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# Charley Paddock and the Changing State of Olympic Amateurism

John Gleaves & Matthew P. Llewellyn\*

*While much historical research has focused on the changing state of Olympic sport during the 1920s, few scholars have focused on the career of one of the era's major athletes: Charles W. Paddock. The first to be dubbed "the fastest man in the world," Paddock, whose career lasted from 1919 to 1928, embodies the roaring Twenties' fascination with sports and entertainment. Paddock was equal parts athlete and showman. His athletic feats, including numerous world records, four Olympic medals, and three appearances in the Olympic Games, secured his place in the 1920s athletic pantheon. However, multiple times Paddock's Olympic career was nearly cut short due to questions regarding his amateur status. In this essay, we examine Paddock's battles over his amateur status as a case study revealing the shifting cultural views of elite sport in the 1920s era United States as well as the emerging challenges facing amateur organizations. This includes asking questions about Paddock's new opportunities in film and the increasing disregard—by athletes and the public—for the ideology of amateurism. We first document the events that raised concerns regarding Paddock's eligibility by examining primary source texts including meeting minutes and personal correspondences. Second, we show that such events resulted from larger social changes including new media such as film and radio and increased coverage of sports in the print media. We conclude that Paddock's battles with amateurism exemplify the cultural tensions between increasingly commodified athletics, changing social values, and the evolving world of Olympic sport.*



## Introduction

The inter-war years marked a period of profound change in the international, political, and social order. In the aftermath of the Great War, one of the darkest and most violent epochs in modern history, Western Civilization reemerged from the shadows radically transformed. Amidst the smoldering of ash, dilapidation, and lost lives, Socialist and Communist movements—fueled by the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution—swept across the European continent. Ideological upheavals also gripped the Middle East and the Indian sub-continent as large-scale, newly-organized nationalist movements emerged following the disintegration of the Turkish-Ottoman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Debilitated post-war economies, high rates of national debt, and swelling ranks of unemployment ensured that

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mass trade unionism, and political and social unrest simmered dangerously on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> Europe's old aristocracy, left ravaged and reeling from the destructive capabilities of modern technology and weaponry, faced a more devastating threat as the currents of liberalism and capitalism threatened to topple the propertied order, the traditional political hierarchy, and the entrenched economic system.<sup>3</sup>

In this era of widespread social and political upheaval, the elite and bourgeois world of amateur sport and its tradition of limited access came under serious assault. As democratic impulses swept throughout Europe and North America, evidenced further by the granting of enfranchisement to women in Germany, Netherlands, the United States, and Great Britain, the aristocratic, patriarchal, and conservative power structure that sustained and legitimized the amateur ethos was rocked to its core.<sup>4</sup> Populist-minded European and Latin American nations, in concert with a small band of international governing bodies of sport, pushed for a gradual loosening of the amateur restraints during the 1920s and 1930s in order to permit greater numbers of athletes and nations to participate in elite sport.<sup>5</sup> In 1926, the Lawn Tennis Federation (LTA) sparked uproar when it vigorously lobbied, albeit unsuccessfully, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to grant reinstated (contaminated) amateurs permission to compete in Olympic competition after knowingly becoming professionals. The *Union Cycliste Internationale* caused an even greater stir a year later when it voted to open its World Road Championship to both amateurs and professionals. The IOC Executive Committee's decision to award broken-time payments—monetary compensation to help defray the costs of time away from the workplace—to amateur footballers at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam represented another grave threat to the sanctity of the amateur ideal.<sup>6</sup>

In the United States, the rising democratization of sport directly threatened the Amateur Athletic Union's (AAU) vaunted amateur ethos.<sup>7</sup> Founded in 1888, the AAU claimed jurisdiction over all amateur athletics in the United States, including (albeit temporarily) baseball, cycling, football, and gymnastics.<sup>8</sup> By the 1920s, the AAU's status as America's sporting powerbroker meant that it drew its members from exclusive social and political backgrounds, tethered together on the basis of a strong proclivity for elite amateur sport. Through institutional mechanisms, the AAU strictly regulated the amateur code, a legitimating ideology conceived in Great Britain during the 1860s to exclude the less desirable elements of society from the play of the leisure classes.<sup>9</sup> Keen to repel the growing commercial and professional influences pervading modern sport, the AAU established a Registration Committee to verify the amateur status of athletes and to award official registration cards to those athletes who qualified as amateurs.

Athletes' amateur status, according to AAU policy, would be revoked if they competed alongside a known professional, derived any pecuniary benefit from their athletic talents (via prize winnings, coaching, writing, and advertisements), or if they competed in a non-AAU sanctioned track and field meet. The registration and meet-sanctioning process provided the AAU with the ability to enforce amateurism and impose life bans on athletes who violated its rules. The infamous Jim Thorpe case, in which the AAU stripped the Native American of his two Olympic gold medals in the pentathlon and decathlon events after it was revealed he had received money playing in a summer professional baseball league, proved a testament to the organization's history of stringently applying its amateur policies.<sup>10</sup>

As the AAU sought to uphold the precepts of amateurism in the years following the Great War, one athlete in particular drew much of its attention. Indeed, the star U.S. sprinter Charles William Paddock emerged at the forefront of many amateur controversies during the inter-war years. The first to be dubbed "the fastest man in the world," Paddock, whose sprinting career lasted from 1919 to 1928, embodied the American "golden ages" (to borrow sports-writer Paul Gallico's famous phrase) fascination with sports and entertainment.<sup>11</sup> Paddock was equal parts athlete and showman. Born in Gainesville, Texas, but raised in Pasadena, California, Paddock—like his fellow Olympian Johnny Weissmuller—parlayed his sporting success into monetary reward via the glitz and glamour of the Hollywood silver screen. Paddock's athletic feats, including two Olympic gold medals and numerous world records, as well as his movie credits and journalistic endeavors, secured his place in the 1920s as a popular celebrity icon.<sup>12</sup>

Due to his popularity, Paddock increasingly found himself navigating the potential profit and fame that came with athletic success, while at the same time abiding by an increasingly anachronistic amateur code. Like other popular athletes of the 1920s, the expansion of sports coverage in the news media, the growth of the film industry, and the general economic prosperity of the "Roaring Twenties" combined to present Paddock with more opportunities to cash in on his athletic fame than athletes of previous generations. Yet such opportunities hampered Paddock's athletic career as he continually found himself at odds with the self-appointed enforcer of amateurism in the United States—the AAU. His appearances on the Hollywood silver screen, aligned with his participation in post-Olympic athletic tours and his various contributions to some of the most widely-read American magazines of the era, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Sport Story Magazine*, and *Collier's*, demonstrate the 1920s' heightened fusion of sport, commercialism, and the modern mass media.<sup>13</sup>

The AAU often viewed Paddock's extracurricular actions as egregious violations of its amateur code. Throughout the 1920s, the AAU generally per-

ceived the post-war currents of democratization and commercialism as threats to its increasingly precarious hold on amateur sport. Paddock's growing celebrity, public relations savvy, and his many opportunities to capitalize on his athletic fame made him a test case for the AAU, which was keen to maintain the purity of the amateur ideal. On many occasions, the AAU directly challenged Paddock's eligibility as an amateur athlete. His long and acrimonious battles with the AAU over amateurism exemplified the prevailing cultural and ideological tensions that existed throughout the 1920s. Paddock's decade long fight to preserve his amateur status served as a precursor to the battles that future Olympians including Paavo Nurmi, Wes Santee, and Steve Prefontaine would wage against governing bodies of sport desperate to maintain the purity of the amateur ideal as well as the Olympic movement's own battles against broken-time payments, commercialism, and the growing public consumption of professional sport.<sup>14</sup>

### **Bursting onto the Scene**

In the immediate aftermath of the carnage and destruction of the Great War, Charles Paddock, a Second Lieutenant in the American Expeditionary Force, entered to compete in the inaugural (and only) Inter-Allied Games. The "Military Olympics," as the event was more commonly known, was the innovation of Elwood S. Brown, a Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A) play leader assigned to the American Expeditionary Force on the European continent.<sup>15</sup> Brown established the Inter-Allied Games to celebrate the fraternity among the successful Allied nations. Held between 22 June and 6 July 1919, at the newly-constructed Pershing Stadium in Paris, the Inter-Allied Games drew 1,500 athletes from 18 nations.<sup>16</sup> The defeated Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey) were unsurprisingly excluded.<sup>17</sup> This one-off event was limited to military personnel currently serving or who had served in Europe during the war. Although Paddock had already earned local and regional honors as a highschool track star, representing Pasadena High School in southern California, the Inter-Allied Games served as his first major international competition.<sup>18</sup> The veteran of the Great War showed no signs that his military service had slowed him down. Paddock stormed to victories in both the 100- and 200-metre events (tying the International Amateur Athletic Federation world record in the latter) and also won as a member of United States' 200-metre-dash relay team.<sup>19</sup>

Paddock's three victories in the Inter-Allied Games served as the prelude to a long and glittering athletic career. Following his discharge from the military, the U.S. sprint king soon held court at the University of Southern California (USC), enrolling in the Fall of 1919. As one of the preeminent sports colleges, USC was the natural choice for the local Pasadena resident. Paddock

flourished as both an athlete and scholar. He earned varsity honors in track four times (1920-23), served as editor of the university student paper, the *Daily Trojan*, wrote and performed in several school plays, and even starred as a member of the debate team.<sup>20</sup>

Following his freshman year performances, the USC sprinter rose to national prominence. As a member of the Los Angeles Athletic Club, the club that supported him throughout his entire running career, Paddock entered the AAU Championships—which acted as the de facto Olympic trials for the 1920 Antwerp Games—held in Cambridge, Massachusetts, between July 16 and 17, 1920. With the interruption of the Olympic Games during the First World War, Paddock's performances at the Inter-Allied Games tagged him as a favorite in the sprints. These predictions proved accurate as he cruised to victory in the 220-yard dash and later finished third in the 100-yard event. Paddock's superlative performances ensured his place on the U.S. track and field team for the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp and heightened the American public's expectations that he would clinch Olympic gold in the war-torn Belgian city.

In Antwerp, Paddock reaffirmed that his victories in Paris the previous year were no fluke and that he was the world's fastest sprinter. As part of an American invasion that brought home 95 medals, 41 of which were gold, Paddock's victory in the marquee 100-metre event secured his celebrity both at home and abroad. The southern Californian resident added two more medals, a gold and a silver, winning the former as a member of the 100-metre relay team and the latter in the 200 metres.<sup>21</sup> With his three medals in hand, Paddock arrived back on U.S. soil as one of the nation's biggest sporting celebrities. It had been eight years since the last Olympic Games and the United States was ready to embrace its new champion.<sup>22</sup> Paddock also appeared willing to fill the athletic vacuum, appearing in parades and providing post-Olympic interviews for his fans to read across the country.<sup>23</sup>

Unwilling to rest on his laurels, Paddock made 1921 one of his most successful years on the track. During a remarkable season, Paddock set seven world records in distances ranging between 90 and 300 yards.<sup>24</sup> It was during this indomitable streak that the San Francisco sports columnist Jack James first labeled the Olympic 100-metre champion as the world's "fastest human."<sup>25</sup> This moniker followed Paddock as his fame rose and track records fell throughout the 1920s. He also became a media darling. One of a new crop of photogenic military veterans who were both well-educated and well-spoken, Paddock was perfect for the emerging media landscape fascinated with star athletes.<sup>26</sup> By the spring of 1921, Paddock's success on the cinders had brought a great deal of national media attention. The *New York Times* reported Paddock's record breaking performances to audiences back east.<sup>27</sup> In May of 1921, the *Los Angeles Times* devoted a full page of pictures depicting the world champion, Paddock, in action.<sup>28</sup> He was listed as a "stellar attraction" alongside honorary

umpires, the celebrity entertainer Fatty Arbuckle, and the actress Shirley Mason at an Elks' exhibition race in Los Angeles.<sup>29</sup> Off the tracks, Paddock, already a contributor to USC's student newspaper, the *Daily Trojan*, began writing for national publications, including *Scientific American*, where he provided coaches and aspiring Olympic champions with information on the latest training methods and techniques.<sup>30</sup>

### Catching the AAU's Eye

While Paddock rocketed to fame, broader social and political changes within the post-war United States directly threatened the sanctity of AAU's amateur ideal. During the inter-war years, U.S. athletes increasingly eschewed amateur sport in favor of more lucrative professional ventures. One of Paddock's own USC teammates, Vernon Blenkiron, who left amateur track and field for professional baseball, captured the lure of professionalism: "what are glory and honor when you have to eat?"<sup>31</sup> The elevation of American football into a commercial endeavor, bolstered by the star Red Grange's migration to the professional National Football League (NFL), represented a further challenge to amateur hegemony.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, opportunistic organizations such as the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and certain international sporting federations used prevailing populist and egalitarian sentiments to decrease the influence of organizations such as the AAU, which was portrayed by some as anachronistic and representing outdated ways of thinking.

The emerging unrest over the AAU's amateur policies in the United States became apparent by the early 1920s. In the popular press, the idea of amateurism sparked heated debate. An editorial in the *New York Times* published in 1922 denounced collegiate amateurism with a populist message, explaining that if amateurism is truly applied to college sport, "it will establish a class distinction in our universities," whereby "no man can play on the teams, can belong to the highest rank of undergraduate aristocracy, unless he is supported by his father or guardian." The result, the editorial forecasted, would be "teams will be recruited exclusively from the sons of the well-to-do."<sup>33</sup> A year later, the *New York Times* published an editorial that further condemned amateurism's hypocritical stance towards working athletes. The nation's leading daily contended that "this policy tends to restrict membership on college teams to men whose fathers are able to pay their way, which would create a class distinction abhorrent to American life," and that "whatever may be the ethical training of football itself, the central doctrine of our theology of amateurism is that honesty is the worst policy."<sup>34</sup>

While popular sentiment increasingly critiqued the amateur ideology, the AAU retrenched its commitment to amateurism. Stricter enforcement of its amateur policies allowed the AAU to maintain control over sport in the face of

professional and commercial pressures. The AAU feared that professional sport (or amateurs behaving as though they were professional athletes) would diminish its organization's influence. Although the AAU had historically gone after athletes such as Jim Thorpe and Abel Kiviat for "shamateur" behaviour, the interwar period brought more money and thus more opportunities for corruption.<sup>35</sup> In 1922, the AAU's executive committee approved the action of the registration committee in suspending Joie Ray of the Illinois Athletic Club and Joe and Frank Loomis of the Chicago Athletic Club for padding their expense accounts.<sup>36</sup> The organization also rejected a proposal submitted by its Middle Western delegates at the 1923 annual AAU meeting that recommended allowing an athlete who had turned professional in one sport to compete as an amateur in another.<sup>37</sup> The AAU's major battle of the early 1920s was waged against Paddock, an athlete who's international and collegiate successes had made him a popular celebrity amongst a public increasingly disillusioned with amateurism.

The dispute between Paddock and the AAU began in the spring of 1923. Fresh off a successful collegiate season, the USC athletic department, with the blessing of the university's faculty and administration, as well as the Southern Pacific branch of the AAU, commissioned Paddock to run in the newly-established International Universities Championships, scheduled to be held in Paris, May 1 to 6.<sup>38</sup> In order to compete in the French capital, Paddock was forced to turn down an offer to run in the AAU-sponsored Drake Relays in Des Moines, Iowa, planned for the same period.<sup>39</sup> This move upset the AAU for a number of reasons. The potential absence of one its marquee attractions from a major race likely bothered AAU officials, especially since the event fell outside the AAU's direct purview.<sup>40</sup> The French also had a reputation for relaxed amateur standards and tolerating cozy reimbursements for certain athletes.<sup>41</sup> While none of these reasons were directly stated by the AAU when they moved to block Paddock's participation in the nascent international championships, it is likely that they influenced the organization's decision and subsequent actions. Undeterred, the 100-metre Olympic champion vehemently maintained that he would compete in Paris regardless of the AAU's decision.<sup>42</sup> After a meeting with the American Olympic Committee's (AOC) foreign relations committee informing the star runner that the organization would enforce the AAU's decision to bar him from competing in Paris, Paddock laughed and declared that "he would go anyway."<sup>43</sup>

On April 11, 1923, the day of his departure to Paris, the AAU officially barred Paddock and any other officially registered AAU athletes from competing on foreign soil for the remainder of the year.<sup>44</sup> Although the ruling applied to all U.S. amateur athletes, the timing and the discussion of the AAU's decision clearly targeted Paddock.<sup>45</sup> The AAU ruled on this issue and cabled its



decision to the runner the day he was set to begin his trip from Pasadena to Paris, an odd coincidence if he was not the subject of their attention.<sup>46</sup>

What is clear is that Paddock, who had received permission to compete from both his local southern California branch of the AAU and his university, had made his plans outside of the national AAU's umbrella.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the USC made his travel and housing arrangements and had even granted him a leave of absence from his studies to engage in a Chautauqua lecture series on the East Coast upon his return from the French capital.<sup>48</sup> None of this, however, crossed the AAU's desk, the body that had traditionally acted as the clearing house for all international athletic travel. An embattled Paddock appeared ready to pursue his own agenda with or without the AAU's sanction. After receiving the cablegram from the AAU headquarters, Paddock ignored the ruling and embarked on his lengthy transcontinental trip.<sup>49</sup> When he arrived in New York City on route to Paris three days later, he was still awaiting the outcome of an appeal against the AAU's decision.<sup>50</sup> Unwilling to cede its ground, the AAU, buoyed by the support of the AOC, restated its decision to bar Paddock as well as all other U.S. amateur athletes from competing on French soil in an unsanctioned event.<sup>51</sup> Once again, an obstinate Paddock failed to back down, setting sail for Paris and openly flouting the AAU's authority.<sup>52</sup>

Arriving in Paris on April 21, the fleet-footed Californian restated in front of a gathering of reporters that he would run in Paris regardless of the AAU's ban.<sup>53</sup> Incensed by this blatant affront to its authority, the AAU announced it would take a hard line against the sprinter and revoke his amateur status.<sup>54</sup> When Paddock arrived on French soil he was confronted with the news the AAU was ready to bar him. The sprinter quickly called the AAU's bluff, announcing that "just as my career started in France, it will end here. This will be the last time I shall take part in any competition."<sup>55</sup> In effect, Paddock threatened to make any action taken by the AAU moot. Whether he was serious about the Paris meet being his last—indeed, he would make many retirement announcements throughout his career—it is clear that Paddock was willing to challenge the AAU when it conflicted with his personal interests.<sup>56</sup>

In the buildup to the Paris meet, contradictory statements between Paddock and the AAU made their way back and forth across the Atlantic. The *Los Angeles Times* summed up the battle with the succinct headline "Paddock Still Says He will Compete; AAU Still Says He Won't."<sup>57</sup> The French Athletic Federation (FFA), a staunch advocate of the principles of elite amateurism, cabled the AAU saying it would enforce the ban, but cautioned that since the meet was a collegiate event it fell under the jurisdiction of the *Union Nationale des Étudiants de France* (UNEF), a governing body that was sympathetic to Paddock's cause.<sup>58</sup> Like the UNEF, the head of the emerging National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), General Palmer A. Pierce, also expressed his

support for Paddock, confirming that his organization had approved Paddock's trip and that the games themselves met their amateur criteria.<sup>59</sup> Pierce shrewdly stopped short of calling into question the AAU's authority but he opined that "it is difficult to conceive that by [competing in Paris, Paddock's] amateur status was affected."<sup>60</sup> The NCAA's defense of Paddock highlights the degree to which the AAU was losing its position as the controlling force in amateur sport.<sup>61</sup>

On May 3, 1923, Paddock toed the line for opening heats in the 100-and-200 metre events.<sup>62</sup> Paddock's entry into the Paris events against the AAU's wishes demonstrated, at least to a degree, the governing body's limited control over amateur sport. With the AAU rendered seemingly powerless, the FFA stated that it would prohibit the International Universities Championships from holding any more events if it continued to permit the renegade Paddock to race.<sup>63</sup> UNEF responded by saying that it was an autonomous organization and not subject to the FFA's jurisdiction.<sup>64</sup> While UNEF was indeed autonomous, the French athletes competing in the event did fall under the FFA's control. The FFA then threatened to expel over 100 French athletes if they chose to continue participating in the International Universities Championships alongside the star U.S. sprinter.<sup>65</sup>

With the Paris Games only a year away, the thought of the host nation being responsible for losing both the reigning 100-metre Olympic champion Paddock and the majority of its own eligible athletes proved too much for the French authorities. What started as a turf war between Paddock and the AAU escalated into international diplomacy when the French Prime Minister, Raymond Poincare, contacted the U.S. ambassador to France, Myron T. Herrick, to help resolve the issue.<sup>66</sup> Herrick, an outsider to sport and no true believer in amateurism, sought a pragmatic conclusion to the problem, cabling the AAU asking it to rescind Paddock's ban on competing in Paris.<sup>67</sup>

The involvement of the French Prime Minister on behalf of Paddock likely confirmed the AAU's fears that the French cared little about the need to preserve amateur sport. After all, France had long been regarded by U.S. amateur officials as a haven of less than sporting behaviour. The prevalence of "broken-time" payments in cycling, rugby union, and association football, coupled with IOC founder Pierre de Coubertin's own ambivalent attitude towards amateurism likely fueled the AAU's suspicions.<sup>68</sup> Refusing to back down, the AAU called Herrick's request "absurd," insisting that "Ambassador Herrick cannot be conversant with the real situation arising out of the Paddock case."<sup>69</sup> For the AAU, the battle with Paddock represented part of the larger war to preserve its standing in American sport. Since the emergence of new organizations such as the NCAA, the IOC, and even powerful sporting federations such as the IAAF, giving into one athlete or one upstart federation meant compromising their absolute authority and acknowledging the changing state of affairs that had

emerged in the post-war era. To back down on Paddock's ban would set a dangerous precedent in favour of athlete power. Set against the larger fears over athletic reforms such as broken-time payments, the AAU believed that any compromise might send athletes flooding towards semi-professionalism, or worse, full-blown professionalism.

Against the AAU's wishes, Paddock proceeded to compete, clinching two gold medals in world record times and thrilling thousands of local Parisian fans who had flocked to see the U.S. star.<sup>70</sup> Paddock's participation did earn him a symbolic lifetime ban from the FFA—a federation that stood firm with the AAU against the new International University Championships. Paddock's ban precluded him from competing in any future exhibitions and events under the FFA's control.<sup>71</sup>

While the bureaucratic machinations played out over Paddock's eligibility, editorials reflecting public sentiment decidedly sided with the sprinter. The AAU, in trying to preserve the sanctity of amateurism, appeared petty, elitist, and outdated. The *New York Times* pledged its support to Paddock, insisting that the AAU overstepped its bounds trying to prohibit Paddock from competing and that "the wisest policy for both right now would seem to be to let the matter rest."<sup>72</sup> A *Los Angeles Times* editorial called the AAU "all wet" in its decision to prevent Paddock from competing, phrasing its objection in a distinctly populist tone: the "usurpation of the individual's rights is never a very pleasant matter—and that is just what the governing body of sport in the United States (AAU) has done."<sup>73</sup> Another *Los Angeles Times* contributor, William Rocap, wrote that the "action of the AAU seems to give everybody pain."<sup>74</sup> Even Paddock's regional branch of the AAU, the Southern Pacific AAU, rejected the national organization's decision to ban Paddock from future amateur meets.<sup>75</sup> The *Washington Post* took a less restrained tone, charging the AAU with exploitation and claiming that Paddock "was the real amateur and competed for the love of it. He couldn't be ordered around the country to run in meets that need his name on the program."<sup>76</sup>

Paddock returned from his European sojourn on June 15, 1923, to begin his previously scheduled Chautauqua lectures on sportsmanship and amateurism at sites across the East Coast. Following his arrival in New York, Paddock announced that he hoped to make the Olympic team the next summer but warned that he was "prepared to turn in [his] AAU registration card and avoid AAU competition in the future."<sup>77</sup> The AAU's close scrutiny of Paddock's trip abroad frustrated the young sprinter who, by this time, was well aware of the hypocrisy surrounding amateur athletics. As Paddock mused candidly in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, "some of the best and most famous amateur club athletes were in fact professionals and that the AAU knew it."<sup>78</sup> Paddock supported his claims with stories of under-the-table payments to other U.S. athletes as well as mentioning that he was personally offered \$10,000 if he

competed in an AAU meet in New York before heading to Paris the previous summer.<sup>79</sup> The long history of U.S. Olympic athletes, such as the “Irish Whales” Martin Sheridan and John Flanagan, finding well-paid employment in the New York City police department confirmed Paddock’s suspicions.<sup>80</sup>

Paddock’s open accusations of professionalism infuriated AAU president, William C. Prout. In his opening address at the 1923 annual AAU meeting in November, Prout angrily accused Paddock of making a personal assault “designed to tear down the AAU.” Prout argued that Paddock “openly admitted that his trip to Europe was for the purposes of establishing a test case, to tear down the authority of the Amateur Athletic Union and the International Amateur Athletic Federation.”<sup>81</sup> Southern Pacific AAU representative, Robert B. Weaver of Los Angeles, rushed to Paddock’s defense. Speaking before the AAU executive committee on Paddock’s behalf, Weaver explained that the sprinter had been misquoted in his claims about professionalism and that he did not violate any rules of amateurism.<sup>82</sup> The irony in Weaver’s defense, of course, was that Paddock had proven himself a “cash cow” for the Southern Pacific branch of the AAU. Hoping to keep its most profitable athlete eligible as an amateur so as to continue lining its coffers contradicted the spirit of amateur sport governance.

Weaver proposed a special three-person committee to review Paddock’s case and consider reinstatement. AAU member William S. Haddock dismissed Weaver’s proposition, maintaining that he had personally met with Paddock in New York before the sprinter departed for Paris and made it clear that he was not to compete. Haddock explained: “[Paddock] was told exactly what he was up against... He knew exactly what he was doing. He defied the AAU when he went over to France.”<sup>83</sup> Haddock’s objection failed to convince AAU president Prout, who subsequently ordered that a special committee be appointed to review the statements Paddock made about the AAU and that the National Registration Committee would consider his amateur standing if he applied for reinstatement.<sup>84</sup>

Satisfied with the conclusion reached at the November meeting, Weaver reassured the awaiting press that Paddock would defend his Olympic 100-metre title at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris.<sup>85</sup> Ultimately, Paddock’s participation in Paris remained contingent upon his reinstatement as an amateur athlete, something that AAU president Prout warned would only happen if the Olympic champion issued a public apology. Again, Paddock refused to back down. His father, Charles Paddock, Sr., reaffirmed that his son would not apologize to the AAU for competing in Paris: “Charley Paddock isn’t going to apologize to the AAU for going to Europe in defiance of their edict and what’s more, he isn’t going to withdraw any remarks he may have made about the AAU either.”<sup>86</sup> The sprinter’s recalcitrance infuriated Prout: “I want to say here and now, without any hesitation, that as long as I am president of the Amateur

Athletic Union and as long as Paddock maintains his present attitude, just so long I will refuse to affix my signature to any certificate of amateurism for him.”<sup>87</sup> AOC president Robert M. Thompson sympathized with Prout’s remarks and called upon NCAA president Palmer Pierce to advise Paddock to cooperate with the AAU’s ongoing investigation.<sup>88</sup> Unwilling to be drawn into the issue further, the NCAA sidestepped the issue of Paddock’s eligibility altogether at its 1923 annual convention.<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps sensing the changing tide of public opinion, Paddock attempted to diffuse the situation. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, Paddock explained that the comments he made were in private, off the record, and misquoted: “I have never attacked the Amateur Athletic Union as an organization. I have never authorized an interview in which I ‘vilified’ the A.A.U. or charged its officers or athletes with professionalism.”<sup>90</sup> The AAU took this as enough of an apology to reinstate the Olympic champion and begin promoting his participation in the upcoming AAU track season. It was clear that Paddock and the AAU had battled to a draw. Given the AAU’s authoritarian track record, the outcome amounted to a win for the young sprinter. The Olympic champion had successfully competed in the inaugural International University Championship in Paris without the AAU’s approval but had retained his amateur status and was eligible to qualify for the 1924 U.S. Olympic team.

Paddock’s battle with the AAU also succeeded on other fronts. While both sides likely lost face in the press—with Paddock being caricatured as selfish and arrogant and the AAU as stubborn and outdated—the AAU appeared worse for wear.<sup>91</sup> Opinions expressed in newsprint displayed waning support for the organization. A columnist in the *Steubenville (Ohio) Daily Herald* decried the “puritanical utterances” made by the AAU, particularly when they avariciously operated the turnstiles with “a surprisingly professional touch” for an amateur organization.<sup>92</sup> An editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* explained that the AAU would owe the entire country an explanation if it barred Paddock from the Olympic Games simply “for hurting President Prout’s feelings,” and noting that “if they can, it’s time to get rid of the AAU.”<sup>93</sup> An American Legion post also condemned the AAU for its negative words against Paddock and voted to withhold support for the Olympic Games until the AAU apologized to the sprinter.<sup>94</sup>

Evidently, the AAU found itself in a difficult predicament. The expanding global and commercial dimensions of organized sport during the inter-war years presented amateur athletes with increased opportunities to parlay their sporting talents into economic reward. As historians Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein explain, “[t]he enormous machinery called into being by World War I helped increase the capacity of industry and communications to produce and distribute to a national market.”<sup>95</sup> This presented prominent amateurs such as Paddock, tennis star Bill Tilden, and Olympic swimming sensations Johnny

Weissmuller and Gertrude Ederle with viable commercial and sporting opportunities both at home and abroad since their stardom carried great marketing potential, both for events and products.<sup>96</sup> Athletes competing—and potentially capitalizing on their athletic fame—outside of the AAU's control represented a significant challenge to its legitimacy. AAU officials recognized that if Paddock and his peers were permitted to engage in such behaviour, nothing would stop a deluge of athletes from competing abroad or embracing commercial ventures. Yet, under pressure from a public eager to ensure that the most talented and celebrated amateur athletes remained eligible for Olympic selection, the AAU proved almost powerless to impose heavy punishments on its marquee attractions. Subsequently, when Paddock applied to the AAU for reinstatement in March of 1924, officials returned a four-to-one vote to restore the Olympic champion's amateur status.<sup>97</sup> The balance of power in amateur sport had gradually shifted toward the athlete.

### **Doing It all over Again**

With his amateur status restored, Paddock began the 1924 track season with his gaze fixed firmly on defending his Olympic 100-metre crown in Paris. Opening his season at the 1924 Drake Relays, Paddock won both the 125- and 100-yard events in a performance that was hailed by one AAU official as “one of the greatest performances of all time.”<sup>98</sup> As the Paris Games neared, U.S. newspapers buzzed from coast to coast with Paddock's every cinder step. But Paddock stumbled at the Olympic trials. The judges had to waive Paddock in to the 100-metre final after he finished in a tie for third in his qualifying heat. In the 100-metre final, the Olympic champion only managed a tie for second, losing to Jackson Scholtz. In the 200-metre final, Paddock pulled up injured and finished sixth. Reflecting upon these performances, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that they were “disastrous,” and a “major setback in Paddock's career.”<sup>99</sup> Yet Paddock had still managed to qualify for his second Olympic Games. He and the rest of the team set sail on the *America*, a trans-Atlantic ocean liner that transported the U.S. team to Paris.<sup>100</sup>

Returning to the site of his first major international victory at the Inter-Allied Games five years earlier, Paddock arrived in the French capital determined to uphold his reputation as the “world's fastest human.” In the 100-metre final, Cambridge University student Harold Abrahams (of *Chariots of Fire* fame) seized Paddock's Olympic crown by storming to gold in a world record clip. Paddock, who had spent the evening prior to the race dining with Hollywood movie icons Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, finished in a disappointing fifth place.<sup>101</sup> The Southern California speedster put on a much better showing in the 200-metre final just two days later. In an enthralling race, Paddock missed out on the gold medal by the narrowest of margins, fin-

ishing a mere twelve inches behind compatriot Jackson Scholtz. Perhaps, had Hollywood scripted the ending, Paddock would have won the gold instead. Still, Paddock's Olympic endeavors ensured that his star continued to burn brightly. Accompanied by fellow Olympians, swimmers Johnny Weissmuller (a man later cast onto the silver screen as *Tarzan the Ape-man*) and Duke Kahanamoku, Paddock returned to the U.S. ready to transform his athletic fame into a lucrative media career.<sup>102</sup> An Olympic silver medal also ensured that he fell back into the good graces of the AAU. William Prout, who had early revoked Paddock's amateur status, now proudly heralded the Olympian as a "model" athlete at the AAU's annual meeting in 1924.<sup>103</sup>

Paddock's reinstatement as the golden boy of U.S. amateur athletics did not last long. He soon found himself once again locked in a long, drawn-out battle with the AAU over his amateur status. Tensions resurfaced during the winter of 1925 as Paddock set sail on an AAU-sponsored seven-month global "goodwill" tour to compete in China, England, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Philippine Islands, and Sweden. Accompanied by fellow U.S. sprinter Loren C. Murchinson, a sixth place finisher in the 100-metre Olympic final in Paris, the press heralded the globe-trekking event as "the most extensive world-wide tour ever undertaken by American athletes."<sup>104</sup> In an era before television and efficient transcontinental communications, the AAU tour provided many sport fans with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see an Olympic champion compete in person. Expecting windfall profits, avaricious sporting promoters agreed to pay all travel and housing costs as well as picking up the star duo's personal expenses.<sup>105</sup> With so much potential profit resting on the "goodwill" performances of the recent USC and University of Chicago graduates Paddock and Murchinson, it seems extremely myopic in retrospect to assume the tour was strictly an amateur affair. In fact, Paddock published a series of articles in the *Los Angeles Times* and in the far more widely circulated *Saturday Evening Post* titled, "Running around the World with Paddock and Murchison."<sup>106</sup> If, as was likely the case, Paddock received monetary compensation for his articles, the AAU could have ruled Paddock ineligible to compete as an amateur since he capitalized on his athletic fame.

As the duo's globetrotting performances captured headlines across the United States, allegations emerged from Sweden that both Paddock and Murchinson were claiming exorbitant expense fees for their travel and accommodation.<sup>107</sup> The popular Swedish athletic periodical *Idrottsbadet* leaked reports that Paddock and Murchison, who had planned to travel from Hamburg, through Sweden, and then to Finland, had requested that both Sweden and Finland pay for the entire cost of the trip separately, essentially double-dipping from their expense reimbursement.<sup>108</sup> While the allegations drew the attention of William Prout, who had just stepped down as AAU president and who realized that the AAU-sponsored trip may have turned into a "shama-

teur” venture, both the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the allegations were likely payback from the Swedes over the treatment of Finland’s Paavo Nurmi, the nine-time career Olympic gold medalist who faced accusations of “shamateurism” during his 1925 tour of the United States.<sup>109</sup> The AAU agreed with the newspapers, announcing that an internal investigation had cleared the two runners of any professional dealings while in Europe.<sup>110</sup>

Despite the damning allegations and negative publicity surrounding Paddock and Murchison’s excessive fees, Swedish officials chose to permit the two sprinters to compete at a track and field meet in Stockholm on July 18, 1925. Murchison, however, opted to attend the concurrent English Amateur Athletic Association’s annual championship instead.<sup>111</sup> In the more inclusive-minded Scandinavia, where jejune amateur rules and regulations were loosely interpreted and enforced, one promoter coyly commentated that Paddock’s expense demands “were certainly not low, as those items go, but they were not excessive either.”<sup>112</sup> Paddock managed to put the controversy behind him while in Stockholm, winning the 200-metre event and later taking second in the 60-metre dash.<sup>113</sup> Naturally, the former Olympic champion rejected the charges of professionalism in the press, insisting that both he and Murchison “have in no way violated either our own or international rules.”<sup>114</sup> The Southern California sprinter maintained that the duo had personally lost nearly \$1,500 on the trip after the reimbursements from their respective athletic clubs, a prodigious amount considering that the two recent college graduates had little personal income. Given these reported loses, the AAU cleared the athletes of any wrong doing at its annual meeting held in November of 1925.<sup>115</sup>

### **Media, Movies, and Money**

The next year, Paddock issued a new—and unanticipated—challenge to the AAU’s amateur code. In accordance with the AAU’s stringent amateur code, Paddock was well aware that the governing body of amateur athletics would disbar an athlete for “capitalization of athletic fame,” a provision that included “granting or sanctioning the use of one’s name to advertise or promote the sale of...commodities” and any transaction where the “usefulness or value arises chiefly from ...the [athlete’s] reputation or fame.”<sup>116</sup> AAU chiefs originally crafted the rule to prevent athletes from endorsing products for payment. However, the rule was created before the expansion of the sports media in the 1920s and prior to the widespread popularity of cinematic motion pictures. This changing media landscape made abiding by the traditional amateur code increasingly difficult. When athletes wrote articles for newspapers or starred in films, they were performing genuine work--and athletes could not be barred from working. But it was clear that such opportunities came about



because of their athletic fame. Addressing this problem in 1925, the *Los Angeles Times* remarked: “the chief trouble nowadays seems to be that the codes of a generation ago do not fit the modern situation,” and that modern sport “presents new problems which are becoming increasingly difficult to solve.”<sup>117</sup> This proved especially true for the versatile Paddock, whose writing and speaking talents off the track complemented his athletic prowess.

By 1926, Paddock, the handsome, well-spoken star from Pasadena, joined the sports staff at the *Los Angeles Times*, where he published a series of articles entitled “Paddock Says.”<sup>118</sup> At the same time, movie producers in Hollywood sought out the Californian as a novel attraction to bring people to the movies. In May of 1926, Paddock inked his first Hollywood contract with the “Famous Players-Lasky Studio” to star in a film titled “The College Flirt.”<sup>119</sup> Following his agreement to do the movie, Paddock announced he would retire for the remainder of the track season – a move that the *Los Angeles Times* mused was a deliberate way of avoiding AAU scrutiny for his new commercial ventures.<sup>120</sup>

Over the next few months a flood of American sporting icons including professional footballer Red Grange, and pugilists Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey followed Paddock’s lead by signing Hollywood acting deals, prompting the *Los Angeles Times* to proclaim that “Athletes Lead Latest Invasion.”<sup>121</sup> The rush of athletes, particularly registered amateurs, to the silver screen forced the AAU to respond to the shifting commercial landscape. Commenting on the upcoming release of Paddock’s movie debut, Southern Pacific AAU president Bob Weaver conceded “that it was hard to draw an absolute line in such cases as Paddock’s because his commercial opportunities were the result of his athletic ability.”<sup>122</sup> If Paddock appeared as an Olympic athlete, it would be obvious that he was capitalizing on his athletic career, but if he simply acted, then it would be hard to say why acting was forbidden under the AAU’s rules. As news of Paddock’s film emerged, AAU officials reported that they had not seen the film so “nobody knows whether Charley will be professionalized because of it.” However, the officials claimed that “Paddock says he did no running in the film, that his name has not been exploited and that therefore his amateur standing has not been jeopardized.”<sup>123</sup> These cautious remarks indicated that the AAU did not exactly know how to address these gray, nebulous cases. Doing nothing risked opening the floodgates to athletes commercializing their talents under pseudo-work as actors or authors. Yet the old amateur codes—written before the post-war media explosion—had to be stretched to accommodate these new issues.

The issue was further complicated by the absence of a professional track and field circuit forcing commercially-ambitious U.S. athletes to maintain their amateur statuses if they wished to compete in elite races. For Paddock and his colleagues, regional, national, and Olympic victories ensured that they remained in the public spotlight in order to remain relevant and commercially

attractive. Mindful of the importance of maintaining his AAU registration card, Paddock turned down a \$70,000 offer to run in three professional meets organized under the auspices of promoter Charles C. "Cash and Carry" Pyle, a prominent U.S. sports agent who, in 1925, signed the "amateur" college football star Red Grange to a lucrative professional contract with the Chicago Bears and who, in 1928, created the 3,422-mile transcontinental "Bunion Derby" for professional runners.<sup>124</sup> "I do not care to turn professional at this time," Paddock maintained, "I think I am good for several years yet and you know the next Olympic games meet is not so far away."<sup>125</sup>

Despite his public utterances, Paddock proved unwilling to live the requisite monastic life afforded by strict adherence to the amateur code. Throughout 1926 he made a series of moves intended to circumvent the AAU rules whilst still capitalizing on his athletic success. Alongside his regular track and field column, "Paddock Says," in the *Los Angeles Times*, Paddock continued lecturing across the country on generic topics such as sportsmanship and, ironically, amateurism. His expanding commercial portfolio soon caught the attention of the ever-vigilant AAU. An advertisement for gasoline in Sacramento, California, depicted him running a competition and led the AAU to open a new case against Paddock.<sup>126</sup> While AAU officials may have been unsure about the best way to handle his acting career, Paddock's appearance promoting products was a familiar breach of amateur protocol—amateur athletes were forbidden from endorsing products. The evidence warranted investigation at the AAU's annual meeting in November of 1926.<sup>127</sup> Paddock attended the meeting and provided the AAU with his defense, explaining that the owner, Art Kemp, was a college friend and that he had received no financial compensation for his endorsement. Kemp confirmed Paddock's story. Although it is doubtful that the entrepreneurial amateur altruistically appeared in a national advertising campaign "for a friend," the AAU was powerless to do anything. Letting the star off with only a warning, AAU officials closed the investigation of Paddock's amateur status.<sup>128</sup>

## One Last Time

The issue of amateurism remained one of the most troublesome issues facing the AAU during the buildup to the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic Games. Global challenges to the preservation of the amateur ethos heightened the AAU's anxieties. On August 8, 1927, the IOC Executive Committee voted to award broken-time payments—monetary compensation to help defray the cost of time away from the workplace—to amateur football players during the 1928 Amsterdam Games. The decision signalled a direct liberalization of the amateur code.<sup>129</sup> The Executive Committee's ruling signalled a blatant departure from the rules of amateurism laid down at the 1925 IOC Congress in Prague,

where members granted permission to international federations to enforce their own amateur definitions on the condition that all athletes “must not be a professional in any branch of sport; must not have been reinstated as an amateur after knowingly becoming a professional; and, must not have received compensation for lost salaries.”<sup>130</sup> Such a dramatic breach in the IOC’s amateur code was the result of a *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) threat, made on June 5, 1927, during its annual Congress in Helsinki, Finland, to boycott the Olympic football tournament unless the IOC recognized a FIFA ruling that granted all affiliated national associations permission to award compensation for lost earnings.<sup>131</sup>

The association football tournament, the de-facto world amateur championship, had long established itself as the “greatest source of revenue” at the Olympic Games. At the 1924 Paris Olympics the football tournament generated more in gate money than the entire athletic program. Olympic football revenues also exceeded the aggregate receipts of swimming, rugby union, tennis, cycling, wrestling, gymnastics, and fencing.<sup>132</sup> The prospect of the reigning South American Olympic finalists Uruguay and Argentina pitting themselves against some of Europe’s strongest footballing nations at the 1928 Amsterdam Games heightened the IOC’s expectations that profits would reach unprecedented levels. Forced into a seemingly untenable position, the Executive Committee conceded to FIFA’s demands to permit broken-time payments.<sup>133</sup> Trapped between the lure of increased spectatorship and windfall profits on the one hand, and appeasing its most vocal amateur allies on the other, the IOC faced the harsh realities of maintaining an increasingly outmoded amateur ideal in an era of broader democratic reform.

The AAU faced similar financial pressures on the domestic front. In its annual meetings, the organization often sought to rectify its own amateur ideals with the potential profit from sport. This issue took center stage in boxing as AAU-sponsored events could produce massive revenue for professional promoters, who often cared little about amateurism’s values.<sup>134</sup> Similarly, an athlete’s expenses and travel arrangements became a topic for the AAU’s 1927 annual meeting.<sup>135</sup> Voices within the AAU remained reluctant to capitulate on the amateur ideal. To give an inch on amateurism meant to give away the whole thing. Viewing amateurism as under attack, the AAU sought to protect its sporting philosophy from such encroachments.

Yet Paddock, with his national fame, continued to place the AAU in similar difficulty when it came to the organization’s own amateur code. His star power meant that he could attract major crowds both throughout the U.S. and across the globe. His appearance on the silver screen likely increased his draw at the gate. At the same time, Paddock grew frustrated with the AAU’s clear hypocrisy regarding amateurism, making it a national issue in January of 1928 when he published an article in the *Los Angeles Evening Post* criticizing the

ideology of amateurism.<sup>136</sup> While Paddock took aim at the “false fairness and hypocrisy that exists” in amateur sports, he noted that only athletes so wealthy that their athletic fame could not advance their material standing could truly be classified as amateurs. Paddock was also likely considering his own situation in the article. He pointed out that all of the athletes were “simon pure” in their intentions to pursue sport for sport’s sake, although they all failed to meet the AAU’s impossible criteria for amateur sport. Paddock’s answer was to professionalize them.<sup>137</sup>

Public sentiment, at least in the popular press, supported Paddock. *Los Angeles Times* columnist Bill Henry agreed with the star sprinter’s assessment and pointed out that Paddock’s plan to professionalize athletes made sense given the current state of sports.<sup>138</sup> The *Chicago Tribune* published a letter to the editor by a reader concurring with Paddock’s point and advocating labeling anyone a professional “who devotes their whole time to [a sport] year after year.”<sup>139</sup> Ironically, Paddock’s comments failed to raise any objection from the AAU. Instead, the powerful amateur governing body focused on what would surely be Paddock’s final track season. Despite his burgeoning career in the movies, the aging sprinter acknowledged that he wanted one more Olympic Games.

To qualify for the 1928 Amsterdam Games, Paddock rededicated himself to sprinting. By the winter of 1927, the Southern Californian had stepped away from acting in movies and also stopped writing regular articles for the *Los Angeles Times* to devote time to returning to his sprinting form. Paddock modified his training plans to include the 1927-28 winter indoor season. For Paddock, who had long since passed his prime, the indoor season was a crucial part of his plan to qualify for the upcoming Olympics, a feat which was far from guaranteed. He also planned to head out to the East Coast to compete in open meets in Pennsylvania and New York against top collegiate and Olympic prospects.<sup>140</sup>

After an early season of races in Southern California, Paddock traveled to New York City, where he took up residence at the New York Athletic Club—an organization with a long reputation for veiled professionalism—and conducted training to prepare for the U.S. Olympic trials.<sup>141</sup> Unsurprisingly, controversy soon followed. Paddock had initially planned to stay on the East Coast and compete in the regional Olympic tryouts before competing in the final national Olympic trials held at Harvard in July. However, the president of the Southern Pacific AAU and long-time Paddock supporter Bob Weaver demanded that he return to the West Coast and compete in the Southern Pacific regional trials as they had been advertising the sprinter’s appearance for two months.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, the regional trials, held in the 75,000 seat Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, were billed as the “race of the century,” where the legendary Paddock was scheduled to meet the emerging U.S. sprinter Frank

Wykoff for the first time. By all accounts, the nineteen-year-old Wykoff, who hailed from Des Moines, Iowa, and like Paddock starred collegiately at the University of Southern California, was viewed (and rightly so it later proved) as the next champion sprinter to take over Paddock's mantle as the "world's fastest human." Whether Paddock feared an embarrassing early elimination on his home track was unclear, but he initially refused to return west, reasoning that two cross country trips in a month would hamper his preparation for the upcoming Olympics.<sup>143</sup> Reacting to Paddock's announcement, the Southern Pacific AAU indicated that without Paddock competing in the West Coast Olympic trials it would not provide the promised \$75,000 to defray the expenses of the American Olympic team's trip to Amsterdam.<sup>144</sup>

Within days of refusing the AAU's request, rumours began circulating in the press that the AAU would investigate Paddock's payment for films that he had done in 1927. This investigation was a thinly-veiled attempt to coerce the sprinter into making a much-needed appearance in Los Angeles. Paddock, perhaps anticipating his battle with the AAU over his film work, had negotiated a unique deferred payment deal so that he would receive his compensation after the conclusion of the Olympic Games and his official retirement from amateur athletics. "I signed no contract but have an agreement with the film producers, who are retaining all money due me until the film has run its course. That will be after the Olympic games are over," the sprinter explained.<sup>145</sup> Paddock announced in the press that he was "sure of his status" and that he had "nothing to worry about because I have not sacrificed my amateur status."<sup>146</sup> While the AAU may not have been deceived by Paddock's shady film contract, it desperately wanted Paddock to compete against Wykoff in Los Angeles. Fearing a drawn out public battle with the AAU, the AOC interceded to resolve the issue. On May 18, 1928, after a brief investigation of Paddock's film career, the AOC gave the athlete a clean bill of health but "insisted that the sprinter return to Los Angeles to race."<sup>147</sup> Reading between the lines, Paddock announced the following day that he planned to compete, fulfilling the AAU's wish of seeing him race Wykoff.<sup>148</sup>

Although he lost to Wykoff in the 100-metre event in Pasadena, Paddock returned to the East Coast to compete in the official U.S. Olympic trials in order to capture a spot on the 1928 American Olympic team. Finishing second in the 200-metres, Paddock secured his third trip to the quadrennial Olympian spectacle. To the sprinter's surprise, however, the AOC, acceding to a request from the AAU, refused to include Paddock on its list of 82 entries to the Amsterdam Games.<sup>149</sup> Although only months before the AOC had given Paddock a clean bill of health, it deferred to the AAU that cited concerns Paddock's movie appearances disqualified the sprinter from amateur competition.<sup>150</sup> With Paddock on the verge of disqualification, the story took another twist. After a closed-door meeting between Paddock, his long-time friend Bob

Weaver and Daniel Ferris, the chairman of the AAU registration committee, the AAU agreed to drop the charges and permit the sprinter to attend the Games.<sup>151</sup>

The decision clearly upset certain elements within the AOC including the vice president, Robert Wightman, who subsequently resigned over Paddock's reinstatement.<sup>152</sup> Wightman had been quoted before the meeting objecting to Paddock's inclusion in the 1928 Games, asserting that "nobody who would wear striped pants and white shoes like Paddock does is fit to represent the United States." In his letter of resignation Wightman declared that he could not "conscientiously retain membership on any committee which ... permits an athlete to represent the United States when he is notoriously under suspicion as an amateur and who therefore may be the cause of destroying the fundamental purpose for which the Olympic Games are held."<sup>153</sup> The pro-Paddock *Los Angeles Times* disagreed with Wightman, lampooning the AOC official with a headline reading "Paddock's Running Trunks Offend Wightman So Much He Resigns from Committee."<sup>154</sup> An additional editorial illustrated the newspaper's general displeasure with the AAU: "Imagine the childish notions of the men who sat in solemn conference and decreed that Charley Paddock was a professional because he wore baby-blue running trunks."<sup>155</sup>

The controversy over Paddock's amateur status followed him on his Olympic voyage across the ocean. In fact, the matter proved so controversial that the IOC held a "stormy secret session" to determine whether Paddock remained eligible to compete in the games.<sup>156</sup> Given that each national Olympic committee was charged with sanctioning the eligibility of its athletes, the IOC could do little to prevent Paddock from competing so long as he had the support of the Americans. Against the backdrop of a renewed debate surrounding his amateur status, Paddock once again ran amidst controversy at the Olympics. His performance failed to match his earlier feats. He failed to qualify for the Olympic finals in the 200-metres, his only event at the games.<sup>157</sup>

### **Paddock's Career in Historical Perspective**

Following his return to the U.S., and his subsequent final retirement, Paddock slowly faded from public memory. His movie deals, no longer bolstered by his performance on the track, dried up. Of Paddock's six film appearances, only one came after he retired from competition.<sup>158</sup> His fame, no doubt increased by his various self-promotional (and semi-professional) ventures, had made him a fascinating subject for the expanding sports media of the 1920s. In the years between his Olympic appearances, Paddock found numerous opportunities to cash in on his athletic success, including advertisements, public lectures, journalistic contributions, travel, and even appearances on the silver screen, while also reducing his racing schedule so as to never be competing and promoting

at the same time. When the AAU caught wind of such actions, criticism and scrutiny soon followed.

However, Paddock's battles with the AAU left a lasting imprint on the organization and one member in particular, Avery Brundage. The young Brundage, rising through the AAU ranks, witnessed Paddock ridicule the organization. Brundage, who went on to lead the IOC as president from 1952 to 1972, spent the entire 1920s serving as an executive for the AAU (eventually taking over as president in 1928) and also as a member of the AOC.<sup>159</sup> Brundage's 1929 AAU presidential address focused on the abuses of amateurism and the threat posed by "prominent athletes seeking evasion and chicanery to obtain material awards of professionalism while maintaining their amateur standing."<sup>160</sup> Brundage's speech, which was eventually published in a pamphlet titled *In Defense of the Amateur Code*, demonstrated the degree to which shifting public attitudes and commercially-ambitious athletes such as Paddock threatened the sanctity of amateurism.<sup>161</sup> Brundage disclosed his true feelings about Paddock in a personal letter to the then-IOC president Sigrid Edstrom, writing that the AAU "has tried to set him straight in other situations but always without success. [Paddock] is a publicity seeker of the worst sort and his stories are filled with half truths [sic] and distortions of all kinds in search for sensationalism."<sup>162</sup> Known later for his ardent defense of amateurism in the Olympic movement, Brundage's first steps into the international sporting hierarchy came right as Paddock first challenged the AAU's authority. As Paddock continued to battle the AAU, Brundage witnessed firsthand what was at stake for an organization dependent on amateur sport.

Indeed, Paddock was also aware of this fact. Following his retirement, despite nearly a decade at the pinnacle of track and field, Paddock had little wealth to show for his success. His athletic fame allowed him to publish an autobiography in 1932, *The Fastest Human*.<sup>163</sup> He also found both of his life's loves at the local *Pasadena Star*. There, he fulfilled his longstanding interest in journalism while also meeting his wife, the daughter of the *Pasadena Star*'s publisher. Although Paddock ceased appearing in movies, he continued writing and working in the newspaper industry. Starting as a sports writer, Paddock eventually moved up to be general manager of the *Pasadena Star* and later the business manager of the *Long Beach Press-Telegram*. His journalism career was interrupted when the U.S. entered the Second World War and Paddock reenlisted for military service. On July 10, 1942, Paddock was commissioned as a captain in the U.S. Marine Corps. Less than a year later, Paddock was killed when the military transport plane in which he was flying crashed off the coast of Sitka, Alaska.<sup>164</sup>

Had Paddock survived the war, he perhaps would have remained an outspoken advocate for athletes in track and field during their battles with the AAU in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. By the 1980s, professional road running,

combined with the continued relaxation of amateur rules within the IOC, eventually eroded the AAU's control of amateur sports in the United States.<sup>165</sup> Now, every two years, U.S. Olympic athletes attempt to parlay their athletic success beyond the ovals and arenas. Seeking lucrative endorsement deals and celebrity notoriety, athletes and their agents engage in biennial hope that the afterglow of the Olympic spotlight will burn bright enough to lengthen their brief stardom.

At the same time, Paddock's athletic career and amateur challenges illuminated a nation in transition as it sought to remake itself in the aftermath of the Great War. As Paul Gallico recounted in his book *Farewell to Sport*, the golden era of sport was "an age that was first dazzled by the speed and showmanship of Charlie Paddock at one hundred yards."<sup>166</sup> Paddock's speed throughout this era was not his only dazzling effect. Amidst the trend in sport towards inclusion and commercial expansion during the 1920s, Paddock led athletes into battles with sporting organizations over the influence of money, power, and sport. Conservative organizations such as the AAU held firm to their traditional values as the media sought to lure and promote the nation's star athletes into commercial ventures. The AAU's refusal to adapt its amateur rules to the modern sporting landscape further illustrates how the organization handled threats to its power and status in sport's changing landscape during the inter-war era. Rather than modify its rules, the AAU treated the old amateur code as sufficient to cover any emerging challenges. In this way, the AAU showed consistency with the principles of amateurism despite the fact that the sporting world in which they were being applied had radically changed.

## Endnotes

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