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Strenuous Competition on the Field of Play, Diplomacy off It: The 1908 London Olympics, Theodore Roosevelt and Arthur Balfour, and Transatlantic Relations.

The Olympic sporting context of 1908, with its tension between nationalistic competition and high-minded amateurism, provides insight as well into the transatlantic relationship between Great Britain and the United States during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt and the years following the prime ministerial tenure of Britain's Arthur Balfour.

The article explores the nature of the transatlantic relationship using two high-profile sports events - the 1908 London Olympic Games and its predecessor games in St Louis in 1904 - to consider how governing political and social networks in the two countries viewed themselves and one another and related to one another. The positions and values of U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt and British prime minister Arthur Balfour are re-evaluated in this context. The article concludes that the 1908 Olympics in many ways typified Anglo-American relations during the opening decade of the twentieth century. Strenuous competition between the two nations was accepted by both parties as a means to achieve a measure of superiority over the other for the broader audience in each nation and also across the globe.

During the 1908 London Summer Games, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, took inspiration for what became the Olympic Creed from the words of Ethelbert Talbot, the bishop of Central Pennsylvania then preaching in London: "The most important thing in the Olympic games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well."¹ The heritage of the precise language of the

¹Bill Mallon and Jeroen Heijmans, *Historical Dictionary of the Olympic Movement*, 4th ed. (Lanham, MD, 2011), 210-211.

creed is the subject of academic debate, but its significance for the purposes of this article is that an American bishop would provide inspiration to an Olympic movement rekindled by a French aristocrat at a games that resuscitated de Coubertin's vision, which had been floundering, and that expressed the central tension of international sport between assertive nationalism and idealist internationalism. The Olympic sporting context of 1908, with its tension between nationalistic competition and high-minded amateurism, provides insight as well into the transatlantic relationship between Great Britain and the United States during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt and the years following the prime ministerial tenure of Britain's Arthur Balfour.

Some eight years previously Theodore Roosevelt used language similar to that of Bishop Talbot, in a speech which has since been immortalised by the line "strenuous life": "I wish to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort, of labor and strife." Reflecting Roosevelt's personal experiences and capturing the zeitgeist of the United States' coming of age at the end of the nineteenth century, the speech espoused physical and mental endeavour as *the* measure of success. Roosevelt continued to tell his 1899 audience in the Hamilton Club in Chicago, that the "highest form of success" comes "to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil, and who out of these wins the splendid ultimate triumph."²

Rhetoric of this type did not come naturally to Arthur James Balfour.³ The philosopher aristocrat, and ardent golfer, was perhaps ultimately most famous during the twentieth century for the Balfour Declaration on Palestine as foreign secretary in 1917, but his premiership in the United Kingdom (July 1902–December 1905) coincided with the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (September 1901–March 1909) on more than just explicit

²Theodore Roosevelt, The Hamilton Club, Chicago, Apr. 10, 1899. Roosevelt's speech appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 11, 1899, the day after it was delivered, and was subsequently published in Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York, 1900).

³See R.J.Q. Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee*, (London, 2007).

political matters. Balfour combined a lifelong commitment to politics and philosophy with a zeal for the balancing benefits of physical activity and athletic sports. In a more measured language than Roosevelt, Balfour preached a parallel gospel. An 1897 edition of *The Fortnightly Review* quoted from his speech to a university audience in Edinburgh, countering the charge that “athletics were a kind of parasitic growth upon modern educational institutions.” Balfour extolled the virtues of the sporting life and the values that sport could create, early in life, providing the basis of a lifelong sense of belonging to “a great community.” The feeling of community in university life was, he reminded his audience, fostered by not only education, lectures, study, and examination, but also sport: “the highest excellence” at football or cricket required the virtues of “patience, sobriety, courage, temper, discipline, subordination” and “no influence fostered” the vital sense of community belonging “more surely and more effectually than that feeling of common life which the modern athletic sports, as they had been developed in modern places of learning, gave to all those who took an interest in such matters, whether as performers or as spectators.”⁴

The article explores the nature of the transatlantic relationship between the United Kingdom and the United States. It uses two high-profile sports events, the 1908 London Olympic Games and its predecessor games in St Louis in 1904, to consider how governing political and social networks in the two countries viewed themselves and one another and related to one another. The positions and values of U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt and British prime minister Arthur Balfour are evaluated in this context. The paper begins by outlining essential elements of the Anglo-American relationship at the turn of the twentieth century, including concepts of honour and respect. The essay then discusses the particular sporting heritages of Roosevelt and Balfour before addressing the transatlantic diplomacy that surrounded the 1908 London Olympic Games. These games created a measure of tension

⁴ In S.H. Jeyes, “Our Gentlemanly Failures”, *The Fortnightly Review* Vol. LX1. New Series, January to June 1897: 387; also cited in J.R. de S. Honey, *Tom Brown’s Universe: The Development of the English Public School in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1977), 117.

between Britain and the United States on account of refereeing controversies that Roosevelt described as being “in the highest degree improper and unsportsmanlike.”⁵

The article concludes that the 1908 Olympics in many ways typified Anglo-American relations during the opening decade of the twentieth century. Strenuous competition between the two nations was accepted by both parties as a means to achieve a measure of superiority over the other for the broader audience in each nation and also across the globe. Such competition could extend from the sports field of the White City Stadium in 1908 to the realm of international affairs. The London Games “sought to establish athletic supremacy and thereby demonstrate the superior national vigor of each respective nation.”⁶ The two nations’ rivalry dominated the games. As such, the rivalry gave significant impetus to the whole Olympic movement. In the opinion of many, the intensity of competition at London in 1908 ensured the movement’s survival after the debacles of the 1900 (Paris) and 1904 (St Louis) events. Importantly, the 1908 games had a distinct Olympic identity, in contrast to the 1904 games, for example, which were connected to and partly overshadowed by that year’s Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. (This was so, even though the 1908 games, and the London stadium, were made possible by an alliance with the Franco-British exhibition.) The framework for developing and administering rules and regulations—controlled by the 1908 hosts and applied in a manner that caused significant ire in the American team—mirrored broader diplomatic Anglo-American relations of the era. The United Kingdom was the arbiter in chief of international relations, although that position was already being challenged by the United States and others.

The prospect of American awakening to its international role meant that while Roosevelt came to share his nation’s upset at the treatment of its athletes in London, he did

⁵Theodore Roosevelt to George C. Buell, Aug. 18, 1908, in *Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. H.W. Brands (New York, 2001), 499.

⁶George R. Matthews, “The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908 as Viewed by the *New York Times* and the *Times* of London,” *Journal of Sport History*.7 (Summer 1980):.40.

not let the sporting rivalry of 1908 distract him from the statecraft he sought to conduct with London and Europe's other Great Powers. As a sanguine reader of his times, Roosevelt recognised that "Europe dominated international affairs," which "conditioned" his American nationalism, for Roosevelt was "first and foremost an American."⁷ He was also an individualist and a meritocrat. In his Romanes lecture at Oxford University in June 1910, Roosevelt championed, in his comments on national "types," the cultivation of character over intellect, a context "in which rugged strength and courage, rugged capacity to resist wrongful aggression by others will go hand in hand with a lofty scorn of doing wrong to others."⁸ He had also addressed the Cambridge Union Society the previous month, proposing a meritocratic ethos of success, based not upon "the position you hold, but upon how you carry yourself in that position." Individuals can shape their lives, he added, and make a "real success of it," but this "does not in the least depend upon the prominence of the position he holds." "Success in life can be the development of ordinary qualities to a more than ordinary degree", Roosevelt further observed, in a comment widely reported in the British press.⁹

Balfour's cool *haute* and philosophical leanings could lead him into modes of aesthetic contemplation. Balfour presented his own Romanes lecture on "Criticism and Beauty" the year before Roosevelt spoke in Oxford. He argued that it is impossible to identify any objective criterion of the beautiful. In the end beauty is a matter of personal valuation,

⁷J Simon Rofe, "Europe as the Nexus of Theodore Roosevelt's International Strategy," in *America's Transatlantic Turn: Theodore Roosevelt and the "Discovery" of Europe*, ed. Hans Krabbendam and John Thompson (New York, 2012), 180, 189.

⁸Theodore Roosevelt, *The Romanes Lecture 1910: Biological Analogies in History* (London, 1910), available via Wikisource Web Archive, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Biological_Analogies_in_History.djvu/7 (access July 23, 2014).

⁹Theodore Roosevelt, "The Conditions of Success," address at the Cambridge Union, May 26, 1910. 11-12, available at www.theodore-roosevelt.com/images/research/speeches/ConditionsofSuccess.pdf. (accessed July 23, 2014).

meaning that “we cannot devise a code of criticism.”¹⁰ One can almost hear in this conclusion the voice of reason at the negotiating table in Paris after World War I, in the VIP box at the London 1908 Olympic Games, or on his tennis courts in his Scottish country retreat. In a November 2, 1908 editorial, the *New York Times* noted that the two former leaders would give successive lectures in Oxford’s Romanes series and remarked on the difference between the men, one a scholar, the other an “eager student.” They shared, the editorial observed, an approach to “politics as an art.”: “Mr Balfour, behind his apparent indifference, like Mr Roosevelt, beneath his seeming rashness, has great tenacity of purpose, takes long views and makes long calculations.”¹¹ The editorial might have also added that the two men shared a sportsman’s respect for opponents and the “rules of the game” and an understanding that the translation of such respect into the international political arena could be a highly effective quality for international statecraft in the increasingly volatile world order. Sporting values were part of the art of politics of both leaders, and it is this that warrants the comparative analysis provided in this article.

Importantly, in the face of the challenges from nations such as Germany, France, Russia, and Japan, Roosevelt’s belief in shared Anglo-Saxon values of vigour and honour allowed for a measure of concert between London and Washington in global affairs, even though it created tensions on the sports field. Roosevelt was connected to Balfour, his British counterpart in these matters and in this essay, in part through the diplomat Henry White, whom TR described as the “most useful man in the entire diplomatic service, during my Presidency and for many years before.”¹² White was among those who believed that relations between the United States and Britain could and should draw upon a common heritage. He acted on the premise that “there was far more in common between the two countries than

¹⁰Arthur James Balfour, *Criticism and Beauty: A Lecture Rewritten, Being the Romanes Lecture for 1909*,” (Oxford, 1910), available via Wikisource Web Archive, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Criticism_and_Beauty (accessed July 23, 2014).

¹¹*New York Times*, Nov. 2, 1908.

¹²Allan Nevins, *Henry White: Thirty Years of American Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1930), v.

between America and any other”, a view “implanted in my mind”¹³ during diplomatic service in Britain. White had been a core member of Balfour’s social circle, *The Souls*, in the later 1880s and early 1890s in London, before becoming a trusted intimate of Roosevelt during and after the latter’s terms of office. He entered diplomatic service in the U.S. legation, and in 1885 met Balfour at The Glen, a Scottish baronial mansion owned by the Tennant family.¹⁴ White was raised a European, socialized into the English elite, and represented an emerging position on the need for stronger British-U.S. relations. Roosevelt wrote to White, from the White House in 1907, of the parochialism and insularity of his country, comparable to “the old days” when England took no part in European affairs: “The same feeling...makes this country feel that it can be a law for itself in many different matters. As yet our people do not fully realize the modern interdependence in financial and business relations. I believe that there will be an awakening, but it will be gradual.”¹⁵

Friendly Rivals: Roosevelt and Anglo-American Relations at the Turn of the Century

Since the conclusion of the Civil War, Anglo-American relations gradually became respectful and cordial, for the most part, interrupted by periodic quarrels and clashes of interest. A master narrative of the United States’ geographic and economic expansion across the North American continent was paralleled by the United Kingdom’s emergence as the first truly global power by 1900.¹⁶ While other nations, notably Germany following unification, Russia, and France, should not be discounted, the tempo and pattern of the most notable

¹³Nevins, *Henry White*, 16. White’s family had left the United States after the Civil War, and he was educated in Rome and Paris, becoming proficient in those languages. White would also attend, at the Paris Peace commission after the Great War, some meetings of the Council of Ten that included Balfour, in the latter’s capacity as British foreign secretary. *Ibid.*, 366.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁶Of studies of Gilded Age culture and politics, the following particularly informed this study: Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York, 1982); Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); and Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*, (Oxford, 2003).

aspects of global affairs was by the 1890s an increasingly Anglo-American affair. Theodore Roosevelt understood this, respected British power, and pursued his presidential foreign policy with the goal in mind of furthering cordial bonhomie with London.¹⁷ While still vice-president, just a few weeks into the new century, Roosevelt stressed to his friend and naval advisor, Alfred T. Mahan, “I am heartily friendly to England.”¹⁸ Some eighteen years later, Roosevelt himself reflected, “The English speaking peoples, of the United States and the British Empire, possess both ideals and interests in common. We can best do our duty, as members of the family of nations, to maintain peace and justice throughout the world by first rendering it impossible that the peace between ourselves can ever be broken.”¹⁹ Such sentiment has formed the basis of historian William Tilchin’s work on Roosevelt and Anglo-American affairs. Tilchin writes that it is “impossible truly to comprehend Rooseveltian diplomacy without an understanding of the great importance Roosevelt attached to building and sustaining a partnership between Great Britain and the United States.”²⁰

No British politician in the first decade of the century was as explicit as Roosevelt on the necessity for a robust Anglo-American *entente*. Britain was preoccupied in the first instance with the balance of military and political power in Europe and with the complexities of management and administration of its imperial territories, not least in the wake of the disastrous Boer Wars in South Africa, particularly the second from 1899-1902. It is widely acknowledged that Roosevelt “played the leading role in transforming a tenuous US-British connection into a seasoned friendship and a deep-rooted informal partnership.”²¹ The

¹⁷On TR’s understanding and appreciation of the United Kingdom, see, William Tilchin, *Theodore Roosevelt and the British Empire: A Study in Presidential Statecraft*, (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997). See also, Howard, K. Beale, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Rise of America to World Power* (Baltimore, 1956); Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex*, (New York, 2001); and Gregory Russell, *The Statecraft of Theodore Roosevelt: The Duties of Nations and World Order*, (Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2009).

¹⁸Theodore Roosevelt to Alfred Mahan, Feb. 14, 1900, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Roosevelt Study Centre Middelburg, the Netherlands [hereafter cited as TRP RSC].

¹⁹Theodore Roosevelt to George H. Putnam, Dec. 5, 1918, TRP RSC.

²⁰William Tilchin, “Anglo-American Partnership: The Foundation of Theodore Roosevelt’s Foreign Policy,” in *A Companion to Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Serge Ricard (Oxford, 2011), 314.

²¹*Ibid.*, 324.

reciprocal British initiatives came slowly and cautiously, but Balfour was central to an emerging perspective and policy that bound Britain's future with that of the United States. He recognised the mutual interests of the two nations and drew upon all his foreign affairs experience and insights when taking the position of foreign secretary in the World War I coalition government. In April 1917, at the age of 68, with a hatred of sea voyages, he sailed to the East Coast of the United States to establish rapport with President Woodrow Wilson and to "smooth the way" to U.S. entry into the war. As Balfour's *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* profile puts it:

Balfour had for [a long time] attached much importance to Anglo-American friendship and...the war cabinet decided that "someone of the highest status" in Britain "who would have the entrée to all circles, should proceed to Washington"... Balfour "very sportingly"...agreed to go...[and] did all that was asked of him.²²

In his 1910 Oxford lecture, Roosevelt had talked of his deeply rooted respect for Britain and its empire and of the joint interests that he believed now bound Britain and the United States together: "You belong to a nation which possesses the greatest empire upon which the sun has ever shone. I belong to a nation which is trying on a scale hitherto unexampled to work out the problems of government for, of, and by the people, while at the same time doing the international duty of a great power. But there are certain problems which both of us have to solve, and as to which our standards should be the same."²³ The speech is both a courteous acknowledgement of the status of his host and a staking of common ground. From their different backgrounds, socially, culturally, and politically, Roosevelt and Balfour nevertheless represented an emerging commitment to the reciprocal interests of their countries in international affairs.

²²Ruddock Mackay and H. C. G. Matthew, "Balfour, Arthur James, First Earl of Balfour (1848–1930)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), available at www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/30553 (accessed July 23, 2014).

²³Roosevelt, *The Romanes Lecture 1910: Biological Analogies in History*.

Roosevelt and Balfour: Sporting Heritage and “Rules” for Sportsmen and Statesmen

Before turning to Anglo-American relations and the London 1908 Olympics, twin aspects of Theodore Roosevelt’s and Arthur Balfour’s character require further discussion, given the way these qualities influenced the views the two men held and the policy choices they made. Firstly, Roosevelt’s appreciation of the “rules” of the game, alongside his own sporting prowess will be reviewed; following that, the sporting ethos of Balfour will be considered.

While one should be careful of transposing personal characteristics to the realm of policy, Roosevelt makes the link implicit himself. Time and again during his life Roosevelt’s words linked duty and honour to policy choices: “It is wicked not to try to live up to high ideals and to better the condition of the world.”²⁴ Such sentiment was evident in one of Roosevelt’s major contributions to U.S. foreign policy during his presidency: the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt told Congress in his 1904 annual message that the United States had a national interest in having its “neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous,” and that “chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence” would “ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation.” Roosevelt continued: “in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”²⁵ The desire to “police” those who failed to measure up to the “rules” should perhaps not be a surprise, coming as it did from a former civil service commissioner (1889-1895) and New York City police commissioner (1895-1896). Nonetheless, Roosevelt’s corollary also illustrated a sense of duty on his and the United States’ behalf to govern and regulate—“however reluctantly”—because of the “high ideals”

²⁴Theodore Roosevelt to George H. Putnam, Dec. 5, 1918, TRP RSC.

²⁵Theodore Roosevelt, Annual Message, Dec. 6, 1904, excerpt at www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=56&page=transcript (accessed July 23, 2014)

that men of character aspired to. These values were close to those espoused in the “Strenuous Life” speech, his Oxford address, and they paralleled those in de Coubertin’s many writings. One example from 1912, on the Frenchmen’s motivation for reviving the games, neatly summarises a desire to police an unruly world; “too many injurious and unprincipled elements threatened to annihilate true sportsmanship; the Olympic Games were the necessary remedy.”²⁶

The convergence of values of duty, honour, valour, courage in sport and statecraft were seen in Roosevelt from an early age. Writing while Roosevelt was vice president in 1901, the author Owen Wister, TR’s friend from Harvard days, described his sporting prowess in the boxing ring in 1878, noting in particular the sportsmanship he exhibited. While Roosevelt’s performance in the Harvard gymnasium was not going to challenge any world champion, his sporting values drew the following commendation. “The courage, the frank brotherly consideration and the sense of honor” had produced “the all round gentlemen.” Wister continued, “When you find an all round gentlemen who is spirited and patriotic, you have the very best thing our American soil can produce.”²⁷ Here one sees the contribution sport could make to broader society: for all of Roosevelt’s individual enthusiasm for sport, its wider value lay in its ability to create gentlemen of character. The social and economic origins of Balfour and Roosevelt were different, but their Cambridge and Harvard backgrounds generated a commitment to the sporting life and the qualities of character that this could produce.

Balfour was initially perceived, as a young boy, as frail in relation to athletic pursuits, and he never shone as an athlete at school at Eton College. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he wore spectacles, took up court tennis, and was for life an enthusiast for and champion of

²⁶Baron Pierre De Coubertin, “The Work of the International Olympic Committee,” *The Olympic Games Stockholm 1912*, (New York, 1912). Another shared attitude expressed by the two men was a mutual aversion to professionalism in sports.

²⁷Owen Wister, “Theodore Roosevelt: The Sportsman and the Man,” *Outing*, June 1901, 247.

organized games, in particular tennis and golf. Rich Scottish landowner, Cambridge-educated philosopher, and lifelong Conservative politician, he was also a tireless proponent of the benefits of modern sports. Talking of golf, he asserted in statements made across the decade from 1899 to 1909:

My firm conviction is that there is no public interest of greater importance than the public interest of providing healthy means of recreation for all classes of the community....I earnestly hope that everybody interested in the game [golf] will do their best to extend it not only to the class who chiefly enjoy it now, but to every class of the community.²⁸

For Balfour, leisure sports were forms of authentic recreation, and he believed that all his countrymen and women should benefit from access to such activities. As a rich landowner and patrician he was particularly privileged in having access to facilities and activities of his own liking. Raised in a country estate, Whittingehame in East Lothian, Scotland, which he inherited in his early twenties, he could construct his own ideal world:

Music and games such as croquet and, by the late 1870s, lawn tennis also prevailed at Whittingehame...; and by the mid-1880s Balfour was devoting every September to golf, a game he continued to play competently well into the 1920s. He built a small private course at Whittingehame and was one of those who made golf a society sport.²⁹

Balfour won the Parliamentary Handicap in 1894, 1897, and 1910 and captained the Royal and Ancient Club at St Andrews in 1894 and the new Rye Club in 1895. In 1882, he donated a trophy to Newnham College, Cambridge, for its lawn tennis doubles championship. His sister Eleanor, as Newnham's principal, would expand the family's commitment to the

²⁸A.J. Balfour, *Arthur James Balfour as Philosopher and Thinker: A Collection of the More Important and Interesting Passages in His Non-political Writings, Speeches and Addresses, 1879-1912*, ed. Wilfrid M. Short, (London, 1912), 276, 278.

²⁹Mackay and Matthew, "Balfour, Arthur James, First Earl of Balfour (1848–1930)." Adams, *Balfour*, 191-92, also discusses Balfour's passion for golf and relaxed demeanour on his private course at Whittingehame.

physical and moral benefits of sport and physical activity.³⁰

While prime minister, Balfour had the London–Edinburgh railway express make a special stop to allow him and his guests to alight near his house. His term as prime minister is recognised as the last British government patterned essentially on the intimacies, interconnections, and interdependencies of the ruling families of the land. Balfour can hardly be described as the product of a meritocratic system, and his experiences and generationally confirmed values certainly translated into prejudices and biases in public and political life. As prime minister, he oversaw the 1902 Education Act, which transferred responsibility for “higher education” of children to local education authorities. The consequences of this act have been described by one historian as “the obliteration of higher-grade development, the preservation of the identity of the grammar schools, and the reinforcement of a public school pattern by new regulations in 1904 and 1907,” overall, “a triumph for traditional thought and the adoption of a public-school cloak for the higher parts of the educational system as a whole.”³¹ David Cannadine summarizes Balfour’s origins and rise to power and the cultural, economic, social, and political advantages that provided the basis of this: “Balfour...enjoyed all the advantages that birth (and brains) could bestow.”³² Quincy Adams subtitled his esteemed study of Balfour “the last grandee” for a good reason.³³ Balfour emerged from the most privileged segment of the landed gentry. He was conservative by instinct but generous in spirit. He was tough when necessary and dignified in both defeat and triumph. At the Paris peace conference in 1919, Balfour came across as “less hostile to the Germans than some of the British delegation. He accepted the need for reparations but recommended the easing of

³⁰Balfour’s sister Eleanor, who married her Cambridge tutor, the university reformer Henry Sidgwick, became Newnham College’s second principal in 1892. She was a strong proponent of organized games and sport for women, which both Newnham and Girton College pioneered. She promoted the college’s field hockey club and ground, encouraged Newnhamites to form rowing, croquet, cricket, swimming, fencing, and lacrosse clubs or societies, and permitted mixed sets with men in lawn tennis. See Kathleen E. McCrone, *Sport and the Physical Emancipation of Women 1870-1914* (London, 1988), 34-38.

³¹T.W. Bamford, *The Rise of the Public Schools: A Study of Boys’ Public Boarding Schools in England and Wales from 1837 to the Present Day*, (London, 1967), 260-61.

³²David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (New Haven, 1990), 225.

³³Adams, *Balfour: The Last Grandee*.

the blockade. When asked if the German foreign minister had not behaved insultingly when remaining seated on receiving the allies' peace terms, Balfour remarked: "I did not notice. I do not stare at a gentleman in distress."³⁴ This is the discourse of the English public school: have respect for your vanquished opponent, in the knowledge that the next contest is yet to come and that your next experience may be defeat rather than victory. In cases of the greatest international importance, for Balfour, relations should be conducted in a manner of gentlemanly courtesy in a way that echoed de Coubertin's blend of national interest and international idealism.

Roosevelt shared Balfour's appreciation of the vanquished opponent as an equal in the sporting contest. The conflation of nationalism with honour and duty was salient for both and especially the American, given his response to controversies of the 1908 Olympics. As we shall see, though the controversies of the London Games vexed Roosevelt in private—especially the self-important and medal-mounting officiating by the hosts—he did not air his criticisms in public, an indication of the value he placed in the relationship above sporting victories. Reflecting such an understanding, a decade after the London Games he wrote: "I believe that the time has come when we should say that under no circumstances shall there ever be a resort to war between the United States and the British Empire, and that no question can ever arise between them that cannot be settled in judicial fashion, in some such manner as questions between states of our own Union would be settled."³⁵ Here again he sought a role for the United States as part of a regime that regulated international affairs, as an umpire would in a sporting contest.

With respect to Roosevelt as a sportsman in his own right, much has been written about what the *Boston Daily Globe*, in the aftermath of his death in 1919, called "the

³⁴Sydney H. Zebel, *Balfour: A Political Biography* (Cambridge, 1973), 260, quoted in Mackay and Matthew, "Balfour, Arthur James, First Earl of Balfour (1848–1930)."

³⁵Theodore Roosevelt to George H. Putnam, Dec. 5, 1918, TRP RSC.

Roosevelt doctrine as to sports.”³⁶ The sports he participated in were boxing, horsemanship, hiking, hunting, and tennis, and he was an avid fan of American football.³⁷ To state clearly, the most important facet of Roosevelt’s own appreciation of sport was as a means of developing character: “athletics served to mold a man.”³⁸ For the man, and he meant “men” rather than women as well, sport served as a change agent that *could* influence a nation’s outlook.³⁹ For someone with his personal history, who based much of his public image on the story of his own rise from sickly child to the epitome of the strenuous life, Roosevelt’s appreciation of sport as a means to “yield positive physical and character development” should not be a surprise.⁴⁰ In this he shared the views of de Coubertin. In one of the few direct exchanges between the two, Roosevelt wrote in 1903: “I think that you preach just the right form of the gospel of physical development.”⁴¹ After explaining the sporting exploits of his sons (and not his daughters), Roosevelt explained the limits of sport, too: “You are well aware of the mistake that so many of my English friends have made, that is of treating physical development as the be-all and the end-all—in other words as the serious business—of life.” Disdainfully he continued, “I have met English officers to whom polo and racing, football and baseball were far more absorbing than their professional duties.” One can see in these words the basis of Roosevelt’s personal disappointment in the conduct of British officials in London in 1908. Roosevelt wistfully concluded, “In such a case athleticism becomes a mere harmful disease.” To this extent the outcome of the contest did not matter; he

³⁶“Roosevelt as a Sportsman,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 5, 1919, quoted in Ryan A Swanson, “‘I Never Was a Champion at Anything’: Theodore Roosevelt’s Complex and Contradictory Record as America’s ‘Sports President,’” *Journal of Sport History* 38 (Fall 2011):.425-46.

³⁷On Roosevelt and college football, see *ibid*, 437-39. Also, John J. Miller, *The Big Scrum: How Teddy Roosevelt Saved Football* (New York, 2012).

³⁸Swanson, “‘I Never Was a Champion at Anything,’” 431.

³⁹Much has been written about Roosevelt’s “manliness,” a theme that does not need recounting here. See Gary Gertsle, “Theodore Roosevelt and the Divided Character of American Nationalism,” *Journal of American History* 86 (Dec. 1999):.1280-1307.

⁴⁰Swanson, “‘I Never Was a Champion at Anything,’” 430.

⁴¹Theodore Roosevelt to Pierre de Coubertin, June 15, 1903, in Brands, *Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 298.

“cared more about participation than proficiency.”⁴² Put more simply, it was the taking part that counted.

Roosevelt relished and cultivated his image as a sportsman. In much of the literature published about Roosevelt during his lifetime and since, the primary picture is of him enjoying outdoor pursuits, undertaking a charge up San Juan Hill, toughing it out in the Dakotas, and traveling after his presidency in Africa and up the Amazon. These are pervasive images and not without justification. The press of the day covered his exertions hiking in Rock Creek Park, where—in a break with diplomatic protocol—he often conducted diplomatic business by insisting his visitors accompany him. The press also reported his evident enjoyment of the sporting spectacle, with the annual Army-Navy football match standing out. Ryan Swanson notes, “Roosevelt’s athletic feats and athletic doctrine were covered exhaustively, to an extent that has not since been equalled.”⁴³

The Background to London 1908

Contributing to Roosevelt’s image as athletic was the role he took in the two Olympics that preceded London 1908: the 1904 St Louis Olympic Games and the 1906 Athens (interim) Games. The latter, effectively written out of history by the post-war International Olympic Committee, were successfully staged after the failings of the 1900 Paris event and the 1904 St. Louis one.⁴⁴ Importantly, American athletes did well in 1906—mainly in competition with the United Kingdom—and built upon their home success in 1904. The record of Roosevelt’s direct commitment to the St Louis Olympics of 1904 is mixed. De

⁴²Swanson, ““I Never Was a Champion at Anything,”” 431.

⁴³Swanson, ““I Never Was a Champion at Anything,”” 440.

⁴⁴The main cause for the failings in Paris and St Louis was the incorporation of the games into world’s fairs, which resulted in their marginalisation. De Coubertin resolved that he would never allow the Olympics to be anything other than a stand-alone event. On the 1904 games, see Charles J.P. Lucas, *The Olympic Games 1904*, (St Louis, 1905) available at www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1904/1904lucas.pdf (accessed July 23, 2014); George R. Matthews and Sandra Marshall, *St. Louis Olympics, 1904* (Mount Pleasant, SC, 2003); and George R. Matthews, *America’s First Olympics: The St. Louis Games of 1904*, (Columbia, MO, 2005).

Coubertin had written to Roosevelt on December 2, 1901, addressing him as “your excellency,” hailing him as a “great sportsman,” and seeking confirmation of the new president’s “powerful support in our new undertaking,” the forthcoming 1904 Olympic Games, at the time planned for Chicago.⁴⁵ Roosevelt initially responded that “he regretted being unable to accede to his request, as his cabinet had advised him not to give the unavoidable impression of governmental connection with the games.” Coubertin pressed TR to reconsider, pointing out precedents established in 1896 and 1900. Again, Roosevelt demurred. Nevertheless, after further persuasion bordering upon protestation from the Frenchmen, Roosevelt, who recognised the potential of hosting the games, granted a presidential endorsement in October 1902. Roosevelt promised “everything I can do for the Olympian Games will be done.”⁴⁶

In 1904 Roosevelt was made honorary president of the Olympic Games, in recognition of his influence in shifting the games to St Louis from the IOC’s initial choice of Chicago (against the wishes of de Coubertin who did not attend the St Louis games). Despite accepting the honorary presidency, with a presidential election on the horizon, Roosevelt did not attend the 1904 games, although his daughter Alice visited twice. But TR’s image adorned various publications, and his inspiration could be felt. Careful language in the official report compiled by James E. Sullivan, director of the 1904 games and secretary of the Amateur Athletic Union, describes Roosevelt’s role: “The acceptance of the Honorary Presidency of the Olympic games by President Roosevelt was a tribute to all concerned in the creation of the Olympic games for 1904. His acceptance proved conclusively that he approved of the organization, had given the subject a great deal of thought and believed that

⁴⁵Pierre de Coubertin to Theodore Roosevelt, Dec. 23, 1901, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, available via Theodore Roosevelt Digital Library, Dickinson State University, www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Research/Digital-Library/Record.aspx?libID=o36343 (accessed July 23, 2014).

⁴⁶Robert Barney, “Coubertin and Americans: Wary Relationships, 1889-1925,” in *Coubertin et l’Olympisme: questions pour l’avenir* (Lausanne, 1998), 58, available at <http://www.coubertin.ch/pdf/PDF-Dateien/112-Barney.pdf> (accessed July 24, 2014).

the successful carrying out of the programme meant much to the future success of this country as an athletic nation.”⁴⁷ In the opening to their book, *St Louis Olympics, 1904*, George Matthews and Sandra Marshall claim that “inspired by young, energetic and athletic President Theodore Roosevelt, a sports mania rampaged across the country. Eager to celebrate its history, and display its commercial, military and athletic potential, the United States hosted the world at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and welcomed the world’s athletes to compete in the international Olympic Games.”⁴⁸

While the incorporation of the games into the centennial celebrations of the Louisiana Purchase frustrated de Coubertin, the sporting competition saw Americans triumph. Such success as there was should perhaps be unsurprising, since over 500 of the 651 athletes who competed were Americans. The major achievements and focus were on the track and field events, with the marathon victory of Thomas Hicks of particular note.⁴⁹ The success on the track and the overtly nationalist dimension to the 1904 games reflected the views of Director Sullivan.⁵⁰ An Irish-American from New York, Sullivan was passionate, almost evangelical about “amateurism,” “athletics” (track and field), and “winning,” the latter putting him at odds with de Coubertin, whose relations with the American were tense. Sullivan continued to play a critical role in Olympic transatlantic relations, as secretary of the U.S. team in 1908

⁴⁷James E. Sullivan, ed., *Spalding’s Athletic Library: Official Athletic Almanac for 1905, Olympic Games Number* (New York, 1905), 161, available at <http://library.la84.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1904/1904Spal.pdf> (accessed July 24, 2014).

⁴⁸Matthews and Marshall, *St Louis Olympics, 1904*, 7.

⁴⁹In St. Louis, the United States won 239 medals, seventy-eight gold. The next highest total was Germany with thirteen, including four gold. www.olympic.org/st-louis-1904-summer-olympics (accessed July 24, 2014).

⁵⁰On the eve of the 1912 Olympics, Sullivan remarked, in language befitting the Founding Fathers on the one hand and the social Darwinists of the era on the other: “American Olympians were products of the melting pot shaped by American institutions into champions who could beat anyone from their former homelands. The American champions represented the adventuresome souls who had escaped the tyranny and repression of the Old World to participate in the great republican experiment that forged the United States.” Mark Dyreson, “Selling American Civilization: The Olympic Games of 1920 and American Culture,” *OLYMPIKA: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 8 (1999): 1-42. According to Rebecca Jenkins, *The First London Olympics: 1908* (London, 2008), 79, Sullivan gained a powerbase in the Amateur Athletic Union while preaching a gospel of pure amateurism: “His supporters praised him as ‘manly, straight-forward and vigorous’; his critics stigmatised him as bullying and rude. But he was a brilliant administrator and networker.” AAU secretary (1889-1906), president (1906-1909), and then secretary again until his untimely death in 1914, Sullivan can be credited with much of the initial success of the U.S. team at the Olympic Games.

and the voice of American discontent with their host.

Roosevelt certainly shared some of Sullivan's enthusiasm for American triumphs and swiftly cabled Sullivan in Athens after the U.S. team's triumphs in the 1906 games.⁵¹ These games, following the success of the first modern games in 1896 and the relative failings of 1900 and 1904, were an unprecedentedly streamlined athletic competition taking place over just two weeks. The London 1908 event, by contrast, ran from April to October. The focused schedule, with an emphasis on track and field, facilitated U.S. success. Roosevelt, writing to Sullivan, stated: "Hearty congratulations to you and the American contestants," adding "Uncle Sam is all right."⁵² With the American team returning with a creditable second place in the medals table in the early summer of 1906, attention turned to the next games. Would Uncle Sam be "all right" when it came to London two years later?⁵³

Little is known of any explicit view that Balfour took of the emerging profile of the Olympic Games in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. He was, though, part of its making. According to official Olympic documents, he had lent his support to the idea of the Olympic revival as early as February 1894, when de Coubertin visited London, and "the Prince of Wales and the Rt. Hon Arthur Balfour signified their approval" of the project.⁵⁴ The future king and prime minister soon found themselves inside de Coubertin's prestigious networks. Indeed, Balfour is named in de Coubertin's documentation of his June

⁵¹The 1906 Olympics in Athens and their place in the history of the Olympic movement is discussed in Karl Lennartz, "The 2nd International Olympic Games in Athens 1906," *Journal of Olympic History* 10 (Dec. 2001-Jan. 2002): 10-27, available at www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/JOH/JOHv10n1/JOHv10n1i.pdf (accessed July 24, 2014).

⁵²Roosevelt to Sullivan May 3, 1906, in James E. Sullivan, *The Olympic Games at Athens, 1906* (New York, 1906), 45. According to Sullivan, "The message was read to the athletes at a dinner at the Hermes Hotel and three long cheers were given for our athletic President. The President again showed his deep interest in the success of the team, as is shown by the following telegram which was received as soon as the team landed from the steamer Republic upon their return to New York: 'Let me heartily congratulate you and all the members of the team upon their admirable showing. We are all proud of the record they made,'" Roosevelt to Sullivan, May 25 1906, in *ibid.*

⁵³On the move of the 1908 Olympics from Rome to London, John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson, eds., *Watching the Olympics: Politics, Power and Representation* (London, 2012), ch. 1.

⁵⁴Theodore Andrea Cook, *The Fourth Olympiad, Being the Official Report The Olympic Games of 1908...* (London, 1909), 17 available at www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1908/1908.pdf (accessed July 24, 2014).

1894 international congress; “M. Balfour, Membre du Parlement Anglais” is one of several British “honorary members or delegates” of the congress, the others being the Liberal politician Lord Aberdare, Sir John Astley of the Sporting Club of London, and Lord Dufferin, British ambassador to France, 1892-96. De Coubertin would court the diplomatic figures he could contact in Paris, mustering their support for his events and their patronage of his initiatives; Dufferin accepted the honorary presidency of an International Meeting of Athletic Sports in 1893. When leaving his Paris posting, he received a letter from de Coubertin “on this very sad occasion of your departure,” expressing “my most sincere gratitude for your many kindnesses towards myself and the French Athletic Union.”⁵⁵ Dufferin had also, de Coubertin recalled in his letter, presided early on in his posting over the first Anglo-French football match to be played in France.⁵⁶ Not one to ignore the call of history, de Coubertin included a fourth British name, William Penny Brookes, the Philhellene and health reformer who staged Olympic-style events in his hometown of Much Wenlock in the 1850s and who later came to know de Coubertin. “Mle Dr. W.P. Brookes” is the apparently unchecked detail listed in the roll call of honorary members.⁵⁷

The de Coubertin tactic of compiling lists of important international statesmen and prestigious aristocrats and royals would have amused Balfour, who probably learned details about London’s stepping in to replace Rome for 1908 through his close friend, Ettie Desborough, the wife of the leader of the London 1908 Games, Lord Desborough. Ettie Desborough was one of the leading socialites of the last quarter of the nineteenth century and a core member of the aesthetic-cum-social group, The Souls, whose intellectual and personal

⁵⁵Pierre de Coubertin to Austin Lee, June 30, 1893 (D1071H/B/C/624/2), and de Coubertin to Lord Dufferin, Oct. 18, 1896 (D1071H/B/C/624/3), Dufferin Papers (General Correspondence), Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast.

⁵⁶See also Norbert Müller, ed., *Pierre de Coubertin 1863-1937: Olympism— Selected Writings* (Lausanne, 2000), 389.

⁵⁷*Bulletin du Comité International*, 1re. Année No. 1, Juillet 1894, in International Olympic Committee Museum/Files, Lausanne.

helmsman had been Balfour.⁵⁸ The Souls nicknamed their leading member, future prime minister of the country, “King Arthur.”⁵⁹ Unlike Roosevelt, Balfour would not have been called upon to make explicit political commitment to the games, even if he had still held prime ministerial office when Lord Desborough was negotiating their assignment to London. Much as boys at public schools might be left to organize their own sporting competitions,⁶⁰ civil society stalwarts such as Lord Desborough pursued their own aspirations, with little or no formal involvement of the state. Informally, such overlapping, interpersonal networks could provide invaluable support in-kind for cultural, political, and economic initiatives such as the emergent sporting event.

1908 Olympics: Strenuous and Strained Anglo-American Competition

If the success of an Olympic games is measured in terms of medals, then both the British and “Uncle Sam” would have reason to be pleased with the outcome of 1908 Olympics.⁶¹ The British topped the overall medal table, with the United States second and triumphant in the athletics competition. “The American athletes just swept England off the map,” Sullivan was reported as saying in the *New York Times*.⁶² However, the substantive tale of the 1908 Olympics—and the reason that it illustrates the tightening, but still sometimes fractious nature of the transatlantic bond—starts with the refereeing controversies that earned these games the moniker, “Battle of Shepherd’s Bush.”⁶³

⁵⁸See Angela Lambert, *Unquiet Souls: The Indian Summer of the British Aristocracy 1880-1918* (London, 1984); Jane Abdy and Charlotte Gere, *The Souls* (London, 1984); and Jane Ridley, “Souls (*act.* 1886-1911),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/templates/theme.jsp?articleid=42005 (accessed July 24, 2014).

⁵⁹Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, (New Haven, 1981), 225.

⁶⁰Lincoln Allison and Rusty MacLean, “There’s a Deathless Myth on the Close Tonight: Re-assessing Rugby’s Place in the History of Sport,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 29 (Sept. 2012): 1866-1884.

⁶¹The United Kingdom had 146 total medals with fifty-six gold; the United States forty-seven total, twenty-three gold. Cook, *The Fourth Olympiad*.

⁶²Jenkins, *The First London Olympics: 1908*, 252.

⁶³Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan, *The 1908 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events* (Jefferson, NC, 2000), append. 3.

It is not the purpose here to detail the individual controversies; suffice it to say that the Opening Ceremony, the 400 meters, the tug of war (until 1920 an Olympic sport), and the marathon reveal the problems and the passions that adhered to the event overall.⁶⁴ What is important for understanding the Anglo-American relationship is how these quarrels over sport generated political controversy that eventually involved Roosevelt, at least in private. Valuing the great strategic partnership with London, he was mute in public. Roosevelt did offer his congratulations to the U.S. team; he invited them to Sagamore Hill, but he also offered salient words of advice.⁶⁵ “You’re heroes for ten days,” Roosevelt told the returning athletes, in keeping with his doctrine that the competition and not the winning was what mattered, “when that time is up drop the hero business and go to work.”⁶⁶ More substantially, Roosevelt reflected, “Thruout [*sic*] the time I have been President I have steadily striven for a better sympathy and understanding between the United States and Great Britain, and to have me take any part whatever in this exceedingly unfortunate controversy would simply tend to undo just what I have been striving to accomplish.”⁶⁷ It was such a balanced perspective reflecting the significance of relations with Great Britain that was to prevail in the aftermath of the games and in the final months of Roosevelt’s presidency.

In private, Roosevelt, exhibiting his nationalist bent, was less sanguine about American treatment at the Olympics. His personal correspondence demonstrates a clear frustration and sense of injustice with the officiating in London and post-facto justifications

⁶⁴As was the practice to this point, the hosts provided all of the officials drawn from the relevant, British, national sports federations. This was to change, one of the legacies of the London Games to the modern Olympic movement. Following the London Games, the IOC implemented changes which meant the hosts would not provide the officials. Henceforth, the International Sporting Federations (ISFs) would manage each of the participating sports. The games set a precedent in terms of scale and organisation, being the largest—with over 2000 athletes—and best-organised to date. Moreover, the 1908 Olympics generated sufficient interest to revive the Olympic movement and steer the games towards the modern-day phenomenon that they would become. Matthews, ‘The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908,’ 52, notes that the first London Games “provided the impetus to restore a sense of dignity and credibility to the Olympic movement after the ludicrous and somewhat farcical games of 1900 and 1904.”

⁶⁵The U.S. team was photographed at Roosevelt’s Sagamore Hill retreat in Oyster Bay, Long Island, Aug. 31, 1908.

⁶⁶Jenkins, *The First London Olympics: 1908*, 251.

⁶⁷Roosevelt to Theodore A. Cook, Nov. 17, 1908, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress, reel 352, quoted in Tilchin, “Anglo-American Partnership,” 322.

of it in the British press. What riled the president the most, along with many of his countrymen, was the accusation of foul play. Roosevelt received a letter from a British correspondent complete with newspaper clippings covering the 400m race, in which the American J.C. Carpenter was alleged to have fouled British champion and idol, Wyndham Halswelle. The judges broke the tape before the athletes crossed the line, a fervent crowd rushed the track, and Carpenter was disqualified by the British officials, with a re-run organised. The Americans –the two other competitors in the final were also American— refused to participate and Halswelle secured the hollowest of victories as he raced alone in the re-run.

In a masterfully measured and thorough *riposte*, Roosevelt balanced the disquiet he harboured for the British judges with a sense of the importance of fairplay for all, a recognition that participating was what mattered. Roosevelt pointed to bias, claiming there was “evidence of a bitterness of hostile feeling on the part of English people...that would render them utterly unfit to pass judgement upon whether or not Carpenter had been guilty of fouling, a bitterness so discreditable that it deprives them of all right to criticise others.” He continued with a damning indictment of the coverage of the incident in the British Press, and particularly *The Sportsman*: “There are papers in this country whose utterances make one feel heartily ashamed, but I have yet to see an American paper writing on this Olympic matter whose utterances should be condemned as unstintedly as those of this paper, *The Sportsman*.”⁶⁸ The press on both sides of the Atlantic certainly sought to make the most of the controversy and in doing so helped fan the flames of transatlantic bad feeling. *The New York Times* headline after the 400m illustrates the American perspective, “Carpenter of Cornell Easily Beats English Crack, but Is Disqualified for Foul. Officials Claim Bump-Race

⁶⁸Theodore Roosevelt to George C. Buell, Aug. 18, 1908, in Brands, *Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 499.

to Be Re-Run, English Crowds Boo American Performers for No Reason Whatsoever.”⁶⁹ *The Times*’s coverage reflected British views: “the race was run in England” and was therefore subject to local rules “that govern sport and to our notions of what is fair play.”⁷⁰ “The American newspapers carried reports of the Shepherd’s Bush disputes for months,” Jenkins notes. “The tone of the returning athletes’ remarks was, in general, less vitriolic than that of their managers, but there was a general opinion that the British officials had been officious and arrogant.”⁷¹

Such a view was certainly held by Sullivan. He told the New York Irish-American Athletic Club at the Waldorf Astoria in September 1908: “The American people think we raised too many objections, but my opinion is that we did not object enough. The American Committee protested only when it was necessary to protect American interests, and even then we had good reason.”⁷² (By the end of the two weeks of athletic competition the Americans had lodged 14 appeals.) Reflecting Roosevelt’s balanced adherence to fair-play, the president wrote that the “action of the judges and the crowd, however, seems to have shown a very violent and malignant spirit,” before noting, “on the other hand, I think that the Americans by the protest they made in the papers and by their bitter complaints of English unfairness behaved as badly themselves.”⁷³ Roosevelt excused the athlete himself who wanted the matter put to bed, but appears to have been less than impressed with Sullivan’s conduct in protesting to the extent he did.

In a further illustration of Roosevelt’s sense of sporting honour and respect in relation to the London controversy, the president drew a parallel between the conduct of the 400m race and the marathon the following day. The 1908 Olympic marathon is doubly important: the length of the race was officially established as 26 miles 385 yards to enable King Edward

⁶⁹*New York Times* July 24, 1908, 7.

⁷⁰*The Times* (London), July 24, 1908, 6.

⁷¹Jenkins, *The First London Olympics: 1908*, 242.

⁷²Sullivan quoted in *ibid.*, 252.

⁷³Roosevelt to Buell, Aug. 18, 1908, in Brands, *Selected Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 496.

VII to observe the start on the lawns of Windsor Castle, but most importantly, the conclusion of the race produced drama with serious political implications. The Italian Pietro Dorando was the first into view of the 90,000 souls packed into the “Great Stadium” at Shepherd’s Bush. But Dorando was so exhausted by his exploits that he began running around the track the wrong way and collapsed before being helped to his feet by a fervent crowd and race stewards. A further three times he needed support to cross the line first. An American, Johnny Hayes, was second to finish, and Sullivan immediately led the protests, but not before the Italian flag had been raised. The American protest was upheld that day, and Hayes awarded the gold medal. Dorando received a unique gold cup from Queen Alexandria for his achievement and was lauded as the “real” champion in the British press, adding fuel to transatlantic ill-feeling.

For Roosevelt, the injustice initially befalling Hayes was worsened by the hypocrisy of the officials from the previous day’s 400m race. “The judges who had waited for no protest to permit the people to rush on the track the day before and to declare Carpenter’s race no race,” Roosevelt observed, “now with all this happening before their eyes, refused to take any action until the Americans on behalf of the man who had really won entered a protest.”⁷⁴ He went on reiterating his point about perceived double standards, “When with such overzealousness against the American one day coupled with such blind in-difference to misconduct of the grossest kind when practiced against the American the next day at the close of the Marathon race, it is hard not to draw an uncharitable conclusion.” Yet, ever the politician and exhibiting a diplomatic capacity that his detractors who saw him as merchant of the Big Stick would not recognise, Roosevelt proceeded to qualify his disenchantment, reflecting his sense of sporting honour and respect. As Tilchin succinctly states, Roosevelt

⁷⁴Ibid.

“acted skilfully behind the scenes to defuse the problem.”⁷⁵ The president philosophised in a fashion any sports fan would recognise: “Fouls continually occur in races...where there is no intentional misconduct at all.” He recounted a race he had competed in as a youth, where he and his competitor clashed and felt aggrieved, yet his sense of gentlemanliness shone through. “Neither of us made the claim,” Roosevelt wrote, “and neither for a moment supposed that the other had fouled him intentionally.” In confessional mood, the president went further in making sure his comments were taken in the appropriate context: “I never should have stated my views at all, even privately, except in answer to a letter such as yours, and I state them to you for your private information merely.”⁷⁶ Concluding his extensive response to the Olympic discord in London, and revealing his appreciation of the wider Anglo-American context, the president stated that it “would be improper, ungenerous, unwise and tend to no good purpose to make any...statement ...in public.” He finished, “My idea is to refrain from every statement which will tend to cause international bitterness” and instead, in a manner befitting the magnitude of sports “simply to congratulate the American team.”⁷⁷ Here one can see how sports fitted into Roosevelt’s broader understanding of U.S. national interest. In doing so, and having used the 400m and the marathon to make his point, Roosevelt ignored two other issues that stirred transatlantic fires. There was disquiet over the absence of Stars and Stripes decorating the stadium at the Opening Ceremony, as well as over the refusal of the U.S. flag bearer to dip his flag to King Edward VII (a “tradition” the U.S. team has maintained ever since under the mantra that the flag “dips to no earthly king”). The Tug of War competition was won by a British team, comprising members of the London City Police. The US team had been defeated in the first round of the competition by a Liverpool Police team wearing boots with steel reinforcements in the form of spikes, heels and cleats.

⁷⁵Tilchin, “Anglo-American Partnership,”.322.

⁷⁶Roosevelt to Buell, Aug., 18, 1908, 497.

⁷⁷Ibid., 498-99.

British officials rejected American protests, deeming such hobnail boots to be permissible footwear if one's "normal" occupation was as a police officer.

Balfour's Olympic summer was not determined by public outcries concerning international interests. From Whittingehame, the family estate in Scotland, Balfour wrote to Lady Elcho (August 15-16) about the male visitors to the house, unusually outnumbering the women:

The girls are, as usual, in tearing spirits, enjoying themselves hugely. Lawn tennis, riding, picnicking in the hills, or by the sea, bathing irrespective of temperature, seem their principal work; --their relaxation listening to the gramophone. Gerald and I not unaccompanied by Frances, have been golfing at Muirfield, North Berwick and Dunbar, with varying success. Yesterday we had a four ball foursome with the brothers Lodge, but everyone played abominably. The nicest experience I have had was a picnic beyond Yester in the Lammermuirs; the weather was extraordinarily clear though stormy looking and I do not think I ever saw such views—right into the heart (as it seemed) of the Highlands with the Gosford woods and the Firth of Forth in the foreground.⁷⁸

This was the patrician former prime minister in his prime, scheduling athletic sports into his everyday life for their social, individual, and physical benefits, then throwing himself into a romantic natural world aesthetic. Later that year Balfour attended the London Olympics, for the final of the men's football tournament, won by Great Britain against Denmark. He sat in the VIP section alongside Lord and Lady Desborough and other dignitaries.⁷⁹ On the same day, October 24, he watched the lacrosse game between Canada and the United Kingdom.⁸⁰ Earlier in the year, in July, Balfour had hosted a dinner at White

⁷⁸Jane Ridley and Clayre Percy, eds., *The Letters of Arthur Balfour & Lady Elcho 1885-1917* (London, 1992), 249.

⁷⁹Cook, *The Fourth Olympiad*, 179.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 207.

City, the London Olympic venue; the Desboroughs were among the guests, after watching the Leander club triumph over the Belgian team in the Olympic rowing final at Henley.⁸¹ The social networks of The Souls were sustained by Balfour, whatever the political or professional demands of the day. Balfour's professional energies would be focused upon the domestic political battles and the wider challenges of international relations and conflict during the following twenty years. His sporting ethos—as espoused at Eton and Cambridge—characterised his approach to international issues and to relationships with emerging and fading superpowers. He was not a hunting or a climbing man, like Roosevelt; but he was a sporting man and a gentleman, a respecter of individual taste, sporting chivalry, as well as a defender of national interests and a mediator of the fragile international order.

In his post-presidency world tour, Roosevelt was accompanied by veteran U.S. diplomat Henry White, also a core member of Balfour's (King Arthur's) Souls, for whom cultural and aesthetic reflection and contemplation had been an antidote to some of the post-imperial difficulties that Balfour faced, particularly those pertaining to the Irish Home Rule. White and his wife Margaret were stalwarts of the social circles of the Souls, initially via the friendship of U.S. novelist Edith Wharton. They attended the key social events, mixing regularly with the interlocking families and dynasties of the British aristocracy. White had come to live in London in 1870 and in 1884 was appointed second secretary at the American Legation, promoted to first secretary in 1886. In 1907, he was made the U.S. ambassador to Paris, though soon relieved of duty after the end of Roosevelt's presidency. Balfour was in effect the patron of The Souls, close friend to White in the late 1880s and early 1890s, and as we have seen, occupying the same rooms in key meetings at the Paris peace conference thirty years later. Balfour's cultural and diplomatic webs thus embraced the man seen by Roosevelt as invaluable to his own political career and presidency and the US diplomatic service as a

⁸¹Richard Davenport-Hines, *Ettie: The Intimate Life and Dauntless Spirit of Lady Desborough*, (London, 1988), 149.

whole. In such ways were the foundations laid for the *rapprochement* of U.S. and British interests in the period.

Conclusion

In his closing remarks to the London 2012 Paralympics, the chair of the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games Lord Sebastian Coe, from a platform in the rapturous Olympic Stadium, stated: “Finally, there are some famous words you can find stamped on the bottom of a product. Words, that when you read them, you know mean high quality, mean skill, mean creativity.” Buoyed by the manifold successes of London 2012, Coe continued. “We have stamped those words on the Olympic and Paralympic Games of London 2012” and ended, succinctly, “London 2012. Made in Britain.”⁸² Over a century before, the first London Olympics of 1908, were *made* in considerable part in the United States also. While the infrastructure and organisation were British, which gave confidence to the still immature and fragile modern Olympic movement to go on and organise future games, transatlantic competition and controversy enlivened the summer of 1908 and served to revive interest in and awareness of the Olympics.⁸³ “The international confrontation in London was... a blessing in disguise for the Olympic movement,” and one that marked an important staging post in the development of the Olympic Games as a modern institution.⁸⁴ The tale of Carpenter’s disqualification, and more so Dorando’s endeavours in the marathon, have become immortalised in Olympic history. And despite the controversy with the United States, the 1908 London Games are often recalled in Great Britain as a pinnacle achievement representing as they do the country’s strongest Olympic showing.

⁸²Lord Sebastian Coe, Closing Ceremony, Sept. 9, 2012.

⁸³Less one think that “controversy” is always a negative for the Olympic Games, one might note Richard Moore, *The Dirtiest Race in History* (London, 2012), which charts the 1988 Olympic men’s 100m final.

⁸⁴Matthews, “The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908,” 40.

This article concludes that within the numerous strands of the transatlantic relationships of the first decade of the twentieth century, a particular insight can be gained by observing how the bond between Great Britain and the United States was forged in the heat of competition in the realm of sport, with the 1908 Olympic Games as a key episode. This was in part due to a common appreciation among the political classes of both countries in the gentlemanly characteristics of honour, duty, and fair-play and in competition's value for strengthening these. These values could be found in the ethos of both Roosevelt and Balfour as sporting enthusiasts and spokesmen for their nations. That the bond was tested in London was intrinsic to understanding on both sides of the Atlantic of sport and the qualities it required and developed. Amid the transatlantic controversies, Roosevelt demonstrated his appreciation of the notion that a gentleman of honour respects the rules, much as would Balfour. Both sought to be the gentleman who "stops when 'time' is called; he fights 'on the square,'" as Wister noted of TR in 1901.⁸⁵ Balfour would not trample on a defeated rival in the peace conference. What Roosevelt and Balfour also appreciated, as the early twentieth century unfolded with increasingly bellicose rhetoric flooding international affairs, was that the United States and the United Kingdom had more in common than that which divided them. The kinship of the English-speaking peoples was, in their view, a bulwark against the autocracies of Germany and Russia and a model of progress to the impotent and lawless nations of the world. Thus the competition of London Olympics "between the two rivals was viewed...as a means of demonstrating the overall cultural superiority and promoting nationalism within the United States and Great Britain." For Roosevelt especially, but in a different way for Balfour, the "overall cultural superiority" and "nationalism" of the United States *and* Great Britain was what mattered.⁸⁶

⁸⁵Wister, "Theodore Roosevelt: The Sportsman and the Man," 248.

⁸⁶Matthews, "The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908," 40.

In his post-presidency world tour, Roosevelt was accompanied by veteran U.S. diplomat Henry White, also a core member of Balfour's (King Arthur's) Souls, for whom cultural and aesthetic reflection and contemplation had been an antidote to some of the post-imperial difficulties that Balfour faced, particularly those pertaining to the Irish Home Rule. White and his wife Margaret were stalwarts of the social circles of the Souls, initially via the friendship of U.S. novelist Edith Wharton. They attended the key social events, mixing regularly with the interlocking families and dynasties of the British aristocracy. White had come to live in London in 1870 and in 1884 was appointed second secretary at the American Legation, promoted to first secretary in 1886. In 1907, he was made the U.S. ambassador to Paris, though soon relieved of duty after the end of Roosevelt's presidency. Balfour was in effect the patron of The Souls, close friend to White in the late 1880s and early 1890s, and as we have seen, occupying the same rooms in key meetings at the Paris peace conference thirty years later. Balfour's cultural and diplomatic webs thus embraced the man seen by Roosevelt as invaluable to his own political career and presidency and the US diplomatic service as a whole. In such ways were the foundations laid for the *rapprochement* of U.S. and British interests in the period.

Describing Anglo-American relations in a later era, during the 1930s and 1940s, David Reynolds characterised the transatlantic Anglo-American relationship as one of "competitive cooperation."⁸⁷ This could also serve as an apt description of this earlier episode in that relationship, as manifested in the London 1908 Olympics and throughout the first two decades of the century which were characterised by the developing mutual interests that tied together the Old and the New World.

⁸⁷David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance, 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-Operation* (Chapel Hill, 1981).

