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## **FOOT-BALL! TURNING COLOMBIAN BOYS INTO PATRIOTIC MEN: HOW SPORT AND EDUCATION DEVELOPED WITH EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY COLOMBIAN NATIONALISM**

Brandon Todd Blakeslee

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FOOT-BALL! TURNING COLOMBIAN  
BOYS INTO PATRIOTIC MEN: HOW  
SPORT AND EDUCATION DEVELOPED  
WITH EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY  
COLOMBIAN NATIONALISM

by

Brandon Todd Blakeslee

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at  
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Supervising Committee:

David LaFevor, Supervising  
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Kenyon Zimmer

## ABSTRACT

Foot-ball! Turning Colombian boys into  
Patriotic men: How Sport and Education  
Developed with early Twentieth-Century  
Colombian Nationalism

Brandon Todd Blakeslee, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2021

Supervising Professor: David LaFevor

In 1948 a collection of ten football (soccer) teams from across Colombia joined together to form the División Mayor (Major League) the culmination of a thirty-year-long process to form a national league. Colombian sports enthusiasts were not motivated by their love of the game, but rather saw football, and sports in general, as a means to modernize their country. Journalists and enthusiasts wrote that the practice of sport, as part of physical education programs or participating in the spectacle of a match were essential to the “modern man” and “modern women.” Colombian nationalists also embraced sport, and a national league, as a cultural means of overcoming regional differences and binding the country together. At the same time, poorer Colombians embraced sport, especially going to the match, as a space where they could socialize and release pent-up emotions. This dissertation tracks the development of Colombian football from a game played by the elites to the national sport which was enjoyed in some way by all levels of Colombian society.

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Blakeslee Clan, without whom I would never have finished.

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## Introduction

In 1918, the Bogotá-based “National Committee of Foot-Ball” held an inaugural national football tournament in what it envisioned would be an annual event. The President of the Republic, José Vicente Concha, donated the silver trophy that would mark the winning club as champions for the year. Daniel Danic, a reporter for *El Nuevo Tiempo*, noted that 5,000 people attended the final match, including the President of the Republic and the Minister of Public Education, the latter of whom gave a speech to mark the opening of the match. Danic also let his readers know that those who gathered to watch the spectacle were members of Bogotá’s elite with two details: first, that an “exquisite” selection of ladies was present; and second, that cars, rare at the time, choked the streets around the playing field.<sup>1</sup> However, the committee’s use of “national” to describe its tournament was optimistic. In the end only four teams participated and all of them were from Bogotá. The issue was that travel between Colombian cities was difficult and expensive. In 1914 there was a total of 1,166 km of railroad track in the country and much of it was export-focused rather than designed for ease of domestic travel.<sup>2</sup>

Domestic travel was both too costly and time prohibitive for a National Committee of football to hold an annual tournament. It would take another ten years’ worth of infrastructure development to make a national tournament, featuring teams from across the nation, feasible. Even then, travel was still too expensive to consider an annual league championship; instead, cities would host a national tournament every four years, mirroring the Olympic schedule. Barbara Keys argues that “bureaucratization and standardization were preconditions for the nationalization of modern sport, because for a sport to be truly national, it had to be played under the same rules throughout the country.”<sup>3</sup> While not yet an annual tournament, Colombian sport enthusiasts and modernists seized on

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Danic, “El Campeonato Nacional de Foot-Ball,” *El Nuevo Tiempo*, July 10, 1918

<sup>2</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia 1845-1930*, Cambridge Latin American Studies 9 (Cambridge; England: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 256.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 43.

the opportunity afforded by regular sport competition to form national associations. In 1936 the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) officially recognized the Asociación Colombiana de Fútbol (Adefútbol). Despite official recognition from FIFA, Adefútbol still had trouble coordinating matches between the different Colombian departments, owing in part to strong regional sporting associations along with continued difficulties in domestic travel. It was not until 1948 when Colombian infrastructure investment generated 21,000km worth of highways and the government established a national airline, Avianca, that an annual football tournament was possible.<sup>4</sup> Thirty years after the “National Committee of Foot-Ball” dreamt of hosting a national tournament annually, Adefútbol inaugurated the Major League (División Mayor or Dimayor) with featured weekly matches between professional teams which flew and drove across the country.

In 1948, a match between two city rivals, Santa Fe and Millonarios, sold out the 25,000-seat stadium and reporters said that another 10,000 sought to get in. A reporter for *El Tiempo*, Mirón, noted that such an interest in sport was a sign of how far the nation had progressed. Mirón hoped, “There will come a day, not far off, when people will put partisan bickering at a lower level and concern themselves more with physical and spiritual health, with displays like yesterday, we are beginning to measure up to more advanced cultures.”<sup>5</sup> Mirón’s hope in many ways echoed the hope of members of the National Committee of Foot-Ball thirty years prior, that sport would bring the country together in a new sense of nationalism, above regional and political rivalries, and help Colombia become more modern. However, Mirón would be disappointed, as events were already underway that would plunge Colombia into chaos for a good part of the 1950s. In April of the same year, a Colombian populist politician and onetime mayor of Bogotá was assassinated in the streets of that same city, which triggered a series of events that

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<sup>4</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 117–23.

<sup>5</sup> "Mirador," *El Tiempo*, September 20, 1948.

saw Colombia descended into Civil War for the first time in nearly half a century.<sup>6</sup> In a misguided attempt to restore order, the Conservative Party barred the Liberals from taking the seats, who in turn armed guerrilla groups in the countryside to fight against the Conservatives. A decade of sporadic violence (known as La Violencia) in the cities as well as the countryside along with the government's inability to restore order, shook Colombian's belief in the democratic process. While professional sports were popular, and continued to be so during La Violencia, it did not help Colombians feel as though they had a voice in politics nor did the guerrillas embrace the football field rather than the *llanos* to fight out their differences.

Just because professional sports were not able to stop La Violencia does not mean that it was socially useless, but it is hard to describe exactly what benefit football (or soccer as it is known in North America) brings to society. According to Chilean filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky, "Anything you put on television and expect millions of people to tune in to watch it, must be profound. Kings, Presidents, Ministers, and Dictators do not command the attention of millions in the same way football does...football must contribute something to humanity."<sup>7</sup> Argentine historian Pablo Alabarces argues that the thing football contributes to humanity is a "narrative and symbolic practice of inclusion by the citizenry, and so is profoundly democratic."<sup>8</sup> Sport is inclusionary in the sense that tens of thousands of people can experience events together in the stadium while millions more can attend at a distance. Sport is democratic in two major ways. The first is that all spectators are, barring a violation of the rules, equally powerless to affect the play of the game from beyond the stands. Second, fans and players alike are bound to the rules, so there is a horizontal leveling of players -no team is given an advantage- and the fans.

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<sup>6</sup> James D. Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia : The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889-1965* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2001), 309, [http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ufl2.aa00011688\\_00001](http://hdl.handle.net/2027/ufl2.aa00011688_00001).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Samuel Martínez López and Francisco Vicente Galán Vélez, *Fútbol-Espectáculo, Cultura y Sociedad: una Revisión Crítica al Negocio Mundial* (México, D.F.: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2010), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Martínez López and Francisco Vicente Galán Vélez, 98.

Colombian scholar Andrés Dávila Ladrón de Guevara argues that football can create a type of vertigo or a space where it is acceptable to let out feelings of intense joy or suffering, which again imparts something important to humanity. Ladrón de Guevara attributed that sentimental space with the special ability that football has “to be epic and at very least rise above the banal, the everyday humdrum.”<sup>9</sup> In *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga spoke about the ritual of play, and how there is a sacred spot where play happens.<sup>10</sup> The feeling of vertigo along with the feeling of being in a sacred, but still secular, space is what gives sport a certain transcendent feel, at least at certain moments. During the 1998 World Cup, María Graciela Rodríguez remembers seeing a bunch of Scottish fans performing Diego Maradona’s famous, or infamous, “hand of god.” The Scottish fans felt a kinship with the Argentine footballer over a shared hatred of the English.<sup>11</sup> While identities based on sport loyalties are not completely fluid, they are elastic as they expand and contract depending largely on who the “they” in question are.

While sport can create an inclusive and democratic narrative along with a special space and time to express feelings and memory, sport has an important place in Colombia as one of only a few national institutions. Ladrón de Guevara remarked on the common belief that “Colombia is a nation devoid of symbols, institutions, and idols that can crystalize a national identity.”<sup>12</sup> A review of the titles of recent history books demonstrate the tenuous nature of the Colombian nation-state: David Bushnell’s *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*, Marco Palacios’ *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875-2002*, or the collaboration between Palacios and Frank Safford, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*. These historians speak of a nation with a weak central

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<sup>9</sup> Ingrid Johanna Dávila L. Bolívar, *Belleza, Fútbol y Religiosidad Popular* (Bogotá, D.C., Colombia: Ministerio de Cultura, 2001), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1950), 19.

<sup>11</sup> Pablo Alabarces, Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, and Grupo de Trabajo “Deporte y Sociedad.,” *Futbologías: Fútbol, Identidad y Violencia en América Latina*, Colección Grupos de trabajo de CLACSO (Buenos Aires: Agencia Sueca de Desarrollo Internacional, 2003), 184.

<sup>12</sup> Bolívar, *Belleza, Fútbol y Religiosidad Popular*, 85.

government, lack of a monopoly on violence, with stronger regional identities to national ones. In their *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History*, Michael J. LaRosa and Germán R. Mejía list five forces which aided national unity: A two-party political system, Roman Catholicism, the Spanish Language, the military, and a national currency.<sup>13</sup> Ladrón de Guevara argues, not against LaRosa and Mejía, that cultural practices can also foster feelings of nationalism and the 1985 Colombian national team is an example of that.<sup>14</sup> While there was not an international superstar on that team, like Pelé for Brazil or Maradona for Argentina, Colombians nonetheless felt that the team represented them.

While this dissertation agrees with Ladrón de Guevara's analysis in principle, it argues that sport alone is not enough to foster nationalism. Colombian nationalists between 1928 and 1948 were certain that the spirit of competition would unite Colombians from different regions and were consistently surprised when their national tournaments instead produced regionalism. An element that was missing from early Colombian football, but present in 1985, was a national association, like Adefútbol, that could exercise centralized authority over the different regional associations. It was not that Colombia was completely devoid of national institutions, but it did not have many, and once formed in 1936, Adefútbol continued to govern Colombian football to the present, though now under the name Federación Colombiana de Fútbol (FCF). In addition to providing central authority, Adefútbol was recognized by FIFA, which made it one of the few private Colombian organizations to receive international recognition. Barbara Keys argues that in the 1930s "it became critical [for smaller nations] not so much to win but to show up, to perform respectably, and to be seen as a member of the club."<sup>15</sup> Colombian nationalists often felt as though their nation was overlooked by the international community and they took the recognition of Adefútbol by FIFA as a sign of acceptance, even if the association did not always benefit Colombia.

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<sup>13</sup> Michael LaRosa and Mejía P., Germán, *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 58.

<sup>14</sup> Bolívar, *Belleza, Fútbol y Religiosidad Popular*, 86.

<sup>15</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 17.

Related to the creation of a national institution, sport also was an “invented tradition,” and one that Colombians across different regions shared. According to Hobsbawm, “Inventing traditions... is essentially a process of formalization and ritualization, characterized by referencing the past, if only by imposing repetition.”<sup>16</sup> Hobsbawm goes on to identify three types of traditions: those that established or symbolized social cohesion, those establishing or legitimizing institutions, and those that socialize a population through inculcation of beliefs, value systems, and conventions of behavior.<sup>17</sup> In Colombia sport, and football, performed all three functions. Through wearing jerseys or performing ritualized behavior (e.g., chanting, fans), demonstrated social cohesion at either the local or national level depending on the jersey or who was playing. Sport through organizations like Adefútbol received legitimacy from both its ability to draw in fans to its matches as well as international recognition from FIFA. Finally, as John Fiske argues, sport provides elites the paternalistic opportunity to ascribe middle-class meaning on the activity of the lower classes as a means of control.<sup>18</sup> However, the lower classes appropriate these symbols of consumption to express their own individuality while still participating in mass culture (e.g., ripping brand new jeans). This same process is evident in the development of Colombian football where Colombian elites attempted to use the sport as a tool to modernize the masses, while the latter drew their own meaning from sport.

The value of sport as an invented tradition in Colombian society is that it could symbolize stability and inclusion during a time of great change. Hobsbawm argued invented traditions “occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable.”<sup>19</sup>

Colombian historian Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño demonstrates that in the first quarter of the twentieth

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, ed., *The Invention of Tradition*, Reissue edition (Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm, 9.

<sup>18</sup> John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2010), 61, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837177>.

<sup>19</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 4.

century the coffee boom along with industrialization and urbanization disrupted the power of the rural *patron* of the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> The Colombian urban elite, who took economic and political control of the country in the twentieth-century needed a rhetorical device to legitimize their power. Pablo Piccato argues that Mexican elites looked for “a generally accepted, stable notion of honor that would legitimize the political elite's claim to embody the virtues of the nation and speak in its name.”<sup>21</sup> Colombian elites’ embrace of sport and the modernity it represented, much like the Mexican elite, was based in the concept of honor, and for similar reason; to legitimize their right to rule especially in an era of great change.

However, the elites were not the only ones to experience great social change; industrialization was changing how and where workers interacted with bosses rather than their rural *patrones* who owned the land they worked on. Between 1870 and 1938 the population of Colombia’s twenty largest cities grew 50% faster than the national average.<sup>22</sup> The new rural arrivals were largely illiterate and found themselves divorced from what Gino Germani calls the primary and obligatory societal roles that they had in the towns.<sup>23</sup> Conservatives and Liberals alike worried about the so-called “social problem” and feared that if the workers were not incorporated into society, and into the party, they might turn to bolshevism. Even Leftist newspapers painted the worker as weak, prone to alcoholism, and often drawn to what is expedient, but in need of organization.<sup>24</sup> Colombia patricians such as Alfonso López Pumarejo and new middle-class leaders like Jorge Eliecer Gaitán sought in the 1930s to use sport to help incorporate the new urban population into Colombia’s democracy. Pumarejo made higher education

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<sup>20</sup> Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport: elites y deporte en la construcción de la nación colombiana, 1903-1925* (Bogotá, Colombia: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2010), 92–93.

<sup>21</sup> Pablo Piccato, *The Tyranny of Opinion: Honor in the Construction of the Mexican Public Sphere* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 58.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Néstor García Canclini, *Imaginario Urbanos* (Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA: Eudeba, 2004), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utarl/detail.action?docID=3190193>.

<sup>24</sup> Ricardo Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, Colección Ciclo básico (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes, 2011), 34–35.

accessible to a wider range of Colombians, while Gaitán and his populist persona, made Colombians feel they had a greater voice in politics.

Colombians, and Colombian elites, linked sport with modernity in two ways: as an essential part of a modern education system and as a shared cultural endeavor to foster nationalism. Granted there was overlap between the two impulses. Ernst Gellner argued that “the monopoly on legitimate education is now more important than the monopoly on legitimate violence.”<sup>25</sup> His larger point was that it was through the school system that the state teaches what it means to be a citizen and that education plays a crucial role in modern society.<sup>26</sup> Colombian elites were aware of this connection between education and nationalism and spent much of the first half of the twentieth century trying to modernize the public education system. Their intentions for public education were two-fold: the first was out of a desire to create a national institution and ferment feeling of nationalism; the second was out of a fear that the rural and largely illiterate populace was holding Colombia back from modernity.

Sport, with its space for heightened emotions and transcendence above the banal, is fertile ground for the making of modern and secular myths. A few days after the “National Tournament” in 1918, Ramón Rodríguez Diago, the Attorney General, gave a speech explaining how football “strengthened the youth of the nation.” In addition, Diago argued that the game was an essential part of “modern education” and could make the youth “better able to serve the needs of the *Patria*.”<sup>27</sup> Diago was responding to popular ideas among the Colombian medical community that argued the Colombian race was in decline. For Diago, and modernists like him, the practice of sport, especially by young people, was essential to combat this racial decline which was often linked to an unhealthy tropical environment. As Cubans refashioned baseball as a paradigm of modernity within a traditional social framework, Colombians embraced football to strengthen their population against the forces of decline,

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<sup>25</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 33.

<sup>26</sup> Gellner, 27.

<sup>27</sup> Ramón Rodríguez Diago, “Discurso,” *El Nuevo Tiempo*, July 16, 1918.



both moral as well as biological, and adopt “modern” pastimes. In the 1928 National Olympics held in Cali, Antonio Bonilla, a minister of public education, mythologized the athletes by comparing them to Homeric heroes straight out of the Iliad. Bonilla held up the athletes to the crowd of over 10,000 gathered as representing the balanced modern citizen who was in complete control of his action and at home either on the battlefield of Thermopylae or in Plato’s Garden.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the young athletes represented the strength of a Spartan warrior with the mind of an Athenian philosopher and could serve the nation equally well in peacetime as in wartime.

Beyond being part of the educational system, football tournaments provided Colombian politicians and tournament organizers the chance to cast a nationalist narrative. In his study of mega-events like World Fairs and the modern Olympics, Maurice Roche argues that such events grew alongside growing nationalist sentiment. Roche continues, “They [mega-events] represented and continue to represent key occasions in which nations could construct and present images of themselves for recognition in relation to other nations and in the eyes of the world.”<sup>29</sup> Colombian tournament organizers applied the same principles to national tournaments, presenting the image of a unified and progressing nation to the gathered citizens. In the 1932 Medellín Olympics such unifying symbols included a speech by the President of the Republic, a military procession, Mass before the event, and an Olympic oath where athletes swore by “God and the Patria.” Medellín organizers used traditional symbols of national unity -the Catholic Church, the Military, and the office of the President- to help legitimize the invented tradition of sports. In turn, politicians hoped that citizens would be grateful, and loyal, to the government that made these events possible.

The Liberal Party was the first to take advantage of the political advantages presented by sport.

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Bonilla “La Premiacion de los Vencedores de los Concursos Olimpicos de Colegios y Escuelas,” *El Tiempo*, January 13, 1929.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture* (Routledge, 2002), 6, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203443941>.

In 1932 *El Tiempo*, a Liberal paper, reported that the party “loved sport.”<sup>30</sup> While the Liberals were the first, the Conservative party also became interested in sport. Ladrón de Guevara notes that in contemporary Colombia there were two teams each in Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali, one with Conservative supporters and the other with Liberal supporters.<sup>31</sup> While political division does not evoke national unity, sporting rivalries do bring competing supporters together in a shared experience. The football match mentioned earlier that drew around 35,000 fans to the stadium was between the Conservative Santa Fe and the Liberal Millonarios. Even if the political divide were replicated in football, the promise that the teams would play each other each season presented the opportunity for the victors to celebrate and the defeated to achieve redemption the following season.

The 1932 Medellín Olympics also featured women’s events, which followed the inclusion of women into the International Olympic Games in Los Angeles of the same year. Colombian women played an important role in the development of sport as figure heads, tournament organizers and promoters, and athletes. In the years of the coffee boom, women served as queens of students as well as sport providing symbols of continuity in rapidly changing times. In the 1930s each Colombian department elected their own queen of sport who helped organize clubs and travelled to surrounding towns to promote the health benefits of playing sports. Additionally, as an important part of Colombian society, there was great debate about what a modern woman looked like. To male reporters for *Cromos* and *El Tiempo*, the modern woman led an active lifestyle, was athletic, and physically attractive. Reporters and physical educators linked women’s health to her beauty and promoted female education as the means to attract a husband or maintain her husband’s interest. While the Liberal party removed barrier that prohibited women’s access to higher education, Liberal politicians were not eager to grant women’s suffrage.

For their part, many Colombian women were also interested in becoming a modern woman and

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<sup>30</sup> “Impuestos al basket, al golf y a la natación,” *El Tiempo*, August 16, 1932.

<sup>31</sup> Bolívar, *Belleza, Fútbol y Religiosidad Popular*, 92.

many saw sport as an important element of modernity. While Colombian women did not dispute the link between health and beauty, they often had greater goals in mind. For tennis star Luz Ramirez, sport was an essential part of any good education program that benefitted women in similar ways to how it benefitted men. To a female editorialist for *El Sábado*, sport provided women the opportunity to prove that they were capable of more than men gave them credit for. Ultimately, Colombian women were able to use the rhetoric of modernity to gain greater access to the professional sphere as well as the public sphere. In the 1940s Colombian women organized across social and regional lines to agitate for increased civil rights which ultimately earned them the vote.

To speak of Latin American elites and modernity or progress, it is important to mention E. Bradford Burns' seminal *Poverty of Progress* and his conclusion that the pursuit of progress was a primary cause of Latin America's poverty. In his important work, Burns' argued that Latin American elites in the nineteenth century were interested in acquiring the "accoutrements of progress: railroads, steamships, electricity, machinery, Parisian fashion, and English textiles," but not at the sacrifice of their own position.<sup>32</sup> Burns concludes that "they (elites) could not achieve real or meaningful modernization because they refused to reform the inherited colonial institutions."<sup>33</sup> Colombian elites in the twentieth century were certainly interested, one might say obsessed, with the accoutrements of progress: concrete buildings, railroads, and modern activities like sports. While progress towards modernity could be measured in track laid, roads paved, or the number of fans in attendance at a football match, Colombian elites did not have an end goal in mind. The closest Colombian elites came to an end goal was a comparison between their country and what Conservative President Marco Fidel Suárez (1918-1921) called the "Northern Star," the United States.<sup>34</sup> Since Colombian elites' concept of modernity was based on comparison and the United States was still developing, that meant that the marker of modern

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<sup>32</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, United States: University of California Press, 1980), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Burns, 142.

<sup>34</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 105.

kept moving as well. As such, Argentine Néstor García Canclini provides a useful framework to understand modernity as a four-part process: an emancipating project, an expansive project, a renovating project, and a democratizing project.<sup>35</sup> Colombian elites' pursuit of modernity clearly fits the model as they pursued, to greater or lesser extent: secularization of cultural fields, greater control over nature to produce consumer goods, reformulation of old markers of individual in new consumer contexts, and the push to achieve rational and moral evolution of the populace. Sport and physical education played an important role within the larger process especially for the rationalization of society, through education, and incorporating rural people within a new urban consumer market through purchasing tickets to attend sports matches.

However, Colombian elites, Conservative and Liberal alike, were also interested in maintaining social order but were willing to sacrifice elements of Spanish tradition to achieve social modernity as well. In this way Colombian elites were similar to how Stephen Allen describes post-Revolutionary Mexican elites. Allen argues, "elites coming to power after the Revolution saw Western sports as key to transforming Mexican society rather than for maintaining its societal power structures."<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Colombian elites thought that sports could make Colombians more modern and make Colombia more modern in the process. As long time Colombian sports promoter Jorge Wills Pradilla said, "sport is not a superficial or vain thing but rather a national necessity."<sup>37</sup>

While Colombian elites were the primary force in organizing and promoting sporting events, they never succeeded in controlling the sporting narrative. David LaFevor reminds us that "the public sphere was more than a neutral site to express opinion; it could take on a life of its own beyond the

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<sup>35</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, 4th ed. (Minneapolis, United States: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 12.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen D. Allen, *A History of Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism* (Albuquerque, United States: University of New Mexico Press, 2017), 21.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 127.

intentions of writers and artists.”<sup>38</sup> While Colombian elites could create the space for sports to happen, they could not ensure that the masses would fill those spaces, much less that they would behave themselves in those spaces. While the 1928 National tournament was supposed to showcase the prowess of Colombian athletes, the committee sent Cornelio Buenaventura to New York to set up an exhibition match between two foreign heavy-weight boxers.<sup>39</sup> The match between the internationally successful Paulino Uzcudun, a Basque, and Jack Renault, a Canadian, would ensure popular participation. The use of foreign boxers to ensure interest in national sports demonstrated that Colombian elites chose activities to promote nationalism based on their popularity rather than creating that popularity. As Johan Huizinga argues, play must be voluntary or else it ceases to become play.<sup>40</sup> In the same way popular culture must be accepted by the masses or else it will remain a culture of the elites.

Beyond the inability to create public interests, or at the very least to guarantee it, Colombian elites were also not able to ensure that the masses would embrace the modern virtues they invested into sports. Louis Pérez Jr. also argues that while sports are governed by rules, and to change the rules too much would be to alter the game, sports also do not dictate their own social function, but are neutral.<sup>41</sup> In other words, sports do not have inherent meaning except what the spectator ascribes to it. Pérez Jr. goes on to demonstrate this by showing how Cubans were able to take the baseball and construct “usable paradigm of modernity in which interests and classes coexisted within a framework of social order.”<sup>42</sup> For Colombian fans of sport, football presented the opportunity of social gathering and making connections especially for the increasingly large group of people who had just moved to the

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<sup>38</sup> David C. LaFevor, *Prizefighting and Civilization: A Cultural History of Boxing, Race, and Masculinity in Mexico and Cuba, 1840-1940* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020), 2.

<sup>39</sup> “El Match de Uzcudum,” *El Nuevo Tiempo*, December 5, 1928.

<sup>40</sup> Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Louis A. Perez, “Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898,” *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (1994): 494, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2081169>.

<sup>42</sup> Perez, 508.

cities from the countryside. Richard Giulianotti wrote of the paradox where “spectators maintain social order by paying admission, cheering the nation's athletes, and consuming merchandise and yet they undermine social order through 'excessive' behavior that offends dominant groups and by creating 'subcultures' that castigate sports authorities.”<sup>43</sup> From the beginning, Colombian fans demonstrated local allegiance by chanting loudly in favor of their home team, accusing those who went against their team of regionalism, and, in extreme cases, transgressing the barrier between the stands and the field to assault players. The Colombian press lamented these fan behaviors as evidence of persistent regional bias or a lack of sporting spirit.

Fans also embraced the spectacle of sport as a type of modern embodiment of the carnival, or a space that was connected to but outside of normal time. Roche writes that mega-events “promise modernity the occurrence (and, ironically, also the control) of charisma and aura in a world often appearing as excessively rationalistic and as lacking any dimensions beyond the everyday lifeworld and its mundanity.”<sup>44</sup> Fans embraced the space and time outside of normal time along with the heightened emotional space afforded by the match to exhibit behaviors that would not have been acceptable elsewhere. A reporter for *El Tiempo* noted that many fans at the Santa Fe versus Millonarios match tried to sit near attractive women and shouted at them “Take it off!” hoping that the women would expose their breasts. The same reporter also noted that in many cases the women obliged, prompting more suggestive shouts by the fans.<sup>45</sup> This was certainly not the middle-class behavior that elites wished fans would learn from or exhibit, but it does indicate how fans made their own meaning out of sporting events, especially as a space to release pent up emotions. This is true not only for the men who would be hesitant to verbally assault women in other mix-gendered spaces, such as at Mass, but also for the women who chose to expose themselves.

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Giulianotti, *Sport: A Critical Sociology* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 44.

<sup>44</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 7.

<sup>45</sup> “El Vértice de un Angulo Fanático: Ríos humanos por las calles,” *El Tiempo*, September 20, 1948.

The above example is an extreme one, but fan preference help explain how football went from a sport practiced by the Colombian elite in 1918 to one performed by professionals in 1948. As demonstrated by the Uzcudun versus Renault boxing match, mass spectacle needed the masses to participate, who in turn paid to participate in the spectacle. A problem with amateurism was that athletes were supposed to play solely for the love of the game and favored elites who could afford to do nothing but practice in their free time, which limited the pool of available players. When the Argentine dictator José Félix Uriburu professionalized soccer in 1931, he argued that such a move would enhance the spectacle.<sup>46</sup> As football grew in popularity among the Colombian masses, they demanded greater and greater spectacle to continue to buy tickets. In 1938 the Colombian national football team participated in its first international tournament and did not win a single match. At the conclusion of the tournament papers like *El Tiempo* published scathing articles with titles like “The Problem with National Football” and discussed the disastrous showing by the national team.<sup>47</sup> If the nation enjoyed the prestige associated with athlete’s victory they also shared in the shame of defeat. Pablo Alabarces noted that many blamed an economic downturn in Argentina to the national team’s devastating 6-1 loss against Czechoslovakia during the 1958 World Cup.<sup>48</sup> In response to Colombia’s loss, team owners looked to import foreign talent to help improve the quality of Colombian football. Enticing foreign players to Colombia required incentives, which is to say some degree of professionalization. The Colombian press highlighted the foreign talent participating in the Dimayor as a major reason why fans should come and attend matches. The press hyped up a match between Universidad and Millonarios by writing “it is sure to be a good show thanks to an injection from Rio de la Plata, both sides are playing quality and extremely clean football.”<sup>49</sup> Football had reached commodity status and fans had to be

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<sup>46</sup> Julio Frydenberg, “El Nacimiento del Fútbol Profesional Argentino,” section II.

<sup>47</sup> “Los Problemas del Fútbol Nacional,” *El Tiempo*, August 23, 1938.

<sup>48</sup> Alabarces, Pablo, *Fútbol y Patria: El Fútbol y Las Narrativas de La Nación En La Argentina* (Buenos Aires, AR: Prometeo libros, 2002), 84.

<sup>49</sup> *El Tiempo*, August 29, 1948.

enticed to the stadium with the promise of great spectacle, in this case the chance to see some of the greatest players in world play in Colombia.

This dissertation follows the development of Colombian sport from an activity of the elites in 1918 to a professionalized and regulated popular activity by 1948. However, this dissertation is primarily concerned with the development of Colombian nationalism and how Colombian's developed national pride in essentially foreign sports. During the period in question sport helped Colombian nationalism develop in two major ways, through institutionalization and through cultural ties that helped make the "imagined community" of Colombia more feasible than a collection of city-states. As mentioned earlier, Gellner argued that institutions, especially public education, was crucial for "two men to recognize each other as belonging to the same nation."<sup>50</sup> Along with education, Gellner argued that the concept of a nation was sustained by a "standardized, homogeneous, centrally-sustained high culture, pervading entire populations rather than elite minorities."<sup>51</sup> In the case of Colombia, the early failures of national sporting associations demonstrated the strength of regional cultures over a central culture. But with the creation of the Dimayor (Major League) in 1948, Colombian football finally had a centrally sustained and standardized arbiter of a cultural activity that Colombians across regions shared. In other words, the Dimayor was one of the few Colombian institutions that operated at a national rather than at a regional level. Perhaps more importantly the Dimayor had the power to levy fines or sanction teams who did not follow the standardized rules and so used institutional authority rather than social authority that had been predominant in earlier years.

Sport also helped create an imagined community, through its popularity among a wide range of Colombians across social and regional spectrum. Benedict Anderson argued that a type of national consciousness proceeded the development of this imagined community which was created by creole

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<sup>50</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 7.

<sup>51</sup> Gellner, 54.



printmen.<sup>52</sup> These creole newsmen created and disseminated a new perspective, their own, which was widely read by the local, and colonial population, which in turn helped to create a uniformed set of ideas and perspectives. However, in Colombia no such national press developed, except for *El Tiempo* which enjoyed broad readership but was still focused predominantly on Bogotá. Colombians then got their news from regional papers and so did not develop this national consciousness, at least not in the same way. Ironically, it was a reporter who noted that sports provided Colombians with a new topic of conversation that was more pure than old topics which “only left the nation with deep cracks that have gone against national stability and consistency.”<sup>53</sup> The reporter was noting that an interest in sport, football especially, was something that Colombians shared across the different departments and across different social classes. A bogotano could walk into a medellinese bar and talk sports. This type of shared interest in football, while not found among all Colombians, was nonetheless common in enough to make it a marker of the imagined Colombian community.

As a cultural history, this dissertation uses newspapers and print media to reconstruct both sporting events and reactions to sporting events. I pull heavily from *El Tiempo*, which was one of the most widely read papers in Colombia, as well as the weekly publication *El Sábado* and the weekly magazine *Cromos*. Both *El Tiempo* and *El Sábado* were owned by prominent Liberal Party members who held moderate rather than radical views, which were often expressed in their papers. As such, the sporting perspective offered by journalists from those papers tends to skew center-left in Colombian politics. Colombian Liberals were also quicker to embrace sport as a populist/political tool and so were quicker to add sporting columns to their papers. In addition to newspapers, I have used published conference proceedings from public conferences and debates held in Colombia on topics ranging from material progress to public health to reconstruct how Colombians of the time viewed progress and

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<sup>52</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2016), 65.

<sup>53</sup> "Un Paisaje en Colores," *El Sábado*, September 25, 1948.

health. Given high illiteracy rates in Colombia, especially among the rural and working-class populations, it was harder to reconstruct how those populations viewed sports and modernity. My best sources for popular belief are reporters' accounts of how fans reacted to sporting events and especially what they reacted to. Reporters were not neutral observers. They often wanted to show the "modernizing effect" of sports, but, knowing this bias allowed me to deconstruct their accounts with a more critical eye aimed at interpreting fan behavior.

A quick note on terms. I use the term "modern sports" to distinguish games like football, basketball, tennis, etc. from older games like the Mayan ball game. Allen Guttman distinguishes modern sports from ancient games via seven qualifications: secularism, equality, specialization, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, and the quest for records.<sup>54</sup> Guttman's distinctions are not only seminal to understanding modern sport, but how sport fits with modernity since values such as rationalization and bureaucratic organization are common in both. I have also chosen to use "football" rather than "soccer" because it is the closer Anglicization of the Spanish "fútbol." I use "elite" as a shorthand to refer educated Colombians of some means who were in some position to travel abroad or hold some measure of political or institutional position and power. Finally, I often refer to Colombians of different regions by a regional distinction, bogotano for somebody from Bogotá. I keep the regional designation in lowercase "b" instead of "B" because that was how the regional distinctions appeared in the newspapers at the time.

This dissertation is broken into five chapters, each centering around a pivotal event to the development of Colombian sport. Chapter one centers around the planning of the 1928 National Olympics in Cali and provides historical context to economic and social development in Colombia that made the national tournament possible. My larger argument in Chapter one is that sport fit as part of the Conservative Party's larger attempt at economic and social modernization of Colombia, and its

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<sup>54</sup> Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 16.

desire for the National Olympics to showcase what they had achieved. Tournament organizers and politicians used rail lines, highways, electricity, and modern structures, to “prove” that their modernization program was being successful. However, the modernization program was far from complete, and I show how the National Olympics was more of an optimistic representation of what the country could be rather than where it was in the process.

Chapter two examines the two marquee events of the National Olympics: the boxing match between Uzcudun and Renault, along with a disastrous football match between a team from Bogotá and one from Cali. Colombian journalists and dignitaries alike used the language of Colombia as a racial republic, with each region contributing its own strength to part of a national whole. The ideas of the racial republic played out in the boxing match, which the press billed as a battle of the races along with the characterization of football players from different Colombian regions. However, these ideas of unity are tested when fans from Cali assault the players from Bogotá after the latter defeated the home team. In response to the assault the Bogotá team withdrew from the Olympics, a decision that drew criticism from the Cali press as well as the Bogotá press. The controversy demonstrated that social capital, like that possessed by elite Colombian families, was more valuable than institutional capital, that invested in rules or governing organizations.

In Chapter three I discuss the second of the National Olympics which were held in Medellín in 1932, and the first to be held during the period of Liberal rule. Not only was there a new political party in power, but the Great Depression also afforded the Liberal Party an opportunity to expand central control over national finance. Using a combination of Keynesian economics and import substitution President Olaya Herrera and Alfonso López Pumarejo financed public work projects, like municipal stadiums, and encouraged the development of domestic industry. In addition, Olaya Herrera inaugurated the 1932 Olympics with a speech, attended the opening Mass, and led a military procession. More so than Conservative Presidents, Liberal Presidents embraced sport to foster

nationalism as well as gain a broader base of support for their party. However, the lack of central institutional authority meant that the Medellín Olympics were full of different delegations threatening, and withdrawing, from the competition if calls were not overturned or if referees were not replaced. Instead of fostering national unity, the Medellín Olympics increased regional tension.

Chapter four focuses on the role Colombian women played in the development of sport. Sport offered Colombian women an opportunity to be recognized for a role other than that of a wife or a mother. Colombian women helped organize sporting events, raised funds for team houses, and ruled over tournaments as Queens of Sports. In addition, women also competed in national tournaments in “appropriate sports” such as tennis, basketball, and equestrianism. The women’s basketball team had greater international success than the men’s teams. However, neither the Liberal nor the Conservative Party were interested in welcoming women into the political sphere and grant them voting rights. Colombian women, however, seized opportunities afforded them by sport and entrance into the professional sphere to form their own associations that advocated for full citizenship, and women were eventually granted the vote in 1955.

In Chapter five, I look at sports as diplomacy and the potential of international tournaments to provide legitimacy, or lack thereof, to not only the national sporting bureaucracy but also the host nation. In 1938 Bogotá-based tournament organizers hosted the first in a series of Bolivarian Games, and international tournament between the surrounding nations. Brazil had hosted a similar event in 1922 and Mexico in 1926, with the stated purpose of preparing the region’s athletes for the International Olympic Games. Joseph Arbena argued that national tournament organizers also hoped to demonstrate to the international community that their nation was not only modern but could be a regional leader.<sup>55</sup> Colombian tournament organizers were interested in fostering this type of regional association with Colombia at its center. However, conflict between the central and municipal authorities

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<sup>55</sup> Joseph L. Arbena, “Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970,” *Journal of Sport History* 18, no. 3 (1991): 354.

led to confusion and conflict over which stadium to use for the events: the stadium at the National University, or El Campín, build by the municipal authorities of Bogotá. The “disastrous” performance by the Colombian national football team prompted calls in the press to hire an impartial coach to select the best players for the team rather than a few from each Colombian region.<sup>56</sup>

Colombia has a rich and complicated history that is sadly under-researched. The stain of Pablo Escobar’s narco-violence along with decades of civil war as not only colored perceptions of Colombia as a violent and unstable country, but also drawn much of the attention of Colombian scholars. My dissertation expands Colombian historiography in two ways. The first is by broadening our understanding of the development of Colombian sports in the first half of the twentieth century. While there are several Colombian scholars working in this period, and I am indebted to their research, they tend to focus on the development of sport within a single Colombian department as opposed to in Colombia as a whole. My dissertation charts the national institutionalization of sport which, while not eliminating regionalism, did create cultural bonds shared by people across the nation. Secondly, my dissertation helps to expand the historiography on how the Colombian state pursued its program of modernization and incorporation of more and more elements of Colombian society.

In a larger sense, this dissertation expands our understanding of how sport fits as a part of modern society. I agree with Pablo Alabarces that sport is not just an opiate for the masses. Sport’s ability to rise above the banal and operate in a time outside of normal time can create transcendent moments. Jeffery Gould wrote about collected experiences of “blood and fire” being able to mark a people as a distinct group.<sup>57</sup> Sport creates those types of moments, such as when the Colombian national team beat the Argentinian national team in the group stages of the 1994 World Cup. The victory was cause for celebration among Colombians and caused soul-searching among Argentinians

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<sup>56</sup> “Los Problemas del Fútbol Nacional,” *El Tiempo*, August 23, 1938.

<sup>57</sup> Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in This Way : Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 231–32.

who wondered how they were beaten by those they had taught how to play. Even Colombians who were not alive in 1994 can still “remember” that victory and feel some sense of group pride. The economy will fluctuate, economic inequality will grow and shrink, new Presidents will be elected, but those epic moments will remain the same.

## Chapter 1

### Traditional Modernity: Colombia's Cautious Pursuit of Modernity

In December of 1928, Colombia hosted the first of a series of National Olympic Games held in Cali, Colombia. Modelled after the International Olympic games that had been held in the Netherlands in the summer during the same year, the all-Colombian version included many of the same events: basketball, track and field, gymnastics, chess (an Olympic sport at the time) and others. Two events stood out among the others and got the most attention from fans and in the press, boxing and football. The first event was a heavy weight boxing match between two foreign contenders, Jack Renault, a Canadian, and Paulino Uzcudun, a Spaniard from the Basque region. The second event drew most of the national press's attention, and it was the first national soccer tournament that featured teams from across Colombia. Both the exhibition boxing match and the football games, especially featuring one of the two home teams, drew thousands of fans to the stadium.

The 1928 National Olympics was a prime example of what Maurice Roche calls a "mega-event." Roche notes that the development of mega-events, like World Fairs or the Olympics, paralleled the spread of modernity and the development of nation-state consciousness along with a reciprocal recognition of being a nation among other nations. What is more, Roche notes that mega events "represented and continue to represent key occasions in which nations could construct and present images of themselves."<sup>1</sup> Granted, Roche was speaking about international events, but tournament organizers such as Hans Huber and Jorge Wills Pradilla, along with distinguished speakers, used the 1928 Olympics to present Colombia as a modern nation to the fans and all those who read about the events in the daily newspapers. As with many of these national narratives, the picture that Pradilla and Huber painted was an optimistic one, reflecting an ideal level of modernity that was not entirely consistent with the reality.

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<sup>1</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 6.

Colombian historian Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño argues that in the first decades of the twentieth century, Colombian elites began to “centralize power, modernize political administration, and development infrastructure.”<sup>2</sup> Such efforts were funded by Colombia’s boom of agricultural exports, especially of coffee. Patiño further argues that Colombia’s growing importance in the international economy disrupted the traditional relationship between the landlord and the rural worker. As such, Colombian elites looked for new ways to confirm their status as the dominant group, and one of their preferred avenues was through exclusive clubs of the social as well as sport variety.<sup>3</sup>

On one hand sports clubs served as an accoutrement of progress, a chance for well-to-do Colombians to demonstrate how modern, or Europeanized they were. Membership to these clubs was a way of confirming one’s status. Colombian sports clubs performed a function like that which Eric Hobsbawm noted in European clubs, namely they provided a method to bring people of equivalent social status together.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, these Colombian sports clubs played a public role as well. While masses were not invited into the daily life of the club, they were welcomed to participate as fans in games or parades held by these clubs. This gave the public the opportunity to see how club members enjoyed modern activities and modern behaviors which the masses should emulate, at least according to the elite members of the clubs. In these public performances, club members were performing the “invented tradition” associated with “establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relationships of authority.”<sup>5</sup> Through these public performances, club members not only confirmed their own modernity by enjoying modern activities, but also established themselves as the group on the top, the one who should be followed.

But for certain politicians and educators, sport served a crucial pedagogical function, especially in the early twentieth century. Longtime sports promoter Jorge Wills Pradilla stated in 1924 “sport is not

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<sup>2</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La politica del sport*, 40.

<sup>3</sup> Ruiz Patino, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 298.

<sup>5</sup> Hobsbawm, 9.



just a vain or superficial endeavor, but rather a national necessity as it complements the physical, moral, and intellectual education of an individual.”<sup>6</sup> Pradilla labeled sport as a useful pedagogical tool for individual development, but as an activity that the nation, in this case the Colombian government, should take a vested interest in developing. In the 1920s there was a large public debate about whether the Colombian *race* was in decline or whether only certain Colombian *races* were declining. Two medical doctors, Luis López de Mesa and Jorge Bejarano were among the most prominent proponents of the multiple race theory. López de Mesa argued that there were multiple Colombian races each with their own regional strength and weaknesses.<sup>7</sup> Bejarano argued in his doctoral dissertation that physical education was especially important to counter racial degeneration.<sup>8</sup> In 1925 the delegate from Antioquia, Carlos Uribe Echeverry introduced a bill to make physical education standard in public schools and to secure government funds to support a series of National Olympics. The bill became Law 80 that same year and guaranteed that sport would be an official part of life in Colombia.<sup>9</sup>

Despite political elites’ desire to use sport to cement their status, or Colombian educators move to use sports to make good citizens, neither group could control the message of sport. The Colombian masses who flocked to the stadium to watch their home team play drew their own meaning from the Olympics which were at times at odds with the official narrative. Likewise, the athletes, though many came from wealthy families, also did not reflect the self-controlled gentlemanly qualities sport was supposed to instill in them. However, both athletes and fans relished the ability to participate in the new modern space of the sports tournament.

This chapter examines how the 1928 National Olympics was the culmination of various elements of Colombian society’s modernization efforts up to that point. Néstor García Canclini describes

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<sup>6</sup> Jorge Wills Pradilla, quoted in Ruiz Patino, *La politica del sport*, 127.

<sup>7</sup> Ruiz Patino, 96.

<sup>8</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia: pedagogía, moral y modernidad en Colombia, 1903-1946 / Saldarriaga, Óscar.*, Colección Clío (Medellín, Colombia: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia, 1997), 57.

<sup>9</sup> I will deal more closely with the idea of Colombia as a racial republic in the following chapter.

modernity, at least in the Latin American context, as the culmination of four movements: an emancipating project, an expansive project, a renovating project, and a democratizing project.<sup>10</sup> While Colombians did not follow Canclini's route to modernity in the same order or to the same degree, especially regarding the secularization of cultural fields from the emancipating project, these movements provide a helpful framework none the less. The first part of this chapter examines the infrastructure improvements that made it possible for athletes to make it to Cali for the games and provided a stadium in which to play (expansive project). The second part of the chapter deals with the medical community's fear of racial degeneration and their use of physical education to combat racial decline (emancipating and democratizing project). In the final part I will explore the figure of the "queen of sport" who was elected to preside over the Olympics as an effort to maintain social order amidst the modernizing project (renovating project).

Unlike Burns' characterization of Latin American elites who pursued a wholesale adoption of modernity, Colombia's well-to-do pursued a more measured form of modernity than countries like Argentina or Mexico. Like Pérez Jr. noted of the Cubans and baseball, Colombians also sought to make their own paradigm of modernity out of sports, including boxing and football. For the well-to-do Colombians, that meant trying to enjoy the economic benefits of modernity without risking social disorder caused by too much democratization. Whereas Burns presents this as evidence of a half-hearted devotion to modernity on behalf of Latin American elites, it better characterizes the studious nature of the well-educated who sought to avoid the "social problems" that they saw in modern countries.<sup>11</sup> The educated saw the social disruption caused by a changing economic system and sought new ways of establishing social order, naturally ones that maintained their position at the top.

### Expansive Project: Colombia's Roaring 20s

On December 3, 1928 Técnico-Bogotá, one of the two bogotano football teams, departed from

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<sup>10</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Burns, *The Poverty of Progress*, 142.

Bogotá to Cali. *El Tiempo* kept readers apprised of their team's progress as they made their way by train from Bogotá to the Magdalena River where they boarded a river boat that took them to the Caribbean port, Puerto Colombia. Once on the coast, the team boarded a steam ship that took them through the Panama Canal to Colombia's Pacific port of Buenaventura. Once at Buenaventura, the team boarded one final train to take them the remaining 88 miles to Cali, where *El Tiempo* reported they arrived at midnight on December 6.<sup>12</sup> Técnico-Bogotá took the most expedient modes of transport available to get from one part of the country to the other and still spent three days, traveled just under 440 miles, and crossed a foreign country, Panama. Today a 286-mile highway connects Bogotá to Cali, or one could take advantage of regular air travel and take an hour-long flight. Still, the fact that the team could travel across the country using modern forms of transport -trains and steam ships- spoke to how far Colombian infrastructure had come since the days when horses and mule trails crisscrossed the country.

Canclini describes the expansion project of modernity as an effort "to extend the knowledge and possession of nature, and the production, circulation, and consumption of goods."<sup>13</sup> Michael LaRosa and Mejía P. Germán note that for Colombians, railroads and industrialization represented modernity, which was measured in the amount of track laid or concrete buildings built.<sup>14</sup> By all accounts Colombia did not enter the twentieth century in an economically advantageous position. Between 1910 and 1913, Colombia received only 1.5% of U.S. foreign investments and an even more meagre 0.5% of British foreign investments. In terms of exports, goods from Colombia only made up 2% of all goods exported from Latin America.<sup>15</sup> Transportation was the primary problem facing Colombian exports. As late as 1920, 90% of all Colombian overland routes were mule trails.<sup>16</sup> Economic historian William Paul McGreevey estimates that transportation costs added an additional 20% to the price of all Colombian

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<sup>12</sup> "Los Deportistas a Cali," *El Tiempo* December 3, 1928; "Los Deportistas del Técnico-Bogotá Fueron Recibidos con Enorme Entusiasmo," *El Tiempo* December 7, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 12.

<sup>14</sup> LaRosa and Mejía P., Germán, *Colombia*, 82.

<sup>15</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 49.

<sup>16</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 92.

exports. However, with the introduction of the railroad, McGreevey estimated that transportation cost fell to 5%, a significant drop.<sup>17</sup> The next problem was that laying rails was slow going in Colombia.

McGreevey also charted the growth of the Colombian railroad as the percentage of the total amount of track that had been laid at the time of his study, in the 1960s. McGreevey estimated that by 1880 Colombian and foreign railroad companies had completed 5% of its total rail network, which was about the same amount that Mexico and Argentina had completed. By 1910 however, Mexico, thanks in large part to the Porfiriato, had completed 84% of its rail network and Argentina 65%, whereas Colombia had only completed 26% of its total rail network.<sup>18</sup>

Part of the problem of expanding the rail system in Colombia was geographic and the other part was economic. In terms of geography, the Andes mountains cut through the country and split off into several ranges called cordilleras. These cordilleras separate the four major Colombian cities -Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, and Barranquilla- from each other. The extreme grades of the mountains, make laying railroad track both difficult and expensive. The other problem Colombia faced was its massive debt caused by financially ruinous series of civil wars in the nineteenth century. This debt, and the social disorder that accompanied civil strife, made it difficult for Colombian presidents to secure foreign loans and investment necessary to expand the country's transportation network.

Rafael Reyes Prieto, general of the Colombian army, emerged as president in 1904 out of the most violent and costly of the civil wars, the War of a Thousand Days (1899-1903). Reyes blamed Colombia's two party-system of Conservatives and Liberals for Colombia's cycle of civil wars in the nineteenth century. While Reyes was a Conservative, many in his own party opposed his candidacy fearing that he would turn into a dictator like Mexico's Porfirio Diaz, fears which ultimately proved well-founded.<sup>19</sup> Reyes won the election, in no small part thanks to election fraud, and immediately went to

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<sup>17</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia*, 237.

<sup>18</sup> William Paul McGreevey, 252.

<sup>19</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 55.

Congress to request authorization to impose new taxes, raise custom duties, and establish a central bank in order to raise funds to remove Colombia's name from the list of countries in default on the London stock exchange.<sup>20</sup>

When his own party, which controlled the congress, indicated that they would not support his economic plan, Reyes appealed to their patriotism to redress national loss. Near the end of the War of a Thousand days, the Colombian Senate rejected the Hay-Herrán treaty that would have given the U.S. access to the isthmus of Panama to build a canal. On November 2, 1903, Panamanian rebels declared independence from Colombia. Three days later, the U.S. recognized Panama as a country and guaranteed the new nation's sovereignty by deploying gunships to Colombia's Caribbean coast.<sup>21</sup> Citing the loss of Panama, Reyes told the congress that "as we were considered people of an inferior civilization...the crime was not merely allowed and sanctioned but was considered a transcendent service to universal civilization."<sup>22</sup> In his quote, Reyes touched on widespread fears of Colombian inferiority, due to the nation's inability to protect its own territory and the necessity of economic modernization to progress as a nation.

The Conservative congress was unmoved by Reyes' words and refused to consider his proposal. But then Reyes got support from his old rivals. One of the prominent Liberal generals during the war, Rafael Uribe Uribe, publicly declared that he would support Reyes, should his rival decide to seize power to pass reforms. Uribe's words were echoed by other prominent Liberal leaders and on December 12, 1904 Reyes dissolved the congress, effectively making himself a dictator. Though Reyes would be ousted from power in 1909, Liberals and Conservatives alike welcomed his seizure of power. On December 18, a handbill entitled "A Necessary Explanation" defending Reyes' action was posted on the streets of

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<sup>20</sup> Henderson, 49.

<sup>21</sup> Henderson, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Rafael Reyes, quoted in Henderson, 55.

Colombia, signed by twenty-two Conservative congressman.<sup>23</sup> It was good for Reyes's modernization play that he had a broad base of support, since his policy of national restoration involved redirecting capital from the departments to the central government.

Once Reyes had assumed full control of the government, he began to implement his economic modernization policy, which he designed after that of Porfirio Diaz, whom he greatly admired. Reyes offered tax incentives to rail, power, and telegraph companies to improve the nation's infrastructure.<sup>24</sup> Reyes introduced tariffs and import duties, which raised enough funds for him to pay off Colombia's outstanding debts by 1907 and so allowed Colombia access to foreign credit. He also sold ten million hectares of national land to domestic capitalist for agricultural production and export.<sup>25</sup> Despite being a Conservative, Marcelo Bucheli noted that Reyes' economic policy was liberal in its focus on tying Colombia's economy to the global economy.<sup>26</sup> Whenever possible, Reyes attempted to adopt a bipartisan stance, as he blamed partisanship for much of Colombia's woes. In a move that helped keep the Colombian army under civilian control for much of the twentieth century, Reyes instructed the Military Academy to accept equal numbers of cadets from Conservative families and Liberal families.<sup>27</sup> This policy meant that neither party could control the army and so could not count on the support of the army.

While Reyes' economic policy started the process of modernization, the opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 proved to be an economic boon, especially for Colombia's western departments. Not only did Buenaventura, Colombia's largest Pacific port city, become a hub for international shipping, but the sugar and coffee fields of the Cauca Valley had easier access to the European markets. A year after the

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<sup>23</sup> Henderson, 56.

<sup>24</sup> Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 89.

<sup>25</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 59–60.

<sup>26</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 89.

<sup>27</sup> David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). p 167

opening of the canal, the Pacific Railroad opened connecting Cali with Buenaventura making Cali one of Colombia's first interior cities to be connected to the coast.<sup>28</sup> Now connected to the coast, exports out of the Cauca Valley doubled in volume within two years after the opening of the Panama Canal. The number of passengers traveling between the interior and the coast also quadrupled in number during the same two years.<sup>29</sup> Técnico-Bogotá and the hundreds of other athletes from across Bogotá also used the Pacific Rail line to get to the 1928 National Olympics. While politicians like Laureano Gómez never forgave the United States for its imperialism others, like many in the Liberal Party, enjoyed the economic benefits they gained through the opening of the Panama Canal.

If Cali and the western regions were the first to benefit from U.S. involvement in Panama, they were not the last to do so. In 1922, the Colombian congress approved the Urrutia-Thompson Treaty. According to the treaty, the U.S. would make a formal apology for its role in guaranteeing Panamanian independence, provide an indemnity payment of \$25 million dollars, and grant Colombian ships preferential access to the canal. In turn the Colombian government would officially recognize Panama as a separate country.<sup>30</sup> Pedro Nel Ospina, President of Colombia, and former businessman from Antioquia, used the vast sum, ten times the cash reserve of all Colombian banks, to further modernize Colombia's economic infrastructure through investment in further railroad construction. In 1921, Edwin Kemmerer, Princeton Economist, and proselyte for the gold standard, came to Colombia to help create a central bank. Pedro Nel Ospina channeled a quarter of the indemnity payment to the central bank so that it would have the cash reserves to begin operating immediately. In 1922, the Bank of the Republic opened and began doing what a central bank should do: stabilize exchange rates, lower interest rates, and provide investment capital for domestic agriculture and industry.<sup>31</sup>

By bringing the Colombian monetary system into line with international standards, Nel Ospina

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<sup>28</sup> Bushnell, 170.

<sup>29</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia*, 258.

<sup>30</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 161.

<sup>31</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 115–16.

made Colombia a more attractive destination for foreign investors to place their capital. Between 1924 and 1928, the U.S. invested \$170 million into Colombia, making the U.S. the largest investor in Colombia by far.<sup>32</sup> Colombians used half of every dollar they received to improve infrastructure, particularly to the coffee-growing regions, laying an impressive 1,000 km of railroad tracks through the 1920s.<sup>33</sup> All the investment in improving access to the coffee growing regions, paid off in the 1920s as the price of coffee increased, along with Colombian growers capacity to produce the lucrative crop and get it to market. In the 1920s coffee constituted around 70% of all Colombian exports.<sup>34</sup> For much of the twentieth century Colombia's economy rose and fell on the price of coffee, even Medellín's large textile factories were founded and run based on coffee revenue.

If modernity for the countryside meant railroads and export-focused agriculture, modernity for the cities meant electricity, paved streets, and places of modern amusement, like theaters. Argentine sociologist, Gino Germani notes that the city was the nucleus of modernity as the urban-dweller was free from the obligatory primary identity that one experienced in a town.<sup>35</sup> Aline Helg touches on this antagonism between the city and town when she noted that after the War of a Thousand Days, young urban Colombian intellectuals saw a dichotomy between themselves and the rural masses.<sup>36</sup> This generation of intellectuals, known as the *centenarios* for coming of age in the new century, viewed the city as the location where modernization happened. The hinterlands provided the economic engine which enabled a cosmopolitan lifestyle modeled after what the *centenarios* saw on their trips to Paris and London. As the *centenarios* began to take public office, their interest in urban modernization showed in the Ministry of Public Work's budget. Between 1910 and 1929 the Ministry of Public Works'

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<sup>32</sup> Aline Helg, *La Educación En Colombia, 1918-1957: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política* (Bogota, Colombia: CEREC, 1987), 131.

<sup>33</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia*, 207.

<sup>35</sup> Gino Germani quoted in, García Canclini, *Imaginarlos Urbanos*, 70.

<sup>36</sup> Aline Helg, *La Educación En Colombia, 1918-1957: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política*, 111.



budget increased from 3.6% of the total budget to 35%, making it the single biggest Ministry.<sup>37</sup>

Across Colombia, municipal and departmental authorities greatly expanded their Ministries of Public Works to build highways and new modern buildings. In *Colombia Cafetera*(coffee-maker), Diego Monsalve detailed the level of development of each Colombian department, including how many kilometers of railroads, highways, or water routes existed. In addition, Monsalve also detailed what each department's ministry of public works had achieved. In Medellín, the ministry of public works of Antioquia was responsible for constructing a new jail built with "scientific specifications based on the modern penal-system."<sup>38</sup> The departmental government of La Valle paid special interest in its ministry of public works giving the department a "network of highways, roads, bridges, and *modern* buildings."<sup>39</sup> In both examples, Monsalve highlighted the modern nature the public works, whether that was Medellín's new prison built to *modern* specifications or La Valle's construction of *modern* buildings in its capital of Cali.

Monsalve noted more than Valle's dedication to modern architecture, he also noted the presence of sports, particularly "*el base ball(sic), el foot ball(sic), y el tennis.*"<sup>40</sup> The only other department Monsalve specifically mentions in connection with sport is Atlántico, where he notes several sports fields as well as a Hippodrome.<sup>41</sup> It is an interesting omission of other departments since the majority also had sports fields. Since early in the 1910s the Medellín Football Club met in Botanical Garden to play football, and in 1915 the Jesuits bought land in the neighborhood of Miraflores to be

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<sup>37</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 167.

<sup>38</sup> Diego Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera. Información histórica, política, civil, administrativa, geográfica, demográfica, etnográfica, fiscal económica, bancaria, postal, telegráfica, educacionista, sanitaria, departamental, minera, agrícola, industrial, comercial, ferroviaria, diplomática y general. Producción y exportación de café de la República de Colombia*. (Barcelona: Artes gráficas, 1927), 228.

<sup>39</sup> Monsalve, 560.

<sup>40</sup> Monsalve, 561.

<sup>41</sup> Monsalve, 292.

used for sports.<sup>42</sup> Around the same time people from Bogotá enjoyed playing football on the field of another Jesuit school, La Merced.<sup>43</sup> Rather than saying that sports only happened in Valle and Atlántico, and elsewhere claiming that Colombians were fans of sport, Monsalve noted that both departments had a special connection to sport.<sup>44</sup> He does not elaborate further, but Atlántico was known for having some of the best football and Monsalve was likely alluding to the National Olympics that opened a year after he published his book.<sup>45</sup>

Monsalve was not the only one to write about Cali's dedication to sport, Caleño (i.e., a person from Cali) boosters were proud of their sporting heritage. In the late 1960s the Colombian Olympic Committee along with the mayor of Cali and the governor of Valle, bid for the honor to host the 1971 Panamerican Games. The committee created a document, written in Spanish, English, French and Portuguese, describing the city's exponential growth and the many stadiums present to host all the events and athletes. In addition to describing the city's current sporting infrastructure, the committee boasted of Cali's historic commitment to sporting excellence. It declared that two citizens, Alfonso Giraldos and Fidel Lalinde, inaugurated the city's passion for sports when the pair returned from a trip to England and established the "Cali Foot-ball Club."<sup>46</sup> The committee also boasted that Cali not only hosted the first "National Athletic Games" (the writers thought Olympics sounded too pompous) but that caleños built the first stadium in the city for the games, Galilea. It was in that stadium with "wooden stands, a *fútbol* field, and running tracks," that the country first began to take interest in track and field and football became a Colombian staple, or so the committee argued.<sup>47</sup>

In many ways, Cali was the ideal choice of hosts for the National Olympics by Hans Huber and

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<sup>42</sup> Luciano López Vélez, *Detrás del balón: historia del fútbol en Medellín, 1910-1952* (Medellín: Carreta Editores, 2004), 26–34.

<sup>43</sup> Alberto Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta, 2008), 17.

<sup>44</sup> Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera.*, 81.

<sup>45</sup> I will discuss Atlántico and their players in more depth in Chapter 2.

<sup>46</sup> Alfonso Bonilla Aragón, *Cali solicita la sede de los VI Juegos Panamericanos* (Cali Comité Pro-Sede de los Juegos Panamericanos, 1967), 25.

<sup>47</sup> Bonilla Aragón, 26.

the Olympic committee. The city was the first to experience the boom of the Agri-exporting economy thanks to the completion of the rail-line to the coast in 1915. Once connected to the coast, the physical and economic growth of the city was nearly exponential. Before the 1920s the city occupied a few hundred hectares of space compared to just under 5,000 hectares by 1966.<sup>48</sup> Much of the city's growth was in "modern buildings," to use Monsalve's term, made of concrete, which according to Mejía and LaRosa symbolized progress. Added on to these modern buildings was just over 300km of highways that connected Cali to the interior, further making the city the center of commerce for western Colombia. Finally, a hydroelectric plant provided the city with around 745kw of power a day.<sup>49</sup> Joanne Hershfield mentions how Mexican advertisers and advice columnists associated the modern home with electricity, even while most homes did not have access to it.<sup>50</sup> Monsalve also associated electricity with modernity as he included detailed information on each department's power grid.

Caleño municipal authorities combined all their material modernity (highways, construction, and electricity) and put it on display in the stadium, Galilea, which they built specially to host the National Olympics. Maurice Roche writes about the importance of the stadium for modern mega-events as "the stage" on which the theatrical or the religious nature of the sporting event is performed.<sup>51</sup> As the tournament organizers designed the play to present modern Colombia, the stage of the stadium provided the venue. Colombian journalists eagerly regaled their readers with details about Galilea, which included all the "modern amenities." These amenities included those of hygienic nature, including showers and changing rooms for the players changing rooms, along with lockers, as well as modern sporting spaces, running tracks, throwing areas (for shot put, discus, etc.), and tennis courts. In addition to modern amenities, Galilea also boasted modern conveniences like electricity and artificial illumination

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<sup>48</sup> Bonilla Aragón, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera*, 561.

<sup>50</sup> Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna: Women, Nation, and Visual Culture in Mexico, 1917-1936* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>51</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 97.

so that games could be played in the evening. Antonio Cesár Gaitán, sport reporter for *El Tiempo*, lamented, with a hint of jealousy, that no such national stadium existed in the capital.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to including all the modern amenities, Cali municipal authorities made sure that their stage to showcase modernity was large. Colombian reporters claimed that Galilea could comfortably seat 25,000 people, though they were likely inflating the size of the stadium.<sup>53</sup> Historian Alberto Galvis Ramírez reported that the Galilea probably only seated 8,000 fans.<sup>54</sup> Photographs from the event show a crowd of fans standing in the space between the stands and the barriers that marked off the field. It is likely that the stadium could comfortably seat 8,000 people but could fit over ten thousand people, and certain games attracted the larger number.

Regardless of the official capacity of the stadium, caleño municipal authorities wanted to make sure that as many people could view the spectacle of the National Olympics and future sporting events as possible. Even if Galilea could only fit 8,000 people in its stands, that still represented ten percent of the population of Cali, who could witness an event together.<sup>55</sup> The stadium was a site of mass consumption which the municipal authorities and tournament organizers targeted at the masses. Tickets to the day's events were set at reasonable prices between \$0.20 for general admission and \$1.00 for covered seating.<sup>56</sup> For comparison, the price of the daily newspaper, *El Nuevo Tiempo*, cost \$0.05 or a large bottle of milk cost around \$1.25. In addition to keeping ticket prices low, Cali's municipal authorities also requested that businesses close early each day of the tournaments so their workers could attend the events in the afternoon.<sup>57</sup> Reporters, who were eager to relay details of the scope of the spectacle to their readers, reported that thousands attended each event and that matches which featured a home team drew over ten thousand fans. The municipal committee's appeal to the city's

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<sup>52</sup> Gaitán, "El Estadio," *El Tiempo*, December 22, 1928.

<sup>53</sup> Alberto Cesar Gaitan, "El Estadio," *El Tiempo*, December 22, 1928.

<sup>54</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 24.

<sup>55</sup> Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera*, 563.

<sup>56</sup> "Precios para las Olimpiadas," *El Tiempo*, December 11, 1928.

<sup>57</sup> Antonio Cesár Gaitán, "Detalles," *El Tiempo*, December 22, 1928.

businesses clearly worked and the caleño masses flocked to see the spectacle of modernity.

In the first decades of the twentieth century Colombian presidents, businessmen, and influential citizens generally favored increased connection to the global economy rather than isolationism. Their investments in infrastructure and in their cities fits with Canclini's notion of the "expansive project" to modernization. Colombian railroads, highways, and telegraphs increased the local and state-wide control and ability to exploit nature. Improved systems of transportation also meant that Colombian citizens could travel to other regions within their own country more easily than ever before, making a national sports tournament more feasible. In addition to infrastructure improvement, Colombian cosmopolitan elites, who benefited most from the coffee boom, invested their proceeds in modernizing their city. The stadium Galilea was one modernizing project that these elites designed to communicate their vision of modernity to the masses through architecture as well the modern activities taking place on the field: sports.

### Democratizing and Emancipating Project: Sport as a Pedagogical Endeavor

If the tournament organizing committee chose Cali and Galilea to represent Colombia's economic and material modernity, they used the tournament to highlight the modernization of the country's school system. In his opening speech, the governor of la Valle (the department where Cali is located), Doctor Holguín Lloreda, specifically asked the Colombian youth to learn from, and follow the example given by, the athletes taking part in the tournament. As such, the organizing committee divided the National Olympics into two categories of competition, a school league and an older league. Both levels featured teams from across Colombia and in the following chapter I will discuss the event that caused the two divisions to be joined. At the end of the tournament Antonio Bonilla, Minister of Public Education for the department of Tolima, gave the victory speech for the athletes of the school league. In his speech, Bonilla held up the victorious athletes to the crowds gathered as proof that Colombia's educational reform of the 1920s was working and would lead Colombia out of a dark past into a bright,

more modern, future. Reporters and observers also noted the youthful vigor of the older athletes as opposed to an older lazier, less optimistic generation.

The multiple decade process by which Colombian reformers sought to modernize Colombia's education system speaks to Canclini's democratizing project of modernity. In the democratizing project, the state "trusts education, the diffusion of art, and specialized knowledge to achieve rational, and moral evolution."<sup>58</sup> To state-based agents like Holguín Lloreda and Antonio Bonilla, the National Olympics represented an opportunity to demonstrate that Colombia's education system, with a focus on sports-based physical education, was producing a new generation of healthy and morally upstanding citizens. Colombian educators characterized the new generation in contrast to the generations of the nineteenth century, who allegedly vacillated between laziness and extreme violence as evidenced by Colombia's series of civil wars. In addition to creating virtuous citizens, Colombian reformers recognized that the country's economy was changing, and the education system needed to prepare workers for life in the city and the factory. Given that in the 1920s Colombia's populace remained largely rural and largely illiterate, the narrative of the National Olympics, as crafted by Colombia's elite, reflected an optimistic future rather than present realities.

Planning for the National Olympics had begun as early as 1924, when long-time sports promoter Jorge Wills Pradilla formed the *Asociación Deportivo Colombiano* (Colombian Sport Association) to organize a tournament in 1926. No stranger to national sport, *El Tiempo* listed Pradilla as one of the guest of honor at the first "National Championship of Foot-Ball" in 1918.<sup>59</sup> Nor was Pradilla a stranger to organizing national tournaments, as he had served as a Secretary to the Tennis Committee and organized a "national" doubles-tennis tournament between Medellín and Bogotá in 1920.<sup>60</sup> Given Pradilla's belief that sport was a "national necessity," he likely welcomed President Pedro Nel Ospina's

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<sup>58</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> "Campeonato menor nacional de foot-ball," *El Tiempo*, July 15, 1918.

<sup>60</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 54.

decision in 1925 to host the Juegos Olímpicos de la República (The Republic's Olympic Games) to coincide with the International Olympics in 1928. Pradilla must have not been happy when Ospina asserted legal control over sporting events and forced the *Asociación Deportivo Colombiano* to close in 1927.<sup>61</sup> It was not that Pradilla did not want the state involved in sport, to the contrary, he worried that the state did not value sport enough. Ospina had only set aside government funds to support National Olympics every four years or so, and Pradilla wanted to establish a national league that would bring together the Colombian departments in an annual competition.<sup>62</sup>

After effectively firing Pradilla, Ospina appointed a German national, Hans Huber, to be the director of the Olympic committee. The Colombian government contracted Huber and two others to help set up the National Pedagogical Institute and help modernize the Colombian education system in 1927.<sup>63</sup> While Huber's colleagues left at the end of their terms, disappointed that the government would not act on their suggestions, Huber stayed to direct the National Olympics. Partway through the event the director expressed his pleasure at how the tournament was proceeding and highlighted the nationalizing effects of the games. "The true splendor of the games," Huber said, "was in the sacrifice made by Colombia as each state sent both teams and fans." His goal for the tournament was to bolster youth development by bringing together interested parties from across the nation to share the experience.<sup>64</sup> Huber essentially told the press that by organizing the National Olympics, he was continuing the pedagogical mission he was brought to do, and that sport and nationalism went hand in hand.

While competitive sports had gained popularity in Germany, especially since World War I, German devotees of modern sports faced competition from the older gymnastic tradition, *Turnen*. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn developed his gymnastic exercises to foster nationalism among the German *volk*,

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<sup>61</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 23–24.

<sup>62</sup> Antonio César Gaitán, *El Tiempo*, December 17, 1928.

<sup>63</sup> William Johnson, *Sport and Physical Education around the World* (Champaign, Ill.: Stipes Pub. Co., 1980), 135.

<sup>64</sup> Hans Huber, *El Tiempo* No. 6196 Dec. 26, 1928.

because there was no German nation yet, after Napoleon defeated Prussian forces.<sup>65</sup> The *Turnervereine* (collection of gymnastic societies) dominated German physical culture throughout the nineteenth century and shunned British-style competitive sports as undesirable foreign activities. Despite opposition, German workers and trade-union members favored competitive sports to the Turnen system. There was enough interest that in sport that the German government to create a commission to promote sport within the German education system.<sup>66</sup> After World War I the balance of popularity began to shift in Germany from the Turnen to competitive sports. The Turnervereine held hope that the Nazi party would be an ally since they loathed internationalism and desired to make a healthy German *volk*. However, the success of German athletes at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics, who were second in medal count behind the U.S., convinced the Nazi party that sports could be a good propaganda tool, provided German athletes continued to win.<sup>67</sup>

There is little to indicate that Huber was a fascist, at least not during his stay in Colombia. Huber and his compatriots came from predominantly Catholic regions of Germany, and it was through Catholic connections that they were invited. What is more, most of the Conservative party was wary of the growth of fascism in Italy and the rest of Europe. José Antonio Hoyos warned, "in fleeing from Bolshevism we must not run the risk of falling into an even worse form of fascism."<sup>68</sup> Rather, the connection between sport and nationalism was common among many nations in the twentieth century. Barbara Keys notes that it was in the twentieth century that "national sports associations began to field representative national teams for international matches, in which the team became a synecdoche for the nation."<sup>69</sup> But governments and reformers also used sports to stimulate nationalism at the local level, as the Mexican government did in the years following the Mexican Revolution.

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<sup>65</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 121.

<sup>66</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 115.

<sup>67</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 124.

<sup>68</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 165.

<sup>69</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 29.



Mexican reformers of the 1920s and 1930s struggled to re-establish central authority after a decade of bloodshed and little political stability. Reformers were especially interested in convincing rural peasants that the state was looking out for them and deserved their support. Keith Brewster argues that key figures inside the Mexican government believed the problems, and violence, of Mexico's countryside "were due to the character and behavior of peasants."<sup>70</sup> The reformers were especially critical of peasant "superstition" connected with their devotion to the Catholic Church, among other pre-revolutionary traditions. Reformers also saw the church as a rival for the political or devotional loyalty of the rural population.<sup>71</sup>

In her *Cultural Politics of Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico 1930-1940*, Mary Kay Vaughan tracks how the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP) of Mexico promoted team sports, like basketball and baseball, over "blood sports" in an effort to modernize the peasantry. Mexican reformers hoped that sports competitions would bring peasants of different groups together and create horizontal unity.<sup>72</sup> In other words, the SEP attempted to create a coherent and cohesive peasant identity that was more fully under state control.

But the SEP also viewed sport as a pedagogical tool in addition to its value in identity creation. In another work, Vaughn describes the SEP's interest in using sport as a pedagogical tool that was especially fitting to a largely illiterate population. Vaughn describes how the SEP used sport, which drew in a larger crowd than a lecture, to promote modernizing values of "individualism, mobility, youth, and change inimical to traditional peasant society."<sup>73</sup> David Ayala, a Mexican senator, claimed that sport would help "create people who were: strong in body and mind, practiced habits of punctuality, hygiene,

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<sup>70</sup> Keith Brewster, "Patriotic Pastimes: The Role of Sport in Post-Revolutionary Mexico," *Sporting Cultures: Hispanic Perspectives on Sport, Text and the Body* (London: Routledge, 2008), 4.

<sup>71</sup> Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation: Sport and Spectacle in Post-Revolutionary Mexico*, *Sport in Global Society* (London: Routledge, 2010), 32.

<sup>72</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940* (Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 42.

<sup>73</sup> William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin, William E. French, ed., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1994), 224.

cooperation, honour and discipline."<sup>74</sup> The SEP conveyed that the athlete's sporting achievement was due to his, dedication to training that made him master over his body and desires as well as his ability to cooperate with his teammates towards a common goal. The focus was on individual improvement (the citizen) that would ultimately benefit the whole (the nation).

The SEP's initial efforts to modernize the Mexican peasantry through sport was haphazard and produced ambiguous results in the 1920s. Joseph Arbena notes that while the Mexican School system taught health and hygiene, they made no mention of physical education.<sup>75</sup> The situation began to change in 1932 when the Mexican government created the *Confederación Deportiva Nacional* (National Sports Confederation). The Confederation coordinated the development of sport and enhance the quality of sport, especially among rural peasants. The Mexican government's move to establish greater control over the development of sport is similar to the Colombian government's absorption of Pradilla's *Asociación Deportivo Colombiano*. In both cases, weak central governments, sought to use sport to establish or re-establish their legitimacy among the population. As Vaughn notes, Mexican patriotic festivals "facilitated the penetration of the nation-state and its regional representation (state government) but also helped to legitimize local power structures, confirm social cohesion, and enhance collective identity in relation to surrounding communities and the state."<sup>76</sup> It was at these festivals that the SEP, and later the *Confederación Deportiva Nacional*, hosted sports tournaments to increase the state's presence in the lives of its people. In the case of Colombia, the central government wanted to maintain control over the narrative of sport, fearing regional variation.<sup>77</sup>

However, the similarities between Mexican and Colombian sport development run deeper than state involvement in sports development. Both countries had a large illiterate rural population whom reformers blamed for bloody civil wars, due to their ignorance as a result from their lack of education

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<sup>74</sup> Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation*, 23.

<sup>75</sup> Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 353.

<sup>76</sup> Beezley, Martin, French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, 215–16.

<sup>77</sup> I Will discuss this more indepth in chapter 2.

which reformers believed made them more irrational and prone to violence. In the year following the War of a Thousand days, the *Revista de Educación Pública* (Journal of Public Education) published an introspective article. “We need to take more care in the noble cause of instructing the child and the youthfulness they possess.” The article went on to lament the vices and defects of the previous generation that led to “feebleness of body and morality, timidity of the individual and group, the shortage of individual initiative, malaise, misery, vice, which all resulted in civil war.”<sup>78</sup> In the same year, Antonio José Uribe, the Minister of Public Education, noted that primary schools should teach children “love for their fatherland (*patria*)...and religious and physical teaching from healthy, vigorous men of noble character.”<sup>79</sup> Both statements expressed in making sure the next generation was not only well educated but also healthy and moral.

José Uribe’s statement, however, reveals a significant deviation between Colombia and Mexico in the role of religious education. Where the post-revolutionary Mexican reformers embraced a program of secularization, the Conservatives had won the War of a Thousand Days and sought to strengthen the role of the church in education. In 1903 the Colombian congress passed Law 39, which guaranteed that all instruction given in public schools would adhere to the teachings of the Catholic Church. Rather than seeing the church as a competitor for the loyalty of the people, the Conservative Colombian government saw it as an ally. Law 39 did not mean that the church controlled public education, but it did grant the church oversight and so any reform had to be approved by the church. To help revitalize the Colombian education system Rafael Reyes invited various church orders to open institutions of public education, like the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an order based in France, who opened a school for girls.<sup>80</sup>

Initially, the close marriage between religious orders and Colombian public education worked well. The church taught the value of work. Through work one gained “discipline, order, and rationality,”

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<sup>78</sup> Humberto (Quiceno Castrillón) Quiceno C., *Pedagogía católica y escuela activa en Colombia (1900-1935)* (Bogotá: Ediciones Foro Nacional por Colombia, 1988), 20.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in, Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 58.

<sup>80</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 60.

whereas to not work was to open oneself to all sorts of vices.<sup>81</sup> For a leader like Reyes, who looked to kickstart the Colombian economy, a hard-working population was certainly a plus. But the Catholic religious orders also viewed the purpose of education was to teach an individual how to control their desires and “dominate their will” and physical education was one of the primary methods for achieving this.<sup>82</sup> The Ministry of Public education published the *Libro del Congreso Pedagógico Nacional* (Book of the National Pedagogical Congress) with materials to guide public schools and their pedagogy. The book included two articles, one by Brother Daniel titled “Physical Culture, Intellectual, and Moral of the Child,” and Fidedigno Cuéllar’s “Educational Gymnastics without Apparatuses.”<sup>83</sup> The Catholic Church supported the early development of physical education in Colombia.

However, the church supported two different tracks of education. On one hand, there was Cuéllar’s guide to swiss gymnastics without apparatuses, which focused on individual exercises without interaction with others. On the other hand, there were the Jesuit schools, like San Bartolome in Bogotá, which built sports fields for their students. While Cuéllar’s guide was meant for public schools, the Jesuit schools in Colombia taught the children of the elite. Educators and medical educators came together in 1919 for a Pedagogical Conference where they recommended swiss-style gymnastics as the physical education of choice for the populace.<sup>84</sup> This recommendation meant that sports should remain the domain of the elites. Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño notes that Colombian elites used their practice of sports to present themselves as “modern, urban social group in contrast with the old elite who were rural and war-like.”<sup>85</sup> While the Colombian intellectual community generally agreed on the importance of physical education, they desired to keep sport as a marker of their social superiority, or their urban modernity. Elites welcomed the populace to participate, but as spectators. Sport then remained a fringe

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<sup>81</sup> Quiceno Castrillón, *Pedagogía católica y escuela activa en Colombia (1900-1935)*, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Quiceno Castrillón, 82.

<sup>83</sup> Quiceno Castrillón, 42.

<sup>84</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 73.

<sup>85</sup> Ruiz Patino, 47.

activity until the convergence of two unrelated movements.

The first movement revolved around a debate among Colombian doctors about racial degeneration and how it was affecting the nation. The debate began in the mid 1910s, coinciding with World War I, which denied well-off Colombians access to Europe, and was led by the medical faculty at the National University. The faculty began to consider how to reform education using modern scientific methods to target childhood abnormalities and directed their graduate students to do the same.<sup>86</sup> The was carried out in a series of debates in Teatro Colón, Bogotá culminating in 1920. Miguel Jiménez López was on one side of the debate, arguing that the Colombian race was reverting to a more primal, less civilized form.<sup>87</sup> Jiménez López and later Senén Suárez Calderón, a doctoral student, offered a eugenic solution, to quarantine or separate abnormal, un-European traits from society or to dilute them with new immigrant blood.<sup>88</sup> Jiménez López supported his argument with physiological data he had collected from across Colombia, arguing that Colombians were more prone to disease, smaller in stature, and shorter life-expectancies than Europeans. His data ignored that Colombian birth rates were higher than European birth rates, and Colombian height and weight were only slightly below European averages.<sup>89</sup>

Jorge Bejarano and Luis López de Mesa sat in opposition to Jiménez López, arguing instead that certain Colombian races may be in decline, but the situation could be remedied through better hygienic practices. Bejarano argued through his doctoral dissertation that that a child's "constitution" was what helped them control their "bestial instincts" and physical education is what helped them develop their constitution. Bejarano concluded that an underdeveloped constitution left a child unable to control their base instincts and so led them to be morally weak.<sup>90</sup> If Bejarano identified a problem, López de Mesa offered a solution. A fan of Jose Vasconcelos and his efforts to reform Mexican Education, López de

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<sup>86</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 54–55.

<sup>87</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, 82.

<sup>88</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, 74–75.

<sup>89</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, 83.

<sup>90</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, 57.

Mesa was one of the founders of the Gimnasio Moderno in 1914. López de Mesa argued that a child needed to be physically active to develop their body, and one that does not will be intellectually weak.<sup>91</sup> López de Mesa and his founders designed the Gimnasio Moderno to engage the students in activity that was fun for them, more than simply calisthenic exercise.

At the heart of the debate was the disagreement over whether there was a single Colombian race or multiple Colombian races. Both sides agreed that there was something wrong with the Colombian population and scientific inquiry was the solution. While the debate continued through the 1920s, the hygienic solutions of Bejarano and López de Mesa proved more popular and served as the template for the Liberal party's educational reform of the 1930s. One of the reasons that hygienic ideals won out over eugenic ideals was because the former offered the state a solution it could pursue. Throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth century the Colombian government made several attempts to encourage immigration to Colombia with little success. Educational reform was something that government could support, with funds from the coffee boom.

While the hygienic movement symbolized by Bejarano and López de Mesa closely linked childhood and physical education, it did not necessarily give preference to sport over swiss-style gymnastics, which focused on repetitive, individual exercises. Competitive sports became much more popular among politicians after the Uruguayan national team won Olympic gold in football in the 1924 Olympics. It was not as if Latin American athletes had not achieved success, but they achieved success at a quintessentially European sport, in Paris, moreover. A writer for the Liberal paper *El Tiempo* interpreted Uruguay's success as doing "more propaganda for Uruguay than all other diplomatic propaganda." The writer also claimed that international sports competition was the current means by which countries interact with or recognize each other, more so than through traditional diplomatic channels. If the Colombian government wanted to win international recognition, it should "organize

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<sup>91</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La politica del sport*, 66–67.

tournaments between distinct regions, facilitate the transportation of teams across the country, create fields for the practice of sport, and make physical education a mandatory part of public education.”<sup>92</sup>

Both *El Tiempo*'s owner, Eduardo Santos, and the leading sports reporter, Antonio César Gaitán, often stated their desire for the government to take a more active role in the development of sport. It is possible that they were just using the 1924 Olympics to support their own agendas, but there is indication that influential politicians did take note of the Uruguayan team's success. In 1925, the conservative *El Patria* published an article saying, “We know of nothing more healthy or noble for the youth to pursue than the practice of sport.”<sup>93</sup> The statement was all the more impressive given that the *El Patria* staff had also published articles lamenting the decline of traditional Spanish festivals like bullfighting, or the presence of “imported words” from France and England. That the writers and readers of *El Patria* would be concerned about the role of sport in 1925, signified a certain receptiveness to sport among at least a portion of Colombian conservatives.

President Ospina also signed Law 80 in 1925, which set aside government funds for creating sports plazas, helping to create sports associations, and making physical education mandatory for primary, secondary, and even higher education.<sup>94</sup> Through Law 80, Ospina also created the National Commission for Physical Education which promoted the development of sports through the different departments through the 1930s. Law 80 also represented the convergence between an increased interest in sport and the fear of racial decline, which was popularly attributed to the unhealthy tropical climate. Carlos Uribe Echeverri, the delegate who authored the law, wrote his justification for the law using European examples:

In our days Swiss sport has shown us the extraordinary effects of regeneration in that country...German gymnastics has had a powerful influence developing their race's

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<sup>92</sup> *El Tiempo*, June 16, 1924.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Manuel Antonio Morales Fontanilla, “El Surgimiento Del Campo Deportivo En Bogotá 1910-1930” (Bogotá, Colombia, Universidad de los Andes, 2011), 54.

<sup>94</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 376.

unity, strength, order, and discipline. In England, sport has developed the people's characteristics as well, as the saying goes, "The valor and tenacity to turn victory from defeat at Waterloo was developed in the Football matches at Rugby and Eton."<sup>95</sup>

While Echeverri labels gymnastics, of both German and Swiss varieties, as well as British team-games all sports, he does distinguish between their uses. Echeverri specifically attributed practice of football to British victory over Napoleon. In other parts of Latin America pedagogists either embraced or rejected team-sports based on their martial utility. For instance, Enrique Romero Brest, an influential Argentine pedagogist, considered team sports unsuitable for the masses as it would make them overly competitive.<sup>96</sup> Since Colombian educational reformers blamed the unrestrained violent nature of Colombians on the series of civil wars the country had experienced in the nineteenth century, it made sense that they would agree with Brest.

However, Bejarano and López de Mesa sought to use the competitive nature of sports as part of their regenerative project. Principals of environmental determinism remained popular among the Colombian medical community, and the wider intellectual community, through the 1920s. Diego Monsalve included an environmental note in each description of the Colombian departments, including what type -temperate or tropical- and if that environment was generally healthy or not. Colombian doctors worried particularly about the tropical regions of the country was full of diseases of biological and sociological nature.<sup>97</sup> The hot humid air, environmental determinists believed, made people lazier and more given to social diseases like alcoholism. Bejarano argued that different Colombian races existed partially based on Colombia's varied environments. For reformers, physical education needed to prepare students to "fight," for life as well as against an environment that was pulling all Colombians,

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<sup>95</sup> Quoted in Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 123.

<sup>96</sup> Enrique Romero Brest, *Pedagogía de la educación física.*, Sistema argentino de educación física (Buenos Aires: Libería del Colegio, 1938), 367–69.

<sup>97</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 32.



but especially the rural poor, into decline or laziness.<sup>98</sup> In this context, the competition inherent in team sports could stimulate the athletes as well as the fans to action. When reporters wanted to offer generic praise to male athletes, they wrote about the athlete's vigor or vitality.

In another sense, proponents of team sport viewed it as a type of proxy battlefield, similar to how Norbert Elias described sport as part of the "civilizing process."<sup>99</sup> Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño argues that elites belonging to the generation of the centenarios used sport to distinguish themselves from the older generation.<sup>100</sup> While the older generation proved their valor on the battlefield, the newer generation proved their valor or capacity to rule on the playing field. The symbolic battlefield of the stadium allowed parties to come together and resolve their differences without bloodshed. Reformers like Hans Huber thought that bringing the different parts of Colombia together in competition would help replace strong regional identities with national ones. However, bringing together bickering groups could have the opposite effect as I will explain in the following chapter.

Returning to Echeverri's justification for the necessity of Law 80, he was careful to praise attributes of the warrior rather than the merits of war itself. Echeverri stated that the British learned how to achieve victory against all odds, an underdog story, rather than stating that the football field made the British great warriors. The fact that Echeverri mentioned the benefits of German gymnastics, *Turnen*, while neglected their martial intention of turning Prussian boys into good soldiers, is indicative of a selective borrowing by the Colombian elite. In other words, Echeverri argued Colombians could use Swiss gymnastics for regeneration, German gymnastics to teach unity, strength, order, and discipline, and British sport to learn of valor and tenacity. While the Colombian intellectual community saw value in the non-competitive gymnastic traditions, the masses were more interested in the spectacle of competitive sport, especially boxing and football. As the SEP learned in Mexico, competitive sports drew

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<sup>98</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, 57.

<sup>99</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Mole Editions; Variation: Mole Editions. (New York: Urizen Books, 1978).

<sup>100</sup> Ruiz Patiño, *La política del sport*, 47.

in crowds of people, and so competitive sports were a more useful vehicle for modernization.

While Law 80 marked the Colombian government's interest in developing sports in everyday life, via education, the National Olympics provided the opportunity to demonstrate the effects that government investment was having. Antonio Bonilla, Minister of Public Education to the department of Tolima, spoke about the benefit sport was conferring on Colombia's future generation during the medal ceremony at the National Olympics. Bonilla instead directed those who gathered in the stand to witness the "the bodies of the athletes, how healthy they are" and to know that "who have to have a healthy body to have a sound mind." The victorious athletes represent, according to Bonilla, that good modern education, would produce a new and healthy generation of Colombians. Later Bonilla made the link more explicit, stating that "their bodies represent the promise of wise pedagogy to produce good citizens." This is a clear indication of the pedagogical nature of the National Olympics, at least or at most for the tournament organizers. Echoing Holguín Lloreda's opening speech, they too hold up the athletes as fruit of Colombia's educational reform as well as examples for those who watch from the stands to follow. This is similar to the SEP's own use of sport to demonstrate attributes and habits that they wanted Mexican peasants to follow.

Bonilla made the pedagogical nature of experiencing the National Olympics as a spectator by describing the event as a spiritual journey to ancient Greece. He described Colombian athletes as the mythic heroes of classical antiquity who were just as at home on the battlefields of Thermopylae as they were in Plato's gardens. This allusion to ancient Greeks is similar to Mexico's hosting of the 1968 Olympic games. Claire and Keith Brewster mention that the tournament organizers commissioned poems, odes, and newspaper articles to reference "how the Hellenic spirits of the past would be rekindled among the temples to the Aztec gods." The point was to link Mexico with ancient European cultures.<sup>101</sup> Bonilla was doing something similar in his speech, linking Colombia to the birthplace of

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<sup>101</sup> Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation*, 92.

democracy, rationality, philosophy and so on. In both the Mexican and Colombian cases, the tournament organizers wanted to project their nations as inheritors of a civilized rather than a barbarous past.

In addition to appealing to antiquity, Bonilla was also making a reference to racial degeneration via his allusion to ancient Greece. Hygienists like Bejarano compared Colombians against ancient, and somewhat mythic, races of the past who set the benchmark for purity, perfection, and strength. In this way they were like the eugenicist Francis Galton, who used the ancient Greeks to support his hypothesis of racial decline.<sup>102</sup> By describing the National Olympics as a spiritual journey to ancient Greece and the Colombian athletes as “heroes from the Illiad,” Bonilla was commenting on the efficacy of such events to halt racial decline. In other words, the focus on physical education and sponsoring National Tournaments could lead to racial improvement according to Bonilla. This improvement would not terminate on the athletes themselves, but they would lead Colombia from a “stagnant backwater to a land of free-flowing ideas and people, crisscrossed on the rails of progress.” In other words, proper education was creating modern citizen who would lead Colombia into a modern future.<sup>103</sup>

### The Renovating Project: The Queens of Colombia

Much as the stadium, Galilea, represented Colombia’s economic modernization, the athletes and event, represented Colombia’s pedagogical modernization. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Colombian politicians, intellectuals, and doctors sought to modernize what they saw as the country’s backward population and physical education played a prominent role in their plan. The move to industrial-scale agricultural export had disrupted the connection between the landlord and the tenant farmer. In the meantime, the increasing demand for export product made labor more valuable while also drawing ever more people to the cities. In other words, the modernization project had the byproduct of causing social upheaval in Colombia, much like E. Bradford Burns has noted of Latin

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<sup>102</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 73.

<sup>103</sup> Bonilla, “La Premiación de los Vencedores,” *El Tiempo*, January 13, 1929.

American in general.

While elites had initially adopted team sports and social clubs as their means to distinguish themselves from the masses, the government's move to incorporate sports into public education made sports more common. It was at this stage that, Hobsbawm notes, European elites shifted their position from players to tournament administrators. It was through maintaining control of governing institutions that elites were able to maintain class lines.<sup>104</sup> Jorge Wills Pradilla's attempt to create his national association was an aborted attempt at doing just that, but such effort was shut down by the Colombian state. Tournament organizers wanted a new symbol that would represent social stability as well as provide a notion of continuity, another "invented tradition."<sup>105</sup> Their solution was to adopt a practice made popular by the Colombian student union in the early 1920s and elect a Queen of Sport who ruled over the Olympics.

Electing Queens of various activities became popular in Colombia in the 1920s, precisely during a time of great social change. In 1922, one of the most prominent student leaders, Germán Arciniegas, began to plan a student-led carnival and parade through the streets of Bogotá complete with floats, costumes, and a beautiful queen. Four years later, Arciniegas' carnival processed through the streets of Bogotá, disrupting traffic on its way to Teatro Colón, one of the city's most prominent venues. At the Teatro Colón, Arciniegas crowned the first Queen of Students, Maruja Vega Jaramillo.<sup>106</sup> Not simply a beauty queen, historian Michael Edward Stanfield notes that the Queen was "an animating force and a spiritual leader" for the students. What is more, the Queen encouraged students to develop a positive appreciation for "honor, beauty, poetry, art, love, action, and a generous heart," while warning them against being "sad, heavy, melancholic, weak, distrustful, or inactive."<sup>107</sup> The Queen did this by

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<sup>104</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 306.

<sup>105</sup> Hobsbawm, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 131–32.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Edward Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 85–86.

representing those healthy qualities in addition to helping organize events for students to help develop those qualities. In other words, the Queen of Students was a female version of Bonilla's warrior-poet athletes, as both were visible examples for others to follow.

In many ways the Queen of Students was itself connected to an older tradition of social societies and women's position in those societies. Women organized the social events, like dances or festivals, in addition to organizing fundraisers. This social role offered married women the chance to associate with each other and allowed single women a space to attract suitors. But these societies also had a philanthropic role, as well. In the days before the carnival, Arciniegas and his fellow organizers published an elaborate and fictionalized story about a failed kidnapping attempt of a wealthy citizen by the students. The students hoped to use the ransom money to finance the carnival and charity ball. However, the wealthy businessman becomes unintentionally injured and takes the students to court, where the judge finds them guilty. The students are sentenced to organize another parade, as well as raise money for various student union causes and a local hospital.<sup>108</sup> It is clear from the elaborate ruse that Arciniegas and his fellow students were already planning to do their punishment.

The election of the Queen of Students played into the philanthropic role of the student union as well. For one, students sold tickets to other charitable events at the election of the queen, presumably because the event was well attended. One of the biggest money-makers was the election of the Queen herself. While ostensibly a democratic process, ballots were not free and were also not limited to one per person. In 1929, Queen of Students for Bogotá ballots cost \$0.20, the price of entrance to a day's events at the National Olympics. María Teres Roldán won the election with 170,000 total votes cast in her favor. The election ended up netting the student union \$21,545 which was a significant amount of money.<sup>109</sup> The sum shows that the election, and by extension the Queen of Students was both popular

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<sup>108</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 131.

<sup>109</sup> Henderson, 171.

and attracted wealthy supporters.<sup>110</sup>

It was not just the students who used a woman as a symbol of unity. In the 1920s the socialist movement began to gain traction in Colombia but had trouble coordinating their efforts across regions and professions. A 37-year-old librarian from a well-to-do family, Maria Cano, became a symbol for the wider socialist movement in Colombia. Cano was named as the Flower of Labor at a May Day parade in Medellín and would later be known as the Red Flower of Labor.<sup>111</sup> While Cano's family wealth allowed her to travel across Colombia, she found it difficult to get labor unions to work together across regions or even industries. But the fact that Colombian socialists thought of naming a Flower of Labor signifies a wider view of women in Colombia as symbols of unification and societal good. The fact that Maria Cano was 37 when she was declared the Flower of Labor indicates that national symbols need not be young women.

The same was true for her majesty, Graciela Velásquez Paláu the First, the Queen of Sport for the 1928 National Olympics. The press never published her age, but the Olympic committee elected her from among several *madrina* (literally: godmother) candidates. Madrinas played an important, if not altogether clearly defined, role in the pre-game ritual. Before opening kickoff, each team took to the field and declared who their *madrina* was. In the National Olympics, Técnico de Bogotá listed six *madrinas* of the team including Ida Fischer, and their opponents, La Salle, also named six *madrinas*, including Tulia Peña, both of whom were candidates for Queen of Sport.<sup>112</sup> In her thesis, Diana Alexandra Alfonso Rodriguez, notes that high society women often occupied prominent spaces during athletic encounters to affirm their social standing and prestige in public settings. She further argues that the presence of these women at Colombian events, like the National Olympics, represented a European

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<sup>110</sup> But it also indicates that these carnivals were lavish as the ticket sales from María Teres Roldán alone should have generated \$34,000 much less the ballots cast for other candidates.

<sup>111</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 159.

<sup>112</sup> Gaitán, "Madrinas de los Equipos," *El Tiempo*, December 22, 1928.

inheritance from the Middle Ages where women played a central role in archaic festivals.<sup>113</sup>

A photo from the 1928 Olympics shows the *madrinas* dressed up in their Olympic uniforms, likely either before or immediately after leading the opening process. They are dressed completely in white, in standard 1920s fashion, with short, bobbed hair underneath worn cloche hats. From the picture, the *madrinas* appear to be not all that young, rather they look like established society ladies. Therefore, the white clothing was not likely a symbol of their virginity and so did not play the role of the maiden that the knight/athletes were striving after. Claire and Keith Brewster mention that the rural teachers in Mexico regularly dressed all in white to convey the health benefits of practicing sport.<sup>114</sup> It is likely that the *madrinas'* outfits communicated something similar or perhaps the purity of the sporting spirit. But even their title of godmothers signifies that they had a more maternal, or nurturing role to the teams which would be in keeping with the pedagogical mission of sport to train boys to be good citizens. Brenda Elsey notes that Chilean sports clubs also featured *madrinas* around the same time. A Chilean *madrina* was characterized as "an older, matronly woman who cooked meals, sewed uniforms, and provided advice for players."<sup>115</sup> It is likely that Colombian *madrinas* played a similar role.

If the Queen of Students symbolized the ideal student, the Queen of Sport symbolized the ideal *madrina* and reigned over the National Olympics. The press referred to Graciela Velásquez Paláu with a variety of regal honorifics for the duration of the Olympics. For instance, she often appeared as Her Majesty Graciela (*S.M. Graciela*) in the daily papers. Even the simplest of her titles spoke to hereditary continuity, which in turn speaks to Queens as Colombian "invented traditions." Graciela I had no heir (nor forebearers for that matter), but the title evoked the expectation of continuity and order, she was first in a line that would continue. In the 1930s each department elected its own queen and yet kept the

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<sup>113</sup> Diana Alexandra Alfonso Rodríguez, "Deporte y Educación Física En Colombia: Inicio de La Popularización Del Deporte 1916-1942" (Bogotá, Colombia, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2012), 91–92.

<sup>114</sup> Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation*, 25.

<sup>115</sup> Brenda Elsey and Joshua Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Series in Latin American and Latino Art and Culture (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2019), 50.

line of succession going. For instance, Medellín's first Queen of Sport was Cecilia I and its second one was Merceditas II. It was also important to keep continuity of Queens in order for the ladies to retain their own names and prestige.

Beyond naming conventions, Graciela I performed, or was said to have performed, actions associated with royalty. She initiated play in the Olympics with a ceremonial kick off. Matches could begin only when the Queen of Sport took her place in the stands, where she was accompanied by mayors, governors, members of the Olympic committee, and other dignitaries. Teams saluted the Queen as they entered the field in addition to saluting each other as gladiators entering the Colosseum might salute the emperor. Her authority extended beyond the stadium, as the Queen of Sport also ordered all shops in Cali to close early so that her subjects might attend the matches.<sup>116</sup> Now it is certain that the elected royal did not have the power to close all the shops, but it is interesting that she would nevertheless get the honor of doing so. While the state could have taken credit for closing the shops, since it did have that authority, it allowed the prestige to go to the figurehead. This was perhaps done to avoid the appearance of regionalism, or maybe it was calculated to enhance the status of a national symbol.

The pageantry surrounding Graciela Velásquez, the Queen of Sport, speaks to an invented tradition. In the case of the National Olympics, the "Queen of Sport" accomplished the first type of Hobsbawm's tradition, symbolizing social cohesion. Colombians who wielded political power could not represent cohesion because their power was limited either to a region or to a certain party. The Queen of Sport transcended those distinctions by being region-less and party-less. It did not matter where Graciela Velásquez was from, because as Queen she represented Colombia, at least for the duration of the games. Her status was solidified on the political spectrum when municipal politicians attributed their actions to her. Graciela's social power was enforced by teams that named her as their *madrina*, the one

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<sup>116</sup> "Pronosticos Sobre el Campeonato del Fútbol," *El Tiempo* December 30, 1928.



they would play for the honor of. This fealty was especially potent when teams overlooked society ladies from their own states in favor of the Queen.

But at the same time, the popularity and position of the Queen of Sport and the all the aristocratic pageantry demonstrates the limits of Colombian modernity. The ideal symbol of modern union was the nation-state, a single people under one government and yet Colombians felt too fractured politically and geographically. To make matters worse, Colombians could not point to a time when they had united to throw off a foreign invader, at least not as of 1928. While the country had fought its share of civil wars, none of them were as decisive as the United States'. One of the reasons that Huber and Pradilla hoped for a national league was because Colombia lacked institutions and symbols which bound the country together.

Despite the focus on hierarchy and an appeal to an aristocratic past (that never was), the Olympics featured democratic elements, particularly in the make-up of the teams. Twelve Colombian states sent delegations of players, who made up a cross-section of Colombian society. Two teams came from Bogotá: one from the Medical School, reserved for well-to-do members of society, and the other from a Technical school run by a Catholic mission for middle to lower-class families. Likewise, the two teams favored to win the tournament came from states with large populations of Afro-Colombians. The field of play became a place where all elements of Colombian society came together to play with an against each other. This democratic spirit was also represented in the stands as fans came together to disagree with certain calls or voice their displeasure at certain teams. Fan behavior was subject of constant worry of reformers as the masses did not always behave as they were supposed to and expressed their own idea of what the tournament should be. What happened at the 1928 National Olympics was a coming together of various elements of Colombian society in what was a messy but democratic affair.

## Limitations of Modernization

By the time of the 1928 National Olympics, the Colombian elite's modernization efforts had touched most levels of Colombian society, not to mention transforming the country's geography. Trains, river boats, and highways made intra-national travel easier than it had ever been before. In the 1910s, railroad extensions connected Colombia's landlocked cultural centers Cali, Medellín, and Bogotá to the ocean, making it easier to get goods -predominantly coffee- to the international market. Colombian businessmen and politicians channeled profits from agricultural exports to the cities, paving streets, expanding the electrical grid, and building "modern" buildings. Colombian elites used the urban centers as a type of vanguard of the modernization process, demonstrating what a modern Colombia would look like, in addition to having a modernizing effect on the urban population. The state also looked to modernize the citizenry through public education reform. A generation of Colombian doctors sought to add scientific data collection and solution to fix what they saw as racial degeneration among either all or certain Colombians. The hygienists like López de Mesa and Bejarano favored obligatory physical education to strengthen the Colombian races in addition to instructing them in modern (European) activities.

President Ospina seized on an opportunity to cast his vision of a modern Colombia, and to give the state a platform for the future, by setting aside funds for a National Olympics. Cali, one of the first cities to benefit from economic modernization, was a natural choice of host for the first of its kind tournament. Municipal and departmental authorities there were eager to host the rest of the country and to portray themselves as a leading city. They financed and built the largest stadium in Colombia as a stage for the event, complete with modern amenities, artificial lighting, bathrooms for both teams, telegraph lines for the press, and so on. Government officials then used the tournament, to cast a vision of what modern Colombia looked like to the thousands of fans who gathered to watch the event.

The optimistic picture that officials and educators painted of a modern Colombia was at best a

work in progress and at worst an illusion. Cali city officials made a special deal with their hydro-electric plant to make sure that the stadium and neighborhoods where the visiting teams were staying would have power. The power company consented to the request and offered the electricity for the event free of charge.<sup>117</sup> That such a deal needed to be made indicates that the power plant could not provide sufficient electricity for all the “modern” Cali buildings. Caleño officials even tore down Galilea after ten years and replaced it with a newer and more modern stadium, one that is still in use today. And despite all the improvements to Colombia’s infrastructure, it still took travelers from Bogotá three days to make the trip to Cali. The route the bogotanos had to take to get to the Olympics also speaks to the fact that the state and private companies were more concerned with getting exports to foreign markets than aiding intra-national travel.

Not only was Colombia’s infrastructure still a work in progress, but so was the education system. Despite the focus on expanding education to include more modern techniques and reach more people, Colombian citizens were still largely illiterate. Monsalve recorded in 1927 that only 41% of caleños were literate while 54% were illiterate and the remainder was semi-literate.<sup>118</sup> Generally speaking, literacy rates were higher in the city; Marco Palacios notes that in 1912 the literacy rate of neighborhoods dedicated to urban production in Bogotá was 79-86%, but it was only 30% in the more rural areas.<sup>119</sup> Even if Colombian experts designed the public school system to improve the masses through education and physical training, restrictive admittance policies reserved higher education for boys from well-to-do families. It was not only by the Liberal Party’s education reforms in the mid-1930s that middle-class Colombians and women were guaranteed access to higher education.

In addition to education, improvements to the quality of life for the masses, brought on by the coffee boon, was slow in coming behind the elites. While Colombia was predominantly rural throughout

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<sup>117</sup> “Para iluminación,” *El Tiempo*, December 1, 1928.

<sup>118</sup> Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera*, 56.

<sup>119</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 88.

the first half the twentieth century, the population of the country was becoming more urbanized. Between 1870 and 1938, the population of Colombia's biggest twenty cities increased 50% quicker than the national average, due in no small part to rural Colombians migrating to the cities. However, most of the new urban dwellers did not enjoy the "modern" buildings described by Monsalve. In the early twentieth century one-third of bogotanos lived in a rented *tienda*, or a single room without windows and usually with a dirt floor.<sup>120</sup> These *tiendas* also tended to be located on the outskirts of the city, as part of the modernization campaign included removing "eyesores" like old buildings, mule carts, and other symbols of a "bygone" age.

Finally, the state's efforts to draw Colombia closer into the global economy altered labor relations in mixed ways. On one hand, since labor was in great demand, Colombian workers found they had more negotiating power than before and certainly better mobility. On the other hand, despite traditionally supporting Colombian-own businesses, the Conservative party invited several U.S. owned companies into the country. United Fruit grew bananas in Ciénaga near the Caribbean coast, while Tropical Oil, a subsidiary of Standard Oil, explored the area Bucaramanga for oil extraction. The Conservatives gave these companies tax breaks and waived import duties, and at times turned a blind eye when the companies circumvented Colombian labor laws. However, United Fruit was more successful than the Colombian government had been at encouraging immigration, and contracted Italians, Spaniards, Lebanese, and Central Americans to work in its plantations.<sup>121</sup> In addition to providing labor to United Fruit, the new immigrants bolstered Colombia's fledgling labor movement. Cristian Bengal, a Dutch immigrant, ran the Unión Sindical de Trabajadores del Magdalena (Workers of Magdalena Labor Union, USTM) which operated in the banana growing region.<sup>122</sup> While it was true that Colombian labor unions had difficulty coordinating sympathy strikes, the number of strikes across the

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<sup>120</sup> Marco Palacios, 60.

<sup>121</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 90.

<sup>122</sup> Bucheli, 125.

nation greatly increased in the 1920s. Growing social unrest caused the Conservatives and Liberals to discuss the “social question,” with the Conservatives fearing labor’s connection to bolshevism and the Liberal trying to keep the socialists in check within their own party.<sup>123</sup>

It is easy to trace the social unrest back to the Colombian elite’s pursuit of modernity, and to speak of the poverty of their progress. In that reading the National Olympics with its Queen of Sport would be nothing more than bread and circuses trying to appease the masses, and no doubt some among the elite tried to use it as such. It would be a mistake to believe that the Colombian elite were only interested in the trappings of modernity and it would be a similar mistake to think that they tried a wholesale importation of modernity. The Conservative government attempted a moderate modernization, one that did not tip to either bolshevism or fascism. Colombian elites created symbols like the Queen of Sport and made physical education mandatory in public schools to make a healthy and cohesive population that they hoped would be capable of leading the country into a better twentieth century. Symbols like the Queen of Sport, and her antecedent the Queen of Students, communicated values and behaviors to a largely illiterate population in addition to acting as invented traditions in a time of great change.

### Modernity on Display

The democratization of the stands somewhat mirrored the democratization of the teams. As mentioned above both bogotano (from Bogotá) teams came from school teams: the Medical School (*Medicina*) and the Technical School (*Técnico-Bogotá*). While both teams made the trip to Cali, the latter team made it further in the tournament and was part of a national scandal and so merits a closer analysis. The *Instituto Técnico Central*, located in Bogotá, took in 300 students a year and taught: locksmithing, smelting, carpentry, drawing, and other trades.<sup>124</sup> While the players from the medical school came from the upper echelons of Colombian society, the players from Técnico Bogotá were

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<sup>123</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 156–57.

<sup>124</sup> Monsalve, *Colombia cafetera*, 188.

preparing for a humbler, but still comfortable life. The *Instituto Técnico Central* was one of several schools and programs across the country run by the Catholic Hermanos de las Escuelas Cristianas. While Catholic education was not unusual for Colombia, the constitution gave the church oversight in issues of pedagogy, it was unusual compared to other contemporary Latin American nations. Nancy Leys Stepan notes that in general Latin American elites saw science, and education, as means to cultural power outside the influence of the.<sup>125</sup> By the late 1920s the Colombian church was in decline, as a political force more so than in attendance, but was still visible through their religious school teams. A photograph from the Olympic Procession shows a priest standing prominently in front of a delegation.

The role that the Catholic Church played in education demonstrated Colombians' dedication to maintaining social order while pursuing modernity. Modernity required a well-educated population, but Colombia did not want to risk the possibility of social unrest resulting from secular education. This measured movement forward was mirrored in Galilea. Even while football opened spaces for a mingling of Colombian society both in the stands as well as on the field, these spaces were limited and structured. Variable ticket prices helped make sure that people of the same socio-economic bracket could sit together. The more well-off citizens sat in the shade under covered seating while the cheaper seats were exposed to the sun, or the cheapest tickets offered a place to stand. Likewise, players on the field might play against their societal betters but principals of amateurism still reserved the sport only for those with free time. Even when teams from different social strata played each other, the match was still officiated by someone with social standing. Once again, the Colombian state and intelligentsia pursued a modified process democratization and modernization, one in which they hoped to keep the social order intact.

### Modernity in Action

If Galilea provided the backdrop of modernity, athletes performed modernity through their

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<sup>125</sup> Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 41.

various sports. Antonio Bonilla, minister of public education for the neighboring state of Tolima, delivered a speech at the medal ceremony for the youth division. In his speech, Bonilla claimed the athlete's victories as proof that reforms to the educational system were working. The victorious athletes were those who had taken to the physical education programs rather than due to individual hard work. Bonilla's speech was also directed at the crowds rather than the athletes, to ensure that those gathered would draw the "right conclusions" from the event. His message was consistent with the goals of the Olympics, both to highlight the role of physical education as well as show its importance for modernizing Colombia. Bonilla expanded on his statements, saying that sport aided in the three most important elements of childhood development: intellectual, physical, and moral. Together, these victorious children represented the potential of a virile, modern Colombian population as opposed to the state of the current Colombian population. The successful students represented what Colombia could be rather than what it was. A crucial element of Colombian modernity is virility or animating the Colombian spirit.<sup>126</sup>

However, crowds were not interested in all the events equally; they were interested in a particular boxing match or when certain soccer teams played. Ismael Romero, a delegate from the state of Cundinamarca, blamed regionalism for empty seats when lesser-known teams played. Games that featured home teams or Santa Marta, by contrast, he claimed generated \$5,000 in ticket sales.<sup>127</sup> (A short aside: if the stadium was full, as Romero implies, that means the average fan paid \$0.22 for entry, which was cheaper than the cheapest seat. This could be either the result of inflated numbers of crowd attendance, or the fact that there was not a good way to control ticket sales and ensure that all who entered paid for their tickets. Both cases are plausible, but either way empty stands were ominous signs for Colombian reformers.) One of the major goals of the games was to bring the disparate states of

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<sup>126</sup> Antonio Bonilla, "La Premiación de los Vencedores de los Concursos Olímpicos de Colegios y Escuelas," *El Tiempo*, January 13, 1929.

<sup>127</sup> Ismael Romero, "Pronosticos Sobre el Campeonato de Fútbol" *El Tiempo* No. 6200 Dec. 30, 1928.

Colombia together in one place and under the banner of competition. Regionalism was a part of the past that Colombian reformers looked to leave behind on their quest for modernity.

To bridge the regional divide, Olympic organizers wanted a figurehead to transcend regional and political differences. However, the goal of national unity made appeals to any one of those forces difficult. To play up either the Conservatives, who were in power, or the Liberals, who were rising in power, would encourage disunity. As for the military, reformers primarily sold physical education as the cure to Colombian society's proclivity to violence, rather than its ability to make fit fighting men. While soldiers lined the field of play, the presence of the Army generally went unmarked in the press. That left the church, which found itself in an interesting position in the late 1920s. While the church existed outside the authority of Colombia, with allegiance to Rome and Italian archbishops, the Conservatives were often more in favor of the church than the Liberals. The populace was still overwhelmingly Catholic, but if organizers and the press focused too much or too little on the church, it would alienate one of the sides. Clergymen were certainly present at the games, but the press did not list them among the dignitaries in the stands or pay much attention to them. What the organizers needed was a symbol that invoked power and authority but was politically benign, hence the creation of the Queen of Sport.

### The Church and Conclusions

Nationalism does not happen but needs to be fostered through symbols and shared experience. While Olympic organizers attempted to show Colombian modernity through technological achievement, education, and nationalism, they did not want to risk social disruption. The larger trend among Latin American countries at the turn of the twentieth century was to liberalize the state. Modernity required a clean break with the colonial past to pursue an autonomous future. Latin American reformers expanded the education system, especially in rural areas, to teach peasants how to be citizens and wrote new constitutions to highlight the rule of law over tradition. Finally, the state needed to supplant both the landholding elite along with the church. Like the wider trend, Colombian reformers were interested in



making good citizens and believed that the urbanite, rather than the rural dweller, was the future of the country.<sup>128</sup>

However, Colombians in general were loath to give up a comfortable social hierarchy rooted for many in the Church. In fact, Radical Liberals triggered a schism in their own party through their attempts to secularize Colombia in 1863. Conservatives and moderate Liberals defeated the radicals and in the 1886 constitution established “the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church is the religion of the Nation...would be respected as an essential element of social order.”<sup>129</sup> Despite such official support for the Catholic church, which remained guardian of social order until the 1990s, *El Tiempo* rendered the church practically invisible from the 1928 Olympics. Dignitaries did allude to spirituality in their speeches and priests were present, but Gaitán did not count them among the other dignitaries. In contrast, the 1932 Medellín Olympics opened with a mass.<sup>130</sup>

The ambivalent relationship between sport and the church in Colombia requires some further explanation. When Mexican reformers tried to boost nationalism after the revolution, there was an antagonistic relationship between reformers and the church. Mary Kay Vaughan notes that the Mexican Secretaria de Educación Pública (SEP) viewed religious belief as an abstraction. However, when educators tried to redirect the rural public’s devotion to the nation at the expense of religious devotion, the peasants doubled down on their beliefs.<sup>131</sup> While Colombian reformers had similar goals to their Mexican counterparts and similar methods, the former was not openly hostile to the church. While Colombian educational reform pursued a more scientific understanding of childhood development, they did not do so in opposition to religious knowledge or teaching. Legally speaking, Law 39 Article 1 of 1903 declared that all instruction in public schools had to be organized and taught in concordance with the

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<sup>128</sup> Zandra Pedraza Gómez, *En cuerpo y alma*: (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Departamento de Lenguajes y Estudios Socioculturales-CESO, 2011), 55.

<sup>129</sup> LaRosa and Mejía P., Germán, *Colombia*, 64–65.

<sup>130</sup> "El Presidente de la Republica Inauguro Solemnemente Las Olimpiadas Nacionales," *El Tiempo*, August 7, 1932.

<sup>131</sup> Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, 194.

Catholic faith.<sup>132</sup>

On the other hand, despite the close relationship between the Catholic Church and Colombian education, the former was relatively invisible throughout the course of the Olympics. If there was an antagonistic relationship, there should have been criticism of the church in the Olympic discourse. Conversely, if there was such a close relationship there should be praise for the church. It is possible that the silence was the result of fear -of the public or of the international church- but that is unlikely. The National Olympics drew out the wealthiest and most politically powerful elements of Colombian society and they were in their seat of power. More likely, Colombian reformers were trying to replicate the church's influence, missionaries and religious orders were the primary agents in incorporating Colombia's hinterland.<sup>133</sup> A problem was that the church was headquartered outside the nation, a fact recognized in the same constitution that made the church guardians of social order. While religious devotion bound Colombians together, it did not bind them to the state. However, as Mejía and LaRosa noted, Colombia did not have many institutions that provided social cohesion and so even if reformers wanted secular institutions to replace religious ones, they were not in a position to challenge the authority of the church.

In conclusion, the National Olympics was an important moment in Colombian history that often goes unnoticed. It was the first national sporting event. Had the Great Depression not hit the following year and dragged Colombia down with it, a national league might have formed earlier than it did. But the fact of the matter is that Colombia is still in many ways a fractured nation, as most are, and sport is one of the institutions that binds the country together. Thousands of Colombians flew to Russia for the 2018 World Cup to cheer on their national team and that interest is echoed by the thousands of fans who attended the National Olympics each day. But more than the history of sport, the National Olympics also brought together reformers from across Colombia. Through speeches and their

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<sup>132</sup> Quiceno Castrillón, *Pedagogía católica y escuela activa en Colombia (1900-1935)*, 29.

<sup>133</sup> LaRosa and Mejía P., Germán, *Colombia*, 64.

organization of the events they were able to translate academic modernity into rituals and traditions that a wider audience could understand and participate in. The message did not always get across and reformers had to make sacrifices in their ideology to relate to the people. Colombia also had not made as much industrial progress as they wanted, but reformers pressed on anyway. They pursued a distinctly Colombian version of modernity which made space for the church and a social hierarchy, unevenly and not always successfully. Colombians were not blind consumers of European or North American ideologies but took what they liked and adapted it to fit their circumstances.

More than the electricity that powered the stadium, Galilea itself was a bit of an illusion; the large structure, despite all its “modern commodities,” was made from wood rather than concrete. Modern stadiums of the time were large concrete structures to match the concrete jungle of the cities in which they resided. Wooden stadiums harkened back to an earlier time in sports. In 1936 the City of Cali opened a much bigger concrete stadium, Estadio Pascual Guerrero, to replace Galilea which was ultimately torn down after only a few years of existence.<sup>134</sup>

Seizing on the opportunity to gain popular support, the state invested in the success of the National Olympics. The government subsidized travel and lodging to Cali for representatives from across the country to ensure high-profile state representation. Improvements were also made at the municipal level. The city of Cali worked to improve its infrastructure (electricity, roads, communication) and built a large stadium to host the event. It is interesting to note that the city built the stadium on its own accord. In other parts of Latin America it was up to local clubs to build stadiums and the city would ensure that electricity, sewage, and other services ran to the stadium.<sup>135</sup> In Colombia, stadium construction remained the realm of the government, which in turn taxed ticket sales for events.

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<sup>134</sup> Bonilla Aragón, *Cali solicita la sede de los VI Juegos Panamericanos*, 26.

<sup>135</sup> Brenda Elsey has a wonderful study on the development of Chilean soccer where she discusses the combination of state and civilian actors in stadium construction: *Citizens and Sportsmen: Fútbol & Politics in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Chile* (Austin, University of Texas Press: 2011).

## Chapter 2

### Regionalism v. Nationalism

More than an opportunity for Colombia to project an image of modernity onto itself, the 1928 Olympics also was a chance to bring the country together. Minister of Public Education Antonio Bonilla's allusion to the event like a "spiritual journey to ancient Greece" was more than just an appeal to Hellenistic antiquity. Like Ancient Greece, early twentieth-century Colombia was more a collection of city-states than a single country. Colombia's many civil wars of the nineteenth century were a result, among other causes, of a weak central government. Once again, geography helped to separate urban centers from one another and so Medellín, Cali, Bogotá, and Barranquilla developed culturally and economically in relative isolation from each other. What is more, as Jorge Humberto Ruiz Patiño notes, the economic shift to agricultural exports favored decentralization and strengthening to regional authorities.<sup>1</sup> Each department grew its own crops and ran its own trainlines to get its crops to market. In her work on Antioquia and Cauca, Nancy Applebaum notes that regionalist discourse in Colombia was oppositional.<sup>2</sup> In other words, poor and rich paisas from Antioquia still considered each other kin by the fact that they were not bogotanos.

A problem was that Colombia lacked nationalizing institutions. While the Catholic Church bound Colombians together, it was still an international entity. The military also had a unifying effect, especially after Rafael Reyes' reform to maintain a balance of Liberal and Conservative officers. But the civil wars and military dictatorships of the nineteenth century made the Conservative party wary of investing too much power in the military. The string of Conservative presidents was consistent in shrinking the military budget to its lowest point of 8.8% of the budget in 1929.<sup>3</sup> Colombia needed national civilian

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<sup>1</sup> Ruiz Patiño, *La política del sport*, 31.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy P. Applebaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948*, Latin America Otherwise : Languages, Empires, Nations (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 167.

institutions that brought in people from across the country but was not located in any one department. Sport enthusiasts such as Jorge Wills Pradilla and Hans Huber, who had come to Colombia to help reform the country's school system, thought a national sports league provided such a solution. Given the prestige brought to Uruguay and Argentina thanks to success of the Uruguayan soccer team at the Parisian Olympics and Argentine boxer Luis Ángel Firpo's title fight against Jack Dempsey, sport was an attractive option. Not only was sport popular among the rich and poor alike, but internationally successful athletes could have positive diplomatic function which could open more markets for Colombian coffee or secure more international investment.

However, given the difficulty and expense of intra-national travel in the 1920s, a national sports league was too risky for individual investors. In 1932 two Colombian businessmen, Luis Emiro Mejía and Miguel Dumit, contracted a Panamanian football team for a tour of Colombia to play local teams in various cities. However, at the end of the two-month tour the businessmen had run out of funds or simply decided that since the tour was over, and they did not pay for the Panamanian's return trip home and left the team in Barranquilla. The team eventually sued the businessmen for failure to complete their contract.<sup>4</sup> Whether Mejía and Dumit ran out of funds or decided it would be cheaper not to pay for the Panamanian's return trip home did not matter much for the team who just wanted to go home after a lengthy three-month tour. The story demonstrates the volatility of the situation for athletes, as they did not have any national organization to appeal to. Pradilla and Huber hoped that the 1928 National Olympics would convince the government that sport was beneficial for the citizenry and get funding for the national league which would defer some of the cost.

In his analysis of boxing in Mexico, Stephen Allen charts how the elites used boxing and famous boxers to promote Mexican nationalism. Allen argues, "their performances inside and outside the ring

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<sup>4</sup> "Los Futbolistas de Panama Abandonados por los Empresarios," *El Tiempo*, August 26, 1932

allowed Mexican elites to portray the nation as cosmopolitan, nationalist, and masculine.”<sup>5</sup> Mexican elites were not only interested in portraying those qualities to the international community but also to the masses who watched the boxing matches. Allen also notes that the post-Revolution elite “frequently looked to popular culture as a means to consolidate power.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, the Mexican elites used popular activities, such as boxing matches, to convey values to the masses, that the state wanted them to adopt. Mary Kay Vaughan has a broader understanding of the way the Mexican state used sport to foster nationalism through her study of patriotic festivals. She argues, “The festival facilitated the penetration of the nation-state and its regional representation (state government) but also helped to legitimize local power structures, confirm social cohesion, and enhance collective identity in relation to surrounding communities and the state.”<sup>7</sup> Colombian elites viewed boxing and football in a similar way. The central state provided travel funding for government officials as well as the teams themselves while municipal and departmental authorities provided accommodations, transportation, and a stadium in which to play. Pedro Nel Ospina, the president of Colombia, even dissolved a private sporting association to assert the state’s control on hosting sporting events.<sup>8</sup> The move by Ospina represented his interest in making sure the state did not have any competition from private or departmental associations.

Hans Huber, the state appointed director of the games was clear that he and the rest of the organizational committee intended the games to have a nationalizing effect. In a statement to the press Huber praised fact that “all the towns contributed to the national glory.”<sup>9</sup> For Huber, the National Olympics brought together the different parts of Colombian in one event, which in and of itself had a nationalizing effect. The statement of Huber, who was himself a German national, reflected the German

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<sup>5</sup> Allen, *A History of Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Beezley, Martin, French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, 215–16.

<sup>8</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Hans Huber in *El Tiempo*, December 26, 1928.

idea of *heimat*. Like *patria*, *heimat* invokes a romanticized idea of homeland that could apply to the local homeland or the national one. In her study of the Pfalz region of Germany, Celia Applegate argues the abstract concept of nation must be experienced through an appreciation of the local.<sup>10</sup> The *pfalzers*, as those from the region call themselves, demonstrate nationalism by cleaning up of local trails and taking care of their region, their corner of the nation. Applegate further argues that participating in neighborhood events -and football matches certainly qualify- is what anchors a *pfalzers* identity as being part of the local.<sup>11</sup> Regional identities were then a small part of a larger national whole and big events, like national tournaments were spaces in which regional identities interacted.

If Huber was influenced by ideas of *heimat*, Colombian intellectuals had their own ideas of regional identity based in racial identity. In the 1920s, Colombian doctors used the concept of race to refer to the Colombian people, replacing the older concept of the *pueblo*.<sup>12</sup> However, there was debate among the intellectual community about what made up the Colombian race. Miguel Jimenéz López argued that the Colombian race was singular and existed in contrast to neighboring races. On the other hand, Luis López de Mesa argued that the Colombian race was made up of different populations with their own regional identities. For López de Mesa the Colombian race contained “the bogotano grace, tolminese gentleness, antioqueño vigor, santandereana pride, and joy of the people on the coast.”<sup>13</sup> However, Jorge Bejarano, a doctor and hygienist, argued that Colombian races needed to mix more to form something akin to Vasconcelos’ “cosmic race.” Bejarano argued that the “black race” was instrumental in the regeneration of the mestizos as well as the highland Indians.<sup>14</sup>

Once again, the National Olympics was the stage on which Colombian officials and intellectuals broadcast their nationalizing vision to the larger public. Politicians, businessman, and the press focused

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<sup>10</sup> Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Applegate, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Ruiz Patino, *La política del sport*, 93.

<sup>13</sup> Luis López de Mesa quoted in Ruiz Patino, 96.

<sup>14</sup> Aline Helg, *La Educación En Colombia, 1918-1957: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política*, 111.

on the two most popular sports to support nationalism: boxing and football. Caleño businessman - Cornelio Buenaventura went to New York and set up an exhibition match between Basque Paulino Uzcudun (spelt Uzcudum in the Colombian press) and the Canadian Jaques Renault. The press sold the boxing match as a fight between the races and heralded Uzcudun's victory as proof that training enabled "weaker races (the Latin races)" to triumph over "stronger (North American)." Likewise, the press heralded the football matches as uniting the country together in the spirit of competition. On the football field, regional Colombian identities competed against each other, making all of them stronger through competition.

In the 1928 National Olympics, a controversy in a semifinal game caused a national outcry and nearly derailed the games. The altercation happened in a match between a *caleño* team and a *bogotano* team that resulted in the later withdrawing from the event. Looking to smooth tensions with the host city and maintain a narrative of national unity, the match was replayed on the final day of the Olympics with stand-in *bogotanos* for those who did not return. The event demonstrated the tension in Colombia between regional and national identities. The story also demonstrates how reformers and organizers tried to bridge the gaps between regional and national identities with varying degrees of effectiveness. Finally, the controversy provides means to gain insight into the values and meanings the fans in the stands drew from the tournament. So much of Colombian sport was and is organized from the top down through building stadiums and organizing tournaments, but in the controversy, we get a glimpse of fans behavior. While organizers intended sport to have a modernizing or a civilizing effect on spectators, fans and players alike were often more interested in personal and collective honor. When regional honor was insulted, fans and players took actions that organizers considered uncivilized. Regardless, such an event demonstrates that the Colombian elites attempt to control the meaning and use of sport failed as athletes and spectators derived their own meanings from it.



## The Paradox of Unity through Competition

Modern sport is paradoxical; on one hand it is by its nature divisive: two clearly defined and fixed sides compete against each other. However, if two teams compete against each other regularly a rivalry often forms between the players, or the fans, or both. In their influential *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning use the example of the Whigs and Tories as an illustration of how this type of competitive identity works. It is impossible to examine either party's platform in isolation, since both parties adopt policies to oppose each other and so each move made by one affect the other.<sup>15</sup> More than affecting each party, the rivalry also affects voters, who may not, and probably do not, completely agree with the entirety of the party's platform but still vote for the party and adopt those other beliefs as a price of loyalty. Rivalry between sports teams have a similar effect, and proximity helps. Sport sociologist, Richard Giulianotti argues that the purest sport rivalries often happen between two teams that share the same city.<sup>16</sup> Proximity makes it easy for fans of both teams to attend the games, enhancing the spectacle and the stakes since fans are more likely to engage with one another and be reminded of victory or defeat.

Before discussing rivalry further, it is important to note that modern sport is a meritocratic enterprise by virtue of both teams share the same set of rules. As Barbara Keys notes with the development of international sport, "Unlike other forms of culture, which can be judged by different standards, sport offers a single, universally accepted standard of achievement."<sup>17</sup> In other words, the rules establish an agreed-upon set of meanings, and ideally, if the rules are enforced, that means that the better side wins. The rules then enforce a horizontal leveling among nations, removing any inherent advantage. But this horizontal leveling also happens within the national-sphere and serves as part of the modernizing effect on players and fans. The rules render all players equal since none are given

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<sup>15</sup> Norbert Elias and Dunning, Eric, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), 10.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 10.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 37.

advantage over the others and likewise the rules restrict spectators to the space of the stands. Should fans take to the field and try to influence the match, the referee would stop the game until fans returned to the space reserved for them or were expelled. Since Colombian reformers most worried about the unrestrained passion of the masses, modern rule-based sport was an especially attractive activity to promote.

A notable example of a regional, or intra-urban rivalry, is the *superclásico* between Boca Juniors and River Plate in Buenos Aires. This rivalry extends back to 1913 and the match maintains its prestige even when the teams do not belong to the same division. The River Plate and Boca Juniors rivalry began because both teams were founded in the same neighborhood, but the former moved away to a wealthier neighborhood and created a new fan base. While the rivalry began between two neighborhoods in Buenos Aires, it has since gained international recognition. British newspapers have a special fascination with the *superclásico* due to the national rivalry between England and Argentina that has been played out on the World Cup stage as well as on the battlefield. The *Daily Telegraph* ranked the rivalry between River Play and Boca Juniors, objectively in terms of number of viewers, as well as subjectively by the extreme behavior of fans, above the notable rivalry between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona.<sup>18</sup>

The Real Madrid and FC Barcelona mark a different type of rivalry, the regional kind between the political capital of Spain and one of the wealthier provinces, Cataluña. *El Clásico* (as the press labeled it) has also taken on global significance with *Forbes* rating each team third and fourth most valuable sport franchises in 2019.<sup>19</sup> To get a sense of the scope of this rivalry, La Liga, the Spanish governing body for football, broadcasts *El Clásico* to 650 million people across 185 countries and between 50-100 million

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<sup>18</sup> "The 25 Biggest Club Rivalries in World Football - Where Does Real Madrid vs Atletico Rank?," *The Telegraph*, May 26, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/football/2016/05/26/the-25-biggest-club-rivalries-in-world-football---where-does-rea/boca-juniors-v-river-plate/>.

<sup>19</sup> Kurt Badenhausen, "The World's 50 Most Valuable Sports Teams 2019," *Forbes*, accessed June 8, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kurtbadenhausen/2019/07/22/the-worlds-50-most-valuable-sports-teams-2019/>.

people tune into the game worldwide. Such a rivalry developed between two regions, which experienced tension as seats of political power and economic power, respectively, but were united by a national league. A single match can generate rivalries, but most occur between teams who meet each other regularly. Repetition offers the opportunity for a redemption narrative and a chance for the losing team to fix its errors. What is more, a record of the wins and losses is kept in a separate category than where each team placed in the regular season. Both teams may have finished at the bottom but for fans, there is cause for celebration since they defeated their rival. This record is collected and passed down as a kind “ethnic memory” which creates a generational link to a certain team.<sup>20</sup> Fandom is something that you are born into and that you pass down.

Football matches offer space for this local anchoring of experience *par excellence* in that they are a space where fans can demonstrate their loyalty to the team as well as each other. Such matches can also foster nationalism when they are performed as part of a national league, as they bring together different regions in a shared experience, playing in one league. Granted there are limitations to a national league’s social cohesion. Keith and Claire Brewster note that basketball was introduced to the Pueblo Indians of Cochiti, New Mexico to foster harmony. However, for the Pueblo Indians the rivalry between factions and families became so extreme that the council banned the sport.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, belonging to the same national league does not guarantee political unity. Cataluña still attempted to succeed from Spain despite having the space of the Real Madrid and FC Barcelona rivalry to work out political or economic differences. As fans invest part of their identity in their team, sport can inflame tensions as well as soothe them, in ways often difficult to predict.

In 1928 Colombia was still in the early stages of developing a national league, which would be further interrupted by the Great Depression and the outbreak of World War II. There was no shortage of

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<sup>20</sup> I am borrowing the term and its usage from Jeffrey Gould who uses it to describe how certain Nicaraguan Indian groups developed a collective identity with one another. Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Die in This Way : Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880-1965*, 231.

<sup>21</sup> Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, *Representing the Nation*, 32.

football teams nationwide since the 1910s, but teams were confined to playing opponents from the same city. Occasionally a team would take a grand tour of Colombia where they would play teams in different cities, as the winner of the 1928 National Olympics did, but such an event was not the norm. Organizers and reformers, such as Jorge Wills Pradilla and Hans Huber, hoped the National Olympics would stimulate enough interest to form a regular national league. A league not only connects all those who participate in it, but it also ranks the participants, allowing each to know where they stand in relation to the other. Bogotanos know where they stand in relation to other cities based on how many of their teams belong to first or second category and, when a national league is formed, where their teams stand in comparison to others. The greatest part of a league is that it is finite. The season will end, and a winner is crowned, but then a new season will begin where all participants get a fresh start, and the ritual continues. This provides winners a chance to celebrate being on top while losers can be optimistic that next year will be their year to win.

### Champion of the Race: Uzcudun versus Renault

In the early twentieth century most Colombians considered boxing to be a civilizing rather than a barbarous sport. Colombian public pedagogy labelled boxing as one of the classical activities that was rooted in Hellenic antiquity. Physical educators taught that boxing was a return to classical culture, and it attracted those who were interested in the health of the Colombian race. Boxing, taught intelligently, would help invigorate a race that was given to “pessimism and apathy.”<sup>22</sup> Boxing, for the Colombian intellectual elite, represented the confluence of classical tradition, intelligence, and physical education. However, the element of boxing that the intellectual elite found the most attractive was the sport’s popularity among the masses, much as Allen noticed among Mexican elites. In 1927, a large crowd of Colombians gathered outside of telegraph offices across the country to hear the latest news about the

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<sup>22</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 233.

Dempsey v. Tunney fight rather than wait to read about it in the morning paper.<sup>23</sup>

Boxing, more so than other sports, was easy for journalists and promoters to allegorize. Unlike football with its somewhat complicated set of rules that requires some prior knowledge, boxing is more straightforward a spectacle (not factoring in how judges award points). Two men, and in Colombia boxing was exclusively a masculine sport, entered a ring and the one left standing at the end was the winner. Journalists and promoters are then able to spend their time describing who the fighters represent or what they are fighting for. In 1921 the Colombian paper *El Gráfico* promoted the title match between American Jack Dempsey and Frenchmen George Carpentier as a “battle of the races.” The reporter for *El Gráfico* characterized Dempsey as a “savage” for seeming to only fight for money, while Carpentier represented the gentility and grace associated with the Latin race.<sup>24</sup> The Conservatives had a complicated relationship with the U.S. On the one hand they courted U.S. investment, but many, most notably the leader of the party for the 1930s and 1940s, Laureano Gomez, harbored resentment against the U.S. for the loss of Panama. The Dempsey v. Carpentier fight represented a battle between an upstart power and what many Conservative Colombians considered to be the locus of European culture, France.

While Carpentier represented an idealized version of the Latin Race, the Argentine Luis Ángel Firpo was Latin American. Firpo made history by being the first Latin American boxer to be granted a title fight against Jack Dempsey in 1923. Writing in *El Gráfico*, Carlos Puyo Delgado heralded Firpo as the undefeated champion of the Latin American peoples. Delgado also imagined that the “all powerful Yankees” must be afraid watching Firpo defeat their best boxers.<sup>25</sup> Firpo’s loss to Dempsey did not dampen Colombian enthusiasm for boxing. What did cause some measure of soul searching was the match between the “bogotano champion” Rafael Tanco and the North American Benjamin Brewster in

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<sup>23</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Morales Fontanilla, “El Surgimiento Del Campo Deportivo,” 51–52.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Morales Fontanilla, 52.

1921. Reflecting on Tanco's loss, Carlos E. Ortiz wrote in *Cromos*, "the Latino feels while the Yankee calculates; the Latino idles while the Yankee multiplies... the Latino is introspective while the Yankee acts."<sup>26</sup> Ortiz's lament echoes language of racial degeneration used by Jorge Bejarano and Luis López de Mesa who characterized Colombians as too governed by their emotions. Ortiz constructed a narrative that Tanco, like the Colombian people, was alternatively emotional and passive, each at the wrong times which was why he lost to Brewster. Colombians, both athletes as well as in general, needed more physical education to invigorate their bodies and yet keep control over them.

Given the public's interest in boxing and the elite's interest in drawing the public to the 1928 National Olympics, tournament organizers wanted to arrange a boxing match between two stars. The committee dispatched Cornelio Buenaventura to New York to secure a contract with two high-profile boxers. Buenaventura was interested from the start in securing an agreement with the Basque-born Paulino Uzcudun to fight at the national Olympics. For one, Uzcudun shared a Spanish heritage with Colombians, and he was gaining international prominence. Using a contact at the Anglo South American Bank, Buenaventura secured a meeting with Uzcudun who he promised that Colombians loved him, and the National Olympics would provide a magnificent stage. Once Uzcudun agreed, Buenaventura spent the next few days trying to secure an opponent before settling on the Canadian Jack Renault.<sup>27</sup> With the two fighters under contract, the National Olympics would include a rematch between the North American and Latin races.

The Olympic organizational committee was correct in thinking that a boxing match would draw a crowd. Reporters for *El Tiempo* estimated that 18,000 fans crowded into Galilea to watch the Uzcudun v. Renault fight, which was greater attendance than all the football matches save for the final.<sup>28</sup> The turnout was even more impressive given the increased ticket price. The most expensive ticket to watch

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Morales Fontanilla, 53.

<sup>27</sup> Cornelio Buenaventura, *El Nuevo Tiempo*, December 6, 1928.

<sup>28</sup> Gaitán, "El Triunfo de Uzcudun" *El Tiempo*, December 26, 1928

the day's football matches cost \$1.00 which was the cheapest ticket to watch the fight. It cost \$5.00 to have a seat in the stadium or \$30.00 for a box seat.<sup>29</sup> The rise in ticket prices likely related to the fact that Uzcudun and Renault were both professional boxers, while the football teams were made up of amateurs. However, the price increase was clearly not a deterrent given the turnout.

Antonio César Gaitán, a journalist and dedicated sports reporter for *El Tiempo*, crafted a narrative of Uzcudun as the underdog. Renault, while not a Yankee, still represented the northern races who had defeated Firpo, Carpentier, and Tanco. As Carpentier represented the grace and gentility of the Latin race, Uzcudun represented the strength and industriousness of the Spanish heritage. Gaitán wrote that the Basques were a people who had "colonized the Americas, liberated Spain from Joseph Bonaparte, and whose work made the Basque region one of the wealthiest."<sup>30</sup> Gaitán mentions the colonization of America to further highlight that Colombians inherit the same tradition as Uzcudun. The success of Uzcudun would be their success as well as the failure. Michael Budd notes "the tendency to envision nations as bodies helped to support notions that societies not only were dangerously susceptible to the forces of degeneration from within but also were organic entities that battled one another for survival on the outside."<sup>31</sup> Gaitán held up Uzcudun as an idealized version of the Colombian race, one that was not tarnished by racial degeneration and the fight against Renault as an allegory for Colombia's fight for increased recognition and prestige on the international stage.

Despite the discourse of racial inferiority, Uzcudun's career as a heavy-weight boxer was still growing in 1928, while Jack Renault's career was declining with a string of losses in 1924 and 1925. Still, Gaitán praised Uzcudun's victory in the National Olympics as an upset, with the Basque using "cunning" and "artistry" to defeat his stronger foe. The language of artistry is reminiscent of the Uruguayan sports commentator Borocotó, who contrasted British footballer's mechanical teamwork to the *criollo's* (from

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<sup>29</sup> "Boxing Prices," *El Tiempo*, December 14, 1928.

<sup>30</sup> Gaitán, "El Triunfo de Uzcudun," *El Tiempo*, December 26, 1928

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 29.

the River Plate regions) individual artistry.<sup>32</sup> Both Borocotó as well as Gaitán used the sporting contests as an allegory for how their regions related economically and politically to more powerful states.

Uzcudun and criollo players could not match the calculating and mechanical style of North American fighters and British players, and so they should not try. As criollo players and Uzcudun demonstrated, the way to achieve victory over those powers was through craftiness and creativity, not pure emulation.

Doctor Silvio Villegas, who attended the fight, wrote an editorial piece for the Cali-based *Diario del Pacífico* describing how Colombians could counter racial degeneration through physical education. Villegas argued that Colombia needed the vigor of these young athletes, as opposed to the idleness of the previous generation who allowed Colombia to remain economically undeveloped and regionally divided, to help development a blossoming national spirit. The youth were especially important to Villegas as they were still developing into adults and he hoped that their physical strength would feed into their spiritual strength and increase their moral resilience. Not only would these young athletes represent of healthy future generation, but Villegas was also sure that Colombians would be inspired by muscle-bound boxers striving against their opponents.<sup>33</sup>

Educational reformers, like Villegas, were also eager to show that their reforms were having a social impact and Villegas pointed to the strong attendance numbers as a sign of positive social change. Villegas and Gaitán cited the contemporary French essayist Henry de Montherlant, who wrote that great spectacles, like boxing matches and foot-ball games, cannot occur in societies in decline.<sup>34</sup> Montherlant's idea was that participation in mass-spectacle, like a boxing match, related to civic engagement. But reformers also wanted to draw Colombians into modern activities and spectacles in hopes of making the people more modern. While critics of the Uzcudun v. Renault fight questioned the significance of the fight, especially since Uzcudun was favored by his record, Gaitán maintained that the

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<sup>32</sup> Eduardo P. Archetti, *Masculinities: Football, Polo, and the Tango in Argentina*, Global Issues (New York: Berg, 1999), 67–68.

<sup>33</sup> Silvio Villegas, "La Fuerza y la Espiritud," *El Tiempo* No. 6196 Dec. 26, 1928.

<sup>34</sup> Alberto Gaitán, "El triunfo de Uzcudun," *El Tiempo* No. 6196 Dec. 26, 1928.



Basque's victory was one that Colombians should celebrate.

### Regionalism: The Antithesis of Nationalism

Journalists and reformers agreed that the narrative of the Olympics should be about healthy, constructive competition that brought the nation together. For journalist and delegates, the antithesis of national unity, was regionalism and became an epithet to be used against anything or anyone that the journalist or dignitary did not like. For instance, Ismael Romero, a delegate from Cundinamarca, blamed regionalism in the poor fan turnout for any game not featuring the home teams or Santa Marta, the team favored to win.<sup>35</sup> While there was certainly an element of federalism versus centralism, the situation in Colombia was more complicated given the discourse of racial degeneration. According to the hygienists, who tended to be more supportive of sport, the Colombian race was the aggregate of regional races.<sup>36</sup> Each region brought their own regional values to the national whole, like the Antioquian entrepreneurial spirit.

Colombian educators found it difficult to create a vision of what a national race looked like. David M.K. Sheinin notes in his study of boxing and the costeño identity (those living on the Caribbean coast) that even in the second half of the twentieth century regional identities proved stronger than national ones.<sup>37</sup> But director Hans Huber and a sympathetic press hoped that the National Olympics would be such a unifying event. Antonio César Gaitán wrote of his expectation that the games “will give the nation hope that the mental and physical dedication of its youth will in a short while allow Colombia to compete at the International Olympics.”<sup>38</sup> Gaitán hoped not only that National Olympics would improve the health of Colombian youth, but also raise a generation of athletes that could compete at the international level. In addition to international prestige, taking part in international tournaments also helped to foster national identity as Colombian athletes competed against non-Colombian athletes.

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<sup>35</sup> Ismael Romero, “Pronosticos Sobre el Campeonato del Futbol,” *El Tiempo*, Dec. 30, 1928.

<sup>36</sup> I deal more closely with this in Chapter 1.

<sup>37</sup> David Sheinin, *Sports Culture in Latin American History*, Pitt Latin American Series; Variation: Pitt Latin American Series. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015), 139.

<sup>38</sup> Gaitán, *El Tiempo*, No. 6188, Dec. 17, 1928.

The wider definition of the “other” created a wider definition for “us.”

Despite Gaitán’s support for the nationalizing effects of the Olympics, he often fell into regionalism. At the end of the article discussed above, Gaitán extolled the two teams from Bogotá to “fight like men, noble and valiantly in defense of their colors and out of love for Bogotá, their maternal city.” Taking Applegate’s notion of how the provincial fits into the national, it is not surprising or even inconsistent that teams should play for the honor of their city. However, it was for love of both the region as well as the nation that Pfaltzers took care of their region. Gaitán asked *bogotanos* to play out of love for their city rather than for the nation. Additionally, Gaitán casted Bogotá as the motherland of the players and not Colombia. While Huber might have been guided by the principal of *heimat*, regional identities were more deeply entrenched than he realized.

Modern sport requires that fans invest a certain amount of identity in their representative team and so a certain amount of pride or regionalism is expected and encouraged. However, in Colombia regionalism was synonymous with factionalism, or pursuing one region’s good at the expense of another region or the nation. Journalists and observers used regionalism as an epithet against perceived injustice and this can be seen most clearly in criticism regarding officiating. Complaints against referees in the National Olympics fell into two major categories: regionalism and ignorance. In a match between the *bogotano* team Técnico and the team from La Salle, Gaitán complained that though the unnamed referee “behaved honorably,” he demonstrated a lack of understanding about the rules. The problem was that the unnamed judge disallowed three points, scored by Técnico, for “no reason.”<sup>39</sup> Gaitán’s complaint does have some merit in this case. At that time there was no professional organization of referees in Colombia. Officials were instead chosen based on their social standing rather than knowledge of the game. For instance, one of the referees, Mr. Stapleton, was chosen because he was the manager of Tropical Oil, which is to say because of his social standing more so than his knowledge of

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<sup>39</sup> Gaitán, “Coneceo De Nuestro Critico” *El Tiempo*, No. 6193 Dec. 22, 1928.

the game. There was no association, national or otherwise, to ensure referees knew the rules or to provide authority for their decisions.

At the same time, Gaitán was far more willing to call out the ignorance of the officials when it benefited a *bogotano* team than when the ignorance played in one of his team's favor. In a hotly contested match between Técnico and Cali, Gaitán reprimanded *caleño* fans who were upset with the Técnico players' "scissor" defense.<sup>40</sup> Given the controversy it caused among *caleño* fans, the "scissor" technique probably involved sliding into attacking players and tripping them, which should have elicited a foul. The referee, Stapleton, never called a foul on the *bogotano* team and even called a foul against Cali that gave a penalty kick to Bogotá. The fact that Stapleton resided in Cali likely also rankled the *caleño* fans who felt betrayed that one of their own, though he was a foreigner, would so blatantly side with their opponent. On Stapleton's side, perhaps he did the best he could or perhaps he thought it would better represent Tropical Oil's interest to curry favor with the nation's capital rather than the provincial capital.

As the calls benefited his side, Gaitán doubled down on his defense of Stapleton, writing that he was a "model referee."<sup>41</sup> However, as the Olympics drew to a close, the head referee, Fernando Hauzer, the de facto head referee of the event, gently criticized Mr. Stapleton's officiating, suggesting a lack of understanding about "modern" rules as well as missing key events.<sup>42</sup> Given the controversy caused by Stapleton's officiating, Gaitán was forced to admit that there had been officiating errors which played in the *bogotano's* favor. But had there not been such an outcry, as will be discussed in the second half of this chapter, it is unlikely that Gaitán would have retracted his statement. Regional loyalties still proved strong, even for those who longed for nationalism. For such people, nationalism was good if it was their department which led the way.

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<sup>40</sup> Gaitán, "Los incidentes Provocados en Cali por el Triunfo del Equipo "Tecnico" Sobre el "Cali," *El Tiempo*, No. 6203: Jan 3, 1929

<sup>41</sup> Gaitán, "Se arma el escándolo," *El Tiempo* no. 6203 Jan 3, 1929.

<sup>42</sup> "Colombia deportiva," *El Tiempo* No. 6210, Jan 10, 1928 reprinted from *El Diario del Pacífico*.

But ignorance was not the only complaint levelled against referees; given that regional loyalties were still strong, regionalism was often invoked to disparage certain referees. Writers for *El Tiempo* and the Colombian press made sure to introduce each official before the start of a match with what experience they had, if any, and which city they called home. Señor Ponce, a trainer for the Santa Marta team, was sought after due to his team's success, which indicated to other teams a good knowledge of the game.<sup>43</sup> However, there was a problem that he was the trainer for Santa Marta and so could not be trusted to officiate their games with impartiality, limiting his usefulness.

The most sought-after official got around this issue by being a foreigner and so therefore could not be easily accused of regional bias. Fernando Hauzer was a Belgian by birth but resided in Bogotá. Being foreign born, and an athlete himself, meant that not only was he authoritative on the game but also that he could not easily be accused of regionalism, despite living in the capital. Hauzer was often asked to weigh in on issues and give summary judgement. For example, during a match between a Cali team and Bucaramanga, one of the caleño players, Piedrahita, got into a fight with one of the Bucaramanga players. David Martínez Collazos, the representative for Bucaramanga, petitioned the national Olympic committee to disqualify Piedrahita from the rest of the tournament. As a witness, Martínez called upon the expertise of Fernando Hauzer, who was the referee for the game. Hauzer confirmed that the foul was willful and worthy of expulsion but then asked Martínez to withdraw his complaint to avoid adding discord to the event, which Martínez did.<sup>44</sup>

Hauzer's ruling on the issue between Cali and Bucaramanga demonstrated both importance of national unity along with the absence of nationalizing institutions. First, Hauzer recognized that Piedrahita was in the wrong and by the rules deserved to be expelled from the tournament. By the principles of sportsmanship and fair play, not to mention the rules, Piedrahita should have accepted this decision and withdrawn. After all, sport is supposed to instill in society a respect for authority and the

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<sup>43</sup> *El Tiempo* No. 6199 Dec. 29, 1928

<sup>44</sup> "Un incidente desagradable," *El Tiempo* No. 6200 Dec. 30, 1928

laws that govern society. However, Hauzer then turned the situation over to Martínez and asked him to withdraw his request so as to not mar the unity of the event. Perhaps Hauzer and the committee feared that expelling the caleño Piedrahita from his home was unenforceable, or that fans would no longer attend games if their star player were not playing. In either case, the caleño organization committee wielded disproportionate power over the tournament, influence that was at odds with the supposed impartiality of the rules.

Martinez was then placed in the position of either withdrawing his complaint and accepting the injustice or maintaining his complaint and risking insulting the host city, which would reflect poorly on Bucaramanga. Martinez chose to withdraw his complaint and in a touch of pageantry apologized to the Queen of Sport for even submitting the complaint. His apology earned him the admiration and applause of all those present. Martínez bowed to social pressure and gave up his right to earn an advantage in the sporting arena in order to not risk loss of social standing. This episode indicates that social and regional pressure was greater than legal pressure, at least as it related to the rules of the game. The weakness of the central state was reflected in the administration of the National Olympics.

### National Controversy and Regional Solutions

The semi-final match between Cali and Técnico Bogotá was far more disruptive than the fight between two players in a previous round. The controversy began when it was announced that Stapleton would officiate the match and, ironically, Gaitán furiously complained that regionalism was at work. He further cautioned, prophetically, that the match would end in disaster.<sup>45</sup> The semi-final match featured a hometown team, and the stadium was packed. An estimated 18,000 tickets were sold by the beginning of the match, generating \$8,000 in revenue, making the match one of the most attended.<sup>46</sup> The crowd favored the hometown team and drowned out any dissenting voices with cries of “Viva Cali!” Upon entering the field, Técnico named Queen Graciela and her court as their *madrinas* while the team from

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<sup>45</sup> Gaitán, “El juez del Martes,” *El Tiempo* no. 6200, Dec. 30, 1928.

<sup>46</sup> Gaitán, “Los incidentes Provocados en Cali por el Triunfo del Equipo ‘Tecnico’ Sobre el ‘Cali,’” *El Tiempo* no. 6203, Jan 3, 1929.

Cali selected the distinguished ladies from the Club Noel. The match began at four in the afternoon with an “avalanche” of photographs.

A quiet first half gave way to a cautious but increasingly tense second half until disaster struck twenty-five minutes into the second half. The captain of the *bogotano* team, Rafael Vernaza, fell in the penalty box and Stapleton signaled for a penalty kick. The stands erupted in insults and petitions as *caleño* fans pleaded against the call. Unsurprisingly, Gaitán disagreed with the crowd’s assessment, writing in *El Tiempo* that Vernaza was clearly knocked down by the Cali defenders. *Caleño* fans suggested that their team should retire from the game in protest of the call, which became common in the 1932 Medellín Olympics, but the Cali team played on. As the time ticked down to the end, the *caleño* attack grew more desperate, and according to Gaitán, less effective. Stapleton finally blew his whistle and signaled the end of the game and victory for Técnico-Bogotá, and the fans took to the field to demonstrate their displeasure with the referee and the victorious team.<sup>47</sup>

Before continuing further, it is worthwhile to note that this was not the first time the *caleño* teams had invaded the field in response to their team losing. Earlier in the tournament, another Cali team lost against the tournament favorites, Santa Marta. The accounts of what happened after the final whistle blew are somewhat contradictory. Gaitán comments that spectators gave a standing ovation to Santa Marta from the stands. The *madrinas* presented the winning team with flowers while ladies in the stands demonstrated their grief for the hometown team. Then Gaitán reported that fans charged the field, but only to congratulate the players, which would be incredible restraint for the fans whose team just lost. As early as the 1918 “National” Tournament in Bogotá, sports reporters complained that fans invaded the field or did not keep to designated areas, so rowdy fan behavior had been a part of Colombian football since early on. For that reason, police officers lined the partition that separated the stands from the field even in 1928. But Gaitán reported that invaders applauded the referee, Hauzer,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

and paraded the victorious players around on their shoulders, which does not match up with ladies crying over their fallen idols in the stands.<sup>48</sup> Perhaps the invaders were samarios, people from Santa Marta, who made the trip to Cali and were congratulating their team. Santa Marta was on the Caribbean coast and travel to Cali would have been much easier and cheaper than for those from interior regions. Or perhaps Gaitán censored his account of the invasion out of respect for the host city. The former explanation best reconciles the two extremes of fan behavior, but it is hard to know since Gaitán only distinguishes between fans from Bogotá and fans from Cali.

However, there was no such ambiguity in the semi-final game when *caleños* furiously stormed the field after their team's loss, threatening violence and administering violence in the form of punches and kicks directed at the bogotanos. Rafael Vernaza was quickly surrounded by angry fans and bore the brunt of their ire. The police were unable to restore order and called for the assistance of nearby soldiers, who also lined the field. The military also had difficulty corralling the invading fans and so tried to create a protective wall around the players. It was only when the soldiers fixed bayonets to their rifles that they were able to form a perimeter around the players and get them off the field.<sup>49</sup>

Once free of the mob, the players from Técnico were taken to Colombia Club for a toast to their victory, as was tradition for this event. At the club, society members of Cali attempted damage control and apologized for the injustice the *bogotano* players had received on behalf of the fans. However, the players from Técnico rejected the attempts at reconciliation and announced their intention to withdraw from the National Olympics. The next day the teams from La Salle, Técnico Juniors (who had won the school cup), and all other athletes from Cundinamarca also withdrew from the Olympics in solidarity with the team from Técnico.<sup>50</sup> Tournament organizers and society members of the host city worried that such an incident would irreparably mar the goodwill the Olympics were meant to achieve.

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<sup>48</sup> "Los Idolos Caen," *El Tiempo*, No. 6197 Dec 27, 1928

<sup>49</sup> "Se arma un escandulo," *El Tiempo* No. 6203: Jan 3, 1929.

<sup>50</sup> "Cali Primer Extra" *El Tiempo*, No. 6203: Jan 3, 1929

Immediately the governor of the department, the mayor of Cali, Hans Huber, Doña Graciela Velasquez, and other dignitaries collectively went to Guavito, a hacienda outside of Cali where Técnico-Bogotá was staying, to ask them to return. The delegation met with the team's representative, J. Almaya Olarte, apologized for the violence the players had experienced, giving their personal assurance of safety.<sup>51</sup> Olarte allowed the delegation to finish before informing them that team was determined to return to the capital by the week's end, once again rejecting their apology and spurning their guarantees of player's safety.

While tournament organizers and high society members tried to salvage the situation, the press leapt to the defense of their own cities, exacerbating regional tensions. *El Relator*, a Cali-based newspaper, accused Técnico-Bogotá of being too sensitive to the actions of a few *caleño* youths, saying that the *bogotanos* were behaving more like women than men.<sup>52</sup> This echoed the dichotomy, discussed above, between the Yankee boxers who were described as intelligent, calculating, and masculine as opposed to the Colombian boxers who were too given to emotions, which Colombian intellectuals labeled as a womanly trait. In an article written for *El Sábado*, Darío Achury Valenzuela countered notions that Colombia was a matriarchal republic, which he defined as "being more sensitive than intelligent" and "only interested in surface level emotions." Achury Valenzuela also noted "having domestic squabbles rather than debates" as an element of a matriarchal Republic that Colombia was guilty of possessing.<sup>53</sup> Masculine sports, which is to say sports that Colombian intellectuals deemed "unfit" for women, were supposed to, according to the same intellectuals, make men more logical, vigorous, brave, and place them above petty squabbles. One of the accusations bound up in the *El Relator* writer's insult was that the bogotanos were being controlled by their emotions rather than being in control of them. As such, the Técnico-Bogotá players were not demonstrating the modern, which is to say western,

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<sup>51</sup> "Cali 2 Extra" No. 6203: Jan 3, 1929

<sup>52</sup> "Tiempo Bogotá" No. 6203: Jan 3, 1929

<sup>53</sup> Darío Achury Valenzuela, "Virtudes y Vicios de Nuestra Nacionalidad," *El Sábado* February 16, 1946.



attributes sport was to instill in them.

A few days later *El Correo de Cauca*, another Cali-based paper, suggested that the game be replayed given the controversial penalty kick.<sup>54</sup> There was a large lobby of *caleños* who argued that replaying the match was the only way to address such a controversial call, and Hauzer offered to officiate the rematch to ensure impartiality. In general, *caleño* papers argued that *El Tiempo's* account of a massive invasion was inaccurate; it was merely a few drunken youths. The papers wanted to make it clear that what happened came from the fringes and was not emblematic of *caleño* society and the “drunken youths” just did not know any better. This is not an altogether uncommon defense for hooligan-type behavior.<sup>55</sup> However, given the necessity of military intervention to protect the players, it is unlikely that the field invasion was only a few drunken young adults, but rather a much more significant part of the 18,000 fans gathered to watch. *Caleño* journalists were merely trying to protect an image of their citizens as modern. To the fans who took to the field however, they were protecting the honor of their city which had been violated by bogotanos who did not play according to the rules.<sup>56</sup>

As the days passed and the players of Técnico-Bogotá stood firm on their decision to leave, public opinion began to turn against them. The players gave interviews to the press to try and win back public opinion. Alberto Esguerra Serrano, one of the main players, said that it was impossible to forget the offenses they suffered, and most were not even published in the press. Vernaza tried to distance the club from its connection to Bogotá and the need to represent the city by saying that they were a society of players and not dependent on an official organization.<sup>57</sup> The team also released a joint statement intended for the press in Bogotá maintaining that they were all sportsman, but their “dignity” was first and foremost. The team had no desire to go back and be made “victims,” nor did they wish to lose the

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<sup>54</sup> “El Equipo 'Tecnico Bogotá Se Retira Efinitivamente de las Olimpiadas” *El Tiempo* No. 6204: Jan 4, 1929

<sup>55</sup> Giulianotti deals largely with German and British efforts to control their hooligans who were comparatively less organized than say the Italian Ultras in Giulianotti, *Football*.

<sup>56</sup> Eduardo Archetti and Amílcar Romero, “Death and Violence in Argentinian Football,” editors Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney, and Mike Hepworth, *Football, Violence, and Social Identity*, (London: Routledge, 1994)

<sup>57</sup> “Entrevistas con los jugadores,” *El Tiempo*, Jan 6, 1926.

“moral championship” by giving up on their ideals. In other words, they were the ones who were wronged by the *caleño* hooligans, who had not respected the sacred space of the field, and so could not be expected to play as their success put them in danger. The team ended the letter by expressing their desire to return to their beloved city that they had fought for.<sup>58</sup>

Técnico-Bogotá’s attempt to sway public opinion in their home city was a failure. Even Gaitán, who initially defended the team against the insults from the *caleño* papers, began to publicly express his reservations about the team’s decision to exit the Olympics. Gaitán reported that he had appealed to the team to return to Cali and face the crowds and that it was their duty as representatives of *bogotano* culture to do so.<sup>59</sup> There are echoes of Hauzer’s counsel to Martínez to forego his rights in favor of unity, but in this case warmer heads won out. Rafael Vernaza “violently” rejected the appeal to return and convinced his teammates that leaving was the moral decision. That to return to Cali would mean validating the mob behavior that drove them from the stadium.

More bogotanos began to visit and write to the players trying to convince the team to change their mind. Miguel Vargas Vásquez, one of the dignitaries in Cali but originally from Bogotá, sent a letter to the team’s representative Amaya. Vásquez played on themes of regionalism and patriotism, appealing to Amaya as a friend and fellow bogotano to retain the moral high ground by returning to the Olympics. While the bogotanos may have enjoyed initial support, they effectively rejected the apologies and assurances of the “greatest” citizens of Cali and so rejected the city itself. Vásquez then spoke to how regional identities can fit into national ones in a way that draws connection to Celia Applegate’s *pfalzers*. Vásquez argued that the city of Bogotá brings to the nation the tradition of gentility and harmony. If the players follow through on their plan to leave the Olympics, they would be betraying those ideals by refusing to perform the national duties of the bogotanos.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “EL TECNICO BOGOTA RESOLVIO IR A BUENAVENTURA Y VENIRSE INMEDIATAMENTE,” *El Tiempo*, Jan 5, 1929

<sup>59</sup> “El Equipo 'Tecnico Bogotá Se Retira Efectivamente de las Olimpiadas” *El Tiempo* No. 6204: Jan 4, 1929

<sup>60</sup> Miguel Vargas Vásquez, “Letter from doctor Miguel Vargas Vásquez to Amaya,” *El Tiempo* No. 6204: Jan 4, 1929

It is worth analyzing Vásquez's concept of patriotism even further, because he applied the principal of López de Mesas' single Colombian race made up of smaller regional races. Vásquez appealed to the players on the basis that they were all bogotanos, both citizens of the same city as well as foreigners in Cali. Again, regional identity proved to be a stronger than a national one, at least at first glance. Contextually however, Vásquez was attempting to establish connection with the players over their shared identity as bogotanos. This was not at the expense of nationalism, but rather that they had the duty to represent bogotano qualities in Cali. The *patria*, argued Vásquez, demands harmony from all who claim her, and Bogotá, the political capital of Colombia, contributed its culture of tradition and gentility to the larger *patria*. This was a slight insult against Cali, implying that they were less gentile, and so more primitive, but Vásquez's larger goal was to convince the players to return. Vásquez continued to argue that the players have a responsibility as "heralds" of culture and tradition and so whatever they chose to do would reflect on Bogotá in general. Vásquez finished his letter by imploring the players to be "faithful" to their city and return to Cali to demonstrate Bogotá's commitment to harmony.

Vásquez' description of patriotism did not invoke the homogenizing melting pot of United States nationalism. It is not that there was no distinction between caleños and bogotanos, instead Vásquez appealed to the bogotano's distinctness as an asset or a prerequisite for national identity. *La patria* required harmony, which by itself assumes different groups cooperating with each other, and Bogotá provided the tradition and gentility that makes such harmony possible. However, even in these claims Vásquez was reinforcing a regionalism. The fact that he appealed to the players as fellow bogotanos assumes that their regional identity was a stronger bond than a larger national identity. Vásquez also placed Bogotá on a scale closer to modernity by his references to bogotanos' commitment to gentility, implying caleños lack of commitment to gentility. Ultimately, both sides resorted to a type of regionalism in their response to the conflict even while they spoke of national unity.

## Reconciliation: Or the Illusion of Reconciliation

Técnico-Bogotá, led by Vernaza, remained determined to return to Bogotá. More voices urged them to reconsider including: The Colombian Club (who hosted the team's victory party), La Medicina (their sister team from Bogotá), *El Nuevo Tiempo* (another Bogotá-based newspaper), and even Fernando Hauzer, but to no avail. Each appeal shared a common admonition that Técnico's decision to retire from the Olympics had become a greater transgression of the "spirit of the games" than the fan invasion which had caused it. Writers for *El Nuevo Tiempo* bluntly told the players that no one cared about the pitch invasion. The newspaper supported the *caleño* newspapers in affirming that it was just the youthful passions of a "few youths" who got caught up in the emotion of the game. *El Nuevo Tiempo* reminded the team that the people who best represented Cali were those who had come to Guavita to offer messages of sportsmanship, gracious hospitality, and nationalism rather than the hooligans.<sup>61</sup>

Despite efforts to expand Colombian democracy, newspapers maintained that it was the well-to-do rather than the masses who truly represented Colombia. At the same time, the *El Nuevo Tiempo* writers' justification for the elites' representation was based on their modern attributes. In a positivist sense, it was the elites' demonstration of sportsmanship, gracious hospitality, and nationalism that represented the future Colombian citizen rather than the hooligans, who represented the Colombia being left behind. The emphasis on the modern traits lionized by the press relates to Robert Buffington's contrast between Mexican dailies, subsidized by the state, and the satirical penny press. There is a close similarity between the punishing critique by the Colombian press and Buffington's second disciplinary project, the one directed by elite social reformers. Both sought to make modern citizens out of the working class using "training, education, and example."<sup>62</sup> In this case, the Colombian press highlighted attitude of the *caleño* elite while marginalizing the action of the *caleño* hooligans even though both

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<sup>61</sup> "Nuevo Tiempo, Debate," *El Tiempo* No. 6206: Jan 6, 1929.

<sup>62</sup> Robert M. Buffington, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man: The Mexico City Penny Press, 1900-1910* (North Carolina, United States: Duke University Press, 2015), 15–16, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/utarl/detail.action?docID=2055739>.

represented the city of Cali. In fact, it was precisely because they both represented the city that the caleño elite came to the defense of their citizens as they maintained that no action needed to be taken against the fans who had assaulted the bogotanos.

Fernando Hauzer added his voice in support of *El Nuevo Tiempo* and he included a direct allusion to class distinction. In Hauzer's account of the controversy, the pitch invaders were "inconsequential boys from lower society," rather than drunken youths. The true representation of caleño society were those who protested the pitch invasion. Hauzer ended with an appeal to the player's "sporting spirit" to continue the fight until it was over and reminding them that "victory is only for those who earn it."<sup>63</sup> Journalists, dignitaries, and officials attacked Técnico-Bogotá's: masculinity, honor, patriotism, and sportsmanship to shame them into returning to the games, but the team held firm. Ironically, the team maintained its position in the face of such withering criticism in order to defend its own honor. Moreover, unlike Martinez, who withdrew his request that the rules be enforced and Piedrahita be expelled from the tournament, the Técnico-Bogotá players demanded redress for the injustice they had suffered. By not accepting the fiction of a few drunken youths or the assurances of caleño high society, they demanded that some punitive action take place.

The impasse between the two sides continued until on January 5, 1929, Gaitán reported that the players from Técnico-Bogotá decided to return to Cali and finish the National Olympics. As Gaitán told the story, the players were finally convinced to return when they saw his telegram published in *El Relator*, the Cali-based newspaper.<sup>64</sup> This would be a strange turn of events, considering how Gaitán elsewhere complained that the players did not listen to his pleas for a diplomatic approach. What is more likely is that players thought that retiring in protest from the injustice they received would give them a moral victory. The team statement said as much. However, the team's resolve faltered when it saw the weight of public opinion turn against them. But not all members changed their minds. Vernaza

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<sup>63</sup> "Fernando Hausseur" *El Tiempo* No. 6206: Jan 6, 1929.

<sup>64</sup> *El Tiempo*, Jan 5, 1929.

and two others made the decision to continue to Bogotá and not return to the games. Reflecting on the Olympics after they had ended, Gaitán noted that Vernaza was a great football player but did not understand the *caleño* public or its feelings which is to say that Vernaza did not understand the diplomatic nature of the National Olympics; he was simply playing the game.<sup>65</sup>

There were two problems with Técnico-Bogotá's return to Cali. First, the team was short three players and so needed to find three replacements to field a full team. Secondly, Técnico-Bogotá had taken so long to decide that the Olympic committee had declared the match over and allowed the Cali team to advance instead. The first problem was easily fixed, as the team recruited three members from the Junior team which had just won the school division. But the team was effectively out of the tournament. Cali played its next match against Culcuta to a sparse crowd of 4,000 and failed once again to achieve victory.<sup>66</sup> This time there was no intervention by officials to ensure that the home team would continue even though it lost. But the tournament organizers were eager to have a rematch between Técnico-Bogotá and Cali to patch up the relationship between the two cities and so scheduled a friendly game to take place right before the final match of the tournament.

On January 10, 1929, the National Olympics closed with a double header, the rematch between Técnico-Bogotá and Cali and the final match between Barranquilla and Santa Marta. Gaitán estimated that 30,000 people packed into the stadium, which would make it one of, if not the most, attended event in the National Olympics. The rematch between Cali and Técnico was a delicate, almost choreographed affair. The game began with the conciliatory gesture of Técnico-Bogotá requesting Fernando Hauzer to be the referee, and the decision was seconded by the team from Cali. Speaking to Gaitán before the match, the bogotanos indicated their goal was to play a "clean gentlemanly" game and hopefully win.<sup>67</sup> The "cleanliness" was an important caveat given that their scissor defense had

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<sup>65</sup> Gaitán, "Los acontecimientos del primero de enero," *El Tiempo*, Jan. 29, 1929

<sup>66</sup> "Cali v. Culcuta," *El Tiempo*, Jan 7, 1929.

<sup>67</sup> "El publico," *El Tiempo*, Jan 11, 1929

aroused the ire of the caleños the first time around. The bogotanos were still apprehensive of returning to Galilea but they understood that this was more of a symbolic or diplomatic match. For the caleños, the match was a chance to redeem themselves and correct the injustice of the previous game. This set up an interesting dynamic between a team that was desperate to win and a team that was hesitant to win.

The match began optimistically with the caleño fans giving a standing ovation to the returning bogotano team. Then from the first moments Cali went on the attack, trying to ensure that the ball remained on Técnico's side of the field. For their part, dealing with three young stand-ins, the bogotanos were content to play defense. There was a tense moment in the first half when Monsalve, a player from Técnico, threw his body in front of a shot and was knocked out long enough for the medical staff to rush onto the field. After a few moments Monsalve recovered and in a conciliatory gesture Mallarino, the player who shot the ball, gave him a hug, and apologized.<sup>68</sup> The caleño team might have wanted to win back lost honor, but they harbored no ill will against the bogotanos.

The most interesting event of the match happened once again in the second half. A caleño player committed a hand ball in front of his own goal, triggering a penalty kick. History was repeating itself, but this time there was no question that Cali was in the wrong. The only question was if Goeta, the caleño keeper, could stop the shot this time and maintain the tie. However, the bogotano striker, Suárez had a different idea in mind. Instead of taking the shot, Suárez instead simply passed the ball to Goeta, foregoing his opportunity to score.<sup>69</sup> Fans awarded Suárez with applause for such a gentlemanly act and the game ended in a draw. As a gesture of thanks, the Cali team awarded Técnico with the Friendship Cup and the two teams exited the field with the crowd cheering both teams and as well as the capital of the republic. The show match had succeeded in repairing relations between the two cities, at least symbolically.

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<sup>68</sup> "Monsalve Lesionado," *El Tiempo*, Jan 11, 1929

<sup>69</sup> "Bogota sera siempre Bogota," *El Tiempo* No. 6211 Jan 11, 1929

After the match finished the press, which had spent the previous week disparaging the character of Técnico-Bogotá, began to restore its reputation. Speaking to *El Diario del Pacífico*, Hauzer recanted his previous statement, confirming that Técnico's decision to play the friendly was a true display of "sporting spirit" and in line with the spirit of the games.<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, Gaitán confirmed that though the match ended in a draw, the bogotanos had clearly won the moral victory. His team had exercised wisdom and shown great gentlemanly quality.<sup>71</sup> Both Hauzer and Gaitán then reaffirmed the bogotano's masculinity, sportsmanship, and commitment to the nation. And with the inclusion of players from the junior team, boys had literally been counted as men, cheekily fulfilling Gaitán's wishes for the teams from Bogotá.

Once again, however, tournament organizers and journalists treated sport as a symbolic activity rather than a means in and of itself. In the British and Argentine cases, competition was the primary means by which sport developed athletes. For the British, sports taught athletes how to work with one another to achieve a common goal: teamwork was useful on and off the field. For the Argentines, sport offered a chance to rise above their status, provided an individual could make enough of their own luck. In both cases, competition was key. In the British case, the better the other team was, the more teamwork was developed. In the Argentinian and Brazilian case, the better one's opponents, the more individual play showed through.

At this point in the development of Colombian football, competition was more of an afterthought. Yes, physical education and sport could help build a healthier population, but too much competition could cause controversy and exacerbate regional tensions. The show match between Cali and Técnico demonstrated this moderate approach to competition because the press praised both teams for not trying to compete too hard. For Colombian football, at the time, sport was a chance for a gentleman to show off his gentlemanly qualities, which had an element of amateurism to it. The

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<sup>70</sup> "Colombia deportiva" *El Tiempo* No. 6210 Jan. 10, 1929.

<sup>71</sup> "Comentario Final," *El Tiempo* No. 6211 Jan 11, 1929



amateur played for the love of the game and victory was an afterthought, and amateurism was often an early stage in the development of sport. Both the British and the Argentine example included early proponents of amateurism, typically among the nobility or well to do. However, in both cases amateurism gave way to professionalism as sport began to generate more and more money.<sup>72</sup> Colombians, however, did not speak highly of amateurism, and in fact hardly mentioned it at all, even as they extolled the virtue of the gentleman athlete. This was likely because professionalism was still far off and so not a viable possibility to consider. Another reason is that Colombian statesman saw sport in a diplomatic light. Each department sent a delegation to Cali as a diplomatic mission to enhance the standing of its own region and to liaise with other regions.

### The Olympics Conclude

Ten minutes after the Técnico-Cali friendly ended, the final match began between Santa Marta and Barranquilla, two neighboring cities on the Caribbean coast. Unlike the show match between Cali and Técnico, both teams were playing for the championship, and Gaitán described an almost brutal level of aggression from both teams. Neither team would let a chance to score slip away in order to show its sportsmanship. The match was not only different because the title was on the line, but also because the *costeños* (those from the Caribbean coast) were featured on both sides. Despite Gaitán's preference for his bogotano teams, he acknowledged that the *costeños* played the best football in Colombia.<sup>73</sup> The final match between Barranquilla and Santa Marta was billed as a clash between two titans and it certainly delivered.

Both cities boasted sizeable Afro-Colombian populations, and Gaitán's description of its players was consistent with the racialized concept of African descendants as strong and virile, if not as intelligent as other Colombian races. Gaitán praised the speed and agility of the *costeño* teams, along

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<sup>72</sup> Hobsbawm argued that the divide between professionalism and amateurism was primarily to reinforce class distinction between aristocratic amateurs and middle-class professionals. I am not arguing against that but think that the separation as more to do with sport developing as a business. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 306.

<sup>73</sup> Gaitán, "Comentario Final," *El Tiempo*, January 11, 1929.

with their discipline.<sup>74</sup> Peter Wade notes that in Colombia “racial mixture and black and Indian populations were harnessed to [models of modernity and progress], to provide a distinctly Latin American response to the dilemma.”<sup>75</sup> An example of this was Bejarano’s idea that African blood helped regenerate the highland mestizo population the idea being that the “black race” was physically stronger and its blood galvanized the passive or weak mestizo.<sup>76</sup> However, the same racial discourse stated that the “black race” was languid and given to sensuality. Gaitán’s praise of the costeño teams’ speed and discipline related to the larger theme of physical education both animating the person as well as granting them control of their desires. The discipline and speed of the costeños was then proof that physical education yielding successful results.

While Gaitán had nothing but praise for the costeños, his praise focused on their physical attributes but neglects to praise their teamwork or other skills. For instance, in the match between Cali and Santa Marta, Gaitán praised the caleños’ cohesion and teamwork, which was better than that of the costeños, who were simply faster.<sup>77</sup> Or later, when Santa Marta played Medellín, which ended up being a surprisingly close match, Gaitán commented that Santa Marta’s victory was due to their physical resistance and not their skill.<sup>78</sup> If one of the limitations of the unifying concept of a Colombian race was that it reinforced regional identity, another was that it consigned the smaller “Colombian races” to certain fixed roles. Afro-Colombians were offered a place in Colombia’s racial geography but only if, as Wade notes, they left “behind a black identity in favor a mestizo/nonblack one that permits participation in national hierarchies.”<sup>79</sup>

Gaitán’s admiration of the costeño-style as the best in Colombia was vindicated when

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<sup>74</sup> “Comentario Final,” *El Tiempo*, December 27, 1928.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Atlantic History and Culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>76</sup> Aline Helg, *La Educación En Colombia, 1918-1957: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política*, 113.

<sup>77</sup> “Comentarios técnicos,” *El Tiempo*, December 26, 1928.

<sup>78</sup> “Comentario final about Medellín v. Santa Marta,” *El Tiempo*, January 6, 1928.

<sup>79</sup> Wade, *Blackness and Race Mixture*, 6.

Barranquilla and Santa Marta met each other in the final match. Gaitán described a hard-fought, “nearly brutal” championship match between the two teams that both wanted to be crowned the first national champion.<sup>80</sup> Upon his return to Bogotá, Gaitán clarified that both teams played a clean game and that it had been obvious to him that the samarios would be the victors within ten minutes of play.<sup>81</sup> After being crowned champions, the team spent a good part of 1929 touring Colombia, playing local teams in various cities, spreading awe in the *costeño* style.

Notably absent from the commentary on the match was the Banana Massacre of 1928, which took place just days before the National Olympics and in Santa Marta. At midnight of, December 4, 1928, the Colombian military opened fire on 2,000-4,000 striking banana workers who were on the way to protest in Santa Marta.<sup>82</sup> The event was immortalized in Gabriel Garcia Marquez’ *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which he described “trainloads” of workers killed by the military. Frank Safford and Marco Palacios argue that the banana massacre became such an important part of collective Colombian memory that the event took on greater significance as time passed. They admit that actual records of the dead, which were recorded by the military, are unreliable, but the loss of life was much less than people remember.<sup>83</sup> Given the freshness of the massacre and its later importance, it is odd that there is little to no mention of it considering that Santa Marta was in the finals.

There are a few explanations for this absence. The first is that the National Olympics was about national unity, and organizers had already demonstrated that the perception of unity was just as desirable as actual unity. The players and press alike could have been avoiding a topic that was too fresh and might “distract” from the unifying message of the Olympics. In their comprehensive history of Colombian pedagogy, Javier Sáenz Obregón, Óscar Saldarriaga, and Armando Ospina argue that

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<sup>80</sup> *El Tiempo*, January 11, 1929.

<sup>81</sup> “El triunfo del Santamarta,” *El Tiempo*, January 21, 1929.

<sup>82</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 131–32.

<sup>83</sup> Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 281.

between 1926-1946 reformers wanted to establish a link between their pedagogical reformers and social change.<sup>84</sup> Since the National Olympics was also an event to demonstrate the fruitfulness of physical education for positive social change, mentioning the strike as well as the massacre would run counter to the larger narrative. The irony was that workers in the banana zone were striking to demand the Colombian government enforce Colombian labor laws by recognizing growers and workers and not contractors. The banana zone worker's strike was also largely peaceful and measured, which were the modern traits that reformers wanted to foster in rural workers. Colombian politicians wanted to circumvent the rule of law and it was government troops who acted the most violently.

Besides presenting a counter-narrative, local tensions in the banana-growing regions also contributed to the silence of the two costeño teams. In the 1920s the migrant laborers imported by United Fruit to expand its operations began to form labor unions and pressure groups to end the company's policy of sub-contracting to banana growers.<sup>85</sup> These labor groups hoped to pressure United Fruit into recognizing growers as employees, along with all the legal protections that came with being an employee. Looking to curb the power of these labor groups, United Fruits awarded generous loans to those who did not join the pressure groups, over \$330,000 in total. The more conservative growers in Santa Marta both took and benefitted from the loans more than the more liberal growers in the inland region of Ciénaga.<sup>86</sup> In 1928 labor unions were more successful in organizing from the Ciénaga region and the strikers came primarily from that region as opposed to Santa Marta. Regionalism also played into labor organization as well; in 1928 the Unión Sindical de Trabajadores del Magdalena (UTSM) refused on principal to endorse a strike by dockworkers in Barranquilla.<sup>87</sup> So there was no guarantee that unions in Santa Marta would back strikers in Ciénaga, even though the latter was one of the bigger and best organized strikes in Colombia.

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<sup>84</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 50.

<sup>85</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 123.

<sup>86</sup> Bucheli, 93.

<sup>87</sup> Bucheli, 125.

In addition to interregional conflict and official narratives, the Banana Massacre grew in importance as time went on. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán (no relation to the reporter), representative of the radical wing of the Liberal Party, gained popularity by representing the banana workers in the wake of the violence. Liberal politicians seized on the government's aggressive response to argue that the conservatives were losing control of the country. Intensive production of coffee and other cash crops had inadvertently led to a shortage of rice, corn, and other foodstuffs. Rising food prices triggered a series of urban protests which prompted the Conservative government to pass an emergency law in 1927 that reduced tariffs on imported rice, corn, and sugar.<sup>88</sup> Former president Marco Fidel Suárez and his "progressive conservatism," which fused Catholic social doctrine with the pursuit of North American material progress, was not keeping pace with social and economic change in Colombia.<sup>89</sup> In 1930, thanks to the Conservative's heavy-handed dealing with the banana strikers, as well as a split ticket, Colombians elected the first Liberal president in nearly half a century. Demonstrating the complicated nature of Colombian identity however, a Conservative candidate won Magdalena, the department where the Banana Massacre took place.<sup>90</sup>

## Conclusion

The participants who remained in Cali were invited to a local club, the Garden of Versailles, by Doctor Huertas and his wife Doña Maria Lozano for a "pic nic." The calque of the English picnic is somewhat out of place. Such calques had been in vogue in the 1910s as a way for the elites to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism and featured prominently in sports such as "foot-ball." In 1928 most terms had been hispanized which demonstrated the football was leaving the exotic and entering popular culture. The banquet was to honor the governor of La Valle along with the distinguished society members of Cali who made the Olympics possible.<sup>91</sup> With that the Olympics closed. Fernando Hauser

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<sup>88</sup> Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia*, 61.

<sup>89</sup> Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, 69.

<sup>90</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 95.

<sup>91</sup> *El Tiempo*, Jan 12, 1929

was asked by *El Diario del Pacifico* how he thought the Olympics went. The much sought-after referee responded optimistically that he saw much promise in Colombia's athletes. If the nation were to enter in international tournaments, its athletes would represent it well.<sup>92</sup> One of the goals of the national Olympics had been to give Colombian athletes a taste of large-scale competition so they might not embarrass the nation on the international stage. Hauser confirmed that the goal had been achieved. Colombia sent its first athlete ever to the international Olympics in 1932, Jorge Perry who attempted, but did not complete the marathon.

However, Pradilla's goal of creating a national league did not come to fruition and would take another twenty years to form. The problem for Colombia continued to be one of infrastructure and logistics. Domestic travel remained cost and time prohibitive and so teams preferred to make grand tours of the country rather than regularly visit different cities. The Great Depression and a decline in demand for Colombian commodities also had slowed the development of sport organization, though this was a complex process that will be examined in Chapters Three and Five. Though a national league had not formed, the Olympics proved that sports, especially football and boxing, drew enough fans to fill a stadium. The presence of foreign observers such as R. Stapleton of Tropical Oil, Hans Huber, and Fernando Hauser provided further credibility to the development of Colombian sports. From the end of the Cali tournament, representatives from Medellín lobbied successfully to host the next tournament in their city.

The 1932 Medellín National Olympics was more closely covered in the press and showcased a closer relationship between sports and the state. In the Cali Olympics, the central state had subsidized travel costs but largely remained in the background, allowing the departmental and municipal authorities to take center-stage. In the Medellín Olympics, President Olaya Herrera opened the Olympics with a speech, joined those gathered in a Mass, and led a military parade. The Liberal government

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<sup>92</sup> Fernando Hauser, "Colombia Deportivo," *El Tiempo*, January 10, 1929.

wanted to take a more active role in governing their citizens and saw participation in sport to be more present or relevant. At the same time, the lack of a national association meant that regionalism was an ever-present critique of the Medellín Olympics and it proved to be even more disruptive than during the Cali Games.

On January 21, after having a chance to collect his thoughts, Gaitán published a lengthy overview of the first National Olympics. He praised the city of Cali with its natural joy, as opposed to the pessimism endemic to the unhealthy parts of the Colombian race, and the city's commitment to progress. Gaitán then praised the ladies who were ever present in the stadium, celebrating with the victors or encouraging the defeated. He had special praise for the chief director of the Olympics, Hans Huber, who was "impartial" and made sure that everything went according to plan. Then Gaitán listed some of his more favorite games along with his own thoughts on the Técnico-Cali game; a "black spot" on what otherwise was a beautiful contest. Gaitán concluded, "The boys learned and grew throughout the competition which, without a doubt, strengthened the fraternal bonds between the diverse sections of the country."<sup>93</sup> For Gaitán, the Olympics succeeded in turning boys into men and had brought the country together in a way that nothing else had.

Gaitán had reason to be optimistic. The guardians of Colombian social order, the elites had stepped in to restore social equilibrium first when it was disrupted by fans and then when it was disrupted by the players. Not only that but the representative of the Colombian race, Paulino Uzcudun, had triumphed over the North American, Jack Renault. All these cases demonstrate the fluidity and multi-faceted nature of Colombian identity at the time. While Bejarano and López de Mesa wrote about a national race, Colombians still embraced foreigner boxers such as Uzcudun, Firpo, or Carpentier as sharing a racial heritage. While Uzcudun and Firpo shared a Spanish heritage, Carpentier shared a cultural heritage, at least one that Colombian elites wanted to emulate. Meanwhile, elite organizers

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<sup>93</sup> Gaitán, "La Olimpiada Nacional," *El Tiempo* Jan 21, 1929.

hoped that spectators would become more civilized/modern through spectating the games. Elite caleños then tacitly supported fans behaving badly to preserve the honor of their regional identity. Or that Miguel Vargas Vásquez appealed to the players of Técnico-Bogotá that it was their regional responsibility to return to the National Olympics for the sake of national unity. Ironically, the largest demonstration of national unity, was the criticism of Técnico-Bogotá's withdraw from the National Olympics and the refusal to accept the guarantee of their safety by the caleño elite. This type of oppositional identity, being defined by what one is not, related to the difficulties Colombian intellectuals had in formulating a national identity for Colombians. Without an external existential threat, the closest "others" to serve in a definition of an "us" were Colombians of different regions.



## Chapter 3

### Medellin National Olympics

In the four years between the Cali Olympics and the Medellin Olympics, Colombians experienced a regime change, a global economic crash, and by 1932 were beginning to make a tenuous recovery. The Colombian coffee boom came to an abrupt halt when the Wall Street crash of 1929 froze not only demand for Colombian commodities, but also froze Colombian access to foreign investment that departments and the state used to finance development projects. Colombian GDP slowed from 3.8% before the Great Depression to 1.6% at the end of World War II.<sup>1</sup> To make matters worse, decreased industrial production in the United States and Europe, along with restrictive tariffs, made it more difficult for Colombians to purchase industrial goods. The lack of imports revealed that Colombia's domestic industry was insufficient to provide consumer goods. But much like in the United States, the crisis caused by the Great Depression created new opportunities.

As Daniel Rogers writes, there is a certain "intellectual economy of catastrophe" that allowed central states to expand their control over the economy in the name of alleviating the hardship caused by the Great Depression.<sup>2</sup> In general, Liberal presidents applied Keynesian economics throughout the 1930s increasing state investment in infrastructure, shifting from railways to highways, and developing domestic industry. The state was especially interested in investing in the construction industry which had contracted 33.7% in 1930 but continued to grow through the rest of the decade including an impressive 27% growth between 1934-1935.<sup>3</sup> Stadiums proved to be popular investment as Barranquilla's Romelio Martínez Stadium was opened in 1934, Bogotá's Nemesio Camacho or Campín

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia*, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Rodgers uses the term to explain Roosevelt's New Deal Policies and I think the term fits with the Colombian experience as I will show. Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Paulo Drinot, *The Great Depression in Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 136.

was completed in 1938, and the year prior Cali builders competed Pascual Guerrero to replace Galilea. Stadium construction was a part of Keynesian government spending but also an effort to capture a growing urban consumer project. Joanne Hershfield has studied how Mexican women in the early twentieth century demonstrated their modernity through “virtuous consumption,” buying healthy products which improved the home.<sup>4</sup> Previous chapters have discussed modern aspects of participating in sport, either as athletes or spectators, municipal authorities began to monetize those events. Renting out stadiums for sporting games and taxing ticket sales provided municipal authorities new sources of revenue under the guise of supporting the development of the sporting scene.

No mere illusion, the Liberal government cultivated an image of itself as a great supporter of sport both through the press as well as through government spending. When the issue was raised if the Medellín city council would charge a sales tax for the Olympics, a correspondent for *El Tiempo* expressed his belief that they “will exempt ticket sales from all sports as did other liberal administrations, because their members love sports and are aware of its necessity.”<sup>5</sup> The liberal government saw sport as an important part of its effort to create a democratic culture and to pull in social elements who were left out of the Conservative’s modernization efforts. Unlike the Conservatives, who favored Decroly’s image of society as an organism, the Liberals favored Dewey’s belief that education should serve social and political ends and be largely secular.<sup>6</sup> While still being predominantly Catholic, Liberals knew that the church generally supported the Conservatives, and they promoted sports as a secular alternative to religious festivals. In this way the liberals used mega events to promote, Maurice Roche notes, “non-religious/secular values, ideologies and principles of organization connected to 'Western civilization.’”<sup>7</sup> One of these secularizing elements was the introduction of an Olympic oath by which athletes promised loyalty to the *patria* and the flag.

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<sup>4</sup> Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna*.

<sup>5</sup> “Impuestos al basket, al golf y a la natación,” *El Tiempo*, August 16, 1932.

<sup>6</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 269.

<sup>7</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 8–9.

This is not to say that the Liberals had no place for religious ritual. Medellín tournament organizers granted the church more space than the Cali organizers had done. One reason for this was that piety was part of antioqueño (Medellín is in the department of Antioquia) regional identity and was especially characteristic of the antioqueño elites who cultivated the regional identity. Another reason was the fact that, like the Conservatives, the Liberals were also interested in fostering nationalism. The antioqueño committee organized a morning Mass each day of the tournament, along with a military procession to open it. The committee wanted to ensure that the Medellín Olympics would bring together all elements of Colombian society, especially those that were common among Colombians of all regions. Stephen Allen notes that Mexican authorities often used “traditional practices” to make “modern” changes.<sup>8</sup> In this case, antioqueño organizers were trying to use traditional markers of identity, the church, and the army, to add modern markers of sports and nationalism.

Keeping with the Liberal desire to bring more people into Colombian democracy, tournament organizers included an expanded role for women both as athletes as well as Queens of Sport. Mary Kay Vaughn notes that portions of Mexican patriotic festivals around the same time “opened areas of activity for girls convergent with a more active notion of women's citizenship.”<sup>9</sup> Vaughn argues that Mexican patriotic festivals opened space for women to perform or exhibit their domestic goods, making them more active participants than simply supporting male athletes. In Colombia, the Queen of Sport proved to be popular and in the years between the National Olympics, each region elected its own Queen to govern or increase the popularity of sport in their own region.<sup>10</sup> Rather than elect one Queen to rule over the Medellín Olympics, each region brought its own Queen. In addition to serving as a symbol of unity, the Queens served a diplomatic function as they were invited to attend a variety of social functions along with other regional sporting representatives. Luis Camacho Montoya, who took

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<sup>8</sup> Allen, *A History of Boxing in Mexico: Masculinity, Modernity, and Nationalism*, 3.

<sup>9</sup> Beezley, Martin, French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, 226.

<sup>10</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 93.

over as primary sports reporter for *El Tiempo*, commented that the bogotano queen Doña Maruja Zorrilla did not have the time to attend all the “gentil events” she was invited to.<sup>11</sup>

Colombian women not only performed symbolic duties at the Medellín Olympics, but also competed as athletes. Doña Maruja Zorrilla and the Medellín Queen, Cecilia Echavarría, both were basketball players, and the former was also the captain of her team.<sup>12</sup> Female athletes had only just been allowed to participate in the 1932 International Olympics that took place in Los Angeles earlier the same summer. The antioqueño organizing committee’s decision to allow female athletes to participate was part of its larger emulation of the largely successful 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. The inclusion of female athletes represented a wider initiative by the Liberal government to expand female physical education. The Asociación Femenina de Deportes (Women’s Sport Association) worked throughout the 1930s to increase girls and young women’s access to physical education and sports.<sup>13</sup> The maternal Queen of Sport of the Cali Olympics was replaced with the younger, athletic Queen of the 1930s to inspire young girls to pursue physical education.

Despite their effort to bring in elements of Colombian society left out by the Conservatives, Liberal tournament organizers had just as much difficulty overriding regional identities with a national one. While the central government occupied a more visible role in the Medellín Olympics, the tournament was organized and ran by a Medellín-based committee who also controlled all communication with the press.<sup>14</sup> The Cali Olympics at least were directed by Han Huber and officiated by Fernando Hauzer, two foreigners who were not susceptible to critiques of regionalism. At the Medellín Olympics it was common for delegations to threaten and withdraw if a call was not dismissed or if a referee was not replaced, and so on. Antonio César Gaitán lamented that the Medellín Olympics

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<sup>11</sup> *El Tiempo*, August 13, 1932.

<sup>12</sup> I’ll deal more closely with female athletes in the following chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Pedraza Gómez, *En cuerpo y alma*, 253.

<sup>14</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 96.

were marked by “regionalism and pettiness” rather than “noble patriotism.”<sup>15</sup>

While the Medellín Olympics did not have the nationalizing impact that the organizers had hoped for, the tournament did help establish sport as a ritual in Colombian society. Female Colombian athletes, especially basketball players, received national acclaim outside their role as wives or mothers. While transportation remained cost- and time-prohibitive, the Medellín Olympics helped to normalize domestic sport travel. Finally, the Medellín Olympics was the first to include a medal count to prove which department won the most medals, a representation of Guttman’s quantification inherent to modern sports.<sup>16</sup> Antioquia won the most medals, a fact they attributed to hiring Peruvian coaches, like Augusto Brondy to train their athletes. Though the Antioquian department was the first to hire a foreign coach, it would not be the last. Other departments looked to hiring foreign coaches, like the Argentine Fernando Paternoster, and then eventually foreign athletes, all in the name of improving Colombian athletics. While the Medellín Olympics may have been a loss for the cause of nationalism, they did help monetize and ritualize sport in Colombia.

### Opportunities out of Catastrophe

After fifty years of Conservative rule, in 1932 Colombians had elected the Liberal Enrique Olaya Herrera to the presidency. The Liberal party capitalized on discontent arising from income inequality as the economic changes that turned Colombia into an agri-exporter had also concentrated power and money into fewer hands. A new generation of reformers who gained popularity in the 1920s, such as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, became increasingly concerned with the “social question.” They worried about disgruntled and unhealthy workers and took steps to educate and organize them into more useful pastimes other than the tavern. The *nuevos*, as members of this generation came to be known, formed their own parties, the *Partido Socialista Revolucionario* (1926) and the *Partido Comunista* (1930), but

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<sup>15</sup> “Los triunfos de nuestra delegación,” *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>16</sup> Allen Guttman, *From Ritual to Record*, 47.

often found a home in the Liberal party.<sup>17</sup> However, the alliance between Liberals and their socialist allies was a tenuous one. The friction extended even into the radical wings of the Liberal party, with the communists labelling Gaitán, who came from humble origins, a fascist for supporting the right to private property.<sup>18</sup> The Liberals had to contend with internal divisions as well as opposition from the Conservatives.

As a moderate Liberal, Enrique Olaya Herrera was in some ways the ideal transitional figure. Economic historians Marcelo Bucheli and Luis Felipe Saénz note that “there were no major ideological differences between Liberals and Conservatives in terms of political economy, and as a result both parties shared a consensual view in economic policy.”<sup>19</sup> Historically the Liberal Party favored laissez-faire economics while the Conservatives favored protectionist policies.<sup>20</sup> However, during the coffee boom Conservatives became more amenable to laissez-faire economics while the Great Depression made the Liberals more willing to consider protectionism. Herrera’s biggest advantage was that he had served as Colombia’s ambassador to the U.S. and used his connections to secure the aid of notable Princeton economist, Edwin Kemmerer. Even before taking office, Herrera flew Kemmerer to Colombia with a \$100,000 loan he had secured from U.S. banks, helped expand the state’s role in fiscal affairs, and used his influence to allow Colombia to place duties on the United Fruit company.<sup>21</sup> Herrera also removed barriers to Tropical Oil’s exploratory and exportation efforts in Colombia, reversing Conservative hostility to the company. The goal was to secure as much foreign capital as possible to make up for loss governmental income.<sup>22</sup>

In 1931, the Liberal party abandoned its policy of laissez-faire economics, despite Kemmerer’s objections. Colombia abandoned the gold standard to devalue the peso in order to create a more

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<sup>17</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 30–35.

<sup>18</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 255.

<sup>19</sup> Drinot, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 132–33.

<sup>20</sup> Bucheli, *Bananas and Business*, 87.

<sup>21</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 178.

<sup>22</sup> Drinot, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 132.

attractive investing climate. Herrera declared a partial moratorium on international debts, as did most Latin American countries, and increased government spending.<sup>23</sup> The biggest departure came when Finance Minister Estéban Jaramillo declared a “rigorously protective” trade policy that was designed for foster domestic growth as import substitution.<sup>24</sup> By as early as the following year, Colombia was showing signs of recovering from the Great Depression with a 6.2% growth in Gross Domestic Product, up from a 1.5% contraction in 1931.<sup>25</sup> What is more, Colombian finance ministers maintained their policy of import substitution throughout the 1930s and achieved success in the growth of domestic industry. A 1939 census listed 4,467 industrial factories throughout the nation, and over half, 2,805, had been created after 1930.<sup>26</sup> Another industry that saw increased growth, was construction and especially urban construction as municipal and national authorities directed foreign investment as well as domestic investment to public works projects. In Bogotá there was 40% more growth in the construction field between 1933-1936 than there had been during the coffee boom of 1926-1929.<sup>27</sup>

Liberal presidents also used increased public spending to improve Colombia’s infrastructure, expanding the highways along with communication and power lines.<sup>28</sup> In 1931, the Minister of Public Transportation, Germán Uribe Hoyos, proposed the creation of a 6,400 km network of highways instead of expanding the rail network.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the Colombian governments were not alone in their attempt to expand their highway system. Historian Eric Rutkow notes that by the late 1920s highways had replaced railroads as the prestige project of choice for Latin American leaders; this was certainly true for

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<sup>23</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 178.

<sup>24</sup> Henderson, 243.

<sup>25</sup> Drinot, *The Great Depression in Latin America*, 136.

<sup>26</sup> Luis Enrique Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia: Todo lo que hay que Saber* (Bogotá, Colombia: Editora Aguilar, 2011), 275.

<sup>27</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 244.

<sup>28</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia*, 278.

Colombia.<sup>30</sup> Railroads, the previous prestige project, required a firm, level foundation with only the slightest of incline, making construction through Colombia's mountains and rainforests both difficult and expensive. In the 1930s Argentina boasted 40,000 km of railway lines and Mexico 20,000 km, but Colombia only had 2,600 km, lagging behind even neighboring Peru, which had 4,000 km.<sup>31</sup> Highways, on the other hand, could be built on a steeper grade which better accommodated Colombia's dramatic elevation changes without the need to build long and expensive tunnels through mountainsides. However, roads had their own problems, as the routes through the rain forest would become impassable during the rainy season.<sup>32</sup>

Construction of the network proved to be slow; by 1942 only a total 391 km of Hoyos's proposed 6,400km had been built. However, by 1947 trucking overtook the railroad in terms of hauling freight. By 1949, over half of all freight was moved on trucks compared to just over 15% on rails.<sup>33</sup> Olaya Herrera instead set aside public funds to build national highways as well as state roads which connected the hinterlands more securely to the capital cities. All told, the Liberals built 13,000 km of roads throughout Colombia.<sup>34</sup> Road construction not only put people to work, it helped the government to better extend its control in the hinterlands and facilitated travel within the country. The reorientation toward inter-national travel went hand in hand with the government's attempt at import substitution. Much of the earlier foreign investment had been aimed at connected the agri-exporting regions to the coast rather than one Colombian region with another. To demonstrate how awkward this development could be, consider that the most secure way for a team to go from Bogotá to Cali involved sailing through the Panama Canal. In other words, the quickest way to get from one Colombian cultural center

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<sup>30</sup> Eric Rutkow, *The Longest Line on the Map: The United States, the Pan-American Highway, and the Quest to Link the Americas* (New York: Scribner, 2019), 223.

<sup>31</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> Manuel Gonzales, "Latin America Restricted Truck Market," *Automotive Industries* XXXVII (July 26, 1917) as quoted in, Rutkow, *The Longest Line on the Map*, 204.

<sup>33</sup> William Paul McGreevey, *An Economic History of Colombia*, 278.

<sup>34</sup> Luis Enrique Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia: todo lo que hay que saber*, Punto de lectura. Ensayo ;; 467; (Bogotá: Editora Aguilar, 2011), 274.



to the other was to leave the country entirely, which did not bode well for a country that is looking to build national cohesion. As Colombian historian Amparo Murillo Posada notes, in the first half of the twentieth century both Liberals and Conservatives sought to consolidate control of the country and stimulate nationalism through improving communication with the hinterlands.<sup>35</sup>

Improved communication, telephone lines, and road systems allowed the government in Bogotá, or one of the other cultural centers, to project power and authority to the more remote regions of the country. LaRosa and Mejía refer to this infrastructure expansion as creating a “common space” for Colombians by essentially reducing the distance between the cities and the hinterlands.<sup>36</sup> This, along with an expanding system of air travel and eventually the radio, which grew more popular after 1936, created new opportunities for mass popular culture. Improved communication also, and far more importantly for the history of Colombian sport, permitted Colombians more freedom to move about their own country. This is not to say that Colombians suddenly began to move all over the country. While vehicle ownership was on the rise, by 1930 there were only 16,000 cars in all of Colombia.<sup>37</sup> Public funds did go into developing public transportation by way of buses and *tranvías* but that mainly aided Colombians getting around within a city rather than to another city. However, it became more feasible for a group, a football team let us say, either national or international, to travel across Colombia on a semi-regular basis.

While Herrera aggressively pursued economic reform aimed at alleviating the Great Depression, he was more hesitant in reform aimed at addressing the “social problem.” The Liberal party was split on how to solve the “social problem,” with the socialists advocating for collectivization, Gaitán for increased middle-class representation, and the oligarchs for only marginal change. However, they all shared a fear of Colombian workers and the need to impart healthy values to them. Even the leftist

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<sup>35</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, 285.

<sup>36</sup> LaRosa and Mejía P., Germán, *Colombia*, 148.

<sup>37</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 254.

newspapers characterized the worker as weak, prone to alcoholism, and drawn to short-term gain.<sup>38</sup> In this way Colombian politicians and journalists of all political leanings operated in a paternalistic manner towards the workers, much in the same way that Robert Buffington characterizes the Liberal Mexican press in the early twentieth century.<sup>39</sup>

Sport took on new meaning for many Liberals to bring those who had been left out of the modernizing process. By the mid-1930s the image of a Colombian race, based on Decroly's biological view of a society, had fallen out of favor with Colombian elites in general, thanks in no small part to the ideology's growing association with fascism. Liberal elites and pedagogists, beginning earnestly in 1935, embraced John Dewey's teaching that public education should serve social and political ends. In this vein, the Liberal governments placed physical education under the banner of public health with three goals: socialization of the people, personality development, and making people healthier.<sup>40</sup> In this way, the Liberal government placed higher value on the horizontal aspect of sport, bring people together in an event and teaching them how to interact with each other as part of a crowd, than had their Conservative predecessors. Liberal politicians viewed sport much as Mary Kay Vaughn describes Mexican urban reformers, who "hoped sports could discipline the uncontrolled impulses and rampant passions of country people."<sup>41</sup> Richard Giulianotti notes that sports offered a type of ritualized control through paying of admission, cheering for athletes, and eventually consuming merchandise.<sup>42</sup> This type of behavior is also allegoric for paying one's taxes, cheering for the same goal, and becoming a consumer of goods, all part of a modern society.

Most of these social reforms were instituted by Alfonso López Pumarejo, which is to say after the Medellín Olympics, but Herrera did initiate a social reform that helped to generate a consumer class

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<sup>38</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 33–35.

<sup>39</sup> Buffington, *A Sentimental Education for the Working Man*.

<sup>40</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 270.

<sup>41</sup> Beezley, Martin, French, *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance*, 224.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Giulianotti, *Sport: A Critical Sociology*, 44.

and a market for leisure time. To ease the government's troubled past with labor, and with the 1928 Banana Massacre still fresh in the mind of Colombians, Olaya instituted the eight-hour workday, instituted paid vacation time, and set aside Sunday as a day off.<sup>43</sup> While these were rather moderate conciliatory steps towards Colombian labor and did not address the right to unionize or the right to strike, it did guarantee wage laborers access to leisure time. Having Sunday off meant workers could attend mass in the morning and then attend a sports match in the afternoon. The improved public transportation system made it easier for workers to move around in the city, granting them access to more spaces to spend their wages. There were other changes also happening in Colombia that conspired together to grant more Colombians access to free time and discretionary income and in many ways Medellín was leading the way.

### Medellín: The Host City

The capital of the department of Antioquia was an obvious pick to host the 1932 National Olympics. Like Cali, the elites in Medellín also set about to modernize their city, removing vestiges of a colonial past to make way for an industrial future. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Medellín grew in importance thanks to the boom in the coffee industry. Small-scale growers from the surrounding towns would send their beans into *trilladoras*, semi-industrial factories, where workers, mostly women, sorted and prepared the beans. Assembled bags of coffee were then carried via mules to the Magdalena River and loaded on riverboats for export.<sup>44</sup> However, many Medellín families wished to diversify their holdings and a host of smaller and larger scale factories began to crop up around the city and neighboring towns. None were more successful than the Echavarría family, nor more emblematic of Medellín's rise to prominence. After a tour of a local textile factory, Enrique Echavarría decided that the family should acquire some mechanical looms to put in the corner of his uncle Alejandro Echavarría's coffee plant. Instead of the small number of looms they had initially planned, the family instead decided

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<sup>43</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 59.

<sup>44</sup> Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory: Myths, Morals, Men, and Women in Colombia's Industrial Experiment, 1905-1960* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 47.

to install enough to compete with the factory Enrique had just toured.<sup>45</sup>

Medellín got its start as the industrial capital of Colombia through the textile industry, much like Great Britain had centuries before. In 1907, the Echavarría's incorporated Coltejer which would become one of the largest textile firms in Latin America. The company started with 30 looms and bought pre-spun yarn that it turned into fabric. By 1916 Coltejer had 141 looms along with spinning machines to process raw cotton.<sup>46</sup> In 1929 the Antioquia Railway finished its line between Medellín and Puerto Berrio on the Magdalena River. Up until that point Medellín was reliant on mule trains to export anything. Railroads allowed the Antioqueño factories greater output and Medellín quickly grew more and more prominent. By 1945 Medellín accounted for 24% of the national industrial output, but only 14% of the total population.<sup>47</sup> Travel to and from Medellín was made even easier when regular air travel was established two years later in 1931.<sup>48</sup> Had the Antioquia Railway line and air travel been established a few years earlier, Medellín rather than Cali may have hosted the first National Olympics.

Medellín's prominent families were also interested in modernizing their city through civic societies and public works. Carlos Forment notes the importance of civil societies for the practice of democracy in Latin America. Forment argues that citizens deposited their sovereignty in each other rather than in government institutions, based in civic Catholic notions of selfhood.<sup>49</sup> In other words, citizens in need would look to one of their social organizations or, in the case of Colombia, one of the major families they had connections with, rather than the government. While Forment is discussing the situation in Mexico and Peru, the deeply religious citizens of Medellín fit with his analysis. Students of a local priest founded the first club in 1866, Club Paquete de Cigarillos, and owed its name to the fact that

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<sup>45</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, 52.

<sup>46</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, 52.

<sup>47</sup> Ann Twinam, *Miners, Merchants, and Farmers in Colonial Colombia*, Fulcrum.Org (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, n.d.), 4.

<sup>48</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*, 46.

<sup>49</sup> Carlos A. Forment, "Democracy in Latin America, 1760-1900," vol. 1 (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 95.

the students like to smoke a certain brand on cigarettes.<sup>50</sup> By the 1880s, clubs performed important social and cultural roles in Medellín society. For instance, Club la Varita sponsored the Easter Ball in 1884.<sup>51</sup> In the 1890s through the 1920s a set of more prominent clubs were formed with cultural goals in mind. These clubs often had reading rooms, lecture halls, and gallery space to host visiting writers, artists, and lecturers.<sup>52</sup> The early twentieth century also saw the proliferation of academic and scientific societies. By 1933 there were eighty-eight academic and cultural societies spread throughout Colombia, and with twenty-six, Antioquia had the most of any other department. Patricia Lodoño Vega argues that department of Antioquia more than other emphasized education to be “civilized,” which in turn led to a proliferation of “cultural bodies.”<sup>53</sup>

Medellín was like other Colombian cities in that the church took a prominent role in the field of education. The students who formed the first club were part of a Catholic school and the church encouraged its students to learn, acquire skills, and pursue higher education. The church was also more prominent in the Medellín Olympics as compared to the Cali Olympics. President Olaya Herrera participated in a morning Mass which served to inaugurate the National Olympics along with people “from all classes.”<sup>54</sup> The church was also important to the history of football in Medellín; the first football club, Sporting Foot-Ball (1912), played in a field next to the cathedral. In 1915 the Jesuits bought land expressly for using sports in their modern education.<sup>55</sup> However, the social and cultural associations of Medellín were mostly formed by individual citizens rather than government or religious organizations. Patricia Londoño Vega notes that only 7% of the communities and associations appeared under the

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<sup>50</sup> Patricia Londoño Vega, *Religion, Society, and Culture in Colombia: Antioquia and Medellín 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 285.

<sup>51</sup> Patricia Londoño Vega, 286.

<sup>52</sup> Patricia Londoño Vega, 288.

<sup>53</sup> Patricia Londoño Vega, 297–98.

<sup>54</sup> “La Misa Campal,” *El Tiempo*, August 7, 1932.

<sup>55</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 34.

“aegis of parishes, brotherhoods, or religious communities.”<sup>56</sup> The purpose of the clubs and associations was a place for people to gather outside of the social spaces provided by the church, or at least outside of church authority.

Club members themselves were often motivated by their faith, as was the case for Jorge Echavarría, nephew to family that ran Coltejer. In 1923 Jorge, along with his brothers, established their own firm, Fabricato. The new mill featured automatic looms, which allowed the mill to produce 140,000 yards of fabric in a month, double the capacity of Fábrica de Bello, the mill on which the factory was based. But Jorge saw himself as an enlightened industrialist and wanted to use his factory as a model for how society should run in general. And so, the inauguration of the factory saw a speech by the president of the republic and a blessing by the archbishop who consecrated the factory to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Drawing on the principles of Catholic Social Action, Jorge believed that his workers owed him obedient service while he had the responsibility to provide a better life for them; an industrial version of the “padrón-peon relationship” and reminiscent of how paternalistic industrialists created company towns. This was more than mere rhetoric; Fabricato spent more on its workers than any other firm, offering higher wages as well as more comprehensive benefits. Reminiscent of E.P. Thompson’s “moral economy,” Jorge also spontaneously raised wages when food prices increased.<sup>57</sup> Not completely altruistic, Jorge feared the specter of bolshevism, especially in the face of unbridled capitalism. Jorge hoped that by improving the lives of his workers, they would be less attracted to Marxist ideas and organization.<sup>58</sup> It was this sort of relationship between industry and labor that the Liberal government wished to highlight to both foster industrial growth as well as deal with the “social problem.” Catholic Social Action also gave moderate Liberals a way to counter the socialists within their own party without leaning too far to the right.

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<sup>56</sup> Patricia Londoño Vega, *Religion, Society, and Culture in Colombia*, 293.

<sup>57</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century*, People and Things, 1991.

<sup>58</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*, 52–53.

Part of Jorge Echavarría's plan to create a model factory for society at large included fostering regional and national pride in his workers. As mentioned above, the president of the republic was on hand at the opening of Fabricato, to offer a secular blessing and commissioning of the plant for the good of the republic. The day after the inauguration, Jorge sent his workers to attend the national industrial exposition taking place in Medellín. Not only did Jorge give them the day off to experience the industrial wonders that Colombia had to offer, but he also paid for them to take the train there, the very symbol of modernity. No mere one-time event, Jorge also began to offer night classes for his operatives, demonstrating the region's commitment to education and the links between education and modernity. Jorge's philanthropy, or paternalism, became the archetype for antioqueño families and one can see echoes of it in the years of Alfonso Lopez Pumarejo's presidency a decade later.

More than embracing a modern industrial future, Medellín's ruling families also sought to reimagine their colonial past through renaming streets and replacing colonial architecture with more modern variants. A traveler to 1932 Medellín Olympics provided an "ethnographic," by which he meant racialized, description of the different Colombian departments. He described the antioqueños as capable of passing for being Anglo-Saxon, with a little bit of Scandinavian, which is to say white.<sup>59</sup> Ann Farnsworth notes the antioqueño elite were deliberate in their creation of the narrative of their regional whitening.<sup>60</sup> Nestor Garcia Canclini notes that beyond being physically constructed, cities are also imagined and monuments, museums, grand avenues, the great buildings all serve as part of a visible patrimony.<sup>61</sup> Antioqueños used the Sociedad de Mejores Públicas (Public Works Society) as the primary vehicle to cast this whitened view of their past. The SMP worked to rename streets in honor of revolutionary heroes or prominent countries in Latin America. In a break with colonial Spanish architecture, they decentered the city by declaring two "principal plazas" instead of one. The SMP also

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<sup>59</sup> "Reflexiones Olimpicas," *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1932.

<sup>60</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*, 44.

<sup>61</sup> García Canclini, *Imaginarios Urbanos*, 93.

anglicized the names, turning the plazas into parks which they then used as focal points for a cultural center and a financial center.

The SMP also created legislation to guarantee to the city would be a modern urban space, using zoning laws. The SMP enacted new ordinances that ensured mule-carts and wagons stayed outside the city limits, leaving urban roads open for automobiles, trolleys, and bicycles.<sup>62</sup> Such legislation did not deny the necessity of using mule-carts and wagons, as both were still widely in use, but helped reinforce a rural-urban dichotomy where the urban represented modernity and the rural represented a premodern past.

Sport served as another symbol of Medellín's modernity. In the late 1920s enterprising antioqueños formed the Sports Society (Sociedad de Deportes) to commercialize and capitalize the growing interest in sport.<sup>63</sup> Monetization of sport occurred earlier in Medellín than other parts of Colombia. One of the first sporting events took place in 1914 on grounds owned by a Belgian transportation company. A philanthropic event, tickets were sold for \$10, and the proceeds went to the San Juan de Dios hospital. That hosted a match to honor the visiting Colombian president, Carlos Eugenio Restrepo, with tickets on sale for between an impressive \$25-\$50. Ticket sales generated \$13,435, that municipal authorities invested in public parks.<sup>64</sup>

The members of the Sports Society looked to expand sports' reach beyond the philanthropic world to include the broader urban consumer. Farnsworth notes that one of the metrics antioqueño elites used to determine "progress" was an increased ability to consume goods created by a modern economy.<sup>65</sup> As such, one of the first actions by the Sport Society was to create the Hipódromo de los Libertadores with seats for 8,000 people. The Society inaugurated the stadium in 1929 with a friendly match against a traveling Peruvian team, who the Society likely paid to play the match. In 1931 the

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<sup>62</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*, 46.

<sup>63</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 61.

<sup>64</sup> López Vélez, 34.

<sup>65</sup> Farnsworth-Alvear, *Dulcinea in the Factory*, 69–70.



Society opened a new field attached to the Hipódromo for use in the Medellín Olympics.<sup>66</sup> The Sports Society was prolific throughout its decade-long history registering over 2,000 events within Medellín and football proved to be one of the most popular events.

In 1941, the Municipality of Medellín bought the Hipódromo from the Society for \$35,000 in municipal bonds, \$20,000 in miscellaneous bonds, a \$80,000 in cash payable over two years.<sup>67</sup> Municipal authorities paid a large amount of money to gain financial control over the stadium and their move is reminiscent of when President Ospina dissolved Jorge Wills Pradilla's private sporting association to assert governmental control. Municipal authorities stopped organizing races at the stadium in favor of football matches and dropped Hipódromo from the stadium's name. A circular from the Antioqueño Football Federation (FAF) in 1941 stated that "football is king and the only sport that draws large crowds to our stadium." Unlike the move by President Ospina, who wanted to control the narrative of sport, antioqueño municipal authorities were more interested in the revenue sports demonstrated. They accompanied their purchase with a 5% tax on any event hosted at the stadium, and since the FAF had forty-six clubs, the potential revenue was significant.<sup>68</sup>

Even before 1941, municipal authorities in Medellín were interested in revenue generated by sport. In 1925, the Liberal council exempted football and tennis matches from taxes on ticket sales. The move led to a great increase in popularity of the two sports. In 1932, eager to secure additional funding, or because of sports achieving the level of growth they wanted, the Council placed a 20% tax on ticket sales for boxing and basketball matches and a 10% tax for swimming and golf. The discrepancy between the tax rate likely had to do with the different venues that catered to each group of sports. Circo España and Teatro de Granada were the stadiums of choice for basketball games and boxing matches and were

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<sup>66</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 61.

<sup>67</sup> López Vélez, 63–64.

<sup>68</sup> López Vélez, 64.

likely more popular and so the ticket tax generated more income.<sup>69</sup>

However, the timing of the Council's decision could have been better because the tax threatened to disrupt the National Olympics. The Federation of Olympic Organizers, a collection of the organization committees from each department, requested the Council exempt Olympic games from the new tax. The municipal council readily waived the tax on basketball games, both the antioqueño men's and women's team were favored in the event but demurred on the other sports. The Federation appealed the Council to reconsider on two grounds. The first was the cost of organizing and holding the Olympics was already great, and the decision to tax the venues would shift more financial responsibility to the Federation. In a sense, this was an appeal to observe national good over regional good. The second ground was more interesting because the Federation appealed to the city council's shared Liberal heritage. The Federation argued that all the other liberal city councils had exempted sports from sales tax to show the party's support for athletics, and trusted that the Medellín city council would soon follow suit.<sup>70</sup>

In Pierre de Coubertin's modern Olympics, the tournament was ruled by the principals of amateurism with athletes competing against each other simply out of the love of the game. Coubertin's commitment to amateurism often ran counter to the growing world of professional sports and was a major reason why the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) created the World Cup in 1930. The other issue was with the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, which began slightly before the Medellín Olympics, but the two events ran concurrently. William May Garland headed the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC), promising that hosting the Olympics would bring southern California \$10 million dollars in free advertising. Louis B. Mayer of Metro-Goldyn-Mayer (MGM) also served on the committee and brought in high-profile Hollywood actors to promote the event, while other studio execs looked to poach athletes for roles in films. As a result of all the advertising, the Los Angeles Olympics

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<sup>69</sup> "Un Congreso de Mejoras Publicas en Medellin," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>70</sup> "Impuestos al basket, al golf y a la natación," *El Tiempo*, August 16, 1932.

became the first in history to generate a profit, a \$1.5 million surplus that eventually went back to the citizens of Los Angeles.<sup>71</sup> Medellín municipal authorities could not have known that the Los Angeles Olympics would generate a profit, but they certainly did take note of the ways in which business could use sport to generate revenue.

The amateur versus professional debate did not feature as prominently as it did in other countries, like Argentina, but the Medellín Olympics drew Colombian attention to the economics of sport. Medellín businesses, through the Sports Society and the FAF, sought to turn sport into a modern good that could be consumed by the population. This is not to say that Liberal politicians were not interested in the pedagogical aspects of mass spectacle; in fact, the bigger the spectacle the more people that can learn from or be influenced by the spectacle. It is no accident that in the late 1940s, Eduardo Santos, owner of *El Tiempo* and president of Colombia, was one of the first to contract high-profile foreign talent to play for his football team, which earned them the nickname *Millonarios*. Living up to the entrepreneurial spirit that was part of their regional identity, antioqueño businessmen and politicians were the first to realize this potential.

### Setting Up for the Olympics

The Medellín organizational committee looked to the Los Angeles Olympics for inspiration in planning their local version. The LAOOC pioneered several traditions that would become staples of the International Olympics, and many were due to the constraints of hosting the event during the Great Depression. One innovation dealt with lodging, the LAOOC claimed that they could provide food and lodging for \$2 a day per competitor by grouping all competitors together in what they called an Olympic Village.<sup>72</sup> Louis B. Mayer provided other innovations to make the event look more cinematic, as all events were filmed and then shown in theaters across LA the following day. One of the most notable cinematic inventions was the three-tiered platform with the athlete's national flag and national anthem

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<sup>71</sup> J.A. Managan and Mark Dyreson, eds., *Olympic Legacies: Intended and Unintended* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 112–13.

<sup>72</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 95.

playing; initially this was only done for the gold medalist.<sup>73</sup> Another important first was the inclusion of female athletes. Coubertin had been adamant in his refusal to accept women athletes to the International Olympics but was forced to resign in 1925. Henri de Baillet-Latour was elected as Coubertin's successor and he was hesitant, but finally agreed in April of 1931 to permit women. For reasons of propriety female athletes were not housed at the Olympic Village but rather at the Chapman Hotel.<sup>74</sup>

But more meaningful, to the Medellín committee if not to the world, was how Garland and the LAOOC crafted and disseminated the narrative of the Los Angeles Olympics. In 1929, before anything else, Garland created a press core and an official Olympic announcement bulletin. Garland next used foreign consuls, steamship and railway offices, and the U.S. Department of Commerce to assemble a list of 6,000 foreign periodicals. The press core translated the Olympic announcement bulletin into five different languages and then sent it out to the 6,000 periodicals, establishing a wide network of communication.<sup>75</sup> Using this network, the LAOOC and tourism agents promoted Los Angeles as a modern metropolis with a faux-Mediterranean climate. But most eye-catching to the Medellín organizers would have been the LAOOC's focus on themes of dynamic modernity and social harmony that they said Los Angeles embodied.<sup>76</sup> The Medellín organizers also looked to emulate what Barbara Keys lists as one of the Los Angeles Olympics legacies: that it was "democratized and made available to the masses, both at home and abroad."<sup>77</sup>

The first change made was that Medellín organizers dedicated officials to talk to the press and placed more emphasis on disseminating what was happening at the Olympics. Due to this focus, and an increased interest in sport in general, newspapers with more national reach, like *El Tiempo*, dedicated

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<sup>73</sup> Eva Kassens Noor, *Los Angeles and the Summer Olympic Games: Planning Legacies*, SpringerBriefs in Geography (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 7, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38553-8>.

<sup>74</sup> Kassens Noor, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 97.

<sup>76</sup> J.A. Managan and Mark Dyreson, *Olympic Legacies*, 112.

<sup>77</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 114.

more page space to cover the Olympics and so readers could expect to see the results of all the events rather than a few. Newer North American sports like basketball and baseball also grew in popularity, especially with a younger generation. Writing in 1947 Abelardo Forero Benavide, a journalist, wrote that the twenty-five-year-old of his day was more influenced by North American culture than the *centenales* who drew their inspiration from Spain and Hellenic Greece.<sup>78</sup> The young man of the 1940s had grown up in the 1930s, during which the string of Liberal Presidents Herrera, Pumarejo, and Santos also sought to bring Colombia economically and politically closer to the U.S. Benavide notes that the new generation took trips to the U.S. unlike of the older Colombians, who wanted to go to Europe. Basketball gained such rapid popularity that in his 1932 summary of the sporting events of the year, Antonio César Gaitán lamented the death of football, prematurely.<sup>79</sup>

In addition to newer sports like basketball, tennis was an older sport that also enjoyed dedicated fans and extensive coverage in the press. Tennis had been played in Colombia at least as long as football and, what is more, it was a sport that was open to women. Following the example of the Los Angeles Olympics, Medellín organizers included both women's basketball and women's tennis were included in the 1932 Medellín Olympics. More impressively, the press provided extensive coverage of the women's events, along with a breakdown of the athletes. It helped that Colombia boasted some talented female athletes, especially in the realm of basketball. Notable sport journalist Luis Camacho Montoya reflected on basketball's sudden popularity for the weekly paper *El Sábado* and its series on Colombian sports. Camacho recalled that for a time everyone was talking about basketball, and it was thanks to a women's team, "El Icoñito," which achieved impressive international results. Its biggest achievement was winning the Bolivarian Games in 1938, which Colombian officials hosted to honor the centenary of Simon Bolivar's death and invited the nations which had been a part of Gran Colombia.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Abelardo Forero Benavide, "'Habla Palacios Rudas," *El Sábado*, July 12, 1947.

<sup>79</sup> Antonio César Gaitán, "Los Deportes en 1932," *El Tiempo*, December 31, 1932.

<sup>80</sup> Luis Camacho Montoya, "Cómo y quiénes hacen deporte en Colombia," *El Sábado*, January 5, 1946.

In addition to adding female events, the Medellín organizers created their own version of the Olympic Village, but their attempts drew scorn instead of praise. The LAOOC's Olympic Village consisted of 550 Spanish-style bungalows overlooking the Pacific with its own hospital, bank, police station, post office, fire department, and open-air theater.<sup>81</sup> The LAOOC wanted its Olympic Village to reflect the internationalism associated with the Olympics and it was a slight to female athletes that they were relegated to a hotel. The situation for the Medellín Olympics was almost reversed. Visiting male athletes were housed in what was essentially a university dorm room. Don Eduardo Torres, the head coach for the delegation from Bogotá, noted that male athletes were quartered in rooms with good services but had to sleep on cots rather than beds.<sup>82</sup> Don Torres's contrast between good services and cots spoke to an expediency on the part of the tournament organizers which was perceived, by Don Torres, as a slight against the visiting athletes. It is unclear if the antioqueño athletes also stayed in the University but given Don Torres' complaint and subsequent critiques of their host, it is likely that the local athletes stayed at home. While the Olympic Village symbolized the internationalism of athletes coming together in spirit of competition, the Medellín version stoked regional resentment.

Another point of contention between Colombian regions proved to be, the election of regional rather than a national Queen of Sport. In the 1928 National Olympics, Graciela Velasquez Paláu was elected as the reigning monarch over the whole of the Olympic games: a symbol of national unity. In the 1932 National Olympics, their own Queen of Sport represented each department. As was the case in the Cali Olympics, these Queens were not necessarily Beauty Queens; Miss Bogotá was Blanca Vásquez whereas the Queen of Sport for Bogotá was Maruja Zorrilla. But that did not mean that beauty was not also a factor in choosing the Queen of Sport. In their article on the "La Reina del Deporte," *El Tiempo* made it clear that the tournament would feature sport as well as beauty.<sup>83</sup> While the department's best

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<sup>81</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 107.

<sup>82</sup> Don Eduardo Torres, *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>83</sup> "La Reina del Deporte," *El Tiempo*, June 13, 1932

athletes competed against each other with strength and skill, the queen also represented the department, but through sociability, gentility, and diplomacy.

For instance, Luz Ramos Mosquera was one of the candidates for Calí's Queen of Sport and it was a position she seriously campaigned for. In the months prior to the Olympics, Mosquera embarked on a trip from Calí to Bogotá in what reporters for *El Tiempo* characterized as "her mission to bring together the athletics of both sections of the country." Mosquera symbolized the virtue and essence of caleño sport and so her visit represented a symbolic exchange of values across the regions. While in Bogotá, Mosquera was treated to games and banquets to be held in her honor in various clubs across the city including the Country Club, América Sport Club, La Magdalena, and others. *El Tiempo* closely followed her diplomatic mission, the "first of its kind." The newspaper even published an article in support of her candidacy, as "her gentility overcame our desire to remain impartial."<sup>84</sup> In his work on Colombian Beauty Queens, Michael Edward Standfield also touches on the Queen of Students who was "expected to possess talent and grace and to lead fellow students by example into a better future."<sup>85</sup> The Queen of sport was expected to have the same qualities plus that of a diplomat, bridging the rough-and-tumble world of masculine politics. Despite Mosquera's dedication to campaigning and support of national papers like *El Tiempo*, the committee ultimately crowned Lulú Bueno as Doña Lulú I, Queen of Sport for Cali.

But Queens of Sport were not only chosen based on their beauty of sociability. Maruja Zorrilla, the Queen for Bogotá was also the captain of the women's basketball team. It was not common among the other departments to elect queens from among their female athletes because both positions required a lot of time. Reporting mid-way through the Olympics, *El Tiempo* noted that Doña Maruja Zorrilla had to manage a deluge of social invitations that left her with no time for anything else.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> "Los Festejos Que se Haran a Doña Luz Ramos Mosquera," *El Tiempo*, June 20, 1932.

<sup>85</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 85–86.

<sup>86</sup> "Reflexiones sobre las Olimpiadas de Medellin," *El Tiempo*, August 13, 1932.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the women's basketball team from Bogotá lost its first match, eliminating it from the tournament and freeing up its captain's schedule.

Bogotá was also rather late in electing its Queen of Sport. *El Tiempo* reported that Doña Zorrilla was crowned a few days before the team was supposed to depart for Medellín. This was clearly later than the other departments, as *El Tiempo* reported that Bogotá had now also had its Queen who would lead its young athletes to Medellín, "guaranteeing progress" and making their hard work pay off.<sup>87</sup> Despite the flattery, the bogotano committee might have picked the captain of the basketball team based on economic reasons. The committee had trouble securing funds to send its delegation to Medellín in the first place. They were originally set to depart on Tuesday morning, but the funds promised by the department and the government had not arrived and they had to delay their trip a few more days.<sup>88</sup> Given the committee's trouble in securing travel funds it is possible that it chose Zorrilla as Queen because she was already going to Medellín.

Another reason for the delay in selecting a Queen of Sport for Bogotá could have been an unwillingness to make the trip. While Medellín is closer to Bogotá than Cali, travel between both cities is about the same. The delegation took a train to the Magdalena River, where they took a river boat to Puerto Berrio, and then got on another train that would finally take the team to Medellín. However, the journey could feature all sorts of hiccups. Don Eduardo Torres recalled that they had trouble securing passage on a river boat and so had to take an express train from Puerto Berrio to Medellín.<sup>89</sup> Three of Bogotá's best women's basketball players declined to make the trip to Medellín, despite the team forming with the express purpose of going to the games. The fact that the women did not end up going and the difficulties the delegation experienced speaks to how hard travel was still within Colombia despite notable expansion to infrastructure.

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<sup>87</sup> "La Reina del Deporte," *El Tiempo*, August 1, 1932.

<sup>88</sup> "Las Delegaciones Deportivas Ya No Saldrán Mañana," *El Tiempo*, August 1, 1932.

<sup>89</sup> Don Eduardo Torres, "Sobre el Torneo Nacional," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.



## Persistent Regionalism

The bogotano delegation's difficulty in getting to Medellín proved to only be the beginning of their complaints about the National Olympics. After all the difficulties the delegation faced in getting to Medellín, their arrival at the train station went completely unmarked. There was no welcoming committee, nor any members of the press there to greet the visiting delegation as there had been at the 1928 Olympics.<sup>90</sup> Granted, the bogotano delegation's arrival was delayed, but the team had also arrived late in the night at the 1928 Olympics as well. The Medellín organizing committee also knew the value of the press, as they sought to control who could speak to the press, and the failure to greet the team from the capital was an ominous sign. The committee also neglected to reserve seats for the head of the bogotano delegation and for their Queen of Sport, requiring both to purchase their own tickets. Don Torres complained that the committee should have provided all dignitaries with boxed seats; that they had not was dishonorable.<sup>91</sup> While the Liberal government looked to create a democratic culture, it still wished to maintain a semblance of social hierarchy, where certain people and families deserved special treatment or consideration.

The cold welcome experienced by the bogotanos was made worse by the bogotano press's optimism before the event. A reporter for *El Tiempo*, Calberari, wrote that the August Olympics, "organized by the enthusiastic antioqueño athletes," would be the most "transcendental" sporting event in the last four years. Calberari expressed his hope that the event would be the "most elegant display of the national soul and its love for and dedication to sport."<sup>92</sup> Calberari expressed a national version of the Olympic spirit through which the antioqueño athletes created a space that would unite the country based on a shared love of sport. Despite clear frustration, Don Torres was careful to level his complaints at the organization committee rather than at the city or its people, to not cause an incident like that at the 1928 Olympics. After complaining about their welcome and accommodations, Don Torres

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Caliberi "Los Resultados Olímpicos de Agosto en Medellín" *El Tiempo*, August 1, 1932

spoke highly of the city and its people. He noted with admiration at the dedication the city devoted to sport, especially to women's sport. By his reckoning Medellín had sixty women's basketball teams along with twenty courts and even more training facilities. Don Torres continued by saying that the antioqueños had been most welcoming and cordial in every dance and party that the delegation had attended. He concluded his interview by lamenting that the official relationship between the two delegations were not better.<sup>93</sup>

If Don Eduardo was diplomatic in his complaints and cordial to the antioqueño public, Antonio César Gaitán was not as worried at offending the public. Gaitán published his complaints of regionalism in the same issue same issue as Don Torres' interview, but the former was critical of the fans as well as the local press. The lead sports editor for *El Tiempo*, Gaitán, accused the Medellín press and public of actively cheering against the bogotano athletes. Focusing on football, one of the activities Bogotá was doing well in, Gaitán directs his anger at the Popayán v. Bogotá match, a close game that went into overtime and ended in favor of Bogotá.

Early rains hampered much of the Olympics, including this match, and 5,000 people braved the wet conditions to watch and the vast majority cheered for Popayán. As Gaitán relates the details of the match, the only people cheering for Bogotá were the forty some athletes from the Cundinamarcan delegation. For Gaitán the issue was not that the fans had their favored side but that they only cheered when Popayán did something noteworthy. A football enthusiast, Gaitán loved the game and believed that fans should cheer for good play. After all, he cheered on Deportivo Panama who defeated the two bogotano sides only a few months prior and applauded the fans who did the same. The antioqueño's vocal support for Popayán, which was farther from Medellín than Bogotá, indicated the stench of regionalism to Gaitán in the worst way. It was not that the antioqueño was cheering for Popayán, it was

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<sup>93</sup> Don Eduardo Torres, "Sobre el Torneo Nacional," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

that they were cheering against Bogotá, or at least that is how Gaitán interpreted the event.<sup>94</sup>

Bogotá was the favored side going into the match, so fans could have been cheering for the underdog and could have been surprised and excited when Popayán scored its second goal to send the game into overtime. Luis Camacho Montoya, *El Tiempo's* lead reporter for the Medellín Olympics, covered the game and commented that the Popayán team clearly demonstrated that there were no easy wins in the Olympic games. The bogotano players would have to have to play much harder if they wanted to go far in the tournament. But Camacho also heaped praise on the bogotanos for coming together as a team, especially during overtime, and playing without regard to how tired they must have been.<sup>95</sup>

However, the antioqueño press was not as impressed with the bogotano player's teamwork or sportsmanship. Gaitán railed against the Medellín dailies for "seeking to devalue the game with absurd claims that the team from the capital achieved victory through dirty tactics and bad play." Heralding Carlos Valderrama's words fourteen years earlier, Gaitán blamed the Medellín press for giving into petty regional rivalries at the expense of patriotism. Giving into his own petty passions, Gaitán continued to complain that *El Tiempo* had always looked favorably on the development of sport in the capital of Antioquia and expected some level of reciprocity from the city. Gaitán ended his tirade with something of an olive branch, saying that he was grateful to the city for hosting the event and housing all the cities of Colombia involved.<sup>96</sup> Apparently there was enough to question Bogotá's victory that the game was replayed on August 18, which yielded an easy 3-0 victory for Bogotá. The match drew poor attendance from fans, which indicated to organizers that rematches were not the best solution for contested games, at least not for drawing in fans.<sup>97</sup>

The bogotano delegation was involved in one more controversy worth mentioning, but this time

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<sup>94</sup> Alberto César Gaitán, "Los triunfos de nuestra delegación," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>95</sup> Luis Camacho Montoya, "Bogotá v. Popayán," *El Tiempo*, August 12, 1932.

<sup>96</sup> "Los triunfos de nuestra delegación."

<sup>97</sup> "Bogota v. Popayan (3-0)," *El Tiempo*, August 19, 1932.

involving the men's basketball team. On August 8, Bogotá played Campestre in men's basketball. Sometime in the first half, Mr. Pretelt the referee stopped play because one of the bogotano players, Venegas, was bleeding from a cut above his eye. As Venegas was being attended to, Pretelt went over to the judges table to notify them of the Campestre player who had committed the foul and disqualify him from the rest of the match. Hearing of the disqualification the captain of the Campestrian team, Don Carlos Echavarría, protested the decision and declared that if it were upheld, his team would withdraw from the match. Not wanting to disappoint the fans who had gathered to watch the match, Pretelt went to the captain of the Bogotá team asking him to not accept the foul. After consulting with the team coach, the bogotano captain indicated that they wanted to accept the penalty, which, if Echavarría did what he promised, would mean a win for the bogotanos. Pretelt then appealed the team's decision by talking to the head of the Cundinamarcan delegation, Carlos Muller, who was in the stands. Muller diplomatically ordered the basketball team to reject the foul and continue playing the match as if nothing had happened.<sup>98</sup>

This incident indicates a couple of important developments in the history of Colombian sports, or at least where Colombia was in the development of its sports. The first is that referees still lacked authority to make their decisions stick. Pretelt had less authority, which was conferred by social standing, than the captains of either basketball team. But another problem was that Pretelt was trapped by his own decision; once made he could not reverse it. The only solution was to appeal to someone who had more authority than both he and the two captains, which was Carlos Muller. Social standing conferred more power than institutional power and that was demonstrated in sport. Radical politicians like Jorge Eliécer Gaitán drew their support by appealing against the Colombian oligarchs who ruled Colombia.<sup>99</sup>

Canclini notes a Latin American "contradiction" wherein a nation's constitution reflected liberal

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<sup>98</sup> "Basket Bogotá v. Campestre," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1932.

<sup>99</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 198.

ideas and guaranteed parliamentary representation but the nation itself lacked the social cohesion and political culture needed to make a society governable under those principals. Instead, “political bosses continue to handle political decisions on the basis of formal alliances and wild relations of force.”<sup>100</sup> In Colombia this meant that while Liberal presidents like Herrera and certainly Pumarejo were sincere in their efforts to expand Colombian democracy, they still relied on their social position, as oligarchs, to achieve their reforms. While using social capital might have been the only way to achieve reforms, it ultimately strengthened those informal social alliances rather than investing power and authority in political or administrative associations. It was ultimately the weakness of political authority, and central political authority in specific, that perpetuated regionalism.

A second development was the growth in football as a mass spectacle, which allowed teams used the threat of withdrawing to disrupt the show. Don Echavarría knew that Pretelt was there to moderate the game and essentially keep it going and so used the threat of withdrawing as an ultimate sign of disruption. Unlike Bogotá’s withdraw from the 1928 Olympics, Don Echavarría’s threat was just that, a threat to overturn an advantage his opponents gained. Técnico’s withdrawal from the 1928 Olympics had been out of fear of bodily harm more than trying to get an advantage.

Don Echavarría was not the only person to use the threat of withdrawing from a game to change something he did not like. The defending Olympic champions in football, Santa Marta, threatened to withdraw from the event before its match against the home team. The issue revolved around the Olympic committee’s choice of Augusto Brondy, a Peruvian national, as the referee for the match. However, as the team from Santa Marta noted, Brondy had be under contract by the Antioqueñan government as a sports trainer. This created a conflict of interest and Santa Marta was prepared to withdraw if this situation was not rectified.<sup>101</sup> The threat by the visiting team was taken seriously and Brondy was replaced Mr. Heirzige, president of the college of referees.

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<sup>100</sup> Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> “Es Posible que los Samarios se retiren de las Olimpiadas,” *El Tiempo*, August 12, 1932.

However, the threat of withdraw could also backfire. Another football match pitted Calí against Cucúta in a hotly contested match. In the middle of the game, the cucútan goalie, Antolinez, dove after the ball and collided with the caleño forward, Varela, causing the goalie to receive a bad wound. While there was no obvious foul, the caleños had been aggressive in their attack but at the end of ninety minutes the score was 1-1. Rather than playing overtime, the team from Cucúta withdrew from the match citing the dirty play of the caleño team and the referee's unwillingness to penalize the team fairly. If the cucútan team hoped that they would gain an advantage, they were thoroughly disappointed. The referee treated Cucúta's withdraw as a forfeit and awarded the win to Cali; there was no rematches this time and Cali advanced to the next round.<sup>102</sup>

However, unlike the controversy caused by Técnico-Bogotá's withdraw from the 1928 Olympics, there was no such national outrage at Cucúta's withdrawal. No delegation of Medellín's most influential people pursued the withdrawn teams to beg them to come back. Neither did Colombians write letters and editorials attacking the sportsmanship or masculinity of the players. In this case, both teams were visitors and there was not a transgressive crowd behavior that or insult that triggered Cucúta's withdrawal. Neither was Cucúta the only team to threaten to leave the Olympics if their demands were not meant the prevalence of such a tactic demonstrated the lack of institutional authority. Teams pitted their authority against the referee's and in many cases were successful because the latter did not have the clout to enforce his decision. The tournament itself also lacked good authority to force teams to play, except for Cucúta, which was not the most prominent of departments in the tournament. This power discrepancy shows what Colombian sporting enthusiasts had been complaining about and would continue to complain about, the lack of national organizations.

The rash of withdraws and threats to withdraw also indicated that sports and national sporting tournaments alone were not enough to foster nationalism. More evident than the Cali Olympics, the

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<sup>102</sup> "Por Retiro de Cucuta fue declarado vencedor Cali," *El Tiempo*, August 12, 1932.

departments brought their regional grudges with them to Medellín to settle them in the stadiums. There is an element of Norbert Elias' "civilizing process" in that the departments air their grievances on the symbolic battlefield rather than in civil war.<sup>103</sup> But the specter of the 1000 Days War still haunted Conservatives and Liberals thirty years later and neither party desired bloodshed. There was also the fact that the same year Colombians professionalized sports was also the same year that inaugurated La Violencia, a time of persistent and pervasive bloodshed, which speaks against the "civilizing process." Regardless, departments brought their grievances with them to the Olympics and found no resolution to them. Without a concerted and deliberate effort to shape the narrative of the Olympics, as there had been in Cali, the tournament became just another arena for Colombian departments to fight amongst themselves.

## Conclusion

Despite the controversies that resulted from regionalism, there were some efforts by tournament organizers to infuse the Olympics with a national spirit. Two of the four forces of national cohesion mentioned by Mejía and LaRosa received much more prominence in the Medellín Olympics than in the previous Cali Olympics: The Church, and the Army. In addition, the president of the Republic, Olaya, officially opened the Olympic games, though did not stay for the tournament itself. Finally, the antioqueño organization committee introduced an Olympic pledge that elevated and deployed national symbols such as fraternal bonds, a shared love of the *patria*, and the glory of the flag. None of these attempts at fostering a national spirit had the same effect of Peru's semi-formal invasion of Leticia the month after the Olympics closed.

In September of 1932, just days after the Medellín Olympics closed, paramilitary forces from Peru captured Leticia, a Colombian port city on the Amazon. The Peruvian paramilitaries were financed and supported by rubber magnate Julio César Arana and were technically not authorized by the

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<sup>103</sup> Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

Peruvian state, who nonetheless did not try to restrain them.<sup>104</sup> The invasion of Colombia by a foreign power brought a wave of nationalism in Colombia, like the Colombian reaction to Panamanian independence. Laureano Gómez, the arch-conservative, ceased attacking his Liberal rivals, calling for "Peace in the interior and war in the threatened borders."<sup>105</sup> Despite such a unified outcry, the Colombian army was poorly equipped and Colombian generals had difficulty deploying troops to a remote part of Colombia. The Colombian military had to rely on riverboats that it borrowed from United Fruit to get their troops to Leticia. Colombian forces finally regained control of Leticia in 1934 a testament to the infrastructure difficulties that persisted in Colombia. The Leticia Affair also proved to politicians and intellectuals that it was possible to harness national sentiment across the diverse Colombian regions, provided they had the correct external stimulus.

Even though the nationalizing effects of the Olympic were overshadowed by foreign invasion, the Medellín Olympics signaled that the Colombian government was ready to take a more direct role in the fostering of sport. The Medellín Olympics opened with an early morning mass attended by Olaya Herrera, the local schools, and the army garrison. After a small break, the procession made its way to stadium for the opening ceremony which concluded in a display of martial prowess as military cadets performed gymnastic exercises.<sup>106</sup> Gymnastics was popular as it demonstrated not only the cadet's strength but also the control they had over their body, the two major benefits of physical exercise, at least the two that Colombian reformers were trying to instill in the masses. The antioqueño organizational committee made it clear in the opening ceremony that the church and the military were important elements of being Colombian.

Likewise, while the Conservative party painted the liberals with an anti-clerical or socialistic brush, such characterizations were unfair. The liberals and their constituents were primarily devout

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<sup>104</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 97.

<sup>105</sup> Quoted in Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 60.

<sup>106</sup> "El Presidente de la Republica Inauguro Solemnemente Las Olimpiadas Nacionales," *El Tiempo*, August 7, 1932.



Catholics just like the conservatives. However, the liberals wanted to disentangle the Colombian government from ecclesiastical authority. While in control of the presidency, Liberal presidents attempted to secularize education, in order to establish their monopoly on legitimate education. As Gellner notes, the state needed a monopoly on legitimate education to instruct the population exactly how to live in society, in addition to educating it about new skills they needed to operate in an industrializing world.<sup>107</sup> To this end the Liberal government opened “national high schools” which it operated independently from the institutions of the Catholic Church. Despite establishing 10,000 schools by 1936 (mostly primary schools), church-run schools still outnumbered these secular schools by a ratio of two-to-one.<sup>108</sup>

It was not as if the Liberals were completely against religious education. All three Liberal presidents that ruled between 1930 and 1946 graduated from the Jesuit-run San Bartolomé school in Bogotá.<sup>109</sup> But the symbols and traditions of Catholicism was something that united most Colombians and liberals wanted to tap into that to continue support for their government. Consider the Olympic pledge, which read, “By God and by the *Patria* I swear to abide by cultural norms, fraternity, and gentlemanliness and will lend my strength in the peaceful development of this tournament out of love for my *Patria* and the glory of my flag.”<sup>110</sup> Colombian athletes, conservative and liberal alike, were expected to swear by God first and their homeland second. For many, fealty to the eternal, God, was likely stronger than fealty to the temporal responsibilities of citizenship which ended at death. But the modernists still viewed religion as the guarantor of morality and the commandment to “love one’s neighbor” fit with the modernists desire for social order. It also represented a sort of horizontal integration among society since the rich and poor alike were all beholden to God and so its inclusion in

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<sup>107</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 28–33.

<sup>108</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 106.

<sup>109</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 25.

<sup>110</sup> “El Presidente de la Republica Inauguro Solemnemente Las Olimpiadas Nacionales,” *El Tiempo*, August 7, 1932.

the Olympic oath was a way to remind athletes of this shared fealty.

But the state was present at the Medellín Olympics in a more tangible way in the form of the president of the Republic. Olaya Herrera's presence at the Olympic games marks a break from the previous ones which had municipal and departmental representation but none from the executive branch. In the 1920s, Conservatives remained divided on modern sports with many favoring traditional Spanish festivals like bull fighting to modern spectacle. A writer for *El Gráfico* contrasted the Spanish Spanish festivals with all the pageantry in the costumes of the bull fighters, the entrance of the bull, ritually tormenting it to a boxing match to a boxing match. While the writer notes that two boxers do demonstrate valor and spirit, it lacks the pageantry of a bull fight.<sup>111</sup> While the Conservative Pedro Nel Ospina did expand the role of sports in schools, he also needed to not upset the more traditional elements of his own party. So, in the 1920s and 1930s Colombians associated the mass spectacle of sport with the Liberal party. In their article about whether or not Medellín would impose a sales tax on ticket sales, *El Tiempo* was confident that the council would not, "just like the other Liberal administrations since their members love sport and recognize its necessity."<sup>112</sup> It makes sense that the Liberals would be the first ones to adopt modern sport and give it a place of prominence. While more and more clubs were being formed to play sport, they were still seen as a largely pedagogical tool for the next generation and Liberals were consistent in pursuing pedagogical reform.

Sports were also a mass spectacle that consistently brought thousands to the events every day. As liberals lowered the bar for participating in Colombia's democracy, mass spectacle was a good way to draw in the masses and teach them to respect the rule of law. Reporters and state representatives alike praised the "clean play" of players on the field, noting that it along with teamwork were the keys to winning the games. The correlation being that following the rules and working together are the the keys to victory. But modern sport also taught the public the "right" way to gather in mass. On game days

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<sup>111</sup> Quoted in, Morales Fontanilla, "El Surgimiento Del Campo Deportivo," 49–50.

<sup>112</sup> "Impuestos al basket, al golf y a la natación," *El Tiempo*, August 16, 1932.

traffic around the stadium was rerouted so the public could get to the stadium without fear of being run over. Once at the stadium, spectators would find their assigned seat to watch the game. The police or military would line the boundaries between the stands and the field making sure that the people stayed in their appropriate place. It was okay for fans to be passionate about their side, just so long as they did so in the right place.

Regardless of why the liberal party took to modern sports, it is important to note that they did not create the popularity of modern sport. Fans had been turning out to watch games long before the liberal government came to power. One of the reasons that liberals took to sport was because it was already popular among the masses. Big public work projects like stadiums would only pay off if people bought tickets which meant making sure that the stadium hosted events. While the Colombian government subsidized tournaments and attempted to fit narratives of nationalism into the games, they were ultimately dependent of if fans would show up. Fans also had the power to just not come back if the government was too heavy handed or tried to put too many events before the games. In fact, both the opening ceremonies, in Cali and Medellín, drew significantly fewer people than the matches did. In Cali there were only a couple of thousand present and *El Tiempo* did not even record how many people attended the Medellín opening ceremony, but they did record attendance at each match. This is not to say that the municipal and federal authorities had no effect on the development of Colombian sports, but whatever they did had to appeal to the masses.

## Chapter 4

### Colombian Sportswomen

In 1932 Women's sports received a boost in popularity when tournament organizers included women's tennis and women's basketball in the Medellín National Olympics, the first national tournament for women athletes. While tennis was one of the older sports and had a following among women as well as men, basketball was just gaining popularity among Colombians. Women's basketball gained a considerable following throughout the 1930s and even outstripped interest in male basketball, thanks in part to international success by the women's team "La Incógnita." Notable sports journalists Luis Camacho Montoya wrote that, for a time, everyone was interested in basketball, largely due to La Incógnita's success in the Bolivarian games where they defeated Panama and Ecuador.<sup>1</sup> Female athletes' international success contrasted with general lack of success of male athletes, which undoubtedly had some effect on the popularity of women's basketball. Oscar Echeverri Mejía wrote an ode to sport valorizing women's basketball in one of his stanzas. Mejía casts a picture of ten sirens playing in the early light of the dawn, turning in harmony with one another as in a dance.<sup>2</sup> Mejía emphasizes the gracefulness of these "escaped sirens" and the fluidity of their motion, more so than siren's tendency to lure sailors to their doom.

Colombian women not only gained national popularity as athletes in 1932, but that same year Colombia hosted the first Miss Colombia pageant, and the winner went on to compete Miss Universe Pageant in Spa, Belgium. Colombia was invited to participate in the pageant thanks to a coffee promotion, which triggered Colombian's interest in beauty pageants.<sup>3</sup> In 1958 Luz Marina Zuluaga won the Miss Universe competition and became the most internationally recognized Colombian at the time,

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<sup>1</sup> Luis Camacho Montoya, "Cómo y quiénes hacen deporte en Colombia," *El Sábado* January 5, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Echeverri Mejía, "La Lírica y el deporte," *El Sábado* February 24, 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 92.

in addition being a national hero. While it is somewhat of a coincidence that women's sports and women's beauty pageants both had their genesis in 1932, at least on the national level, there was nothing coincidental about the link sports and beauty. Since 1923 Colombian newspapermen, and they were men for the most part, wrote articles extolling "natural beauty" that was a sign of good health and clean living.<sup>4</sup> Exercise and participating in "appropriate" sports could help women become or remain healthy and so become or remain beautiful.

In addition to health and beauty, the issue of women's rights began to take on a new significance in the 1930s. In 1934, Alfonso López Pumarejo assumed the presidency from the moderate Olaya Herrera. An admirer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Pumarejo sought to emulate the North American patrician and use his own privileged upbringing to speak on behalf of poor.<sup>5</sup> Declaring the "Revolución en Marcha," Pumarejo sought to undo elements of Colombia's oligarchy and expand access to the country's democracy. In addition to land reform, which generated controversy, Pumarejo was particularly keen to grow Colombia's educated class, which he accomplished by removing various barriers to enter higher education.<sup>6</sup> One of the barriers Pumarejo removed was the one that prohibited women from getting anything more than an elementary school education. However, opening the doors to higher education was the furthest Pumarejo and the Liberal government was prepared to go on the issue of women's rights.

In the 1930s and the 1940s Colombian women began to organize in bipartisan groups to agitate for the right to vote and to end income inequality, and more. Women's rights proved to be a divisive issue for the Liberal party and Colombian society. At the heart of the debate was what modernity looked like for Colombian women and how women contributed to a modern nation. Nira Yuval-Davis argues that women were central to imagining a nation and nationalism in five ways: as agents of biological

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<sup>4</sup> Stanfield, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 185.

<sup>6</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 64.

reproduction, reproducers of ethnic and national boundaries, transmitters of national culture, symbols of national ideologies, and participants in national struggles.<sup>7</sup> Colombian politicians and reformers, predominantly or exclusively male, focused on women as agents of biological reproduction and transmitters of national culture, especially in the domestic sphere. At the same time, Colombian reformers feared that the campesino was not able to effectively run a modern home to the detriment of their children. Jorge Bejarano wrote in 1929 that “our people are the enemy of the child” and that “the alcoholic mothers and fathers who physically abused their child are the most repulsive.”<sup>8</sup> One solution to the problem was to entice the alcoholic out of the tavern and into a healthier environment, like the sports field. A writer for *El Sábado*, Ardan, represented this idea when he wrote that that sporting environment “takes workers out of the tavern and brings them to the football field.”<sup>9</sup>

However, other solutions to reformers’ perceived failures of the Colombian family highlighted the role of the state as a healthier family and opened the doors for women to serve as surrogate mothers. Public school was one such institution that could provide children moral education that might be lacking at home. Gabriel Anzola Gomez wrote in the *Journal of Health and Healthiness*, “The defense of the child is almost exclusively the central issue of healthy schooling because you cannot trust in neither the rural family nor the working family.”<sup>10</sup> Gomez argued that public school should take over where the Colombian family, and she was especially worried about lower-class families, had failed. Another way that the state helped address deficiency in the Colombian family was through the field of social work. In an interview with *El Sábado*, an unnamed female social worker said, “The state, the nation, forms its own family. Could there be a mission more important for the woman other than contribute to better the home of her patria?”<sup>11</sup> The social worker imagined the nation as a family and

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 33.

<sup>9</sup> “Un Paisaje en Colores,” *El Sábado*, September 25, 1948.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*.

<sup>11</sup> “El espejo refleja,” *El Sábado*, January 15, 1942.

saw the “terrible plagues” of “infant mortality and alcoholism” as part of a domestic sphere that extended to the nation. More importantly, the field of education and social worker opened the possibilities for Colombian women to enter the public sphere as professionals with some measure of authority, roles outside wives and mothers; at least for middle-class women.

In addition to participating in the public sphere, though still in fixed gendered roles, the modern woman was also a consumer of modern goods: print media, fashion, cosmetics and so on. Once again, the situation in Mexico serves as a useful comparison to the situation in Colombia. Joanne Hershfield examines how the Mexican press fashioned images of the *chica moderna* (modern girl), using modern domestic products, and so on. Hershfield describes the image of the *chica moderna* as “middle or upper class; she married for love, took care of the house and the children, and was the family's primary consumer in the marketplace; she attended church regularly and once married, remained faithful to her husband; rarely did she work outside the home, yet she participated in public-policy making, especially in the area of education and moral reform.”<sup>12</sup> As mentioned above, the Colombian *chica moderna* also participated in public policy through education and moral reform in addition to dutifully taking care of the house and children.

While the press played an important role in disseminating the image of the *chica moderna*, women still chose how they would apply such images to their daily life. Hershfield argues, “People look to images to help them make sense of reality; for suggestions on how to be in the world, how to act, to move through particular spaces, how to dress, as well as how to relate to other individuals and material objects and spaces.”<sup>13</sup> Mexican and Colombian women consumed images of the *chica moderna* for help in navigating the modern world and finding their own place in it.

For the Colombian and Mexican press, the beautiful and independent Anglo-American woman, as portrayed by in Hollywood films and magazines, represented the modern woman. *Cromos*, the

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<sup>12</sup> Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna*, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Joanne Hershfield, 15.

Colombian equivalent of *Life Magazine*, republished images of Hollywood actresses dressed up in athletic gear for the 1932 Olympics for an eager Colombian audience.<sup>14</sup> *El Tiempo* ran a weekly page dedicated to women (Pagina Femina) with articles concerning fashion, beauty, and health as well. Hershfield argues how fashion pages, like the Pagina Femina, allowed women a chance “to mark out an identity within certain social and economic constraints: to articulate their social roles, to define their femininity, and to assert an individual identity.”<sup>15</sup> *El Sábado* also ran a semi-regular column “We Ladies,” where women wrote articles about being a woman in society and gave advice to others. Even though *El Sábado* was owned by the moderate Liberal Armando Solano, the editorial staff still ran articles in the 1940s endorsing feminist stories, those featuring independent women, as well as articles advocating for increased female participating in the public sphere.

In the 1930s and 1940s Liberal reformers advocated for the modern woman, but one that fit traditional gender roles, which is to say that was anchored in the domestic sphere. But others, a loose collection of progressives, women of privilege, working women, socialist women, and so on, advocated for greater inclusion in Colombia’s democracy. This group argued in interviews and articles that feminine education was the key to the progress of the nation, and that an important part of modern education was training the body as well as the mind. Sport, they argued, developed the best feminine characteristics by making a woman healthier, more intelligent, and morally upright, which would aid her in the professional world as well as in the domestic world. Ultimately Colombians on both sides of the debate agreed on the value of health and physical exercise and that women were valuable to the country’s progress but disagreed on where women’s value lay.

### Women as Sport Promoters

Colombian women had participated in sports like tennis and equestrianism since the beginning but began to take a more public and prominent role in 1920s and 1930s. One of the ways women grew

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<sup>14</sup> Alfonso Rodríguez, “Deporte y Educación Física En Colombia,” 99.

<sup>15</sup> Joanne Hershfield, *Imagining the Chica Moderna*, 71.



more prominent in the world of sport was by organizing tournaments and helping to form and support teams. In 1931 a group of ladies belonging to some of the prominent families in Medellín worked closely with the Antioqueño Football Federation (FAF) to organize sports clubs and host a series of matches. These ladies' foray into the world of sports came out of their other philanthropic work as a portion of the ticket sales went to the Hospital San Vicente de Paúl.<sup>16</sup> Sports, for Medellín high society ladies, provided another opportunity to socialize with one another in addition to displaying their prominence in society at large. Eric Hobsbawm wrote about "invented traditions" in post-industrial Europe that served a variety of functions, but one way they worked was to "foster a sense of corporate *superiority* of élites."<sup>17</sup> Hobsbawm goes on to say that this sense of superiority was particularly important for those who were not of noble birth. While the society ladies came from the most prominent families in Medellín, their prominence was only recently gained. To borrow a phrase from Thomas Adam's study of North American and German philanthropy, the women wanted to "buy respectability."<sup>18</sup>

The social aspect of the society ladies' philanthropy is best seen in one of their more lucrative fundraisers, electing a Queen of Sport. In 1931 twenty women competed for honor of presiding over the National Olympics. The candidates came from a variety of backgrounds including local teams, universities, and social clubs, but all were women of some means. The election proved to be popular, with newspapers like *El Colombiano* and *El Correo de Colombia* publishing interviews and pictures of the candidates on their front pages. Other newspapers took the opportunity to refocus the publicity of the election to developing sport in the city, like *El Heraldo de Antioquia*. Since the election was a way to make money, voters had to buy their votes. Thousands of votes were sold through various business throughout Medellín. Unsurprisingly, Cecilia Echavarría, daughter of a founder of Fabricato, one of the

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<sup>16</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, ed., *The Invention of Tradition*, Reissue edition (Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Adam, *Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Urban Society in Transnational Perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009)

largest textile mills in the country, won the election with 2,462 votes.<sup>19</sup>

As Queen of Sport, Echavarría's duties included attending matches, presenting trophies for the upcoming Olympic games, and liaising with the queens of other departments. Along with Maruja Zorrilla, the queen from Bogotá, Echavarría was also an athlete and one of the stars for one of Medellín's female basketball teams Blanco y Verde (White and Green). It is unsurprising that Echavarría and Zorrilla were both Queens and basketball players. In his study of Colombian beauty pageants, Michael Edward Stanfield noted that Colombian notions of beauty in the 1930s emphasized athletic women, with basketball being the most common sport.<sup>20</sup> This is not to say that the Queen of Sport was a beauty contest, at least not per se. Ana Guitiérrez Villa, not Cecilia Echavarría, represented Antioquia for the 1932 Miss Colombia beauty pageant. However, beauty was certainly a factor in the election for a Queen of Sport since it was a common belief in Colombia that beauty was directly connected to health. The Queen was an example for other women to follow and so in addition to being a good athlete, or rather because of it, should also be beautiful.

The election of Cecilia I, as she was dubbed by the press, and her subsequent reign, was successful and popular enough that the FAF organized another election in 1933, to preside over their newly created "Week of Sport." Given the growing responsibilities of the queen, the victorious candidate would also appoint three ministers: minister of external relations, a minister of football, and finally a governor. The FAF presented these ministers as subservient to the Queen, but they would likely do the majority of the governing, and the Queen would be relegated to more of a figurehead for her year-long tenure. As an interesting sidenote, *El Heraldo de Antioquía* reported that each minister would be accompanied by his respective "lady of honor." This might refer to the minister's wife or it could be another symbolic position granted to the runner ups. There was already precedent for such as symbolic

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<sup>19</sup> López Vélez, 92-93.

<sup>20</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 93.

position as the Queen's royal court included a princess, the second-place finisher.<sup>21</sup>

Though not necessarily a fundraiser for a hospital, votes were once again on sale and the second election proved more popular than the first. Merceditas Ángel Villa won with an impressive 17,807 votes and Bertha Martínez came in second place with 3,610 votes, still more than the Cecilia Echavarría received. In a mark of continuity with the previous monarch, Ángel Villa took the royal name Merceditas II, even though there had not been a Merceditas I. The desire by the FAF to impose continuity on the Sports Queen fits neatly with Hobsbawm's process of inventing traditions characterized by, "formalization and ritualization, characterized by referencing the past, if only by repetition."<sup>22</sup> The Sports Queen also makes sense as an invented tradition, given the rapid social change Medellín was undergoing thanks to the boom in the textile industry.<sup>23</sup> An unbroken succession in the Sports Queen provided comforting continuity in the face of so much change.

Merceditas II and her cabinet immediately set to work promoting a vision of future Medellín sporting success while also working towards regional unity. One of her first acts was to set up a sporting house to help develop Medellín athletic talent with the goal of representing the city and department at the next National Olympics in Barranquilla. In addition to preparing athletes for the next Olympics, Merceditas II and her ministers worked with local businesses to secure funds for building a newer and bigger stadium and to provide support to various clubs throughout the city. To foster unity in her domain, Merceditas II toured the department of Antioquia encouraging the development of sport, especially football, in the smaller municipalities.<sup>24</sup>

Sport Queens remained a part of the Colombian sports scene throughout the 1930s, providing symbols of continuity. While the people of Medellín had experienced the most rapid growth, Colombia was growing more urban and small-parcel landownership was being replaced by more industrial

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<sup>21</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 94.

<sup>22</sup> Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*, 4.

<sup>23</sup> For more information on the social changes, see chapter 4.

<sup>24</sup> López Vélez, *Detrás del balón*, 96.

processes. Sport Queens symbolically resisted that change. When Cali inaugurated its new stadium, Pascual Guerrero in 1937 Stella I, its Queen of Sport, waved to fans in her all-white royal outfit. It had been nearly a decade since Graciela I presided over the national Olympics in Cali and the wardrobe of the queen had not changed. Stella I's outfit was completely white from her head covering to her shoes and white gloves. The queen's garb remained distinctly white. What is more, the Queen's monochromatic outfit was reserved for the opening ceremonies as pictures from the tournament show the Queen wearing colorful and contemporary fashion. This distinction is important as tournament organizers used the opening ceremonies to provide the public "correct" way of viewing the athletes and their performances. The Queen and her outfit provided unity and a ritualization of past performances with the present, giving the notion of progressive athletic performance.<sup>25</sup>

### Sports and Beauty

While Stella I and her court wore similar outfits to Graciela I and her court, the former appear to be much younger than the latter. In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Queens were chosen from among society ladies as an extension of the club *madrinas*, who served the clubs in a motherly capacity. In contrast, Cecilia Echavarría was twenty-three years old when she served as queen of sport for Antioquía. The shift from *madrina* to young society female marks changing Colombian perception in how women related to sport. In 1928 Colombian reformers saw sport as a tool to turn potentially unhealthy boys into healthy men. If sport was about raising boys, then they needed motherly influence. However, in the 1930s Colombian reformers began to consider if sport could be used to turn girls into healthy women as well. If sports were also for girls, then Sport Queens needed to also be a symbol for young girls to aspire to: young, athletic, and beautiful.

In fact, athleticism and athletic clothing was in vogue in 1930s Colombia. Michael Edward Standfield remarks that "modern beauty in mid-1930s focused on athletic women participating in

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<sup>25</sup> For more information on Queens, see Chapter 1.

competitive sports. Basketball appeared most commonly, with young team members photographed in matching uniforms.”<sup>26</sup> While Colombian publications like *Cromos* presented sports as essential to the modern women as early as 1919, a series of factors came together in the 1930s that brought the Colombian sportswoman to the forefront.<sup>27</sup> The first was that sport in general was more popular in the 1930s and much more accessible to more Colombians than it had been before. There were more tournaments, both local and national, that cast a brighter spotlight on male and female athletes alike. The second factor, and more important for the concept of beauty, related to the 1932 Olympics held in Los Angeles. Hollywood, led by studios such as Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, took the opportunity to present its stars as beautiful and athletic, capitalizing on the flood of interest the Olympics presented. *Cromos* republished pictures of the rising Hollywood starlets as they posed with tennis rackets or with horses, showing how athletic they were.<sup>28</sup> These pictures were disseminated across the globe thanks to William May Garland’s “public-relation machine” that broadcast photos, videos, and narratives of the Los Angeles Olympics to a global audience.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the influence of Hollywood and North America on Colombian fashion and trends, it would be a mistake to label Colombian’s interest in female athletes as a type of cultural imperialism. The beautiful and athletic Hollywood starlet fit easily within older Colombian concepts of beauty. In the 1920s, writers for national magazines like *Cromos* spoke about beauty as a sign of God’s approval. Colombian authors, predominantly male, attributed feminine beauty as a gift of God to symbolize that the woman was living a virtuous life. Harmony, equilibrium, and health contributed the most to making a woman beautiful. What is more, these authors viewed a woman’s face, and not her eyes, as a mirror into her soul. Unhealthy passions such as envy, vanity, ignorance, and others would mar her face. These newspapermen viewed makeup as an evil only used by certain women who wished to hide their sinful

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<sup>26</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Alfonso Rodríguez, “Deporte y Educación Física En Colombia,” 93.

<sup>28</sup> Alfonso Rodríguez, 94–99.

<sup>29</sup> J.A. Managan and Mark Dyreson, *Olympic Legacies*, 113.

lives.<sup>30</sup> The implication for the writer's words were that if women wanted to attain true beauty, they should live healthy and virtuous, or moral, lives.

Physical education was the primary area of overlap where the relationship between health and beauty could be most clearly seen. Brenda Elsey notes that starting in the 1930s the *Revista Brasileira de Educação Física* (Brazilian Magazine of Physical Education) started publishing articles on exercise for women. The magazine encouraged women to exercise, as it was good for their health and beauty was the result of good health in women in the same way that strength was for men.<sup>31</sup> Colombians followed closely behind the Brazilians with a series of books published on the topic of physical education for girls.

By the 1940s exercise for females became a topic of conversation in popular media. *El Sábado*, a weekly newspaper published in Bogotá, featured a semi-frequent column, "Por Nosotras" (For us Ladies), that featured articles geared to female readers. A frequent contributor was a writer who went by the name Lucy. She offered a combination of satirical and serious advice for women. In an article on "Rhythmic Gymnastics," Lucy advised her readers that daily exercise was crucial for maintaining or obtaining hotness (calor). Lucy's exercise regimen was not strenuous by modern standards. "Women should spend fifteen minutes a day walking around their patio or garden, fully clothed of course, and after that practice a little jump rope. If the reader does not have a patio or garden big enough, she should practice the exercises demonstrated below."<sup>32</sup> The exercises below were really a set of stretches that women could perform from a seated or standing position.

Lucy's moderate exercise was consistent with Argentine radio programs of the 1930s which advised women to practice small resistance exercises and stretches in the privacy of their homes to avoid deforming their bodies.<sup>33</sup> The concern for deformity revealed the eugenic nature of Argentine physical educators and Colombian educators who were interested in women's health and to how

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<sup>30</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 79.

<sup>31</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 112.

<sup>32</sup> Lucy, "Nosotras: Gimnasia Ritmica," *El Sábado* August 7, 1943.

<sup>33</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 24.

women served the nation as mothers. If men needed to be healthy to pass their genes on to their children, women needed to have healthy bodies to bear the children. Latin American physical educators favored light workouts for women so that they would stay at an appropriate body weight but not gain muscles. If women gained too much muscle, it would “deform” their bodies, or so educators argued. While gaining muscles might not be that harmful to the woman herself, apart from potentially sacrificing her beauty and transgressing gender norms by looking masculine, she risked passing the deformity on to her children. If healthiness was an inheritable trait, as many Latin American reformers believed it to be, then unhealthiness was also inheritable. Deformity was one of the worst traits to pass along because it was the hardest to get rid of. Latin American eugenicists tended to be more optimistic than their North American and European counterparts as they believed that healthy genes were stronger than recessive or unhealthy genes. The goal of Latin American eugenicists was not to weed out “inferior” genes from the national pool, but to breed in “superior” genes in a type of “racial uplift.”<sup>34</sup>

Just as too much muscle could harm the maternal nature of a woman’s body, physical educators worried about women who were too skinny. An uncredited author gave advice for ladies who were too thin in an article entitled “Consejos para las flacas” (Advice for skinny ladies). He or she stated, “a minimum amount of fat and muscle is necessary to have beautiful bodylines.” The author further contended that thinness conceals true beauty similarly to makeup. As a solution, the unnamed author offers ten different ways skinny girls can gain a little weight so they can “greatly increase their number of admirers.” Most solutions involved resting, breathing correctly, and eating a doctor-approved meal plan, but the ninth tip is especially interesting. The unnamed author recommended doing special exercises daily, participating in a sport or going to the gym at regular intervals. This step was important, not for the development of muscle but so that “fat does not accumulate.”<sup>35</sup>

“Consejos para las flacas” demonstrated that ideas about women’s health did not remain

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<sup>34</sup> Elsey and Nadel, 20.

<sup>35</sup> “Consejos para las Flacas,” *El Sábado*, April 14, 1945.

confined to academic publications but filtered into popular culture. While the language the author used was not academic, the ideas were certainly consistent with academic language. First the writer used “beauty” instead of “health,” even though in the context they meant the same thing. Rather than being unhealthy, the writer characterized thinness as unsightly and unfashionable. A woman who was too skinny made any dress look like, “it was hanging off a bag of bones.” There is also a practical application to healthiness, in that it will help a woman “increase her admirers.” The implication is that she will have more options when it comes to choosing her husband, giving her more options of social mobility, of marrying up. Of course, the advice only works if Colombian men are interested in healthy women, rather than skinny women making good use of contour lines.

The work of academics and columnists had some measure of success and by the 1940s the link between health and beauty had become common knowledge. Beginning in the 1940s *El Sábado* ran a regular column, “Muchachas en Flor” (Girls in Bloom), which were informal interviews conducted by reporters with young women they saw out and about in Bogotá. Reporters asked various questions about these young girls’ interests. At times they would ask if the girls played sports or, more commonly, if they liked men who played sports. One of the reporters, Andres Holguín, asked two women, Sophye Arbelaez Correa and Hersilia Vejarano, a direct question, “Do you think that sports harm women...deforming them or cause women to lose their natural femininity?” Hersilia disagreed entirely with the women who neglected sports thinking that it would deform their body. To the contrary, she found that her preferred sports, bowling and skating, made her more “sleek.”<sup>36</sup> Another muchacha en flor, Emma Buenaventura responded even more strongly, declaring that sport was “essential for a woman.” Far from robbing a woman of her femininity, sport made women more “pleasant, happy, and beautiful.”<sup>37</sup> Both Emma and Hersilia linked beauty to health and described physical activity as the primary way of obtaining or maintaining health. It is worth noting that neither woman mentioned

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<sup>36</sup> Andres Holguín, “Las Muchachas en Flor,” *El Sábado*, August 28, 1943

<sup>37</sup> Alfredo Bonilla Aragón, “Cómo vive, ama y piensa la mujer de Cali,” *El Sábado*, September 18, 1943.



contact sports or team sports like football as beneficial for women.

Sophye Arbelaez Correa believed that certain sports were acceptable for girls, not necessarily for women, to play. A self-described Liberal, Sophye played a variety of sports when she was younger; she especially liked tennis and thought that it was a perfect sport for girls to play. On the other hand, Sophye thought that basketball was essentially a male sport, which put her in the minority opinion, especially after the success of female teams in the 1930s. Physical educators also disagreed with Sophye as they considered basketball, a no-contact sport, perfect for women since it posed little chance of injury. Basketball was also popular among women. Two “muchachas” from Ipiales, near the Ecuadorian border, listed basketball as their favorite sport because it was good exercise, which in turn was good for their health.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately, Sophye does not elaborate on what made basketball male. Likely, World War II had interrupted support for women’s basketball, as it did for many sports, and so it had fallen out of popularity. In 1946 Luis Camacho Montoya mentioned that there *was* a time when basketball was popular, meaning that it no longer held the same interest.

Sophy did make another interesting claim when she hints that sport is something that girls, rather than women, play. She mentioned that she used to play sport, and clearly specified that “girls” do not lose any of their femininity by playing tennis. Now, Sophye no longer plays sports but instead watches the athletes play.<sup>39</sup> Sophye was in good company. In the mid-twentieth century Latin American academics were divided over whether women should continue to play sports once they reached puberty. One of the louder voices against postpubescent women playing sports was a faculty member at the University of Buenos Aires, who worried that sport could harm a women’s chance of having children.<sup>40</sup> While Sophye does not mention a fear of not having children as a reason why she stopped playing sports, but it does make sense of her claim that tennis is a good sport for girls.

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<sup>38</sup> “Las Muchachas de Ipiales,” *El Sábado*, August 26, 1944.

<sup>39</sup> Andres Holguín, “Las Muchachas en Flor,” *El Sábado*, August 28, 1943

<sup>40</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 26.

## Sport and the Female Athlete

Not all the “muchachas” liked sports and one thought that sport was the domain of lower-class girls or women. The pretentious Rosita Ribón, who wished she had a more distinguished name like María Cristina instead of a servant’s name, did not like any sport. She thought, “tennis developed too much muscle, bowling destroyed one’s nails, swimming left her breathless, she once fell off a horse, and just does not like basketball.”<sup>41</sup> Rosita’s account of her experience with sports is comical almost to the point of being a caricature. Her words contain an almost aristocratic disdain for any type of physical activity. Rosita also chooses some of the more “aristocratic” and female-friendly sports, those with lower risk of injury, on which to heap her heap scorn on. At the time, bowling was a popular up-and-coming sport in Colombia, but tennis and equestrianism were some of the older sports that experts deemed appropriate for women. Rosita certainly expresses an unpopular opinion but more than that, the interview presents her in an almost pre-modern light.

Beginning in the 1930s, the Colombian press began to emphasize the importance of an active lifestyle for the “modern woman.” *Cromos* published an article looking to the epicenter of modern femininity, a place where “feminine beauty was the norm rather than the exception,” Los Angeles. The unaccredited author compared the Anglo-American woman who practiced sport in the open air, even after she had grown old, to the Colombian woman who, once married, shut herself in at home and grew fat. To illustrate his point, the reporter included a picture of a tennis lesson at the University of California. In the picture, a line of female students in their tennis uniforms, white-sleeveless-thigh-length dresses, are being taught by their instructor, an older woman. The reporter also interpreted the image, ensuring readers got the right message. “All of them are pictures of health and youthfulness. And all of them speak to the immense benefit of sports, sunbathing, and pure air for the modern woman.”<sup>42</sup>

Once again, the writer highlighted beauty and youthfulness as a sign of good health in women

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<sup>41</sup> “Las Muchachas en Flor,” *El Sábado*, October 23, 1943.

<sup>42</sup> “Una Clase de Tennis,” *Cromos*, No. 794, December 26, 1931.

and the benefit sport can bring to women. He—and it is likely the writer is male—connects the beauty of the Anglo-American women to the fact that they stayed active even after they got married. The writer made it clear that in Los Angeles, young girls, single ladies, and married women all practiced sports together, which allowed them to maintain their “elegant thinness and flexibility” and to present “the perfect type of feminine beauty.” While the writer laments the relative beauty of the Anglo-American woman as compared to the Colombian women, he does not cite any racial or environmental reasons for the beauty discrepancy. Ideas of environmental determinism, which were popular among learned Colombians in the 1910s and 1920s were fading in popularity by the 1930s. Instead, the *Cromos* reporter cited cultural differences between North America and Colombia, which could be addressed if Colombian women practiced of open-air exercises like the Los Angeles women. In addition to becoming more healthy, youthful, and beautiful, such exercises would make Colombian women more modern and, by extension, Colombia as well.

While the *Cromos* reporter does not use racialized terms, he does use hygienic concepts that Jorge Bejarano and Luis López de Mesa popularized in the 1910s and 1920s through his references to “sunbathing” and “pure air” along with sports as being beneficial to female health and youthfulness. In her *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State*, Julia Rodriguez examines the Argentine state’s effort to “civilize” its population by addressing environmental problems along with other issues. Rodriguez pays close attention to the way that the Argentine state classified social issues such as poverty, crime, hysteria, etc. as illnesses and developed hygienic systems to “cure” those problems.<sup>43</sup> In 1876 Guillermo Rawson, a hygienist, spoke at an Argentine conference on public hygiene about the importance of open spaces in urban planning so that the citizens can breathe. Hygienists like Rawson worried that congested and polluted air could cause genetic defects, which would lead to

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<sup>43</sup> Julia Rodríguez, *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 6.

further racial degeneration.<sup>44</sup> The writer for *Cromos* is pulling from the same fears when he writes about the benefit of the sun and pure air on the Anglo-American women. Granted, 70% of the Colombian population still lived in rural areas as late as 1938, but the writer is contrasting the public lives of the Anglo-American woman to the Colombian woman who never leaves her house.

While hygienic solutions to social problems were fading in popularity, at least among Colombian intellectuals, they survived longer in the field of women's health. There are two major reasons that hygienic language continued to be applied to women. One had to do with the eugenic interest in women as potential mothers and the other was a lack of study on women's physiology. While hygienists of nineteenth and early twentieth century worried about genetic abnormalities among the whole population, eugenicists worried about women harming their reproductive capacity. In a 1940 example from Brazil, Dr. Leite de Castro was a persistent critic of female sports. Dr. Castro, among other Brazilian doctors, worried that sports would damage a women's genitals and compromise their role as mothers.<sup>45</sup> Dr. Castro's preoccupation indicated that sport was only good for women if it made them more fit mothers who served the nation by producing the next generation of citizens.

Colombian physical educators and doctors were also concerned with how sport might affect a woman's capacity to have children. In 1940 Fidencio Díaz de la Vega and Luis Silva Ballestros published a manual on how to teach women's track and field. They created their manual based on the latest physiological studies coming out of North America and included diagrams on the most efficient techniques for each athletic activity as well including training exercises for each event. They even included a sample training schedule, along with along with a list of cautions that were unique to each activity, except for one which was consistent across all activities: they should not be performed by menstruating women. Their fear was that "the uterus is heavier during menstruation and a blow or

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<sup>44</sup> Rodríguez, 182.

<sup>45</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 97.

shock could cause the ligaments that suspend the uterus to tear and damage the organ.”<sup>46</sup> While De la Vega and Ballestros were directly referencing activities that involved jumping, they included their prohibition on menstruating women to activities such as throwing a baseball and basketball as well. De la Vega and Ballestros echo the fears of Dr. Castro that sports should not damage a women’s ability to have children. However, unlike Dr. Castro, the Colombians physical educators were overall supportive of women’s sports.

This leads to the second reason that Latin American scientists applied hygienic discourse to women longer than men, the lack of scientific study. Brenda Elsey notes that there were few studies on women’s health and so twentieth-century Latin American reformers “spun fantasies and worked from convoluted ideas of women’s anatomy.”<sup>47</sup> While knowledge of female anatomy was severely lacking and there certainly were fantastical ideas, there were also well-meaning educators who were limited by the knowledge of the day. De la Vega and Ballestros lamented that their *Atletismo para Mujeres* (Track and Field for Women) was based on studies of male athletes.<sup>48</sup> The physical educators lamented the lack of properly designed studies on the appropriate way to conduct track and field exercises and viewed their training guide as a first step to a more scientific study of female athleticism.

But still, De la Vega and Ballestros’ ideas represented a blending of study-based scientific analysis with scientific-based guesswork. What they offered were hypotheses for known occurrences. The physical educators claimed that since women run out of breath quicker than men do, their exercises should be lower intensity and spread out over more days.<sup>49</sup> De la Vega and Ballestros reasoned that female hemoglobin must be less capable of transmitting oxygen to the body, at least in comparison to male hemoglobin. While the notion that there is special hemoglobin based on a person sex is ridiculous,

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<sup>46</sup> Fidencio Díaz de la Vega and Luis Silva Ballestros, *Atletismo Para Mujeres* (Bogotá, Colombia: Dirección de Educación de Cundinamarca, 1940), 6.

<sup>47</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Díaz de la Vega and Ballestros, *Atletismo Para Mujeres*, 9.

<sup>49</sup> Díaz de la Vega and Ballestros, 4.

recent studies do support the conclusion that generally the peak oxygen uptake for women is significantly lower than in men. However, the reason for this is likely due to physiology. Men tend to be physically larger than women and so their airways also tend to be larger.<sup>50</sup> De la Vega and Ballestros' observation that women, on average, run out of breath sooner than men was accurate, but their conclusion was not and it led them to make the incorrect recommendation that long distance running was not an appropriate for females.

### Sport in her own Words

In the same *Cromos* issue as the piece on women's tennis, Luz Ramirez, a popular Colombian tennis star, argued that "those interested in the progression of the Colombian race" should support female sports. In the lead up to the Medellín Olympics, *El Cromos* sent Ezequiel Perdromo to the Racing Club to interview Luz Ramirez who was coaching several women tennis players including the soon to be first female champion, Essie Sayer. Perdromo's first impression of Luz Ramirez was glowing: "the most genteel athlete, queen of gracefulness...embodying a pleasant disposition with all the complex attributes of a 'modern girl.'" Colombian reporters often used the attributes of gentility, gracefulness, and pleasant disposition to describe female athletes that they were impressed with, but Luz Ramirez' interview was anything but normal. Perdromo was expecting to have a hard time as she was known to be cautious about making public "declarations." However, when he began to ask her about sports and their place in Colombian society, she "forgot her fear of interviews and making public statements." Luz Ramirez argued that women should play sports for their own benefit as well as the benefit of the nation.<sup>51</sup>

Before discussing what Luz Ramirez said about women and sports it is important to see how

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<sup>50</sup> Antonella LoMauro and Andrea Aliverti. "Sex differences in respiratory function," *Breathe* (Sheffield, England) vol. 14,2 (2018): 131-140. doi:10.1183/20734735.000318; Reybrouck T, Fagard R. Gender differences in the oxygen transport system during maximal exercise in hypertensive subjects. *Chest*. 1999 Mar;115(3):788-92. doi: 10.1378/chest.115.3.788. PMID: 10084493.

<sup>51</sup> Ezequiel Perdromo, "Es Indispensable Fomentar Los Deportes en la Mujer: Entrevista con la Gentil Deportista Doña Luz Ramirez" *Cromos* no. 794, December 26, 1931.

*Cromos* presented her to the public. To highlight Perdomo's comment about her pleasant disposition and the complexities of being a modern girl, *Cromos* ran two pictures of Luz Ramírez, one at work and the other at home. In the at work picture, a smiling Luz is dressed in her tennis uniform with a skirt that falls just below her thigh, lower than the dress worn by the University of California students. Perdomo indicates that Luz did not know he was going to take the picture and so her joy was genuine and related to the fact that she was just finishing a training set. Her picture at home, however, was clearly staged as she stoically looked off in the distance and wore a black dress "of the latest style." In both pictures Perdomo points out her beauty but also the quality of her character. For instance, he notes how the dark dress is wrapped around Luz' "sleek body." When describing the picture of her coming off the courts, he mentions that she is "armed with a racket to ward off any attack from an impetuous or mischievous heart."<sup>52</sup> Using Luz as an example, Perdomo suggests that sports provide women with a desirable body in addition to strengthening their spirit and character against men with ill intentions.

In her interview, Luz Ramirez agreed that sport was indispensable for the creation of the modern women but should be a part of female education. This was a bold statement for Ramirez since women in Colombia were not guaranteed access to higher education until 1934, three years after she gave her interview. While women were guaranteed access to primary school education under law, Colombian universities could and did refuse to accept women into their degree programs. In his article on the women's tennis class, the *Cromos* writer neglects to mention that the women taking part in the class are students at the University of California, information only given in a caption. If the writer truly wanted Colombian women to emulate Anglo-American women to become modern as they were, he should have mentioned access to higher education. Instead, the *Cromos* writer and Perdomo picked out a piece of modernity they wanted Colombian women to emulate, in this case a desire and effort to stay beautiful even after they are married.

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<sup>52</sup> Ezequiel Perdomo, "Es Indispensable Fomentar Los Deportes en la Mujer: Entrevista con la Gentil Deportista Doña Luz Ramirez" *Cromos* no. 794, December 26, 1931.

In contrast, Luz Ramirez recognized education as essential for the modern women and she demonstrated that she had been the recipient of a good education. It is important to note that Luz was born into privilege; Perdomo noted that her mother was one of the more influential women in antioqueñan society. Her high birth not only afforded Luz access to education but also to social clubs where she could play sports. But Luz did not let the opportunities available to her go to waste. From the first time she played tennis with a friend after school she set out to win a championship. After they discussed sports, Perdomo notes that “they spoke about various different topics...art, history, painting...favorite authors, poets, books, and more.” In addition to praising her appearance, Perdomo concluded that “Luz is genuinely intelligent, well learned, and erudite.”

Luz Ramírez used two sources of wisdom to defend the centrality of sport to forming the modern woman: contemporary scientific thought, and classical wisdom. Her larger appeal to the benefit of sport was based on the Latin principal of *mens sana in corpore sano* (a sound mind in a sound body), which Luz then supported with contemporary understanding of the principal. Beyond explaining how the principal of *mens sana* works on the individual level, Luz saw it as a benefit for the nation. In an example reminiscent of Antonio Bonilla’s victory speech during the 1928 Olympics, Luz invoked Hellenistic antiquity as the basis for political modernity. She recounted that open air games were so important to the Greeks, that leading Athenian statesman, Solon, gathered children in the principal plaza to teach them to play all manner of sports. On one hand, Luz argued that if the ancient Greeks valued sport, then Colombians should as well, at least if they wanted to be modern. On the other hand, Luz also wanted to inspire the government to take a more direct role in developing sport in Colombia. In her example, sport was so valuable to the Greeks that the senior statesman oversaw its instruction. Luz added her voice to the voices of Jorge Wills Pradilla, Antonio César Gaitán, Hans Huber, and others in advocating for greater state involvement in developing Colombian sport.

Having linked sport with antiquity, Luz continued her defense of sport explaining how it would



strengthen the Colombian race. Ramírez argued that sport made one “strong, lean, flexible, and joyful” and encouraged or stimulated virtues such as “courage, boldness, self-denial, and others.” While Luz’s larger argument was how sport benefited the modern woman, many of the attributes she mentioned were equally applicable to men as well, again due to a greater understanding of how physical exercise effected the male body. Ramírez divided her attributes into two categories, the physical benefits of playing sports, “strong, lean, flexibility, and joyful” and the moral aspects of playing sport “courage, boldness, self-denial.” The distinction is important to Luz as athletes gained the first set of attributes through exercise, the physical aspect of the sport, and developed the second set of virtues through competition or play with others.

While strength, leanness, and flexibility all have obvious physical connections to the body, joyfulness has a more tenuous connection, but would not have been out of place. De la Vega and Ballestros argued in their track and field manual that training should “develop physical strength and energy reserves (stamina) so that each organ is healthy and under control of the mind.”<sup>53</sup> In addition to the mind having control of the body, *mens sana*, the two physical educators emphasized the role of stamina, or “vital energy.” They explained that this energy reserve is necessary for the body, especially the heart, to run efficiently and effectively, too little energy and the physical body begins to decline. De la Vega and Ballestros went on to argue that there is a link between how energetic, or joyful, a person is and their energy reserves.<sup>54</sup> Gradual training, the educators argue, is the best way for any person to build up this energy reserve, which could in turn make the athlete more joyful.

The principal of vital energy is also at play in the *Cromos* writer’s account of the tennis class. The active lifestyle of Anglo-American women led to an increase in their vital energy which made them happy while the stagnant lifestyle of the Colombian housewife caused her vital energy to atrophy. Colombians were not the only ones making the connection between physical well-being and happiness.

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<sup>53</sup> Díaz de la Vega and Ballestros, *Atletismo Para Mujeres*, 3.

<sup>54</sup> Díaz de la Vega and Ballestros, 4.

Joshua Nadel notes that the Mexico's physical education community promoted "sound mind and body" exercises at the same time. Mexican physical education journals promoted exercises to, "strengthen [women]...and make her happy and healthy."<sup>55</sup> Luz Ramirez argued that if the government took a more active role in developing sports among women, via education, Colombian would boast a healthier and happier population.

If sport can build a stronger and joyful population, it can build a moral and unified population. The second set of virtues that Luz listed, "courage, boldness, self-denial" an athlete develops through playing the sport, which is to say through competition. In other words, these are the values that athletes can expect to develop through playing sports against others. An athlete develops courage and boldness by facing and then overcoming their opponents, who should develop similar attributes. Self-denial related more directly to team sport and measured an athlete's willingness to put the good of the team, or the success of the team over personal success. Throughout the 1930s when Colombian reporters wanted to convey a team played well together, or that they played well in general, they praised the homogeneity of the team. For the reporters, the ideal team was not a collection of individuals, but a single entity united by a common goal, victory.

Team cohesion was also an important allegory or illusion that sports provided for the nation. One could imagine the nation as a collection of individuals all bound together in pursuit of a common goal. Self-denial was particularly sought after by Colombian reformers as they struggled to build a national rather than a regional identity. Luz made a point in her interview to talk about the Colombian *race* in the singular compared with Miguel Jiménez López who spoke about the Colombian *races* being in decline. Nancy Applebaum notes that in the nineteenth century Colombians used often used race in familial terms, but in an elastic sort of way. A person could describe their race departmentally, such as the antioqueño race, or intra-departmentally, as from a certain region or village. Nineteenth-century

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<sup>55</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 164.

Colombians also used race to refer to the citizens of a certain nation.<sup>56</sup> Colombians used race as an oppositional concept where the “we” is defined by whoever the “they” is. Applebaum notes this oppositional identity most notably in regionalist discourse, with people from the department of Antioquia describing themselves as *antioqueños* as opposed to people from the Cauca department. However, within the department of Antioquia, people described their race in terms of their village or city.<sup>57</sup> Without strong national traditions though, the virtue of self-denial only reinforced regionalism, as evidenced by the 1932 Medellín Olympics.

Luz Ramírez was at the forefront of linking sport, education, and nationalism at least as it pertained to women. While physical education had been a part of Colombian pedagogy since the early twentieth century, it was only in the 1930s that Colombian educators started to discuss the role of physical education for female students. In 1930 Colombian educator López de Mesa published his *Enseñanza femenina y educación física* (Female Education and Physical Education). A fan of Vasconcelos’ educational reforms in Mexico, López de Mesa argued that men and women had the same intellectual and physical capacity, provided they had properly tailored education and development.<sup>58</sup> Like minded educators formed the *Asociación Femenina de Deportes* (Women’s Association of Sports) which in the 1930s helped girls’ schools develop sports programs. In 1933 Colombian schools started to build sporting apparatuses in women’s schools focusing on the “appropriate women’s sports” of tennis and basketball.<sup>59</sup> The popularity of Luz Ramirez and other notable Colombian sportswomen were filtering into Colombian society, via the education system.

While the link between health and beauty was driven home by scores of Colombian male reformers, Gilma Wills Olaya offered a more nuanced view in her 1938 *Educación Física Escolar* (Physical Education for Schools). In her book, Wills Olaya promoted German gymnastic in the style of Frederick

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<sup>56</sup> Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters*, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Appelbaum, 39.

<sup>58</sup> Aline Helg, *La Educación En Colombia, 1918-1957: Una Historia Social, Económica y Política*, 152.

<sup>59</sup> Pedraza Gómez, *En cuerpo y alma*, 252–53.

Ludwig Jahn, who favored open-air exercises. Jahn began to teach his gymnastics lessons in the aftermath of Napoleon's occupation of the German states. A proponent of German unification, Jahn thought his gymnastic courses were a way to unify and strengthen the German people against future invaders. Many of Jahn's disciples were a part of the failed democratic revolution of 1848 and had to flee Germany, taking their teacher's exercises with them.

Jahn intended his exercise primarily for men and future soldiers. However, Wills Olaya adapted the exercises to include women as well. Concerning the role of female physical education, Wills Olaya emphasized that only healthy women were truly beautiful, but also argued that physical education would help women increase their social standing. Wills Olaya wrote that "Physical education would give a woman healthy and beautiful body along with enriching her physique, intellectual and moral growth, and give her life such a rhythm that she will be able better her social position and gain community standing."<sup>60</sup> While discipline made men resistant to social vices, alcoholism, gambling, and violence, Wills Olaya argues that it gives women something equally intangible but no less valuable: gracefulness and charm. This is certainly a far cry from demanding equal representation or equal pay, but Wills Olaya was making a case for the value of holistic female education, even in fields not related to homemaking. Charm and grace were not useful skills for women isolated at home, but rather for those women at parties and social gatherings. It was a way for "truly beautiful" women to set themselves apart from those who used makeup to cover up their unhealthiness.

### "Appropriate" Sports for Women

While Colombian women played prominent roles in organizing sporting events, ruling over tournaments as Sport Queens, and lobbying for sport, women still had to fit in prescribed roles and positions. Colombians were eager to support women athletes so long as they played "appropriate" sports such as tennis, basketball, equestrianism, and track and field, all sports without much contact. If

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<sup>60</sup> Pedraza Gómez, 255.

Colombian women played to these roles, fans turned out in large numbers. For instance, the women's basketball finals in the 1932 Medellín Olympics attracted over five thousand people.<sup>61</sup> By way of comparison, Joshua Nadel notes that in the late 1960s, the early days of the Mexican female football league, matches only attracted two thousand people.<sup>62</sup> Granted, in the Colombian case, it was the final event of the tournament and was a match between two teams from Medellín. However, Colombian reporters did not mention poor attendance at the other matches, which they tended to do. It also needs to be said that, in the case of women's basketball and tennis, the women's events took place right before the men's events and likely tickets covered both events. Even if most fans were there to watch the men's events, they still came early for the women's events. By coupling the events together tournament organizers showed tacit support for women's events.

Regardless of how events were monetized, Colombian fans showed support for female athletes by attending their matches, but only in so far as they played "appropriate" sports. What was and was not an appropriate sport for Colombian women was not easily defined because unlike Brazil, the Colombian state did not ban female sports. In 1941, the Brazilian Conselho Nacional de Desportos (National Sports Council) created by Gétulio Vargas declared a ban on women playing certain team sports such as "football, rugby, polo, and water polo" for "being violent sports and not adaptable to the female body."<sup>63</sup> Unlike Brazil, Colombian politicians struggled to establish lasting national sports organizations and ones that could wield more influence than regional sport organizations, so a national ban on certain female sports was not viable. Though there were no laws against women playing certain sports, there was cultural pressure placed on women to avoid the more violent sports. Writing in the 1940s a female reporter who went by the pen name SIM looked forward to the day when Colombian

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<sup>61</sup> "Blanco y Verde v. Blanco y Negro," *El Tiempo*, August 26, 1932.

<sup>62</sup> Elsey and Nadel, *Futbolera: A History of Women and Sports in Latin America*, 206.

<sup>63</sup> Elsey and Nadel, 99–100.

women could engage in all the sports the world had to offer without “fear of public shame.”<sup>64</sup>

Without a list of banned or inappropriate sports, Colombian physical educators and women provided examples of sports that “were adaptable to the female body.” In describing her personal sport history, Luz Ramírez said that she enjoyed playing both tennis and basketball in the afternoons at Club Campestre, in Medellín. But the sport that she most enjoyed watching, the one that keeps her on the edge of her seat, was a good “foot-ball” match.<sup>65</sup> Luz made an important distinction between her enjoyment of *playing* tennis and basketball and her enjoyment of *watching* football. While it was acceptable for Luz to play the less violent sports of tennis and basketball, the only way she could participate in football game was as a spectator.

Likewise, in *Atletismo para mujeres*, De la Vega and Ballestros ignore football in their list of exercises. Granted, football was not a track and field event, but the educators included baseball and basketball. In both cases, their exercises focused on how women could improve their throwing form, but they could have included instruction or exercises in how to kick a ball, without endorsing football. Since their research came from North America, it is possible that football (e.g. soccer) was ignored by North American athletes, but this is unlikely. There was enough interest in football that the United States national team competed in the inaugural 1930 World Cup and earned the nation’s highest placement to date. Neither did any of the “Muchachas en Flor” expressed any interest in playing football, though some admitted that they enjoyed. It is possible that these women played football and is probable that women had played football from much earlier on but were largely silent about this in the national press. Among popular audiences, football was an “inappropriate” sport for women to play.

Even in the sports that popular culture deemed appropriate for women to play, they were not supposed to play as men did. Reporters like Ezequiel Perdomo and R. Mejía Angel focused on a female athlete’s gracefulness, gentility, and body shape. On the other hand, male athletes were praised for

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<sup>64</sup> “Mujeres Deportistas,” *El Sábado*, February 23, 1946

<sup>65</sup> “Es Indispensable Fomentar Los Deportes en la Mujer,” *Cromos* no. 794, December 26, 1931

displaying more aggressive and martial virtues such as their virility, passion, or knightliness. In the 1928 National Olympics, Gaitán extorted the bogotano teams to *fight* for the honor of their mother city. But female athletes did not fight, nor were they supposed to. Women were the guardians and caretakers of the home and other nurturing spaces. Sport could improve their gracefulness or gentility, but it should not prepare them to fight.

Coverage of the men's and women's basketball final in the Medellín Olympics provides a good example of how reporters crafted differing narratives of what men and women should get out of sports. On August 23, 1932, over five thousand people crowded into the Circo España to watch the two medellinese women's teams, Blanco y Verde (White and Green) and Blanco y Negro (White and Black) compete, followed by the men's final between Club Campestre and Bogotá. R. Mejía Angel, an antioqueño, published his account of the two matches in *El Tiempo*. In case readers did not know who the members of the women's teams were, Mejía Angel listed the lineup for both. The lineup read like a list of the most influential women in Medellín. Alternatively, Mejía Angel does not mention the lineup of the men's teams. Perhaps Mejía Angel assumed readers would be more familiar with the men's teams, or maybe the name recognition was stronger among the female teams.

Regardless of discrepancy, Mejía Angel was impressed with the skill both male and female athletes demonstrated in the finals. Mejía praised the skill and enthusiasm of the young women, especially those on the victorious team, Blanco and Verde, which played with "such clean lines." In other words, they were the team that played the best together, and could maintain their formation. By contrast, Mejía was equally impressed with the men's final, probably even more so since he dedicated more space to recounting the game. In contrast to the women's "clean lines" and skillful play, Mejía describes the men's final as aggressive and the athletes as ferocious. This is clearly meant to communicate the passion with which both sides played the game rather than an indication of actual violence. Elsewhere, Mejía praised the "scientific play" demonstrated by Club Campestre's star players.

Sport was meant to help men access the ferocity of the animalistic side but in a disciplined and controlled way, to animate but then use that strength in a constructive or “scientific” way.

While there is nothing inherently pejorative about the belief that men and women should develop different skills through playing sport, Mejía and other reporters also indicated that women’s sport was less important compared to male sport. As mentioned before, Mejía includes much more detail about the men’s final either because he found it more interesting or believed that his readers would be more interested in the men’s game. Both were relatively new sports, at least in Colombia, and so it was not as if men’s basketball was that much more developed than women’s basketball, but that is how Mejía tries to present the difference between the two. In his conclusion to the women’s final, Mejía made the comment that the two women’s teams were “much improved over the past few games,” and that they had “come so far in such a short amount of time.” Drawing attention to the improvement of a team rather than its achievement is a way of diminishing the achievement. Yet Mejía does not include any qualifier to the men’s final. There is an element of paternalism to Mejía’s coverage of the basketball finals and to women’s sports in general. Sport was useful if it made women more desirable companions but not for making them more capable citizens. In many ways this is entirely consistent with how Colombian reformers pursued modernity; trying to adopt the trappings of modernity while not disturbing the social order. It was fine for women to play sports just so long as they did not use it as a base for increased access to education or the public sphere.

### Women in the Public Sphere

In many ways politicians followed a similar path as the reporters, at least regarding the creation of the modern woman, without upsetting social and gendered norms. On the surface, the Liberal party supported greater female involvement in public life. In 1934, Colombian patrician López Pumarejo ascended to the presidency and declared constitutional reforms to expand Colombia’s democracy to include elements of Colombian society left out by previous Conservative administrations. López



Pumarejo declared that his “Revolución en Marcha” would also include female citizenship.<sup>66</sup> The issue of how much citizenship rights to grant Colombian women proved to be divisive in the Liberal party. Some issues proved easier to reach consensus than others, such as permitting women access to university and guaranteeing that women retained legal claim to her possessions in marriage.

While removing barriers to allow women into higher education was a big win, marriage law remained skewed in favor of husbands. In a 1936 reform to the penal code, Liberals made provisions that made women more culpable than men in issues of adultery, a crime in Colombia at the time. If a woman were caught in adultery, her husband could have her committed to a penitentiary establishment for a period of up to four years, but a woman could not do the same if her husband were caught.<sup>67</sup> While women could attend University, the Liberal party refrained from making public education co-ed. Germán Arciniegas was a student leader in the 1920s when he lamented the oppression women were subjected to. By the 1930s he had changed his mind and cautioned that co-ed education “would cause sexual disorders” in women.<sup>68</sup>

The problem, as Arciniegas saw it, was that the girls would become too distracted by boys and engage in sexual liaisons. Despite praising men for their virility, a popular conception was that girls were more emotional and so more given to flights of fancy and meaningless romance. A reporter for the weekly newspaper *El Sábado* celebrated the moral formation the Nuevo Gimnasio school imparted its female students. Regarding the sixteen graduates, the reporter mentioned that the “women know that life has a permanent reason to it, more than passing the time in various romantic endeavors that do not last.”<sup>69</sup> Separating the sexes was then about protecting boys and girls from themselves. The extra focus on girls is consistent with the disproportionate control exerted over Colombian women by Colombian

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<sup>66</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 281.

<sup>67</sup> Ricardo Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, Colección Ciclo básico; Variation: Colección Ciclo básico. (Bogotá, Colombia: Universidad de los Andes, 2011), 74-75.

<sup>68</sup> Arias Trujillo, 75.

<sup>69</sup> “La Certidumbre del Futuro: Las Dieciséis Bachilleras del 'Neuvo Gimnasio,' *El Sábado*, November 27, 1943

men.<sup>70</sup>

Some Liberals broke with the party at large and supported full citizenship rights for women. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was the most vocal and prominent representative of this progressive wing of the Liberal party. On the other side was Armando Solano, who represented the more moderate Liberals. Solano represented the majority opinion that believed that “latin culture would not tolerate a woman politician” or in any other official position for that matter.<sup>71</sup> Moderate Liberals viewed women as important to the nation but as serving it from the domestic sphere. Moderate Liberals found an ally in the newspaper *El Tiempo*, partly because the newspaper was owned by Eduardo Santos Montejó, who became president after Pumarejo and announced a pause to the “Revolución en Marcha.” In the 1930s and 1940s, *El Tiempo* ran articles disparaging the type of modern women who “shunned married life” or demanded the right to have a family “outside the sacred vehicle to do so.” Going even further, editorialists declared that if women got the right to vote, it would be the end to Colombian culture.<sup>72</sup> While modern women in North America and Britain might have some degree of political and public presence, Liberals like Solano saw no place for that type of modernity in Colombia.

When it became clear that the Liberal party had done all it was prepared to do for women’s rights, Colombian women began to organize on their own. In 1944, professional women from both parties formed La Unión Femenina (The Women’s Union) with the goal of pursuing civil rights, suffrage, and equal pay. In 1945, politically-minded women with socialist beliefs formed the Alianza Femenina (Women’s Alliance), which boasted a diverse cross-section of Colombian women. The Unión Femenina and the Alianza Femenina represented the largest female-led organizations of the 1940s. Together the organizations applied pressure on established politicians and gained allies with the newly formed Partido Socialista Democrática (Democratic Socialist Party). These female-led groups found limited initial

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<sup>70</sup> As an interesting sidenote, Argentine anarchists argued that separating the sexes was what led to sexual disorder.

<sup>71</sup> Arias Trujillo, *Historia de Colombia contemporánea, 1920-2010*, 75–76.

<sup>72</sup> Arias Trujillo, 76.

success, as Liberal and Conservative politicians were largely united against women's involvement in the political sphere. Oddly enough, Colombian women gained the most success under Colombia's brief period of military rule. President Rojas Pinilla, who led a coup against the arch-conservative Laureano Gómez, introduced a resolution to grant women's suffrage to the National Assembly in 1954 after successful lobbying by La Organización Femenina Nacional (National Organization of Women). The National Assembly approved the law that then needed to be verified via national referendum, which succeeded in 1957.<sup>73</sup>

The victories of the 1950s were made in no small part thanks to the Colombian women of the 1940s who made women's rights a popular topic through print media. When the biggest national paper, *El Tiempo*, made its stance against women's rights known, women created their own paper, *La Agitación Femenina* (Female Agitation) to present and disseminate their arguments for women's rights. Colombian women also found an unlikely outlet in the weekly "publication to service American culture and democracy," or so its motto read, *El Sábado*. The weekly paper not only ran the "Muchachas en Flor" column but frequently reserved a page for women to write articles to other women. While *La Agitación Femenina* was useful to organize already like-minded women *El Sábado* provided women an opportunity to win converts. What made *El Sábado* an unlikely outlet was the fact that one of the directors of the paper was Armando Solano, who was outspoken against women's political involvement. Perhaps Solano intended to use the women's column to highlight women who spoke out against women's involvement in the political sphere, of which there were more than a few. Or maybe he felt trapped by "being a service to American democracy" and felt he should include dissenting voices as well. Regardless, female writers took to *El Sábado* to promote female authors, greater access to education, and even greater involvement in politics. There were women like Doña Ana Restrepo de Corral, who ran a girls' school and generally agreed that the domestic sphere was the place for women to thrive. However, much like North

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<sup>73</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 281–82.

American women argued in the Temperance movement, the domestic sphere was larger than one's own home. On the other side of the spectrum is an author who identifies as SIM, perhaps her initials, who argued that women fully belong in the public sphere alongside men. Both women agreed that women should have greater involvement within the nation and that education and sport were two avenues for women to gain greater access.

In 1943, sixteen girls received their diplomas from the school Nuevo Gimnasio. In an optimistically titled article, "The Future is Certain," the editorial staff of *El Sábado* congratulated the female director of the school, Doña Celia Duque de Duque, on the wonderful achievement. It was only in 1936 that Lopez Pumarejo and his government guaranteed women's right to receive a high school diploma and pursue higher education. *El Sábado* editorial staff's comment that "Colombian girls would conquer higher and higher levels of intellectual achievement, as they have proven capable of based on their own power," emphasizing the new possibilities open to these women. The *El Sábado* editors also chose these sixteen girls because of the "fresh environment of healthy youthfulness that Nuevo Gimnasio just breathes." The open fields and vigilant gaze of the staff ensured that students left disciplined, with well-developed intellect, and solid moral formation.<sup>74</sup> Nuevo Gimnasio embraced the style of education that Luz Ramírez spoke highly of, one that focused on physical development as an aid to intellectual development.

While the Nuevo Gimnasio focused on educating urban women, Doña Ana Restrepo del Corral ran a girl's school in Bogotá and had a vision of female education that applied to rural women. In an interview for *El Sábado*, Restrepo del Corral argued for a vocational education that would prepare girls for working in the real world. Rural girls should learn how to work on the land while urban girls should learn how to make goods to benefit the home. But, Restrepo de Corral argued, education should also be progressive and not cast a vision for the world as it is but rather how it could be. Educators should

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<sup>74</sup> "La Certidumbre del Futuro: Las Dieciséis Bachilleras del 'Nuevo Gimnasio,'" *El Sábado*, November 27, 1943

present a “noble and embellished reality,” something that their students could strive to make a reality. At the same time, Restrepo del Corral also appealed to the idea that “land is source of life and national prosperity.” Restrepo del Corral then argued that if education is important to prepare a boy for the world, then it is even more so important to prepare a girl, who is not only responsible for caring for the home but “for the heart as well as the ability to create something from nothing.” Restrepo del Corral casts the home as an essential space for the Republic and casts women as caretakers of this essential place as well as the heart of the Republic.

But the home could be more than simply a site of rest and rejuvenation. Restrepo del Corral also argued in favor of domestic industry, a type of cottaging industry. She argued that since the world was busy making weapons of war, production of importation and domestic goods had declined. Colombian women could aid the push for import substitution from home-based industry. It is not just that women contribute to the moral wellbeing of the nation, but they could contribute to domestic production. In the wake of the Great Depression and the restrictive tariffs that stymied international trade, Colombians became more acutely aware of their dependence on foreign goods to meet their domestic needs.<sup>75</sup> Now that the industrial powers had retooled their factories for war and paused production of domestic goods, Restrepo del Corral claimed that Colombian women had the opportunity to pick up the slack and make those domestic goods from the home. While returning to a cottaging industry might not be practical or sustainable in an industrial world, Restrepo de Corral nonetheless expanded the view of the domestic domain, from the home to also include the economy as well.<sup>76</sup>

The domestic sphere need not to be limited to the home; the relatively new occupation of social worker provided woman an avenue into the professional world without the need to transgress gender norms. In an article for *El Sábado*, an unnamed social worker extols the virtues of her profession as the

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<sup>75</sup> I deal with the effects of the Great Depression on the Colombian economy more closely in the following chapter.

<sup>76</sup> Ana Restrepo del Corral, "La Educación de la Mujer En Colombia," interviewed by María Enciso *El Sábado* October 30, 1943.

“most praiseworthy reward for the soul of a woman.” While social workers were professionals, they primarily addressed issues of the home, turning broken families into “nuclear families” to produce “a new generation of healthy kids.” Social workers were decidedly modern as they were specialists taught in a “modern understanding of societal assistance” in order to apply “scientific understanding to feminine care.” The goal of the social worker was to eradicate social ills like “alcoholism and infant mortality,” as well as to reform “indecent families” for the greater good of the country.<sup>77</sup> Social workers then were employed by the state to perform functions that religious societies had and still did perform. The fact that social work was a “specialized” occupation spoke to training, and its focus on “feminine care” and addressing “indecent families” reserved it for women. Despite its valorization of gender roles, social work provided Colombian women the opportunity to enter the professional and public sphere in a role other than that of a wife or a mother. What is more, the work element of social work meant that middle-class women, who had access to education, could engage in a public life that had been primarily reserved for well-to-do women. Social workers were still limited to “women’s work,” taking care of the home and family. However, the immediate masculine presence of the home, the husband, was replaced with the abstract masculine presence of the state, the *patria*. But still, social work provided an avenue to increased independence.

While Restrepo del Corral and the unnamed social worker argued for an expanded domestic sphere, another writer proposed that women should be able to do whatever they want. The writer for *El Sábado* who identified herself as SIM argued that sports offered women a chance to prove that they were more capable than men had believed. What is more, she argued, Colombian women had always used sports to gain more recognition and more freedom. SIM cited the example of equestrianism and tennis as examples of sports men begrudgingly allowed women to play on the condition that they “wore thick dresses.” Women accepted these “concessions with a smile” but then set about “revolutionizing

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<sup>77</sup> “El Espejo reflecta,” *El Sábado* January 15, 1944.

the sport.”<sup>78</sup> It is odd that SIM did not mention basketball as a sport that saw the greatest female success to date, but such an omission probably relates to a general decline of interest in basketball.

SIM not only makes the case for how women can use sports to prove themselves but also attacks the notion of “appropriate” female sports. Her contempt was evident as she described how women were forced to dress to be equestrians, with “thick dresses” or to play tennis with special rackets and wide-brim hats. She also objects to a society that thinks it impossible for a woman to “run after a ball, fight for a trophy, or take part in the Olympics.” SIM does not mention football by name but does argue that women should be allowed to participate in “all facets of the world of sport” without “fear of public shame.” What is most interesting is that sport is not an end in and of itself for SIM but rather a means for women to gain greater involvement in public life. She maintains that women are “interesting whether or not they play sports and whether or not they have jobs.” In other words, women should have the option to play sports or the option to enter the workforce without the fear of social reprisals.

In the mid-1940s “freedom” was an important buzzword that was closely related to women’s rights. One of *El Sábado*’s services to Colombian democracy was to review new books and poems. Sofia Imber was one of *El Sábado*’s literature correspondents and she reviewed *My Life*, the autobiography of Isadora Duncan, a famous North American dancer, whom Imber characterizes as a woman who freed herself from society’s constraints through art. Inspired by Duncan’s book, Sofia Imber editorialized that a free woman “does whatever comes naturally to her: works, studies, goes to university, plays sports, loves, and relaxes.” What is more, Sofia Imber expresses a hopeful vision where a woman can do all the things she mentioned “without being combative or feeling like a heroine of a story.” In other words, Sofia Imber longed for a society where women are free to do what they want without giving it a second

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<sup>78</sup> “Mujeres Deportistas,” *El Sábado*, February 23, 1946

thought.<sup>79</sup> As Colombian reformers and sports enthusiasts viewed sports as a path to modernization rather than an end in and of itself, women like Sofia Imber and SIM viewed sport as a means for Colombian women to gain more freedom.

## Conclusion

In 1930s Colombia, women's sport enjoyed a burst of popularity because of a convergence of various factors. One factor was the Los Angeles 1932 Olympics where film studios like Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer publicized their starlets as athletes as well, helping to bring female sports into vogue. A larger factor was the emphasis the Liberal Government placed on sport as part of its larger modernization campaign. Physical educators had long advocated for the role of sport in creating a healthy, moral, and virile male citizens and wondered if sport could make a health, moral, and fertile female citizen as well. This increased public interest opened the door for Colombian women to take a greater part in the development of sport as promoters, Queens, and athletes.

At the same time, the Liberal Government selectively borrowed the parts of North American modernity that would fit in Colombian society without disturbing social or gendered norms. Physical educators, politicians, and reporters focused on how the modern woman was physically fit, which in turn made her healthy and beautiful. Colombian reporters downplayed the "education" part of physical education or the degree of independence that supported the modern woman's active lifestyle. Instead, these Colombian reformers emphasized that the modern woman used her health and fitness to bear healthy children and maintain a healthy home. The motherhood element of physical education is best demonstrated by De la Vega and Ballestros and their concern for damaging a women's uterus. While the modern Anglo-American women had the right to vote, most Colombian politicians sought to keep the Colombian woman out of the political sphere.

But ideas like modernity are hard to contain, and Colombian women seized on their own ideas

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<sup>79</sup> Sofia Imber, "Decimos Hoy: Isadora Duncán y el Feminismo," *El Sábado*, March 2, 1946.



of what it meant to be a modern woman. Early female sports stars like Luz Ramírez used their popularity to put the education back in physical education. Ramírez argued that if the Colombian government were serious at modernizing the Colombian population, they could not ignore women. In 1934 López Pumarejo allowed not just wealthy women to enter higher education, but middle-class women as well. Then in the 1940s these educated-professional women pursued their rights as modern citizens through professional and social organizations and the press. To counter narratives that women were unfit for politics, reporters like SIM argued that woman had proven themselves more successful athletes than male experts had deemed possible.

Colombian women used the language of modernity to argue for increased participation and adopted the same language of Colombian reformers and politicians, making their arguments harder to dismiss. In her study of the development of the Cuban narrative of a “raceless state,” Ada Ferrer argues that leaders of the Cuban revolution fashioned anti-racial rhetoric as a weapon against Spain. However, Ferrer also notes that many revolutionaries still wanted to maintain a race-based hierarchy in an independent Cuba. It was the multi-racial people that were part of the revolutionary army that forced the racist element of the army to enact anti-racial policies.<sup>80</sup> Ferrer’s larger point that empty rhetoric can still exert influence is applicable to Colombian sportswomen and rhetoric about modernity. Colombian politicians, physical educators, and reporters used language about the modern female to promote their vision of a modern Colombian woman who was attractive, fertile, and good housekeeper. Colombian women then argued that the modern female was also educated, professional, and political active. Colombian politicians and reporters, who conspired to keep women out of the public and political sphere, found themselves in a difficult position the modern population they sought to foster included modern women. As women’s groups like the Alianza Femenina and the Unión Femenina agitated for increased access to the public sphere, they did so from a position of political weakness but

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<sup>80</sup> Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868-1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 12–18.

rhetorical strength.

## Chapter 5

### The Bolivarian Games

In honor of the centenary of Simón Bolívar's death, Colombia hosted an international tournament inviting Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. The so-called Bolivarian Games were the brainchild of the bogotano Alberto Nariño Cheyenne, who had established the Comité Olímpico Colombiano (COC) two years prior in 1936. While the Bolivarian Games incorporated events typically found in the Olympics such as basketball, track and field, swimming, etc., the event held special significance for the development of Colombian football. In addition to Olympic events, the Bolivarian Games incorporated a FIFA-sponsored international football tournament, the first FIFA-sponsored tournament in Colombia. In addition to receiving recognition from an international organization, the football tournament featured a Colombian national team made up of players from different regions. The Bolivarian Games presented Colombian nationalists the opportunity to replicate the national sentiment present during the recent border-dispute turned quasi-invasion of Leticia by Peruvian mercenaries. The national team, ideally, represented the best Colombian athletes from each region who would perform symbolic combat against the best from Colombia's neighbors.

In addition to a nationalist contest, the Colombian politicians wanted to prove that the country could be a regional leader. Colombians had long been aware of the link between sports and diplomacy. Responding to the Uruguayan football team's victory in the 1924 Paris Olympics, a writer for *El Tiempo* remarked that winning gold did "more propaganda for Uruguay than all other diplomatic propaganda."<sup>1</sup> Back in 1924 the *El Tiempo* writer did not think it was possible for Colombia to even perform respectably on the international stage and so he suggested that the Colombian government focus on developing domestic tournaments first as a way to build up Colombian athletes. But an end goal of this domestic

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Morales Fontanilla, "El Surgimiento Del Campo Deportivo," 54.

sport development was always to participate in international tournaments. Before the start of the 1928 Cali Olympics, another writer for *El Tiempo* expressed his hope that “seeing how the youth have dedicated their body and soul for the love of sport, in a short time the people would see them represent Colombia at an international Olympics.”<sup>2</sup> The writer got his wish in 1932 when a runner, Jorge Perry Villate of Boyacá, became the first Colombian to compete in the International Olympics. That same year Aura Gutiérrez Villa of Antioquia became the first Colombian to compete in the Miss Universe Pageant. Slowly Colombia was gaining international recognition.

Colombia was also enjoying a period of economic prosperity, having effectively exited the Great Depression in 1932. The economic prosperity was thanks in no small part to Liberal presidents developing closer diplomatic ties with the United States. In 1936 as the price of coffee began to dip, Colombia entered a lucrative trade deal with the United States. As part of the deal, Colombia removed tariffs from 161 listed U.S. products and the U.S. removed duties from Colombian coffee, which caused coffee prices to stabilize.<sup>3</sup> This close association with the United States continued through World War II as Colombia took advantage of U.S. interest in protecting access to the Panama Canal to gain additional investment from the U.S. to modernize the Colombian army. Fearing German influence, U.S. officials helped the Colombian government buy a controlling stake in the first commercial airline in Latin America, Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transportes Aéreos (SCADTA), which became Avianca.<sup>4</sup> In 1948, Colombia hosted the ninth International American Conference, which created the Organization of American States (OAS).<sup>5</sup>

Ten years prior, Cheyenne designed the Bolivarian Games to prove that Colombia could play a major role in the norther Andean region. Cheyenne made sure to invite dignitaries from the neighboring

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<sup>2</sup> *El Tiempo*, December 17, 1928.

<sup>3</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 242.

<sup>4</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 165–66.

<sup>5</sup> Olivier Dabène, *The Politics of Regional Integration in Latin America: Theoretical and Comparative Explorations*, The Sciences Po Series in International Relations and Political Economy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 16.

countries to participate in the event and devised an elaborate ritual to demonstrate regional solidarity. Each dignitary brought an urn of dirt from a historic location in their home nation that related to South American independence. At the closure of the Bolivarian Games each dignitary would use his urn to extinguish the Bolivarian flame in symbolic action that Jorge Zalamea, director of the event, said demonstrated “the covering of the Olympic flame with our fraternal bonds [symbolized by the dirt] and joy and vigor of our youths.”<sup>6</sup> For Zalamea, the Bolivarian flame was an Olympic flame, but where the latter represented a type of universalism, at least in Coubertin’s understanding, the former represented a regional identity, one common among the Bolivarian nations.

The Bolivarian games represented a movement, initiated by Colombian tournament organizers, towards regional integration. Olivier Dabene defines regional integration as “a historical process of increased levels of interaction between political units (subnational, national, or transnational), provided by actors sharing common ideas, setting objectives, and defining methods to achieve them, and by so doing contributing to building a region.”<sup>7</sup> Dabene lists three stages of regional integration: actors agree on a range of issues of regional interests, the region acts in common interests of its members beyond classical defense of national interests, and finally a degree of institutionalization like the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALC).<sup>8</sup> Such associations can prove to be tenuous, for instance in 1969 Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela left the ALALC, claiming that the agreement benefited Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico more than them. The nations then formed their own free-trade zone which they named the Andean Community (CAN).<sup>9</sup> With the exception of Chile, which left CAN in the 1970s, the other nations of CAN -Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela- all sent representatives to the Bolivarian Games in 1938. The tournament represented the first stage of regional integration, where actors came together on a range of issues, in this sense, through sporting competition.

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<sup>6</sup> "Los Delegados Deportivos Fueron Recibidos Ayer Por El Presidente Santos," *El Tiempo* August 15, 1938.

<sup>7</sup> Dabène, *The Politics of Regional Integration in Latin America*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Dabène, 30.

<sup>9</sup> Dabène, 16.

The Bolivarian nations were not alone in using sport as a diplomatic tool. Maurice Roche argues that Olympic sites provides a type of theatrical religious framework, and the central stadium serves as a diplomatic territory.<sup>10</sup> Maurice notes that international mega-events included national elements, such as a speech by a head of state and a parade of athletes holding signs and flags that represent their nation, but also symbols of peaceful competition, such as releasing doves.<sup>11</sup> But such diplomacy did not always represent the interest of peace. Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party saw the 1936 Berlin Olympics as an opportunity to showcase the superiority of Aryan athletes and practice diplomatic intimidation. While Jesse Owens damaged this narrative by being the single most decorated athlete, German athletes earned the most medals overall. Barbara Keys argues that the main reason governments used international sports to promote national prestige had to do with the meritocratic nature of sport. Accepted rules created a universally accepted standard of achievement and so victorious athletes, and the nations they represented, earned immediate prestige.<sup>12</sup>

While hosting the Bolivarian Games was a significant achievement, both politically as well as for the development of sport in Colombia, the event was marred by poor a performance by the men's football team as well factional in-fighting within the Liberal Party. Keys noted that for smaller nations, like Colombia, winning was not necessarily the expectation, but being competitive was. However, the Colombian football team failed to win a single match while "El Incognita," the women's basketball team, won their tournament. While Javier Sáenz Obregón, Óscar Saldarriaga, Armando Ospina note that Decroly's metaphor of society as an organism was declining in popularity in Colombia, athletes still represented the nation in their success as well as their failure.<sup>13</sup> A writer for *El Tiempo* wrote of the "Problems with the National Football" and cited the lack of an official, and independent, coach who

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<sup>10</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 97–98.

<sup>11</sup> Roche, 98.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Javier Ospina Sáenz Obregón, *Mirar la infancia*, 269.

could make a truly worthy national team.<sup>14</sup> The writer leveled a complaint based on regionalism where each department of Colombia chose a player they wanted to contribute to the National team instead of a central coach making a team out of individual players. In addition to divisions about the team itself, there were two stadiums constructed for the event, one in the National University and one built by municipal authorities in Bogotá. The controversy about which stadium to use for the Bolivarian Games demonstrated that the tension between central and regional governments extended even to Bogotá, the seat of central power.

### Colombia and International Competition

In the 1920s and the 1930s it was relatively common for Latin American countries to host International regional tournaments as a means of building a stronger regional identity. At times, these events were well attended and other times less so. For instance, tournament organizers in Mexico hosted the Central American and Caribbean Games in 1926 but only Cuba and Guatemala attended from the region.<sup>15</sup> Mexican tournament organizers were likely trying to replicate what they saw in Brazil during the Latin American Games in 1922. The Confederaçao Brasileira de Desportos (Brazilian Sports Confederation) organized the regional event in honor of Brazil's centenary of Independence. The organization committee for the Latin American Games envisioned that their tournament would prepare Latin American Athletes for the International Olympics, much like the organizers for Colombia's National Olympic games.<sup>16</sup> A diverse set of Latin American nations participated in the games from neighbors, Uruguay and Argentina to other South American countries, Chile and Peru, and finally Caribbean countries, Mexico, and Cuba.

The Latin American Games also coincided with the Latin American tour of Pierre de Coubertin's right-hand man Henri Baillet-Latour. The CFB and other Latin American sport organizations wanted to

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<sup>14</sup> "Los Problemas del Fútbol Nacional," *El Tiempo*, August 23, 1938.

<sup>15</sup> Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 354.

<sup>16</sup> Cesar R. Torres, "The Latin American 'Olympic Explosion' of the 1920s: Causes and Consequences," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 7 (November 1, 2006): 1096, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523360600832320>.

show Baillet-Latour the quality of their athletes and to prove themselves ready to enter the international stage. In turn, Coubertin had sent Baillet-Latour to help promote the Olympic movement in Latin America. The tour produced mixed results. On one hand eight Latin American nations and one-hundred and twenty Latin American athletes participated in the 1924 Paris Olympics.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Baillet-Latour was critical of the official's knowledge of the rule book and lamented that neither the spectators nor the athletes demonstrated any sporting education.<sup>18</sup> Representatives from Peru and Cuba also worried that their citizens would not embrace the athletic events associated with the International Olympics. While the Cuban representatives believed their citizens could be competitive in baseball, they doubted their athletes would be competitive in other events.<sup>19</sup> Despite the pessimism, athletes from Peru and Cuba did compete in the 1924 Olympics, but despite interest in organizing another Latin American Games, the scheduled meeting to plan the event never took place and the hope of forming a Latin American bloc of athletes came to naught.

Returning to the Central American games organized by Mexican Officials, while the event only drew representatives from Cuba and Guatemala, just hosting the event was a success in and of itself. Joseph Arbena argued that the Central American Games was a way for Mexican officials to its neighbors and the world that Mexico was a potential international leader.<sup>20</sup> Despite the poor attendance, Baillet-Latour, then president of the IOC, nonetheless congratulated Mexico on the endeavor. Rather than focusing on Latin America as a single bloc, the IOC called for central and southern American conferences, still designed to prepare athletes for the International Olympics.<sup>21</sup> This experience demonstrated several realizations for national committees as well as the IOC. Baillet-Latour learned of the value of smaller regional associations, such as the Bolivarian nations, for the development of

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<sup>17</sup> Torres, 1089.

<sup>18</sup> Torres, 1098.

<sup>19</sup> Torres, 1102.

<sup>20</sup> Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 354.

<sup>21</sup> Torres, "The Latin American 'Olympic Explosion' of the 1920s," 1103.



Olympic athletes and ease of coordinating events. National organizations embraced the value of hosting these regional tournaments as a way of demonstrating their nation civility to their neighbors as well as to the international community.

It was not lost on Colombian nationalists and Colombian sporting enthusiasts that their athletes were not invited to participate in these regional tournaments. Before 1924 there was not that much interest in competing in international tournaments. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, Colombian perceptions begin to shift following the Uruguayan soccer team's gold medal finish in the Paris Olympics. Earlier I mentioned the writer for *El Tiempo's* appeal to the government to invest in infrastructure and national tournaments to get Colombian athletes ready for international competition. The writer drew on a belief that since they are both Latin, Uruguay's success could be Colombia's success if only Colombia could achieve the development of Uruguay. In a 1928 conference, Laureano Gómez, who had been Colombia's ambassador to Argentina, drew on this idea as he noted the lack of Colombian progress. He stated that "Argentina [along with Uruguay and Chile] is a natural example of a cultured human settlement. An immigrant arrives to find an open, clean, and healthy land." Gómez went on to say that Colombia had all the materials it needs to achieve that level of culture, it just needed the infrastructure to access it.<sup>22</sup>

It was a common belief among Colombians that their nation's geography was an impediment to their progress. Journalist and diplomat Eduardo Caballero Calderón summed up this sentiment in his 1943 Día de la Raza speech. He wrote, "The Spaniard that sleeps inside of us has been attacked by the environment and the climate. The tropics have assaulted his indomitable will and the cordilleras have disarmed his ambition for domination."<sup>23</sup> While Calderón used language of environmental determinism he was not being deterministic as he concluded that the American soil was producing a new man, in an homage to Vasconcelos' "cosmic race." The larger point was that Colombian nationalists often felt

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<sup>22</sup> Laureano Gómez, *Interrogantes sobre el progreso de Colombia; conferencias dictadas en el Teatro Municipal de Bogotá*. (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Revista Colombiana, 1970), 38–40.

<sup>23</sup> Eduardo Caballero Calderón "'La Fiesta de La Raza,'" *El Sábado* October 9, 1943.

developmentally behind other Latin American nations, which they blamed on geographic realities.

Colombia's international success in women's basketball was mirrored by international failure of its male football teams and this embarrassment might also have contributed to a notable decline in the importance of football, at least among some. In spring of 1932, a few months before the Medellín Olympics, a young Panamanian sports team, Sporting Panama, toured Colombia. The tour had two main objectives, to improve relations between Panama and Colombia and to generate additional revenue to stadium owners. On the first account there were still plenty of Colombians, such as the Conservative leader Laureano Gómez, who were bitter about Panamanian independence from Colombia. On the second front, Sporting Panama toured the major Colombian cities drawing large crowds who wanted to see their hometown favorites take on the visitors and hopefully win back some national pride. Given the special nature of the event, ticket prices were somewhat inflated and with the higher ticket price came higher expectations for the match.<sup>24</sup>

Building the excitement of the match worked well with the diplomatic mission of the Panamanian team, as the press wanted to build up the excitement of the match. Sporting Panama's first stop was in Cali and a local sport editor, Ezequiel Perdomo, described the team and what the rest of the country could expect. First and foremost, Perdomo described the team as "gentlemanly," which reflected well on the visiting team and the Republic which they represented. Perdomo went on to describe the match, not so much in the details of what transpired but more in a symbolic nature. It was not as important that the Cali team lost or that the Panamanian team played without four of its best players due to illness. Perdomo emphasized that no penalties were called and the caleño fans applauded the visitors from their "Sister Republic." The lack of incident meant that the match was a diplomatic win for the two nations.<sup>25</sup>

In Bogotá, reports of the match between Cali and Panama were treated with skepticism.

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<sup>24</sup> "La Decadencia del Fútbol Bogotano," *El Tiempo*, June 13, 1932.

<sup>25</sup> Ezequiel Perdomo, "El Deportivo Panama," *El Tiempo*, May 30, 1932.

Antonio César Gaitán refrained from making disparaging comments on the caleño team's performance but let his readers know that he had disparaging thoughts. Gaitán made a diplomatic dismissal of the caleño teams in writing that Deportivo Panama is a new team and not from a country of the sporting caliber of Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Perú. In this case, the fact that the caleño team lost should be no cause for alarm and Gaitán was clearly expecting that the bogotanos would be favored. The Bogotá teams after all had been around longer than two years. If Gaitán was worried about anything, it was that the two teams from Bogotá were somewhat demoralized and in decline. He hoped that the international competition might reinvigorate and reanimate the city for football.<sup>26</sup>

The two matches played in Bogotá proved to be a great disappointment to bogotano fans and they generated multiple complaints revealing that fans were already investing identity and pride in their teams. The first match was between Sporting Panama and Bogotá's division one team, Internacional. What followed was sixty-five minutes of mediocrity which ended in the Panamanian's victory. The match was shortened out of deference to the Panamanians who were not acclimated to Bogotá's higher altitude, which also served to excuse any sluggishness on behalf of the visiting players. However, to the press and fans alike, such sluggishness was unforgivable for the bogotanos who should have been used to altitude. After the game, Gaitán sent an open letter to the director of the Internacional, Luis Eduardo Paez, saying that a second division game between no name players was more interesting and he needed to guide his players better. On the other side the press and fans had nothing but praise for the Panamanian team. Deportivo Panama was clearly the superior team thanks to their teamwork and the serenity of their players.<sup>27</sup> The Panamanian's serenity indicated their athleticism in that they were able to control their emotions and operate objectively, traits that Colombian reformers prized and felt were lacking among the Colombian population. Reporters highlighted the serenity of the Panamanians as an example for Colombian readers and fans to follow.

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<sup>26</sup> Antonio Cesar Gaitán, "La temporada internacional de futbol," *El Tiempo*, May 30, 1932.

<sup>27</sup> "La Decadencia del Futbol Bogotano," *El Tiempo*, June 13, 1932.

There were two major tendencies evident in Deportivo Panama's tour: a type of pessimism concerning Colombian sports, especially football, and the potential solution of looking to outside for help rather than inside. Despite expecting to achieve victory over the young Panamanian side, there were no reports of fan violence against the visitors. In fact, the press in Cali and Bogotá noted the local fans warm reception of the visitors. It is hard to imagine that visiting teams from other parts of Colombia would receive such a reception. This is not to say that Colombian fans were expecting to lose; Gaitán clearly thought that the Bogotá teams would have no problem defeating the young Panamanians. When the visiting team turned out to be better than they expected, the bogotano fans accepted the fact almost fatalistically. Bogotano fans found it easy to believe that the visitors were just better. This pessimism was more pronounced in the Bolivarian Games 1938, when Colombia's national team failed to win a single game. After a loss to the Peruvian team, which an international observer attributed to inexperience, Colombian journalists noted that the fans behaved admirably and continued to applaud the Peruvian team in future matches.<sup>28</sup> The Peruvian team was the favorite of the tournament and the crowd reaction somewhat matches how caleño fans reacted when their team lost to Santa Marta, the favorites, in the 1928 Olympics.

The second tendency is related, and that is the very beginnings of a shift from improving domestic play to looking for foreign talent to help develop Colombian athletics, first as coaches and trainers and later as players. Even before the match was played, Gaitán noted that Internacional lacked motivation to play at the highest level. Not only did they lack motivation but interest in the sport was declining, at least among the players. Gaitán hoped that the prospect of international competition would help motivate the bogotanos to keep on improving and for football to continue to develop. Despite the interest in creating a national league after the 1928 Cali Olympics, no national league survived for long. Transportation across Colombia was still cost-prohibitive, at least for weekly travel.

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<sup>28</sup> "La cultura del público," *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

Another problem with developing a national league was intra-departmental rivalry. Which department would get the honor of hosting the national league? Atlántico was the obvious choice since the costeño style was the most prized in Colombia but then who would administrate the league? Carlos Valderrama, president of popular club Millionarios, reflected on the development of Colombian football from his vantage point in 1946, right before professionalization. Valderrama remembers that Colombia should have had a national organization as early as 1930, “but quarreling and dislike has frustrated its development and individual interests got in the way.”<sup>29</sup>

International matches had the opportunity to provide what the Peruvian paramilitaries provided in 1932, an external foe which Colombians had to unite against to achieve victory. However, as the tour of Deportivo Panama proved, foreign teams that beat municipal club teams did not elicit the same kind of national outcry. Gaitán interpreted the Panamanian defeat of the caleño teams as no cause for concern, implying that the bogotano teams were better. But more importantly, the Panamanian team did not elicit cries from Gaitán or others to avenge Colombian honor and national pride, instead his shame was that the Bogotá teams did not live up to his expectations of them. What Colombian sporting authorities needed was an international tournament, like the Bolivarian Games, where a Colombian national team competed against other national teams.

### Urbanization and National Leagues, or the Lack Thereof

In 1934 Colombia also elected a new president, Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938; 1942-1945), who pursued more aggressive reforms than his predecessor Olaya Herrera. López Pumarejo was from a wealthy banking family and worried that the unchecked capitalism of the 1920s, with its exploitation of Colombia’s working class, would send those workers into the hands of the growing socialist movement. Pumarejo was a great admirer of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and created a

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<sup>29</sup> Carlos A. Valderrama, “Fútbol en Bogotá: Millionarios,” *El Sabado*, January 26, 1946.

Colombian version of the New Deal called the *Revolución en la Marcha*.<sup>30</sup> More so than Olaya Herrera, López Pumarejo introduced protective tariffs, long a staple of the Conservative Party, and continued to encourage investment in domestic industry, begun by Olaya Herrera. In 1939 there were 4,467 industrial businesses in Colombia, over half of which were created in the 1930s.<sup>31</sup> These new businesses encouraged higher rates of emigration to the cities from the Colombian countryside. Between 1930 and 1951 the populations of Bogotá and Medellín doubled while Cali and Barranquilla's populations quadrupled.<sup>32</sup> As Colombia began to urbanize, slowly, 70% of the population was still rural by 1949, new middle-class opportunities emerged. The urban population supported the proliferations of corner stores, laundromats, and cafés expanding the middle class. According to the 1951 census, 45% of the urban population of Colombia was middle-class and 31% were factory workers, *obreros*.<sup>33</sup> At least 45% of the urban population had access to discretionary income, which created even more business opportunities to relieve the emergent class of their extra money.

While amateur sports can be practiced anywhere, professional sports require an urban population that has access to discretionary income. Urban environments provided not only the infrastructure to sustain a modern stadium, electricity, access to the stadium through roads, and running water for bathrooms, but the city also contained a dense population tied to the consumer market.<sup>34</sup> Christopher Thomas Gaffney also describes how stadiums serve as central parts of Latin American urban geography *Temples to the Earthbound Gods*.<sup>35</sup> In Colombia, many stadiums were also parts of Keynesian economic policies aimed to counter the Great Depression. Construction companies

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<sup>30</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 185.

<sup>31</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 275.

<sup>32</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, 276.

<sup>33</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, 278.

<sup>34</sup> Brenda Elsey discussed how Chilean immigrant neighborhoods would build a stadium and pick up football in order to gain access to the city's utility grid in Brenda Elsey, *Citizens and Sportsmen: Fútbol and Politics in Twentieth-Century Chile* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Thomas Gaffney, *Temples of the Earthbound Gods: Stadiums in the Cultural Landscapes of Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

especially benefited from government spending and in Bogotá alone the companies saw 40% more growth in the years immediately following the Great Depression (1933-1936) than even at the height of the coffee boom (1926-1929).<sup>36</sup> Stadiums were part of this governmental focus as three large stadiums, Pascual Guerrero (Cali), Romelio Martínez (Barranquilla), and El Campín (Bogotá), were all built in the 1930s. As mentioned in Chapter 3, one of the reasons that Colombian states invested in stadium construction was to generate income by taxing ticket sales and renting out the space to host matches. However, many Colombian elites saw stadiums as a way of incorporating newly arrived rural migrants into a modern, urban, Colombian society. From the vantage point of 1948, a reporter for *El Sábado*, Ardan, reflected on how civilized Colombia was and how “confident Colombians were in their own national identity.” Ardan singled out the numerous “big stadiums, sports fields, gyms, and running tracks” as proof of Colombia’s civilized status.<sup>37</sup> Stadiums along with the crowds that flock to them served as signs of Colombian progress, at least to Colombian elites and the press. In many ways this connects to Keith Brewster’s characterization of the Mexican reformers who “believed that, if carefully orchestrated, the promotion of mass sports could help to bring a recalcitrant nation under control.”<sup>38</sup> While Colombian elites were not as concerned with bringing the nation under control, at least not in the late 1930s, but they still wanted to foster nationalist sentiment.

As mentioned earlier, Argentina, and Buenos Aires in particular, was one source of inspiration for Colombians not only in culture but also in the world of sport. In 1947 Andrés Rodríguez published an account of his trip to Buenos Aires. He was impressed that the match between rivals Boca Juniors and River Plate drew 100,000 people to the stands even for an early morning start. Rodríguez was even more impressed with how many sports clubs there were through the city and the amenities they offered. He noted that many were large, as much as nine stories tall, and in addition to gyms, basketball courts, and

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<sup>36</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 244.

<sup>37</sup> “Un Paisaje en Colores,” *El Sábado*, September 25, 1948.

<sup>38</sup> *Sporting Cultures*, 3.

pools these clubs also had reading rooms, theaters, restaurants, and other public amenities.<sup>39</sup> While Rodríguez does not directly compare the sporting situation in Buenos Aires with that in Colombia, but his account implied how much more developed Argentina's sporting culture was to Colombia's. The comparison is understandable given the River Plate region's international prominence especially concerning football.

An important aspect of Argentina's sporting development in comparison with Colombia's was a football organization with tradition and significant administrative power. The Argentine Football Association (AFA) was initially established by a Scottish expatriate Alexander Watson Hutton in 1893 to coordinate a football league between English high schools. In 1912 the administration of the league passed into Argentine hands and in 1913 the first Argentine club, Racing, won the league.<sup>40</sup> At the same time the AFA had an embarrassment of riches in the sense that there were 300 registered clubs that wanted to participate in the league. To weed out some of the clubs the AFA set a requirement in its 1915 Rules and Regulations that each club have its own field to play on to be accepted into the league. The Rules and Regulations further stipulated stadiums should be equipped with separate lockers and changing rooms be available for visitors and the home team.<sup>41</sup> Since Buenos Aires was already well developed, buying an unused plot of land was difficult and expensive. Some clubs, like River Plate, moved to the suburbs where land was cheaper. Other clubs, like Boca Juniors, expanded the number of members and used dues to finance land purchase. However, once clubs built their stadium all relied on ticket sales in some way to support ongoing maintenance costs. This fact incentivized clubs to secure good players who would draw in a crowd, and one of the ways to secure good players was to pay

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<sup>39</sup> Andrés Rodríguez "Buenos Aires, gran centro de atracciones," *El Sábado*, March 10, 1947.

<sup>40</sup> Pablo Alabarces, *Fútbol y patria: el fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2002), 51.

<sup>41</sup> Estatutos y Reglamento General 1915, <http://biblioteca.afa.org.ar/libros.html#> as seen on 3/10/2014, 27.



them.<sup>42</sup> In 1931, seeking to gain popular support after his coup, Félix José Uriburu recognized football as a professional sport and afforded athletes' legal protections as workers. In Argentina then, sport developed first as a private business organization and then became more politically integrated following Uriburu's professionalization of football.

By contrast, Colombia's first successful league of not was the Asociación de Fútbol Colombiana (Adefútbol), which was formed as late as 1936. Adefútbol did enjoy recognition from FIFA, but its initial duty was to aid the development of departmental leagues, rather than national leagues. The other issue was the fact that the weak central government feared giving private organizations too much power, as evidenced by Ospina's closure of Jorge Wills Pradilla's *Asociación Deportivo Colombiano* (Colombian Sport Association) in 1927 and assertion that the state had legal control over sporting events.<sup>43</sup> The central state used the Instituto Nacional de Educación Física (National Institute of Physical Education), which was created in 1925, to organize and finance major tournaments but had little interest in financing yearly leagues. At the outbreak of World War II, Colombian politicians, who were beginning to see signs of hyper-inflation, decided to stop funding sports tournaments and closed the Instituto Nacional de Educación Física. Money that had gone towards the development of sport went elsewhere at a time when sport had reached the peak of its popularity, but more on that later.<sup>44</sup>

The financial burden of building stadiums to house modern sport largely fell on municipal or national authorities which created a potential conflict of interest between central and regional authorities. Since 1928 the standard policy had been that municipal authorities financed construction of the stadium and the central government would cover the cost for the event. For example, to honor the fourth centenary of the founding of Cali, López Pumarejo provided funds to hold an international

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<sup>42</sup> If interested in Argentine football, Julio Frydenberg is a good authority on the subject. Julio Frydenberg, *Historia social del fútbol: del amateurismo a la profesionalización*, Historia y cultura (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 23–24.

<sup>44</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyne, "Deportes en Colombia," *El Sabado*, July 29, 1944.

tournament in the newly constructed Estadio Pascual Guerrero, which replaced Galilea in 1937. The stadium was named after the Colombian poet, who made the request to the municipality of Cali to build the stadium. While the municipality of Cali took a large amount of the financial responsibility for the stadium's construction, the national government sponsored the inaugural event; an international football tournament featuring teams from Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, and Argentina. López Pumarejo's government spent \$160,000 via the Instituto de Educación Física.<sup>45</sup> The situation initial worked well as both the central government as well as regional governments could take credit for hosting the event. As sport continued to gain in popularity and more and more people bought tickets to events, the situation became skewed in the department's favor as it received tax revenue from the event that the central government did not. It is likely for that reason that when it came to the Bolivarian Games the government set aside \$156,000 for the games and another \$100,000 to build a stadium in the National University, that was under control of the central government.<sup>46</sup>

Before discussing the Bolivarian games, the tournament held at Pascual Guerrero was the first international football tournament hosted in Colombian and the first time that Colombia fielded a national football team. Barbara Keys notes that globally, it was only in the early 1920s that nations began to field national teams which served as "a synecdoche for the nation."<sup>47</sup> The fact that Colombia fielded a team in 1937 was behind the global average but also represented a milestone in the development of Colombian sport. It was nine years earlier that the writer for *El Tiempo* hoped the National Olympics would prepare Colombian youth to represent the nation in the International Olympics.<sup>48</sup> While the five-team tournament was not the Olympics, it was an international event at which the Colombian youth were representing the nation. However, the national team did not immediately have a nationalizing effect among fans nor sport reporters. If anything, in the increasingly

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<sup>45</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyne, "Deportes en Colombia"

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> *El Tiempo*, December 17, 1928.

politicization of Colombian society, fans questioned why certain players were chosen from certain departments and why not others. Without a national league, fans only development connections with players that they saw regularly, which is to say within their own department or city. Another problem was that Colombia did not have a designated coach for this national team who could make all the decisions for who gets selected for the national team. The failure of the Colombian team in Cali was a foreshadowing of their larger failure at the Bolivarian Games the following year.

Related to the national team, the caleño games demonstrated the importance of international relations in the development of Colombian sports. Throughout the 1930s Colombia sought to improve its relations with its neighbors while also increasing its international standing in general. As early as 1931, the Barranquilla football association, that unofficially ran a “national” league, appealed to FIFA for international recognition. FIFA finally granted the request in 1936 and the association changed its name to the more national sounding, Asociación Colombiana de Fútbol (Adefutbol).<sup>49</sup> While the name change did not will a national league into existence, it did connect Colombian football more closely to South American football at large. The year after Colombia fielded its first national team in Cali, the country played host to the Bolivarian games in 1938 and once again called on its team to play for the honor of their home country, a task the year-old team was not up for, but more on that later. With the FIFA association, along with the improved infrastructure it became more and more common for foreign teams and players to come through Colombia.

### Bolivarian Games 1938: Tension Between National and Municipal Authority

While the caleño games of 1937 celebrated Cali’s four-hundred-year history, the 1938 Bolivarian games were designed to demonstrate that Colombia was ready to be a leader in the region. In 1936 Alberto Nariño Cheyne, the director of Instituto Nacional de Educación Física founded the Colombian Olympic Committee (COC) with the purpose of organizing a semi-regular tournament between nations

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<sup>49</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 29.

of the Bolivarian region: Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia. Cheyenne was following the precedent set by Brazil and the Latin American games of 1922 and Mexico with the Central American and Caribbean games in 1926. These regional tournaments would prepare athletes from those nations for the international Olympics.<sup>50</sup> As Joseph Arbena notes, the act of hosting the games indicated that the host country was civilized enough to do so and was capable of being a regional leader.<sup>51</sup> International recognition was certainly Cheyenne's goal as he submitted a request to the IOC for official recognition to a regional athletics competition between to be held in 1938. The IOC agreed and set apart a special "Bolivarian zone" creating a formally recognized region.<sup>52</sup>

Official recognition by the IOC not only granted credibility to the COC, but it also gave Colombian diplomats the opportunity to improve relationships with neighboring countries. In the first half of the twentieth century Colombia had a tense relationship with two of its neighbors. At the beginning of the century the United States facilitated Panamanian independence which Colombia did not official recognize until 1922, and only then because the U.S. paid Colombia to do so.<sup>53</sup> The second neighbor was Peru, who had claimed the Colombian city of Leticia in 1932 and Colombia had only reclaimed the city in 1934.

On the closing day of the Bolivarian games each delegate would use their urn of dirt to extinguish the Olympic flame in a symbol of Bolivarian unity. Both the symbolism inherent in the ceremony as well as the invocation of a shared past speaks to the historic process of regional integration. While no free trade zones came out of the tournament, the same regular games increased peaceful interaction between the Bolivarian nations including the sharing of common ideas and past.<sup>54</sup> These shared cultural experiences laid the groundwork for increased regional integration in the future.

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<sup>50</sup> Torres, "The Latin American 'Olympic Explosion' of the 1920s," 1096.

<sup>51</sup> Arbena, "Sport, Development, and Mexican Nationalism, 1920-1970," 354.

<sup>52</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyenne, "Deportes en Colombia"

<sup>53</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 161.

<sup>54</sup> Dabène, *The Politics of Regional Integration in Latin America*, 10.

In 1969, the Bolivarian nations, and Chile, broke away from the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALAC) to form their own Andean Trade Region (GRAN), and Chile left a few years later leaving only the Bolivarian nations.<sup>55</sup>

However, the Bolivarian games were not an unqualified success for the COC and tension between bogotano municipal authorities and the central government nearly caused an international incident. The issue was that the event was going to be held in the capital, Bogotá, which in 1936 did not have a modern stadium that could fit all the dignitaries as well as the thousands of fans needed to make a “mega-event.” Since dignitaries from across the Bolivarian zone would attend the games, it was important to Cheyne and Colombian politicians to demonstrate that Colombia was a modern country. However, in the second half of the 1930s, cracks began to form in the Liberal party. Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, the mayor of Bogotá and self-made man from a lower-middle class family did not think that the Liberals were doing enough to stamp out the Oligarchy. Even the reform minded López Pumarejo was a banker who came from a wealthy family and enjoyed the finer things in life. While López Pumarejo spoke for the workers, it was clear that he was not from among them.<sup>56</sup> Eliecer Gaitán on the other hand did come from the humble beginnings and enjoyed popular support especially among urbanites, a growing minority of Colombians. In the early 1930s, Eliecer Gaitán left the Liberal Party to form the UNIR with the purpose of acquiring land reform for rural peasants, campesinos. When López Pumarejo passed land reform legislation, Eliecer Gaitán dissolved his UNIR party and returned to the Liberals who in return rewarded him by making in the mayor of Bogotá.<sup>57</sup> Despite being back in the party Gaitán was frequently at odds with his fellow party members.

While the COC oversaw the organization and running of the Bolivarian games, the money for the project came from the Instituto Nacional de Educación Física. In 1937, the Colombian government

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<sup>55</sup> Dabène, 18.

<sup>56</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 185.

<sup>57</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 255.

budgeted \$80,000 for the Institute with another \$90,000 set aside for the Bolivarian games. From those two funds the Institute budgeted \$156,000 for the games, a little less than the tournament in Cali. While the funds covered the cost of hosting the events the Institute requested another \$100,000 to build a stadium in the Universidad Nacional, which the Institute oversaw.<sup>58</sup> Despite the additional invest the stadium, called Universitaria, was woefully undersized for an international tournament with only 12,000 seats available. The problem was that the stadium was designed for use of the students at the university and collegiate rather than professional games.

In the meantime, Eliecer Gaitán secured \$250,000 to construct a 23,500-seat municipal stadium that would be run by the city and not a university, much like when the Medellín council purchased Libertadores.<sup>59</sup> Gaitán hired a local engineer Luis Eduardo Mora Anguiera to run the project and contracted with local companies Diehaus and Trabajos Urbanos to lay the football fields and build the running tracks. Despite securing the funds to build the structure, the project would not have begun had not Luis Camacho Matiz not donated 20 blocks of land from the family's *finca* (a combination farm/weekend cottage) to be used for the stadium. To get a sense of the role of a *finca* in Colombian society, the Camacho family's *finca* was named after the activity they would do there, Campín or "Camping." There was also a sense of philanthropy and so the stadium was named after the Camacho patriarch, Nemesia Camacho or "El Campín."<sup>60</sup> The irony then is that Gaitán who made a point of being anti-oligarchy still relied on certain elements of the oligarchy to advance his projects.

In 1937, two stadiums were being built for the Bolivarian games, one by the Institute for Physical Education and one by the city of Bogotá. Problems arose when construction of El Campín fell behind schedule. In January of 1938, the director of the Bolivarian Games, Colonel Piedrahita, spoke with the lead architect, Anguiera, about the status of the municipal stadium and to reassure him that

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<sup>58</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyne, "Los Deportes en Colombia," *El Sábado*, July 29, 1944

<sup>59</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>60</sup> Galvis Ramírez, *100 años de fútbol en Colombia*, 30–32.

the COC still planned to use El Campín instead of Universitario. However, a few days later Colonel Piedrahita changed his mind and announced they would instead focus their efforts on getting Universitario ready for the Bolivarian games.<sup>61</sup> This set off a power struggle between municipal and national authorities. Anguiera criticized Piedrahita in the press for deliberately “sabotaging” his stadium. Disobeying the calls to stand down, Anguiera continued to work on El Campín hoping to complete the project in time for the Bolivarian games in August. When reporters from *El Tiempo* asked Anguiera why they continued work knowing that the stadium would not be used, the engineer invoked municipal authority. “The city wanted to the stadium to be finished,” argued Anguiera, “because Universitario was mainly going to be used by students of the Universidad Nacional.” El Campín could play host to visiting teams as well as be used for local teams, which is to say it could be used to by the larger public, as spectators. Anguiera also hoped that at least the football field would be ready for the more anticipated international football matches of the Bolivarian Games.<sup>62</sup>

Despite a great effort on the parts of the workers to finish El Campín, Piedrahita remained committed to using Universitario for the games. When the former was nearing completion, Piedrahita maintained that the fields were not ready for the tournament. One of Anguiera’s colleagues, Doctor Arciniegas, asked that an independent study be carried out to determine the fitness of the field for play, but Piedrahita refused both to do the study as well as to change his mind. On August 5, 1938, President López Pumarejo welcomed delegates from the five Bolivarian nations to the 12,000-seat Universitario, whose staff proved unprepared to receive the foreign press and the thousands who gathered to see the event. Fans were met by ticket counters who did not know the price of admission and even if one was able to get a ticket, there were no ushers to guide people to their seats nor were the seats clearly marked. The bottleneck at the entrance and the lack of seating guidance meant that people sat in

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<sup>61</sup> L.E. Mora Anguiera "Con Un Desfile de Policia Se Proyecta Inaugurar el Campín," *El Tiempo* August 11, 1938

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

clumps which gave the impression that opening event was not well attended.<sup>63</sup> Not only was this bad for publicity as fan attendance at modern events was still a marker of a civilized population and the lack of fans reflected poorly on the home country.

Along with not communicating the price of admission, the Universitario staff failed to issue press badges for visiting journalists. This oversight was even more grievous since the Bolivarian games were designed to enhance regional identity and cooperation. It was essential that the foreign press be able to report on the day's activities to their local press so readers at home could follow along in the spectacle. To make matters worse for Universitario, even when the journalists managed to get through the bottleneck at the ticket counters, they found their box seats occupied by fans who got there before them.<sup>64</sup>

A week into the games Colonel Piedrahita still refused to move the games from Universitaria to El Campín which was unquestionably finished. Colonel Piedrahita argued that it would be bad form to change stadiums in the middle of a tournament and stated that the Peruvian players did not want to change stadiums and the other delegations agreed. Anguiera countered this claim by saying that he knew of several delegations who had a chance to tour El Campín and were pleased with its construction. However, Anguiera could not produce any witnesses to support his claim and so the issue stalled, which favored Piedrahita. As of Thursday August 11, 1938, *El Tiempo* reported that El Campín was set to officially open on the following Monday with a procession by the police, a muted opening to a large municipal stadium.<sup>65</sup>

However, public opinion turned against Colonel Piedrahita over the weekend, and on Monday, El Campín was inaugurated with as much fanfare as the start of the Bolivarian Games. Instead of a procession by the municipal police, the President of the Republic led a procession of the highest sporting

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<sup>63</sup> "El Desorden desorganizado," *El Tiempo*, August 6, 1938.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> L.E. Mora Anguiera "Con Un Desfile de Policia Se Proyecta Inaugurar el Campín,"



authorities along with the bogotano elite. Next, the National Choir and National Conservatory played the Hymn of the games while the Olympic Llama, an animal associated with the Andean region, finished its trek from Universitario to El Campín. Finally, a runner carried the Olympic flame from Universitaria to El Campín, which represented the Olympic spirit passing from the former to the latter location. Once the Olympic Llama is safely within the stadium, President Santos raised the Colombia flag followed by the heads of the other delegations raising their country's flag and the tournament would continue in a new venue.<sup>66</sup>

In the battle of which stadium to use, the municipal ended up victorious over the national on the merit of being more adaptable and more organized. The problem with modern sport is that it is confined to a stadium and in an era before television, one needed to go to the game to experience it. Even in the age of Television and streaming, thousands choose to go to stadiums and see the game in person. While Piedrahita and the COC wanted to ensure a national backdrop for the Bolivarian games, the fact of the matter was that the nation would not get to enjoy Universitaria. On the other hand, El Campín benefited from the fact that it was made by bogotanos for the use of bogotanos, there was clear ownership and benefit. For example, Bogotá's Department of Transportation rearranged bus schedules and re-routed the flow of traffic so that visitors to El Campín did not have to worry about getting run over by cars.<sup>67</sup> El Campín was a larger and more modern stadium in large part because Eliecer Gaitán could secure more money to build it. Granted the Colombian government had access to more money than any one city, but still needed to justify expenditures based on how it benefitted the country. Gaitán could raise more money because he was building a municipal stadium that will benefit the municipality long after the Bolivarian Games had closed.

### Bolivarian Games: Regionalism

But even if the municipality won out in the battle of the stadiums, it was not as if the nation lost

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<sup>66</sup> "Hoy a las 10 se Inaugura el Estadio de 'El Campín,'" *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1938.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

out. The Bolivarian games, much like the National Olympics, afforded the COC a chance to project an image of itself to its neighbors as well as to itself.<sup>68</sup> The change of stadiums presented another opportunity for the COC to present an image of regional unity. President López Pumarejo delivered an opening speech that the games would be good for the development of sport in each nation participating and “would strengthen the fraternal bonds of the nations who shared in the spirit of the liberator, Simón Bolívar.”<sup>69</sup> Following the example of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, all the processions, speeches, and ceremonies were intended for mass consumption, and so detailed itinerary was given to the press so that they could publish it in their morning editions. In a Gellnerian sense, a regional identity would only work if the reporters convinced the wider population that it existed and that they were indeed a part of it.<sup>70</sup>

As the opening processions were highly symbolic affairs, they granted a window into where Colombians thought sport fit within their society. Still seen by elites as an activity to help develop healthy youths, the COC gave Colombian students prominent roles to play in the opening procession, right behind the president. The president of the Republic marched at the head of the procession along with the tournament organizers; and there were followed by the “disciplined” march of the military school students; the Marina cadets who “looked like they belonged in the US navy, so perfect were their uniforms and discipline;” and then marched the Institute of Physical Education.<sup>71</sup> The hesitancy to link militarism and physical education during the 1928 Olympics was all but forgotten in 1938. Not only to cadets from the military school march near the head of the procession, reporters in *El Tiempo* draw a clear connection between sport and the “discipline” these students show. Once again discipline stood in contrast to being ruled by passions and was the mark of a good: soldier, athlete, and citizen.

Another element to note about the opening procession is the reporter’s reference to North

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<sup>68</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> “Palabras de Presidente López,” *El Tiempo*, August 6, 1938.

<sup>70</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 54.

<sup>71</sup> “Con Una Brillante Ceremonia se Inauguraron los Juegos Bolivarianos,” *El Tiempo*, August 6, 1938.

America. In the 1930s and into the 1940s the United States was replacing Europe as the travel destination for young Colombians. In an article published in *El Sabado*, a weekly publication about culture and democracy, Abelardo Forero Benavides, a reporter, and statesman of renown, wrote about a new type of man. The centennial generation was focused on a fusion of Latin and Hellenic culture. The new generation are more bohemian and interested in imbibing North American culture through magazines, sports, cars, and so on.<sup>72</sup> This is not to say that the United States had not been important to Colombia before the 1930s and 1940s, but Marcos Fidel Suárez' "Northern Star" had referred to economic modernization rather than a cultural icon. To a certain extent the United States had been slowly advancing in Colombian culture even before Benavides published his article in 1947, but what had become clear was that there was a notable generational shift in Colombia. This could be seen in the world of sport, where Basketball and Baseball, two US sports were gaining in popularity in Colombia, but football was still king.

After the nationalistic displays of Colombia's leadership and military power, the procession used symbols and rituals to instill the sense of a Bolivarian identity. Delegates from the visiting nations marched at the end of the procession and the band performed the Bolivarian Hymn, written by poet Eduardo Carranza for the occasion. The Bolivarian hymn served as a regional version of the Olympic Hymn composed by Spyridon Samaras for the first modern Olympics and sung predominantly after the Parade of Nations in the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics.<sup>73</sup> Carranza's hymn was nineteen stanzas of four verses. Carranza wrote of "our America," who shared the same father, Simon Bolivar. Along with sharing one father, Carranza returns again and again to the idea that youthful soul is full of joy and life that is demonstrated through various sports featured at the games. While the youthfulness referred to the athletes competing, since the athlete's represented the nation, the youthfulness, joy, and life also refers to the Bolivarian nations. Carranza's hymn celebrated the youthful passion of sports that served to

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<sup>72</sup> Abelardo Forero Benavides, "Habla Palacios Rudas," *El Sabado*, July 12, 1947.

<sup>73</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 97.

strengthen “our America” as well. The Bolivarian games are a chance then for each nation to strengthen their population through competition with one another.<sup>74</sup>

While the Bolivarian Hymn looked towards a bright future, the Colombian Olympic Committee’s elaborate closing ceremony harkened to a shared past. During the closing ceremony, the urn containing the Olympic flame was placed in the center of the stadium surrounded by the flags of the participating nations along with the Olympic flag. The box containing the earth from the Bolivarian nations was brought out to douse the flame while the flags are solemnly lowered. Once the flame has been doused, the urn was covered in the flags of the participating country, each flag overlapping the other but still clearly visible, a symbol of modern unity where everyone is present but as part of a larger whole. Once done everyone observed a moment of silence adding weight to the closure of the games. The closing ceremony served as a kind of eulogy for the event as well as a symbolic coming together of the region which fits with the secularization of mega events while maintaining older sacred traditions.<sup>75</sup> First, with the mixture of earth which covered the flame of the Olympic spirit and then the national flags covering that urn. It is a kind of burial of the event but in order that the sporting spirit might return with the visiting delegates to their own countries. It is out of place then, that the delegates exited the stadium to the tune of the Colombian national anthem rather than the Bolivarian hymn. An event that was so focused on cultivating a regional identity ended with the celebration of national identity and this requires further explanation.<sup>76</sup>

### Lessons from the Bolivarian Games

In his closing speech, the newly elected Colombian president Eduardo Santos, alluded to the Bolivarian Games ushering in a new era in the development of Colombian sport. Santos continued that the tournament was an opportunity for Colombians to observe and emulate the virtues of “nobility, generosity, and hard work.” In other words, the Bolivarian games were not so much an opportunity for

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<sup>74</sup> Eduardo Carranza, “Himno para Cantar en los Juegos Bolivarian,” *El Tiempo* August 6, 1938.

<sup>75</sup> Roche, *Megaevents and Modernity*, 8–9.

<sup>76</sup> “Hoy se Efectúa la Clausura de los Juegos Bolivarianos,” *El Tiempo*, August 22, 1938

Colombia to show off but rather for Colombia's to observe and emulate the skills of their more talented neighbors. Santos further spoke of his hope that consistent international competitions such as this one might increase Colombia's sporting spirit. Only after talking about all the ways Colombia benefited from the tournament, did Santos then turn to talk about the athletic spirit binding the Américas to one another. As Santos made clear in his speech, Colombia hosted the games to benefit its sporting scene and help its population improve.<sup>77</sup>

Beginning in the 1930s, Colombian leaders looked to import foreign academics and talent to help improve Colombia. Colombian universities hosted foreign investigators from France, Germany, and Spain to help Colombia better understand itself.<sup>78</sup> These foreign professors were also given the goal of developing Colombian higher education beyond the traditional fields of law and medicine. President Santos recruited European academics displaced by Nazi racial repression to teach at the National University to improve the quality of Colombian education through principals of humanism, rationalism, and liberalism.<sup>79</sup> The COC took a similar approach to the Bolivarian games, but instead of importing foreign academics they imported foreign athletes and, in some cases, foreign coaches. In 1934, an earlier version of the COC invited the Chilean Candelario Sepúlveda Lafuente to help develop the physical education.<sup>80</sup> But by 1938, the COC and other were willing to test Colombian athletes against their neighbors in competition. However, there was a sort of optimistic pessimism as well among Colombians, who did not expect victory but rather thought that this would be a good learning experience. In a sense the COC had the perspective of a smaller nation, that winning was not as important as making a good show of it.<sup>81</sup> While Colombian athletes did well overall, Colombian athletes

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<sup>77</sup> Eduardo Santos Montejó, "El Discurso del Presidente en la Clausura de los Bolivarianos," *El Tiempo*, August 23, 1938.

<sup>78</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 66.

<sup>79</sup> Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 115.

<sup>80</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyne, "Los Deportes en Colombia," *El Sábado* July 29, 1944.

<sup>81</sup> Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 17.

won the most total medals, the Colombian football team did not win a single match.<sup>82</sup>

Colombia's first football match was against Peru and generated great interest among bogotanos who flooded the stadium. *El Tiempo* reported that 25,000 fans crammed into Universitaria, a stadium whose capacity was set at 12,000.<sup>83</sup> The match was so highly anticipated that the venue doubled the all-day ticket prices from \$0.80 to \$1.60 and increased the afternoon entry from \$0.50 to \$0.80 and still 25,000 people attended.<sup>84</sup> More interestingly, the prices to attend a football match and boxing in the Bolivarian games were about equal. Ring side seats for a boxing match at the Bolivarian games would set one back \$1.00 and if that were too much the stands only cost \$0.50. In fact, the most expensive tickets, apart from the one-time price of the Peru v. Colombia football match was to attend the tennis matches in Club América which went for \$1.20.<sup>85</sup> There was not a comparable high price event like the Uzcudun v. Renault fight of the 1928 National Olympics. The COC made sure that the Bolivarian games had mass appeal and was accessible to the masses. However, fraudulent tickets were prevalent as the Peru versus Colombian match that attracted 25,000 spectators only generated \$10,000 in revenue. Though perhaps the papers only reported the net profit after expenses. For instance, a drawback of international recognition was the fact that Adefutbol now had to pay FIFA 2.5% of all ticket sales within seventy days so the later would recognize the match.

Despite the pessimism surrounding the Colombian football team, which failed to win a match in 1937, bogotano fans attended the football matches in greater numbers than any other event. There was some reason for Colombians to be optimistic as the team was coached by notable Argentine footballer, Fernando Paternoster. Any hope that Paternoster would instantly bring professionalism to the Colombian team was instantly dashed when the team lined up for the first game in mismatched uniforms. Half the Colombian team wore one set of colors while the other half wore a completely

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<sup>82</sup> Peruvian athletes earned the most Gold medals and only won one medal less than Colombian athletes.

<sup>83</sup> "Apuntes sobre el Partido," *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

<sup>84</sup> "Corto Deportivo," *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

<sup>85</sup> "Fijados los precios para las pruebas de lucha de esta noche," *El Tiempo*, August 10, 1938.

different set of colors. While the Colombian press made light about the mistake, even treating it as comical, it was an ominous sign if a team could not even coordinate their uniforms.<sup>86</sup> It was clear from the opening minutes of the match that the home team did not stand a chance against the Peruvian team. Vicente J. Reisse, a visiting sport journalist from Argentina, did not temper his critique of the home team who “lacked decision making and a fighting spirit.” Going further, Reisse suggested that the Colombian team did not know what to do once they had the ball. The only two advantages the team had, according to Reisse, were largely out of the team’s control: the hometown crowd and Bogotá’s high altitude. Despite such harsh criticism, Reisse concluded that the Colombian team just lacked experience and could improve by playing more international matches, which were a true trial by fire.<sup>87</sup>

Colombian fans may not have liked the poor performance by their team, but they accepted it with a certain amount of fatalism. Unlike previous years, Colombian fans supported the visiting team with applause and cheers rather than insults. A writer for *El Tiempo*, suggested without hint of scorn that the Peruvian team’s polished play may even have won them fans among the bogotanos.<sup>88</sup> The Peruvian team was favored to win the tournament and the bogotano fans reacted much like the caleño fans had when their team lost to Santa Marta in the 1928 Olympics. The Colombian team’s poor performance against the other teams led the local press to shift its attention to other sports where the nation’s athletes were doing well, such as men’s and women’s basketball. At the end of the tournament writers for *El Tiempo* revisited the national football team’s record to ask where it all went wrong and what could be done to fix it.

In an unambiguously titled “Problemas del Fútbol Nacional” (Problems with National Football), sports writers for *El Tiempo*, likely Luis Camacho Montoya, blamed the lack of success on the persistent absence of a national league and a lack of authority. Camacho begins his article by addressing the

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<sup>86</sup> “Corto Deportivo,” *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

<sup>87</sup> “Reisse Comenta el Partido de Fútbol entre Perú y Colombia,” *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

<sup>88</sup> “Apuntes sobre el Partido,” *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1938.

“disastrous results” of the national team and that he needs to “reveal the causes” to defend the most popular sport in the country. The primary problem, according to Camacho was a lack of central leadership over the national team. In modern football, a country selected a coach for the team and then the coach chooses the players he thinks would make the best team. Colombia did the opposite, where each department selected the players they wanted to send to the national team and then Adefútbol found a coach for the team that was formed.<sup>89</sup>

Adefútbol was still too new an organization and too weak to compete with the authority of the departmental leagues. Camacho suggested that the league of Cundinamarca, where the capital was located, should be responsible for coordinating between the other departmental leagues rather than Adefútbol. There was a certain logic to the capital of the country being the capital of football. The city of Bogotá had recently invested quite a bit of money into developing its football infrastructure. Antonio José Vargas, Minister of Transportation for Bogotá and Álvaro Rozo, Director of Education, had already agreed to budget \$50,000 a year for sport.<sup>90</sup> But, Camacho had to know that what he was suggesting was essentially a coup. Atlántico was the department that housed both Barranquilla as well as Santa Marta which boasted the most celebrated Colombian footballers. Teams from across the country already went to play in the Atlántico league and if any department should take the lead, it was that one. Barranquilla was also growing as an urban and industrial center in a way that could rival Bogotá. To muddy the waters further, Adefútbol was headquartered in Barranquilla.<sup>91</sup>

Looking to gain national authority and standing, and prove itself above partiality, Adefútbol supported Cundinamarca’s request to form a new national team. More significant than the fledgling national organization’s blessing was that of the Argentine Fernando Paternoster. As a foreigner and notable sport’s authority, he sat above regional squabbling and his approval had the air of impartiality.

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<sup>89</sup> “Los Problemas del Fútbol Nacional,” *El Tiempo*, August 23, 1938

<sup>90</sup> Guillermo Ruiz Bonilla, *Millonarios: El Ballet Azul* (Bogotá, Colombia: DGR, 2017), 12.

<sup>91</sup> Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 186.



However, Paternoster stood to gain quite a bit from the arrangement. Cundinamarca also sought a full-time coach of the national team who would be responsible for forming the team. As the current trainer, Paternoster was in an ideal position to get the job, which he did. The Cundinamarca league placed him under contract for the 1939 year and the first thing he did was to import talented players from his home country of Argentina.<sup>92</sup> Argentine players were no strangers to playing abroad and even made up three of eleven players that won Italy the 1934 World Cup. However, with the Spanish Civil War and Mussolini's increasing aggression, caused Argentinian players to seek other places to play.<sup>93</sup> Colombia was a growing market for football and was also greatly interested in importing foreign talent to improve their own play and so was an easy fit for Argentine players.

## Conclusion

The outbreak of World War II and the subsequent fall in revenue meant that Cundinamarca never fully took over as a national league. Turbulence in Europe caused Barranquilla to cancel its commitment to host the 1941 Central American games and the National Olympics set to be held in Bucaramanga in 1942 was also cancelled. In 1941 the Universidad Nacional and the Instituto Nacional de Educación Física were both closed due to budget cuts. By 1942 the only collegiate sporting matches were still being held.<sup>94</sup> Any development to the sports scene would have to wait for the war to be over and the demand for Colombian commodities to return to normal. However, the Bolivarian games facilitated two major shifts in Colombian thinking about sport that would carry over into the second half of the 1940s.

The first shift was from an insular focus to a more international focus. The Bolivarian games demonstrated the limitations in the National Olympic model. The idea behind the 1928 Olympics was to give Colombian athletes a chance to improve in a national competition so that they would be more likely

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<sup>92</sup> Ruiz Bonilla, *Millonarios*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> For more on Argentinian players abroad, check out: Jonathan Wilson, *Angels with Dirty Faces: How Argentinian Soccer Defined a Nation and Changed the Game Forever* (New York: Nation Books, 2016).

<sup>94</sup> Alberto Nariño Cheyne, "Los Deportes en Colombia," *El Sabado*, July 29, 1944.

to succeed in international tournaments. While Colombia did have a good showing in the Bolivarian games winning both men's and women's basketball, they failed in the most popular sport, football. The failure was made worse by the fact that players came from all over Colombia and so all departments shared the blame for defeat. This defeat clearly demonstrated the need for a more centralized structure in the governing of Colombian Football. Granted enthusiasts such as Jorge Wills Pradilla had been calling for a National League since 1928, if not earlier, but politicians demurred. The crushing loss at the Bolivarian games caused statesmen to rethink their position.

More than a national league, if Colombians were going to be competitive at football, they needed outside help. The first element of this outside help was an old one, since the early 1930s various departmental leagues sought out international coaches. Fernando Paternoster was different in that he encouraged the importation of foreign players as well. Colombians needed to play alongside better players to learn how they played. Beginning in the 1940s, various Colombian team owners looked to sign notable Argentine players who became ubiquitous in Colombian football. In many ways, this importation of foreign athletic talent mirrored the government's attempt to improve higher education, by bringing in foreign professors. If Colombia could not attract large scale immigration like Argentina or Brazil, they could at least use targeted migration. Ideally foreign professors brought the benefit of studying abroad to those students who could not afford to do so in addition to improving the teaching of their Colombian colleagues. Likewise, foreign footballers brought their skills with them, skills that Colombian players could learn by playing alongside of them.

In addition to making Colombia more internationally competitive, the importation of foreign players indicates a shift in how Colombian's viewed football. Before the Bolivarian Games, journalists and reformers presented football and team sports like it as a pedagogical tool. While adults could enjoy playing games, sports were best used to develop young Colombians into healthy, moral, and otherwise good citizens, who in turn would invigorate a tired and idle nation. As such, sport was a useful pastime

that was much preferable to hanging out on the streets, or in places of ill-repute, it was not a profession. Unlike in Argentina, Colombians did not develop a strong sense of amateurism, or speak about the virtue of playing a sport simply for the love of the game. Similarly, since there was not any national league in Colombia, there was no worry that certain teams were paying players under the table, creating an unfair sporting environment. Most Colombian athletes were amateurs who either did not need to work or trained in their spare time. One of the excuses given for Colombia's loss to Peru was that the latter was comprised of professionals while the former was made up of "workers and students."<sup>95</sup> Colombians recognized that to be competitive they would also need to develop full-time athletes as well. The fact that certain teams were willing to procure foreign players indicates this shift from amateur to professional.

It was not just that full-time athletes can spend more time training and so are better athletes, but also that they are more entertaining to watch. Stadium construction may have begun to develop Colombian industry and get people to work, but it also acknowledged that modern sport could be big business. 25,000 gladly paid inflated ticket prices to watch twenty-two people from Colombia and Peru kick a ball around for ninety minutes. However, Colombia's disappointing performance led to a decrease in fan interest, at least in the football team. Moving towards professionalism would guarantee a certain level of quality in each match, which in turn would more easily help fans part with their cash. Importing well-known foreign players had the same effect. If visiting teams brought people to the stands, what about procuring some of the more internationally known players to then attract those same fans week after week. But Colombia's perennial problem persisted, it did not have a professional league to guarantee quality matches between quality teams would happen on a regular basis. That problem would be solved quickly after the end of World War II with the formation of the División Mayor (Dimayor).

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<sup>95</sup> "Apuntes sobre el Partido," *El Tiempo*, August 9, 1948.

## Conclusion

On August 15, 1948, a reporter for *El Tiempo* celebrated the start of the professional football league, in many ways the culmination of a three-decade process. The writer likened the start of the División Mayor (Major Division also known as the Dimayor) to entering a new age. "The pirate era has ended where teams travelled from city to city, like a group of gypsies, looking to play in front of hundreds of fans for a handful of pesos."<sup>1</sup> In many ways the Dimayor was the culmination of Jorge Wills Pradilla dream in the early 1920s to have a national league where teams competed against each other from across the country. Using public funds, the Colombian government had constructed over 13,000km of highways that connected cities with each other as well as to the coast.<sup>2</sup> Not only was it possible for buses to travel between Colombian cities, but something also that had not been possible before, a national airline, Avianca, made air travel easier than it had ever been before. In 1948 it was finally possible for the initial ten teams to play weekly matches in completely opposite regions of Colombia. Each team played each other twice which allowed at least one match to be played in the team's home city, guaranteeing that fans could attend.

Fans attended the weekly matches en masse. The match between city rivals Santa Fé and Millonarios filled the 25,000 seat El Campín to capacity with another 10,000 who wanted to get in. El Campín, which had been built as part of the Great Depression era's public work projects and finished for the Bolivarian Games of 1938 had become too small. A journalist for *El Tiempo* found it "sad that 10,000 souls" could not attend the event and called for municipal authorities to double the number of seats to accommodate "the explosion of interest."<sup>3</sup> Fans not only overwhelmed the stadium but also the infrastructure surrounding the stadium. *El Tiempo* reported that fans begin to show up thirty minutes

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<sup>1</sup> "Se inicia hoy el Torneo Nal. De Futbol," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1948

<sup>2</sup> Rodríguez Baquero, *Historia de Colombia*, 274.

<sup>3</sup> "Mirador," *El Tiempo*, September 20, 1948.

before the match and formed a “kilometer long procession” to get in the stadium. By mid-day all the streets surrounding the stadium was choked with “buses, tranvias(a type of public transportation), taxis, and all other types of locomotives.”<sup>4</sup> The fact that the 35,000 fans could make it to the stadium in combination of public transportation, taxis, and various types of locomotives was a testament to urban infrastructure projects financed by the coffee-boom of the 1920s. The fact that reporters characterized the match itself as “uninspired” citing poor play from the Millonarios is not important. Football had reached a popular enough status that fans were content to pay for the possibility of a spectacle, and even if their team was not playing well, they could still shout, drink, gamble, and socialize in a space outside of ordinary life.

Professional football as had limited space for female participation. In 1948, women could not vote nor was football an “appropriate game” for them to play but the space of the stadium was open to them. Much like the first queen of sport, Graciela Velasquez Paláu, initiated the inaugural National Olympics in 1928, the Queen of the Navy brought out the ball for inaugural game in the Dimayor. *El Tiempo* invited people to come out to the stadium if for no other reason than to see the “most genteel” Queen.<sup>5</sup> As Michael Edward Stanfield argued, beauty tempered the bestial in Colombian society.<sup>6</sup> The presence of the queen was meant to stimulate noble behavior from players and fans rather than give in to base emotions. But women also participated in the spectacle as fans. Stadiums tended to be overwhelmingly male spaces in Latin America but, they were not closed off to women.<sup>7</sup> Reporters noted that during the Santa Fé and Millonarios match the fans on the western side of the stadium were especially animated and the women were shouting with more spirit than the men. It is unclear how many women enjoyed football matches, but the woman who did attend matches were subject to sexual objectification by male fans and even reporters. The same reporter who wrote that the women were

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<sup>4</sup> "Reloj en Mano: Coraje-Brío Sin Técnica," *El Tiempo*, September 20, 1948.

<sup>5</sup> "La Reina de la Marina Hará el Saque de Bola en el Partido de Hoy," *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1948.

<sup>6</sup> Stanfield, *Of Beast and Beauty: Gender, Race, and Identity in Colombia*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Gaffney, *Temples of the Earthbound Gods*.

shouting more vigorously than the men alleged that they “enhanced the mood” by shouting the suggestive “Take it out! Take it out!”<sup>8</sup> Ostensibly the shout would be directed at defenders to get the ball away from the area around the goal but was also inuendo and something that would “animate” the surrounding male fans. In 1948, Colombian women then either represented genteel virtue, represented by the Queen of the Navy, or an object for sexual fantasy, at least in the separate space created by the stadium. Despite this mixed representation of women, they nonetheless were gaining prominence in the public sphere, a space they would have been prohibited from entirely a few decades earlier. Moderate progress in the field of women’s rights and citizenship in many ways was descriptive of gains Colombian women made during the Liberal administrations.

The most significant marker that Colombian football was entering a new age was concerning the administration of the Dimayor and that administration’s commitment to enforce the rules of the game. The reporter for *El Tiempo* wrote “the games would be played in accordance with international regulation.” The standardization of the ruleset meant that there no longer would be an incident like there was in the 1932 Medellín Olympics where two teams practiced under two different set of rules. More than providing standardization, the Dimayor had institutional power that none of the other national organizations had. The journalist reported that the Dimayor would “severely enforce the rules,” and the Dimayor could “levy fines against teams and sanction them, forcing them to close their fields.”<sup>9</sup> While it is unclear if the Dimayor had the constitutional power to close the fields, many of which were owned by municipal authorities, but it was clear that the Dimayor would not have to compete with the authority of departmental associations for the enforcement of its rules. Colombian football finally had a national organization that could, at least in the space of football, superseded regional authority and could exercise a nationalizing effect. It also inaugurated an administration that has survived to the present day, providing historic continuity of an invented tradition.

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<sup>8</sup> "El Vértice de un Angulo Fanático: Ríos humanos por las calles," September 20, 1948.

<sup>9</sup> “Se inicia hoy el Torneo Nal. De Futbol,” *El Tiempo*, August 15, 1948.

The inauguration of the professional league caused a reporter for *El Sábado*, Ardan, to reflect on the history of Colombian football as a national endeavor which brought together all elements of Colombian society. Ardan began his essay, "Today our country, a most civilized and confident in its own national identity, is full of big stadiums, sports fields, gyms, tracks." Here he echoes the beliefs of earlier generations that adherence to sport is a mark of civility and Ardan uses the sporting infrastructure as a mark of Colombian's civility. Ardan continued to argue that sport provided national cohesion due to its popularity, that sport a new topic of conversation unlike "many of the older topics that only left the nation with deep cracks that have gone against national stability and consistency." In other words, Colombians could recognize that despite being from different regions or in different occupations, they shared a love of sport that bound them together. Going even further, Ardan argues that sport "acts like a mortar that solidifies and protects nationality" which brought together all Colombian social classes.<sup>10</sup> While VIPs might have positions of prominence in box seats while the populous classes occupied the stands, they all nonetheless participated in the same event.

Despite expressing the belief that football benefited all Colombian social classes, Ardan focused on the benefit to the working class. Ardan wrote of how sports, "brought workers out of the taverns and to the fútbol fields" and provided workers with something positive to do rather than "spend their time in worthless or immoral pursuits."<sup>11</sup> Ardan expressed the belief that sport would inculcate middle-class values on the working class and steer them away especially from the social evils of alcoholism. Another writer for *El Sábado* emphasized this point from his article, "Why Santa Fé won the National Championship of Football." The writer emphasized that the team was able to maintain "its discipline and organization throughout the tournament" which "served as a good example to their municipal colleagues as well as the nation."<sup>12</sup> The reporter used Santa Fé team as an allegory; if they could act with

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<sup>10</sup> "Un Paisaje en Colores," *El Sábado*, September 25, 1948.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> "Por que Triunfó el Santa Fé en el Campeonato Nacional De Fútbol," *El Sábado*, December 25, 1948.

discipline and with a singular direction, to achieve victory, the same could be said for Colombia as a whole.

Calls for football-like unity in the Colombian press was especially important as political forces were pulling the country apart. In spring of 1948, a few months before the professional league began, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, the populist and current Liberal leader, was assassinated on the streets of Bogotá by a drifter, Juan Roa Sierra. The death of such a prominent leader in his home city of Bogotá triggered a massive riot which would later be called the *Bogotazo*. The Conservatives had returned to power and the initial stage of the riot targeted symbols of Conservative power, government buildings and religious institutions.<sup>13</sup> A few hours after the riots began, the army mobilized to protect government buildings, firing into crowds of protestors to disperse or kill them. From that point on, protestors gave up on revolutionary impulses and turned to looting.<sup>14</sup> James D. Henderson noted that the change in looters mentality represented “from that time forward the pursuit of individual goals would dominate the thinking of a citizenry increasingly alienated from its public world.”<sup>15</sup> In the following years the Conservative administration would attempt to regain control of the country by barring Liberals from taking their seats and the Liberals responded by arming guerrillas in the Colombian hinterland. If football was the mortar that held the country together, it still needed time to set.

If reporters were overly optimistic about the ability of football to cement national unity, they also overestimated football’s moralizing power. A writer for *El Tiempo* noted with a hint of dismay that during one of the matches “colorful banknotes changed hands as everyone bet on their favorite teams.” While not on the same level as alcoholism, gambling was still a social vice that was anathema to middle-class Colombians, at least publicly. But the same reporter noted that along with rampant betting was

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<sup>13</sup> Henderson, *Modernization in Colombia*, 311.

<sup>14</sup> Henderson, 312.

<sup>15</sup> Henderson, 313.



rampant consumption of alcohol.<sup>16</sup> Far from drawing workers from the taverns to the football field, the stadium served as another tavern. The bad behavior was not limited to the fans. A writer for *El Sábado* noted that a fight broke out during the second match of the season between Santa Fé and Millonarios. The reporter lamented the “lack of sporting spirit” for a brawl between players of both teams, and one of the coaches.<sup>17</sup> What made the fight distressing to the reporter is that it ran counter to the narrative that physical education helped a person master the feelings. In popular understanding, athletes should both be disciplined enough not to brawl, but they should also not want to fight against other athletes, since they shared the same “sporting spirit.”

Transgressive fan and behavior demonstrated two important elements of sport and mass spectacle: that it has the capacity to cause a type of vertigo heightening emotions and that sport does not dictate its own social function. Fans were not required to adopt the middle-class values that reformers wished to invest in sport. Transgressive behavior was a part of Colombian football from early on and was not always related to alcohol. Caleño fans invaded the field in 1928 to express their anger at a perceived injustice. The bogotano players then refused to accept the apology of elite caleños based on maintaining the “moral victory.” In 1932, teams and delegations threatened to not take part in the competition unless a call was reversed or a referee replaced, which, from the requesting team, was a way to maintain fairness. As a space of heightened emotions and increased tension, mass spectacles cater to the extremes of joy or sadness and fans attend matches to release those emotions. Andrés Dávila Ladrón de Guevara argued that one of four factors present in every football match was, “the capacity for mimicry, it is symbolic to the players as well as the fans and they can draw meaning from it for their daily lives.”<sup>18</sup> It is not just that fans and players draw meaning from the game to their ordinary life but they also bring their desires and hopes to the game to see it played out by their chosen sporting

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<sup>16</sup> “El Vértice de un Angulo Fanático: Ríos humanos por las calles,” *El Tiempo*, September 20, 1948

<sup>17</sup> “Pugilismo,” *El Sábado*, December 4, 1948.

<sup>18</sup> Bolívar, *Belleza, Fútbol y Religiosidad Popular*, 89.

avatars or to performs behaviors that would be unacceptable outside the stadium.

In conclusion, sport was not able to stop Colombian from descending into La Violencia nor was it able to guarantee “civilized” fan behavior, but it did provide a cultural and administrative force that pulled Colombians together. Modern sport is a rare spectacle where the spectator is an active participant in the spectator. Fans actively cheer for their team and believe that their cheers have a positive effect on the players. For their part, the players solicit the cheers of the fans encouraging them to cheer louder or basking in their applause after scoring a goal. As Pablo Alabarces noted, “sport is a profoundly democratic narrative and symbolic practice of how citizens interact [with their governments].”<sup>19</sup> Citizens learn that like their sports teams, their politicians are there to serve them and just as a team cannot survive without fans, a government cannot survive without support, freely given or coerced, of the people. In addition to providing a shared cultural experience and a national institution, football taught Colombians how democracy worked. While Colombians would not always feel that they had a say in government, as evidenced by the Bogotazo, sport provided fans with a space where they did matter.

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<sup>19</sup> Samuel Martínez López and Francisco Vicente Galán Vélez, *Fútbol-espectáculo, cultura y sociedad*, 98.

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