John Sommer

up the fiction that the victory would have to be "clean" - whatever the means in this particular context.

Has anybody, for instance, ever asked the question, if the great writer who just collected the Nobel Prize for Literature in Stockholm, wrote his books with the help of performance enhancing drugs or not? Of course not, because the question is vastly beside the point.

If the emphasis is on winning, and you only have to open the sports pages of your newspaper to find out that no paper likes to waste space on losers, your duty as a coach or sports minister or whatever, is to give the dedicated athlete or artist under your care everything he or she needs for that, and, everything else is mumbo jumbo and bloody hypocrisy.

Don't get me wrong. I am appalled by the risks athletes are supposed to take in order to excel.

Berthold Brecht said 60 years ago that "great sport begins at a point where it has ceased to be healthy."

In sports as in everything else, we have made a fetish of competition. It is the worst possible system for the athletes, who will quickly sink out of sight and out of our minds, if he is not produc-

ing record breaking results. We are spectators only, but the athlete is taking all the risks.

"Running Risks" is the apt title of a just published book by Angela Issajenko, another Canadian athlete, who had the guts to bare her soul at the Dublin Inquiry. I suggest that you read it.

The lesson of Ben Johnson's sorry ordeal is, surely, that the fiction of "amateur sports" has to go. Today's athletes are professionals. Performance enhancing drugs should be outlawed because of the health risk to the athletes if for no other reason.

If we don't outlaw them worldwide, we might, with these drugs, be in the same fix we are in regard to atomic weapons.

Let's not accuse our athletes if they use them to give us what we crave: gold medals, new world records, and unforgettable moments on television.

For many of us there is still a certain snob appeal attached to foreign wines, but the truth has been for many years, that the best Canadian wines are on a par with the wines produced in other countries.

On Feb. 6, the members of Arts and Crafts of Georgetown and their invited guests took a bus trip to Winona to visit Andres Winery Ltd., Canada's largest wine producer.

After a fact-filled tour of the vast halls with their stainless steel wine tanks, the party tasted a large and varied assortment of wines, from a dry Chardonnay to the sweetest of sherrys. In great spirits the party proceeded to the Gable Manor Restaurant in Grimsby, where a fine lunch had been ordered.

Many thanks are due to Ms. Donna Vettesi, the organizer of the tour, for the success of the outing.

War amps of Canada special children's song

The War Amps of Canada would like Canadians to join with them in celebrating their Child Amputee (CHAMP) Program's 15th anniversary by sharing in a song that is close to the children's hearts. The Champ youngsters have a theme song called "I Will Grow Stronger" and the Association has released it to radio stations across the country for all to hear.

The theme song captures the spirit of CHAMP: a program for child amputees that has been built upon The War Amps tradition of "amputees helping amputees." Every child who enrolls in CHAMP receives a tape of the "I Will Grow Stronger" song. The song's encouraging lyrics have helped many children in learning to cope with their amputations.

The determination and courage of 11-year-old Chris Koch, the CHAMP Ambassador-at-Large for CHAMP, have brought the song's lyrics to life for many Champs. Chris is a quadruple amputee who doesn't let his amputations stand in the way of living life just like any other child

his age. With the help of specially designed artificial limbs provided by CHAMP, Chris skis, plays baseball and is learning to play

the autoharp and the piano. The public's support for The War Amps makes the CHAMP Program possible.

Artisans offering embroidery course

The Credit Valley Artisans are offering a counted thread embroidery course on Thursday evenings starting February 23. Georgetown resident Else Staal Neilsen, with over 35 years experience in embroidery, will be the instructor.

Else learned counted thread embroidery as a child in school in Denmark. There, the children were instructed in the craft for three hours per week for six years. As an adult, Else also studied traditional embroidery techniques, such as cross-stitch, hardanger, and white-on-white with the Embroidery Guild in Denmark. Else has taught counted thread embroidery for many years and has assembled kits for other teachers. Else is a member of the Heritage Handweavers guild of the Credit Valley Artisans.

This course is designed for the enthusiastic beginner as well as the intermediate embroiderer. Basic embroidery techniques and stitches will be taught with an emphasis on counted thread embroidery. Hemstitching and old traditional heirloom techniques will be studied as time permits. Each student will produce a sampler on linen suitable for framing. Design techniques and ideas will also be discussed. This course does not teach crewel embroidery.

For further information contact Frank Anthony, Registrar, at 877-5856 between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. Deadline for registration in this course is February 15, 1991.

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