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# Mass Sport Through Education or Elite Olympic Sport?

José Benjamín Zubiaur's Dilemma and Argentina's  
Olympic Sports Legacy

Cesar R. Torres\*

Much has been written about the impact that Anglo-American sporting ideology had in the debates over the construction of modern nations in Europe and North America. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, reformers in those regions sought to inject sports in every aspect of cultural life. They claimed that sports had unique potential to develop nations' well-being, vitality and patriotism. Movements such as the so-called "muscular Christianity" and "the strenuous life" are well-studied examples of the intention to build progressive nations utilizing sports as a powerful and meaningful tool.<sup>1</sup>

Although these movements were part of a transatlantic intellectual conversation, the South American outlook and participation in this discourse has rarely been explored. The literature on the roots of modern sport in Latin America is very limited.<sup>2</sup> The case of José Benjamín Zubiaur constitutes a paradigmatic illustration of this state of affairs. Zubiaur, a well-known and respected Argentinian pedagogue, was in 1894 an original Baron Pierre de Coubertin appointee to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the first Latin American ever accorded this honor. The mythology that developed around Zubiaur's honor led to a number of misunderstandings that were perpetuated by the popular press and sport officials in Argentina. It is generally accepted that, for example, Zubiaur was present at the 1894 Sorbonne meeting when Coubertin established the IOC, and that he played an active role in the organization.<sup>3</sup> Paradoxically, and in spite of the fact that Zubiaur remained an IOC member until 1907, neither his biographies<sup>4</sup> nor any of his obituaries<sup>5</sup> provide an account of his involvement with the IOC.

This mythological Zubiaur is a romantic attempt to link his story to that of France's universally famous Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Even though Coubertin and

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Zubiaur started in exceptionally different intellectual and sociopolitical climates, their early careers were marked by profoundly similar concerns. Both men were obsessed with the establishment of a strong, vigorous, and progressive nation in their own lands. The principal targets for their social reforms were the respective French and Argentinian educational systems. Indeed, Coubertin and Zubiaur shared a belief that the cult of sport played a key role in the dynamic and leading Anglo-American cultures. Within the transatlantic intellectual dialogue, Great Britain and the United States were seen as the models of modern nations, leaders of Western Civilization. It is precisely that conception that ignited Coubertin's and Zubiaur's zeal to include sports and physical education in the school curriculums in an effort to provide physical, moral, and spiritual excellence. Later in his career, however, Coubertin was dedicated exclusively to the promotion of international sports competitions. Coubertin argued that internationalism and the peace movement would receive a new ally in sports .<sup>6</sup>



**José Benjamín Zubiaur -- Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires**

Demonstrating a similar initial set of values to those promulgated by Coubertin, it would have been easy for Zubiaur to erect himself as the champion of the Olympic Ideal and international sports in Latin America at the beginning of the twentieth century. He might well have become, had he followed Coubertin's path, the founding

father of the Olympic movement in Latin America. During those years, Zubiaur had to make a decision, either continue his commitment to reform public education or adopt Coubertin's novel internationalist sporting endeavor.

As Jorge Luis Borges once wrote, any life, however long and complicated it may be, actually consists of a single moment - the moment when a man knows forever more who he is.<sup>7</sup> Sometime during the early 1890s Zubiaur discovered who he was and what his role in public life should be. He stuck faithfully to that destiny for the rest of his life.

## Formative Years

Zubiaur was born in Argentina on March 31, 1856, at Paranà, Province of Entre Ríos, as José Mariano Benjamin Zubiaur. Nevertheless, he admitted to having always signed his name as J. B. Zubiaur, stripping the 'M' that stands for Mariano out of his signature and literally from himself.<sup>8</sup> His paternal lineage was Basque. His grandfather José,<sup>9</sup> came from Viscaya, Spain in the late 18th century and settled in what was then known as the *Virreinato Español del Río de la Plata*. The family owned a general store in Paranà. His father, Mariano, was active in public life.<sup>10</sup> He died when José Benjamín was a child of six years. His mother, Dolores Pujato, lived until he was 58 years of age.

Zubiaur's early years were not easy. The family struggled to provide for an education. Zubiaur recalled that "I learned the first letters of the alphabet on my father's knees."<sup>11</sup> The death of his father left the family in a precarious economic situation, although young José Benjamín was able to receive primary instruction. By the age of 14 he had to take a job as an apprentice to a store owner. Most of his adolescence was spent working at the mercantile establishment. At age 18 he reported, "I had to clean twenty kerosene lamps daily, besides pouring *mate* [a tea-like drink] and doing all the other required duties. . . . But that did not prevent me from playing with kites or ball on Sundays!"<sup>12</sup> Zubiaur's desire for secondary education was fulfilled in 1875 when, at age 19, through the help of Dr. Gregorio F. De la Puente, his brother-in-law, Zubiaur was awarded a scholarship and admitted to Argentina's *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay*.<sup>13</sup> It is precisely during his years in Concepción del Uruguay, Province of Entre Ríos, that he discovered his passion for teaching and started to develop a broad and critical vision of education. In 1876 and 1877 he served the College as a librarian, and the following year, as a substitute teacher. Finally, after four years of study he received his secondary education degree.<sup>14</sup>

Zubiaur's early training laid the groundwork for a life-time commitment to education. While a student at the *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay* he became conscious of the economic difficulties he had to surmount to receive his education. He founded *La Fraternidad* society of popular education in 1877 whose goal was to help students in need complete their degrees. Zubiaur presided over the organization during the first two years of its existence. The year following his graduation from the *Colegio Nacional*, he decided to remain in Concepción del Uruguay to broaden his intellectual horizons. Zubiaur established and directed the Franklin Primary School and, at the same time, began to study at the School of Law annexed to the *Colegio Nacional*.

This institution was to close its doors by 1880, thus forcing Zubiatur, already committed to finishing his law degree, to move to Buenos Aires in order to continue his studies.<sup>15</sup>

In Argentina's capital Zubiatur continued his law studies at the *Facultad de Derecho y Ciencias Sociales* of the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. In 1884, at age 28, he earned his doctorate with the successful defense of a dissertation entitled *La Protección al Niño (The Protection of the Child)*. This research was published as a book later that same year. In a letter that Zubiatur sent to his mother a few months before his graduation, he wrote of his values and motivations. He said:

With honest satisfaction I send you this letter announcing the happy result of my last partial exams. I do not have anything left to do but the general exam, which I expect to take in March finishing in this way a career that will have absorbed nine years of my life. In exchange, [this career] has provided me with the satisfaction of my studies, which were my strongest wish, and to be useful to you, who has made so many sacrifices for me, to be useful to my brothers, and to all of those who have helped me. . . . I was thinking of quitting my job and of going to study there during this vacation . . . but special circumstances that cannot be neglected and affect my future in the position that I have, have made me give up this idea for now.<sup>16</sup>

Zubiatur was not only motivated by his parents' education and his own formal training, but by the political climate of his time as well. He grew up in a period during which the foundations of modern Argentina were established, an era often referred to as the "transitional period," roughly from 1853 to 1880. He was born only three years after the national constitution was approved in 1853. Argentina won its independence from Spain in the second decade of the nineteenth century, but the young country experienced more social disharmony than national unity. After forty years of divisive internal fights, the 1853 constitution provided for a federal republic and incorporated the classical freedoms and civil rights.<sup>17</sup> This constitutional document was strongly influenced by the liberal intellectual Juan Baustista Alberdi, who favored a balance between central power and provincial rights, as well as progressive programs of immigration, education, and modernization. A blend of utilitarian and liberal ideologies, promoting individual liberty and a democratic society, was widespread during Zubiatur's formative years. Later he would say that he was a liberal thinker who reflected Alberdi's philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

Zubiatur's formative years were influenced by the liberal climate of ideas, and he fervently adopted many of them. Zubiatur's intellectual life was also affected by the so-called Generation of Eighty, made up of men whose careers began about that year, and concentrated in the city of Buenos Aires. The Generation of Eighty's ideas were shaped by European positivism and early American pragmatism. Both schools of thought considered education a major responsibility of the state. Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Domingo F. Sarmiento, and William James, among others, greatly influenced Zubiatur's views. Tomás Garrone, a long-time friend, summarized Zubiatur's "weltanschauung" in an informative way:

His theories, in the educational as well as in the social and philosophical

orders, were impregnated in their totality with deep liberal trends. . . . His mottoes of struggle were the same as those of the French Revolution. . . . Truth, for him, was not in the divine revelation, but in the arm, in the mind, in the heart, in each individual's will. It was in the honest, active, prolific, creative life; in the free personal initiative; in the altruistic and disinterested action, for the own self, useful for the family, the society, and the nation.<sup>19</sup>

Without a doubt, Zubiatur belonged to that generation, a generation that transformed and definitively modernized Argentina.<sup>20</sup> His character, talents, and education made him an educational force during this dynamic period.

### Zubiatur's Olympic Connection

Shortly after Zubiatur arrived in Buenos Aires in 1881, he obtained a position in the *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública* as a clerk, and started a prominent career in the state bureaucracy. Two years later, he received his first promotion to Assistant Supervisor of *Escuela Normales y Colegios Nacionales*. In 1885, not long after he contemplated leaving the Ministry, he was promoted again, this time to Supervisor of *Escuelas Normales y Colegios Nacionales*, a position he held until 1891.<sup>21</sup>

During his early years in the metropolis, Zubiatur expanded his professional horizons. Even while at the Ministry, he taught part-time at the *Escuela Normal de Maestros*, a high school that prepared teachers. In 1886, he founded the professional journal *La Educación*, a publication that had a significant influence on the Argentinian educational system during its nearly two decades of existence.<sup>22</sup> In 1888, Zubiatur published the first Spanish translation of Johann Pestalozzi's *How Gertrude Educates Her Children*, a liberal treatise on education.

Zubiatur's years in Buenos Aires were important, not only intellectually but personally. His marriage to Acela Tahier in 1886 was an important landmark in his life. Opposed to the Catholic Church, Zubiatur married in Paysandú, Uruguay because secular marriages were not recognized at that time in Argentina.<sup>23</sup> When children arrived, they were not baptized. Later in his career, he published an official report on the state of Patagonian schools in which he severely criticized the Catholic Salesian educational institutions in that region, arguing that their religious commitments hampered the achievement of educational goals. In response, Pedro Marabini wrote a book refuting all of Zubiatur's claims.<sup>24</sup> His attitude towards the Church in a country dominated by Catholicism almost certainly limited his ability to rise to the highest positions in his profession.<sup>25</sup>

Although Zubiatur was trained as a lawyer, he rarely practiced in his field of formal training. Instead, he devoted his time to the study of theoretical educational approaches. From a practical point of view he was concerned about the conditions under which education took place in his own country. His promotions within the Ministry gave him the opportunity to visit schools throughout the country and gain first-hand knowledge of their needs, expectations, and local interests. Those years constitute the roots and early development of a vocation devoted to the improvement of public education. J. Alfredo Ferreira, a respected educator, recognized Zubiatur's

efforts during this period:

My distinguished friend: in the present generation, you are the educator who has not abandoned, for any moment, the promotion of the school. You have never been lazy, or weak, or disillusioned. In this sense, your opinion is welcomed everywhere schools are discussed, to strengthen the good ideas and encourage those who sustain them.<sup>26</sup>

By 1889, Zubiaur was a significant educational figure in Argentina, and he began to represent the country abroad. Zubiaur was appointed a member of the delegation sent by the *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública* to the Universal Exposition in Paris, France, representing also the provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes. Zubiaur's wife and children made the long trip to Europe, and one of his daughters, América, was born in France. Zubiaur was also commissioned to participate in the International Pedagogical Congress on Primary Instruction and to study different European educational systems. During his twelve months of residence in Europe, Zubiaur assisted the works of the Pedagogical Congress, published and presented a book on Education in Argentina entitled *Quelques Mots Sur L'instruction Publique et Privée dans la République Argentine (Notes on the Public and Private Instruction in the Argentine Republic)*, and traveled extensively throughout France, Switzerland, Belgium, and Germany. Victoriano Montes, a distinguished educator, poet, and long-time friend, described Zubiaur's fertile days in Europe:

Dear friend: I see that you are not wasting your time in the French capital. You have made yours the badge of the Roman emperor: let's work! . . .

I do not know how the hell you can do so many things at the same time: visiting schools; writing correspondence for *La Nación*, extensive notes to the Minister, articles and letters for *La Educación*, and epistles to friends; attending banquets; strolling through the exposition; and touring neighbor cities; etc.<sup>27</sup>

Because Zubiaur's interests included all topics related to education, once he learned about the Universal Exposition's International Congress for the Propagation of Physical Exercise it is almost certain that he attended the five-day event. The purpose of the Congress was to generate interest in physical exercises as a crucial aspect of a well-rounded education. As it did for Zubiaur, the Congress constituted Pierre de Coubertin's first experience with sport education on an international stage. Coubertin served as general secretary of the Congress and also presented a paper at the gathering.<sup>28</sup>

For a brief period, highlighted by the 1889 Congress in Paris, Zubiaur's and Coubertin's passions overlapped. They were both intrigued by the prospect of reforming their nations' educational systems by adopting Anglo-American programs of physical education and sport. In 1889 Zubiaur published a report based on his work in the Paris' Universal Exposition, entitled *La Escuela Primaria en Francia (The Elementary School in France)*. In it, Zubiaur gave a detailed account of what he judged to be the advantages of the French educational system. He offered a clue about his encounter with the Baron de Coubertin in his praise of the incipient but growing role that

physical education played in the French schooling system. Zubiatur reported that: "Increasingly the English athletic games find more support. The goodness of these games is praised by Mr. Pierre de Coubertin, author of two interesting books in this matter."<sup>29</sup>

Zubiatur, however, would only rarely refer to the writing and thoughts of Coubertin during his career.<sup>30</sup> When he did, Zubiatur mentioned him not in association with the establishment of the Modern International Olympic Games, but exclusively as a member, along with French republican Jules Simon, of a distinguished group of educators. Zubiatur remembered Coubertin as a progressive thinker who publicly recommended sports as a valuable subject matter to be included in school curriculums for the training of sound citizens. Coubertin and Zubiatur would become, shortly after the 1889 Universal Exposition, famous in their respective countries for the articulation and promotion of educational policy reforms.

In all probability, the first and only personal encounter between Zubiatur and Coubertin took place during the Paris Universal Exposition. Soon after the International Congress for the Propagation of Physical Exercise concluded, Coubertin traveled to North America for the first time on a seven-month journey during the winter and spring of 1889-1890. Zubiatur returned to Argentina and never returned to Europe. Zubiatur wrote a letter to Coubertin in 1907, noting that "since 1889 I can recall that I have received only one note inviting me to the Athens athletic meeting."<sup>31</sup> This strongly suggests that the two educators met in person in France in 1889. If not, then why did Zubiatur emphasize the year 1889 as *the* starting point from which to recall the absence of a regular correspondence with Coubertin?

Zubiatur's 1889 experience at the Physical Education Congress was the first connection between Latin America and what, in a few years, would become the Olympic movement. Half a decade later at the famous 1894 Sorbonne meeting, Coubertin revived the idea of organizing a modern international version of the ancient Olympic Games and established the IOC. Coubertin included Zubiatur as a member of the founding committee of the IOC, probably to strengthen the international character of his endeavor. Historian David Young aptly observed that apart from Coubertin, Demetrios Vikelas, and Felix Callot, "the other IOC members were mainly names to put on the letterhead to give it an impressive and international flavor."<sup>32</sup>

Coubertin later acknowledged that most of the members selected were not present at the meeting, admitting in effect that he had manipulated the selection process. Whatever the reason for his appointment, Zubiatur became the first Latin American IOC member. It is not likely that he was rapidly informed of his inclusion in the IOC. The excerpt from Zubiatur's letter to Coubertin is evidence of a the lack of consistent communication between the two. Coincidentally, the major Argentinian newspapers reported the Paris 1894 International Athletic Congress but made no mention of Zubiatur's appointment.<sup>33</sup> Had the journalists known about the Argentinian's novel position, they would have proudly included the news in the main editions. *The London Times* report on the Sorbonne meeting noted Zubiatur's presence, misspelled his last name and identified him as Uruguayan.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, in the Congress' official program, Zubiatur's nationality and position appeared correctly. This suggests that Coubertin was aware of Zubiatur's professional position in 1894, one that had changed since their initial contact in 1889. This also indicates that prior to Zubiatur's



letter there had been at least one other contact between the two men. What is clear is that beyond those misunderstandings, the two men did not seem to be much affected by their mutual indifference and continued devoting time and energy to their respective causes which, ironically, were interrelated.

If Zubiatur failed to receive word of the IOC appointment, he did receive an Olympic call through a letter from Coubertin dated March 24, 1901. In it, Coubertin asked Zubiatur for support of Chicago as the 1904 Olympic site. At this time there was a bitter and long struggle between Chicago and St. Louis to host the 1904 Olympic Games.<sup>35</sup> Coubertin was in a difficult situation and turned to his committee for help. Zubiatur agreed with Coubertin: "I think like yourself that a city of this country [the United States], namely Chicago, is appropriate to host the next Olympic festival."<sup>36</sup> Interestingly Zubiatur supported the Baron without having visited Chicago. His endorsement, however, arrived approximately three months after the fourth IOC session had been held in Paris from May 19 to 21, 1901, when Chicago was awarded the Games.

Despite that decision, and under the strong pressure exerted by some St. Louis supporters, Coubertin sent letters and cables to his IOC colleagues on December 21, 1902, requesting opinions about a possible transfer of the Games to St. Louis. Pretending that he had received favorable replies from his colleagues, Coubertin decided, without consultation from the rest of the IOC, to transfer the Games. In February 1903, David R. Francis, President of the St. Louis Exposition, learned that he had less than two years to prepare for the first American Olympic Games.<sup>37</sup> No record has been discovered of Zubiatur having answered Coubertin on the transfer issue. In 1903, Zubiatur submitted a proposal to the *Consejo Nacional de Educación* to send a delegation to the St. Louis Exposition to display the achievements of the Argentinian schools. By the time the project was submitted the fact that St. Louis would be the host of the 1904 Olympic Games had been settled. Although Zubiatur knew, at least through the pages of *El Monitor de la Educación Comùn*, that the Olympic Games would be organized as part of the Exposition, he did not propose to send athletes.<sup>38</sup> Once again, Coubertin and Zubiatur failed to keep each other informed.

Although Zubiatur devoted a significant amount of time and energy to the promotion of sports and physical education, he never wrote a word about the modern Olympic Games. In addition, in spite of being an IOC member, he never attended a committee meeting or an Olympic Games, nor did he organize any effort to form an Argentinian Olympic Committee.

During the ninth IOC session held in The Hague in late May, 1907, Zubiatur was dismissed from the IOC.<sup>39</sup> Fourteen out of the thirty-three IOC members were present for that session.<sup>40</sup> Zubiatur was not pleased with his exclusion. He complained to Coubertin that:

I have received your communication in which you informed me that, in accordance with the rules of the International Olympic Committee, I am considered as resigned because no replies to the communications sent to me have been received. In return, I would like to say that I do not deserve such a decision. In fact, since 1889 I can recall that I have received only one note inviting me to the Athens' athletic meeting. I did reply to this note sending

you my congratulations and informing you that it was not possible to attend. On the other hand, I regularly received the Olympic Review which I always enjoy reading.

Since my visit to Europe in 1889-1890 and to the United States in 1901-1902, I have written a few books and pamphlets on education. In these books I have advocated excellence in physical exercises; and in my capacity of Principal of the *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay* in the Province of Entre Ríos (1892-1898); and as *Director of Instrucción Pública* since 1899 and as member of the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*, which I still am, I have done my utmost to see the expansion of Physical Education in the schools of my country.

The *Colegio del Uruguay* under my administration was the second school to have provided the training in football and in manual arts education in this country.<sup>41</sup>

Zubiaur argued that he deserved to remain on the IOC because he had done more, maybe more than anyone else in Argentina, to foster education through sports in the school system. Zubiaur, however, failed to promote what Coubertin desired most--the advertising of the Olympic Idea. Indeed, Coubertin had intended that Zubiaur spread Olympism throughout South America. Since Zubiaur did not understand his role in the Olympic movement, he had little chance to succeed. The first Argentinian Olympic participation occurred in London in 1908, the year after Zubiaur's dismissal, although a new account suggests that the first Argentinian participation occurred at Paris in 1900.<sup>42</sup> Even if that were the case, Zubiaur undoubtedly had no responsibility for it, for he would have mentioned this in his dismissal response letter. In short, it is clear that Zubiaur was an IOC member in name only, having infrequent communication with Coubertin and playing no significant role in IOC matters. Zubiaur failed to become the "Coubertin" of South America. During the final decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, while Coubertin forged ahead with his Olympic movement, Zubiaur fought to reform Argentinian education. If Zubiaur failed to forward Coubertin's agenda in Latin America, he succeeded in laying the foundation for school sports and rational recreation in Argentina.

After his return from Europe in 1889, Zubiaur continued to serve as Supervisor of *Escuelas Normales y Colegios Nacionales*, but soon he was appointed as Headmaster of the *Colegio Nacional de Concepción del Uruguay*. Although Zubiaur had already manifested interest in favor of a practical and manual arts education before his trip to Europe, it was after being exposed to the educational trends of Europe that he adopted sports and physical education as one of the best ways to achieve a solid and well-rounded education. His European experience was a very important landmark in his career. His reading of Coubertin's books with their praise of the English educational system left a profound mark on Zubiaur.

Zubiaur's arrival at the *Colegio Nacional* created high expectations in the community. He was considered an exemplary son, having been there as a student and a teacher in the past. A few days before classes began in 1892, J. Alfredo Ferreira

described the climate of excitement generated by Zubiatur's appearance on the scene. Ferreira proclaimed, "I am sure that, under your administration the historic *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay* will return to the honorable and high place that it previously held in the country."<sup>43</sup> During his seven years (1892-1898) in charge of the *Colegio Nacional*, Zubiatur implemented a system of education that he described as "theoretical, practical, and experimental; national [and] American; scientific [and] humanistic; democratic [and] liberal."<sup>44</sup>

Zubiatur revolutionized the *Colegio Nacional* with his visions and leadership. Juan Carulla, a former student of the *Colegio Nacional*, once rhetorically asked: "What did he [Zubiatur] do [as Headmaster]? . . . It would be better to ask, gentlemen, what this active teacher did not do."<sup>45</sup> He promoted manual arts education, the formation of an orchestra and a band, the introduction of educational field trips, and sponsored student associations. In addition, the Argentinian *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay*, under Zubiatur's insistence, was the first to accept women as students.<sup>46</sup>

Zubiatur reformed Argentinian physical education. Almost immediately, he purchased vital equipment and appointed an Englishman, J. H. Gibbon Spilbury, to teach physical education with an emphasis on sports. On October 12, 1892, the 400th Anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas, the first public football (soccer) match took place in the province. Two days later Zubiatur telegraphed Santiago Fitz Simon, who had succeeded him as Supervisor of *Escuelas Normales y Colegios Nacionales*, informing him that "the first football match and the first school regattas have taken place with excellent results and in the presence of a crowd."<sup>47</sup> This was only the beginning. Zubiatur later recalled that those games represented "a never-broken tradition in this *Colegio Nacional*, in the solemn celebration of every national holiday."<sup>48</sup> Overall, Zubiatur remembered the introduction of sports in the *Colegio Nacional* as a significant accomplishment:

The outdoor athletic exercises, which constitute one of the most profitable glories of English schools and universities, and are now incorporating the most developed schooling legislation into their bosoms, constitute another example of the novelties introduced.<sup>49</sup>

Zubiatur not only introduced football and rowing to the *Colegio Nacional* but also cricket, lawn-tennis, rounders, swimming, and track and field. He referred to these 'outdoor athletic games' as the replacements for the "dangerous ancient acrobatic gymnastics and the monotonous indoor gymnastics."<sup>50</sup> Pragmatic as he was, Zubiatur also taught physical education during a brief leave of absence of an instructor on his staff.<sup>51</sup> Zubiatur was so enthusiastic and so convinced about the efficacy of 'outdoor athletic games' that in 1896, the year in which the first modern International Olympic Games were organized, he stated that "no city is as good as . . . this one [Concepción del Uruguay] for the realization of a complete plan of physical education."<sup>52</sup> He believed that the location of his Argentinian school need not envy the traditional centers of school sports such as Cambridge, Oxford, Eton, and Rugby.<sup>53</sup>

Zubiatur's last year as headmaster was 1898. He left the *Colegio Nacional* with a well established program of physical education, the best in the country, having imple-

mented his progressive thoughts on education. Sports were, by that time, a respected tradition in the College, and they were deeply embedded in the community. That year Victor Mercante, a prominent pedagogue and psychologist, praised Zubiaur. "I appreciate your authority as an educator," Mercante told Zubiaur, "and I recognize the huge merits of your work fighting in the midst of obstacles that hinder those who are dedicated to the public well being."<sup>54</sup> In recognition for his unceasing efforts on behalf of public education, the success of his collegiate leadership, and his previous experience within the Ministry, Zubiaur was named to occupy another position in that institution.

## National Education Council and the North American Connection

In 1899, Zubiaur returned to the center of Argentina society -- Buenos Aires. For the rest of his career he remained in the Argentinian capital, capitalizing on his new prestigious and more powerful positions to extend his reform programs. That year, he was appointed Director of the *Division de Instrucción Pública* of the *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública*. He was also appointed member of the prestigious *Consejo Nacional de Educación*, a position he retained until 1911. From there he continued to strive for the full inclusion and development of sports and physical education as important school subjects.<sup>55</sup> He presented many projects favoring a practical approach to education, emphasizing technical and agricultural learning. He also developed curricula for all levels of schooling, always giving physical education a central function. During these years, Zubiaur remained involved in what he most enjoyed -- teaching. From 1904 to 1907 he returned to the *Escuela Normal de Maestros*, and from 1908 to 1916 he taught at the *Liceo Nacional de Señoritas*.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to his responsibilities in Buenos Aires, Zubiaur kept accepting new challenges. In 1903, he participated in the convention that amended the constitution of his native Entre Ríos province.<sup>57</sup> A year later, he founded *La Protectora de Niños, Pájaros y Plantas*, an association dedicated to the protection of children, birds, and trees. The organization reflected advanced ecological thinking for its time.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, during the period between 1892 and 1916, Zubiaur published more than thirty works including books, pamphlets, official reports, memories, biographies, and speeches. Among them were several renowned works, *La Enseñanza Práctica e Industrial en la República Argentina* (*Practical and Industrial Teaching in the Argentine Republic*), *Sinópsis de la Educación en la República Argentina* (*Synopsis of Education in the Argentine Republic*), *Surcos y Semillas Escolares* (literally, in English, *School Furrows and Seeds*), *Ideales Practicados y Practicables* (*Applied and Applicable Ideals*), *La Enseñanza en Norte América* (*Teaching in North America*), and the translation into Spanish of American social economist Carroll Wright's, *Industrial Education*. All of them were important studies for his contemporaries. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Zubiaur was a mature and prominent scholar.

In 1901, Zubiaur was sent abroad by the *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública* for the second and last time. Zubiaur was commissioned to be a delegate on behalf of Argentina and the provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes to Buffalo's Pan-American Exposition. As well, he was to study the North American educational systems and visit Argentinian-sponsored students pursuing degrees in

North America. He traveled with his family, settling in Buffalo, New York. Zubiatur spent a year and a half, from May 1901 to October 1902, visiting schools and universities. He wrote correspondence to *La Nación* and *Tribuna*, letters to friends, and even to the President of the Republic, Julio A. Roca. Zubiatur was euphoric about the vitality of the educational systems in North America. He was astonished with the vigor and physicality displayed on all the campuses. He had wished to visit the institutions that Domingo F. Sarmiento had so well described in the past, but he never expected to be as impressed. Zubiatur declared: "The countries that I have visited . . . show us the only road to follow for a nation to reach and keep prosperity."<sup>59</sup>

Zubiatur had time to reinforce his vision on sports. He was moved by the extraordinary things he learned, scrutinizing a dozen higher educational institutions during his visit to nine states in the United States and one Canadian province. Zubiatur intimated that Argentina was on the right track in the realm of physical education. Nevertheless, he felt that much more had to be done to reach North American standards. Two of the phenomena that most pervaded Zubiatur's thoughts were the majestic facilities and the massive athletic participation he found on university campuses. After visiting Girard College in Philadelphia, Zubiatur rhapsodized about "the splendid gymnasiums, equipped with marble locker rooms and hot and cold water. . . . The ladies' gymnasium is admirable, nothing is lacking: ropes, trapezes, tightrope-walking, pommel horses, etc."<sup>60</sup> In the same fashion, he described the extensive athletic fields and facilities at the University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, Cornell University, Ohio State University, and the University of Toronto, among other well-known institutions. The amount of athletic participation in North American institutions also impressed Zubiatur. He recalled that at the University of Pennsylvania he was surprised by the "thousands of people who attended . . . the exercises done by the students of a school to which it [an extensive physical exercise field] had been lent."<sup>61</sup> During his trip Zubiatur attended several baseball games, including one in which professors and students took part. He also described how students frequently participated in rowing, swimming, and football.<sup>62</sup>

After returning to Argentina, Zubiatur proposed that each school building must be located on a large tract of land. This tract of land had to be at least 70 meters by 40 meters or 50 meters by 50 meters in metropolitan areas, and an entire block in the suburbs. This would allow the schools to have adequate athletic fields. Zubiatur declared that in elementary schools, high schools, and universities with such facilities, "an intuitive, experimental and practical physical education can be developed."<sup>63</sup> Zubiatur also affirmed that the *Universidad de Buenos Aires* had all the conditions to build athletics programs like those he saw in North America. He also was more convinced than ever before that the right badge for education was "mens sana in corpore sano, among other reasons because 'the most solid base, the guarantee that secures all moral education is a good physical education.'"<sup>64</sup> He continued to preach the values of sport at the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*.

Zubiatur's long stay in North America produced one more result. On a motion sponsored by William T. Harris, United States' Commissioner of Education, Zubiatur was elected a corresponding member of the National Educational Association of the United States.<sup>65</sup> That honor was reserved for 50 eminent educators not residing in

the United States. In December 1908, the Association discontinued publishing his name in its annual proceedings at approximately the same time that he was removed from the IOC. This may have been mere coincidence as Zubiaur dedicated less time to international endeavors, but he evidently made no effort to contact or meet any of the three United States' IOC members of that time.<sup>66</sup>

As North America flourished in the early twentieth century, so too did Argentina. As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, Argentina had experienced nearly three continuous decades of rapid economic growth. On the eve of its first century of existence, Argentina had been transformed into a modern and prosperous country. During that period, the population increased dramatically, mainly from a massive influx of immigrants from Europe. As a consequence of these processes, cities enlarged, the administrative apparatus and educational system expanded, and upward social and economic mobility were more marked.

The young nation was proud of its achievements and used the revolution and independence centennial celebration of May 1910, to show all its vitality and progress to the world. On February 19, 1909 José Figueroa Alcorta, the president of the country, signed a decree by which he implemented the *Ley Nacional 6286* (National Law 6286) and established the creation of the *Comisión Nacional del Centenario* (Centennial National Commission). This commission was chaired by Marco Avellaneda, Minister of Interior, and created seven special commissions to organize the celebrations. Two of those commissions, the Commission of Expositions, Polygon, House of Physical Exercise and Olympic Games, and the Commission of Exterior and Congresses had important connections to Argentinian physical education. Those commissions were presided over by Leonardo Pereyra Iraola, a wealthy landowner, and Norberto Quirno Acosta, former vice-president of Argentina, respectively. Because of the specificity of the mission and the unique requirements of it, the central commission decided to form a final special commission named the "Commission for Olympic Games." This latter board was conducted by Antonio De Marchi, president of *Sociedad Sportiva Argentina* (Argentine Sporting Society). The commissions set up an impressive program of public celebrations, festivities, and events commencing in May and continuing throughout the year. The "Commission for Olympic Games" prepared an extensive agenda of international sports competitions that included boxing, equestrian, fencing, football, rowing, rugby, and track and field events. The organizers also included exercises and sporting activities for children. The entire group of athletic competitions were commonly regarded as the "Centennial Olympic Games."<sup>67</sup>

Most of the athletic events were organized in three main venues, *Club Atlético Belgrano* (Belgrano Athletic Club), *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* (The Gymnastic and Fencing Club of Buenos Aires), and the field of the *Sociedad Sportiva Argentina*. The competitions took place over one week. However, nearly all events were held from May 28th to 30th. Athletes from Argentina, Belgium, Chile, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Uruguay participated in the different events. The *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima's* stadium was filled to sixty percent of its total capacity during the events, except for the football matches which attracted even larger crowds. According to the press, the Centennial Olympic Games were a complete success.<sup>68</sup> After the gymnastic competitions for school children were opened, a

newspaper report described the atmosphere:

The meeting that the *Sociedad Sportiva Argentina* offered to foreign delegations, to Her Royal Majesty Infanta Isabel, to the presidents of Argentina and Chile, to special guests of the party and to people in general, has resulted in an unprecedented event in the annals of sport. The six- thousand-children spectacle moving together in the Palermo venue is undoubtedly unique and without precedent in South America, a definition that is clear proof of its beauty.<sup>69</sup>

A Brazilian newspaper was also surprised by the number of children taking part in the ceremony.<sup>70</sup> Many political dignitaries were there including the Presidents of Argentina and Chile, José Figueroa Alcorta and Pedro Montt; Argentinian Ministers Victorino de la Plaza, Romulo Naón, Manuel de Iriondo, and José Galvez; Presidents of *Sociedad Sportiva Argentina* and *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima* Antonio De Marchi and Ricardo Aldao; and a large number of affluent citizens.

Besides the “Centennial Olympic Games,” there was another event during the centennial celebrations in relation to sport. That was the *Congreso Americano Internacional de Medicina e Higiene* (American International Congress on Medicine and Hygiene).<sup>71</sup> Within the activities of the congress there was an *Exposición Internacional de Higiene* (International Hygienic Exposition) that contained a section on hygienic sports, which was a practical section displaying “physical exercises of all kinds, races, football, calisthenics, wrestling, gymnastics, horse riding, equestrian contests, jumps, etc.”<sup>72</sup>

Although Zubiaur did not officially take part in any of the commissions mentioned above, he had the opportunity to go beyond the educational realm and get involved in other ways with what he had been proposing all of his life -- sport and physical education. Here he had a chance to embrace the Olympic cause and prove that he really deserved the position that had been taken away from him by the IOC three years before. It was a serendipitous opportunity to collaborate with sport organizers and improve the still weak sports club system in Argentina.

Unfortunately, there is no record to indicate that Zubiaur was involved in or even attended any of those sporting activities. His only involvement in the centennial celebrations was ceremonial in nature. For instance, on May 22, 1910 he took part in a ceremony at *Plaza de Mayo* and delivered a “patriotic speech.”<sup>73</sup> Three days later, as a representative of the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*, he participated in the unveiling of a bust of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, president of the Republic (1868-1874) and a vigorous promoter of schools and universities.<sup>74</sup>

Zubiaur’s failure to participate in any of the sport related activities of the so-called Centennial Olympic Games indicates that he was an educator who focused on sport and its value within the context of the formal schooling system. ‘s Zubiaur had no connection with the people who promoted sports outside the educational realm, men such as De Marchi, Ricardo Aldao, future IOC member, Jorge Newbery, genteel sportsman and aeronautics pioneer, Carlos Delcasse, dedicated sportsman and politician, and future president of Argentina and IOC member, Marcelo T. de Alvear. They were members of the Buenos Aires elite class, to which Zubiaur did not belong.

The embraced a different attitude towards sports than did Zubiaur. For them, sports were synonymous with recreation, a gentleman's pastime, and a social amusement. For Zubiaur, sports were primarily a powerful tool to educate the entire community.



**Zubiaur orates a “patriotic speech” (1910) -- Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires**

The sport promoters outside of education did what Zubiaur could not or did not want to do; they created the Argentinian Olympic Committee in 1923 and started a productive period of Olympic participation for their nation. In a sense, and in addition to their own merits, they benefited from Zubiaur's struggle for the inclusion of sports and physical education in school curriculums. By the time that Zubiaur had already developed his movement kingdom in *Concepción del Uruguay* and ardently advocated sports for everyone from all his positions, the members of that group were practicing sports mainly among themselves.<sup>76</sup>





**Zubiaur (right), Juan W. Gez (educator, left), and Francisico P. Morenc (scientist, centre) at ceremonies in May 1910 commemorating the centenary of Domingo F. Sarmiento's birth -- Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires**

### **Later years**

After having served the educational cause in Argentina for forty years, Zubiaur retired on March 20, 1916. In retirement he remained busy. He spent most of his retirement days in his Villa Devoto, away from noisy downtown of Buenos Aires. At Villa Devoto, he found the quiet rest that his frail health condition required. Still, and only eleven days after his retirement, he signed the dedication for a new book. Zubiaur regarded this work as “a true balance . . . of my modest but continuous educational work.”<sup>77</sup> His passion remained intact. Zubiaur had envisaged a big project for his retirement days. He hoped that the profit from the book “is destined to enlarge the money for the creation of an idea in which I am determined and will be . . . my predilect task: the establishment of a national school and a leisure center for professors, teachers and students in the island that belonged to Sarmiento.”<sup>78</sup> Three years after announcing this purpose and after conducting a fundraising campaign, Zubiaur made his dream come true.

In addition to the island project, Zubiaur continued with his old endeavors. He continued to preside over *La Protectora de Niños, Pájaros y Plantas*, and wrote

extensively. In this regard, and despite the volumes that Zubiaur published during this period, Tomàs Garrone wrote that “we know that he [Zubiaur] left several unpublished works.”<sup>79</sup> During his last years Zubiaur continued to spread the idea of sports and physical education. He concentrated on a topic that he had started to develop more than a decade before, one that now gained renewed momentum. It was a project to bring sports to the entire citizenry and not only to the school children. He labeled his visionary endeavor, *plazas de educación física* or *centros de recreación y juegos al aire libre* (squares of physical education or centers for recreation and outdoors games). Zubiaur was concerned about people leading sedentary, non-active life-styles. Because of that he dedicated much time to the propagation of these public play areas. His goal was to “favor the physical development of children under school age, providing them with the space and sun so often lacking in their homes, and complete the physical education of those children in school age . . . giving them the proper elements and entertainment that keep them away from the streets and other dangerous places.”<sup>80</sup>

Zubiaur was also worried about the potentially harmful effects of the new, and for him degrading, cinema on the health of Argentinians. Zubiaur was not against theater or motion pictures, though he openly talked about regulating them. Instead, he favored an active and outdoor way of discovering the world. Zubiaur’s idea was that the *Centros* would offer a variety of activities, ranging from football and lawn-tennis to gardening and arboriculture. He proclaimed that “our public squares would acquire a new life. Children and youth, poor and rich would go to them in search of health, strength, and sane fun.”<sup>81</sup> The intention was to build a bridge between the school system, homes, and families. Zubiaur executed the idea through *La Protectora de Niños, Pàjaros y Plantas*, whose goals overlapped those of the *Centros*. *La Protectora* contacted the *Municipalidad de Buenos Aires* (Municipality of Buenos Aires) and some voluntary associations to work together in the establishment of the *Centros*. *La Protectora* did so in the Buenos Aires quarters of Belgrano, Palermo, and Saavedra. It is clear that Zubiaur was committed to communal well-being. He wanted to train “independent beings, because they know how to think and work, using brains and muscles, head and arms.”<sup>82</sup> Zubiaur was a promoter of what later would become the ‘Sport for All’ movement. This ideology fitted Zubiaur’s conviction about education for all. He wished for a “popular education, one that is not sectarian.”<sup>83</sup>

As busy as he was, but enjoying his retirement period, Zubiaur once again received the call of duty. In 1920, he accepted the tremendous challenge of reorganizing Corrientes province’s school system. Zubiaur, at age sixty-three, was appointed president of Corrientes’ *Consejo Superior de Educación*. As soon as Zubiaur accepted the new position, he started to promote physical education. One of his first moves was to implement an extensive poll in order to know the needs and interest of teachers and principals in regard to physical education. Zubiaur was upset with the results of the poll. The findings showed both low interest and lack of consideration for the subject matter by the educators. Nevertheless, in his 1920 official report Zubiaur wrote again about the importance of physical education and encouraged everyone in the educational system to promote it.<sup>84</sup>



**Zubiau the Scholar/Author (1913) -- Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires**

During his period in Corrientes, and along with his commitment to the *Centros*, he proposed to establish the first *Centro* in that province. However, he failed to achieve that in his first term in office.<sup>85</sup> Zubiaur's ideas were ahead of the political pace. Notwithstanding, he was planning to continue the reforms that had been started almost a year before when his health forced him to move back to Buenos Aires. Zubiaur died on September 6, 1921, refusing to the end to receive a blessing from a Catholic priest. His funeral was attended by the most distinguished members of the educational community. In his farewell, Francisco Barroetaveña, one of Zubiaur's best friends, remembered him as a "good man, the apostle of the instructive, industrial and moral school; the excellent head of a family; an honorable citizen; a noble and altruistic friend; a benefactor of democracy."<sup>86</sup>

### Conclusion

José Benjamín Zubiaur occupied the highest positions in the *Ministerio de Justicia, Culto e Instrucción Pública* with the exception of the leadership of Ministry itself. There are three likely reasons why he did not reach the top. First, he was not a member of a political party. Second, he criticized Catholicism. Third, he did not belong to the social elite. Zubiaur was aware of his contribution to the development of his country through his dedicated service. He did not, however, consider himself deserving of any special treatment. Two years before his death he proclaimed that "I am a free thinker and I wish to be cremated. My burial should be the modest one corresponding to a school teacher."<sup>87</sup> That was Zubiaur, a dedicated teacher who did not ask for special privileges. Zubiaur adopted the educational cause with the strong conviction that public instruction was *the* tool to cope with the social, political, and eco-

conomic changes generated by a young and fast-growing country.

Zubiaur shared Pierre de Coubertin's early motivation for education through sports. Both of them believed that the value of sports and physical education practices were to be found in their cultivating moral force. Zubiaur's fascination with the English public school system and its sport ideology stemmed from his encounter with the French Baron and his acquaintance with Coubertin's early works. Although Zubiaur's *La Enseñanza en Norte América* appeared more than a decade after Coubertin's *Universités Transatlantiques*, the essays demonstrate how the two educators strengthened their beliefs in the educational potential of English sport after visiting North American institutions. Both men were impressed by the United States' liberal democracy, its candid spirit, and its dynamism. Their trips to North America marked a turning point in their respective careers; both were galvanized by strong desires for public educational reform.

Despite Zubiaur's and Coubertin's commonalities, and although sports were crucial for both of their projects, there were notable differences between them. Coubertin had envisaged the Olympic Idea as an international enterprise. In Coubertin's mind, Olympism was an instrument to promote international and mutual understanding. He was influenced by nineteenth-century internationalism, including the peace movement. Zubiaur, on the contrary, had a parochial view, a provincial approach to the world. He was primarily concerned with the establishment of the foundations of a stable nation. Although on a few occasions Zubiaur talked about Pan-Americanism, his central visions and efforts were directed to the effects of sports within Argentinian boundaries. Interestingly, it was precisely Coubertin's internationalism that brought Zubiaur to the IOC. Paradoxically, it was Zubiaur's provincialism that led to his dismissal from the IOC. Zubiaur's linkage with the IOC was tenuous. The image of Coubertin that remained with Zubiaur emerged from their 1889 meeting. That static perception is reflected in the sporadic conversations between them. This perception is exemplified in a 1907 letter from Zubiaur to Coubertin. Zubiaur wrote that "In spite of the silence in which I was kept in the organization of the Argentinian Committee for next year's Olympic Congress in London, I will try to do everything to make the representation of our country and especially our schools as large as possible."<sup>88</sup>

Remarkably, Zubiaur was thinking of sending school children, not mature athletes into Olympic competition. By the turn of the century, Zubiaur and Coubertin no longer shared the same project. The two men worked in different directions. Coubertin was fostering his international Olympic ideology through the implementation of elite competition in search of excellence. Zubiaur was trying to promote sport and physical education in Argentina and convince everyone of their benefits for the masses. Zubiaur, with reference to "his children," summarized his dedication to education, reflecting, as it did, his successful school projects:

I declare to have four more children, in addition to the [six]<sup>89</sup> already mentioned: "La Fraternidad" society for popular education . . . , the Franklin primary school . . . , la "Protectora de Niños, Pàjaros y Plantas" . . . and the national, regional and practical school on Sarmiento's island.<sup>90</sup>



**Zubiaur shortly before his death (1921) -- Courtesy of the Archivo General de la Nación, Buenos Aires**

That claim reinforced the idea that Zubiaur was entirely devoted to education, and implicitly to education through sports and physical education. But Zubiaur did not count the Olympic cause among his priorities. In this sense, Zubiaur was only technically a member of the IOC. Once Coubertin realized that Zubiaur was not valuable to his cause in South America, he dismissed Zubiaur from the IOC. Zubiaur had the distinction of being the first Latin American IOC member, but as a result of his inaction he was also the first to be removed from that body.

Zubiaur's life and deeds have to be understood in the climate of ideas reigning in his time. Argentina needed a solid education system, and Zubiaur helped to create it. Moreover, when Zubiaur started his school career, sports and physical education were foreign designs. Zubiaur was instrumental in developing sports and physical education in the formal school system. In addition, his last years were concerned with an ideology of sport for all. Zubiaur decided, unlike the elitist Coubertin, to promote physical education for the general populace. In this regard, Zubiaur was much closer to American physical educators Dudley A. Sargent or Luther H. Gulick Jr. than to the French Baron. After having discovered the formative potential of sport for the entire nation, Zubiaur remained faithful to this ideology. Argentina benefited more from the populist Zubiaur than it would have gained from an imitation of the Baron.

Zubiaur established the foundations for popular participation in sport, an achievement made possible through the universalization of education. His work at the *Colegio Nacional del Uruguay* constituted a unique model in this sense. Zubiaur was a pioneer in this realm during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century in Argentina. Zubiaur's inception of sport in schools allowed other sports promoters to continue his work.

Since the 1920s, Argentina has reaped the benefits of official and continuous participation in the Olympics. Between 1924 and 1952, Argentina experienced its golden Olympic years, becoming the most successful Latin American country in the Games. The nation's athletes won 37 medals, including 13 gold. That was Zubiaur's indirect contribution to the Olympic movement in Argentina. He established the foundations from which sport participation became a widespread phenomenon, reaching well beyond a well-to-do minority.

Zubiaur's own words reveal his prophetic vision. In a 1916 interview Zubiaur was asked, "What sport do you prefer for your people?" He replied, "Outdoor exercises and games, including aquatics."<sup>91</sup> Three years later, and close to the end of his life, Zubiaur affirmed that soccer football "is happily now a street institution."<sup>92</sup> From the turn-of-the-century onwards, not only football but many other sports spread rapidly throughout the country, becoming a well-integrated element in Argentinian culture. Time would later demonstrate how advanced were his views and his contributions to Argentinian sports. Zubiaur's failure to follow Coubertin contributed to the success of his own project and benefited the people of Argentina.

### Endnotes

1. Full accounts of those sporting movements are found in Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), Elliot Gorn and Warren Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), Harvey Green, *Fit for America. Health, Fitness, Sport and the American Society* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), Steven Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting traditions in the American Imagination 1876-1926* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) Benjamin Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Age of Televised Sports*, 4<sup>th</sup>. Ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1999) and James Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness, the History of American Health Reformers* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982).
2. Some of the sources are, Wolf Kraemer-Mandau, "National and International Olympic Movements in Latin America," *Contemporary Studies in the National Olympic Games*, ed. Roland Naul (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1997); Joseph Arbena, "Nationalism and Sport in Latin America, 1850-1990): The Paradox of Promoting and Performing 'European' Sports", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 12, no. 2 (August 1995) : 220-238; Richard McGehee, "The Rise of Modern Sport in Guatemala", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 9, no. 1 (April 1992) : 132-140; Richard McGehee, "The Origins of Olympism in Mexico: the Central American Games of 1926", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 10, no. 3 (December 1993) : 313-332; Eduardo Olivera, *Orígenes de los Deportes Británicos en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: L. J. Rosso, 1932).
3. The following quotations are examples of the misunderstandings surrounding the Jose Benjamin Zubiaur myth in relation to Argentina and the Olympic Movement: "In our history, this concern for the Olympics materialized when in 1894,

Baron Pierre de Coubertin gathered representatives from several countries in Paris to create a committee whose mission was to plan the organization of the [Olympic] Games. And Dr. Juan B. Zubiaurre [sic] took part in the meeting on behalf of our country.” Comité Olímpico Argentino to Avery Brundage, 22 December 1971, Avery Brundage Collection, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Reel 64. “There is a strong Olympic tradition in the country since 1894 when Argentinian teacher José Benjamín Zubiaur signed in Paris with Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the International Olympic Committee’s foundation documents.” *The Best City For The Best Games* (n.p., [1997]) 9. “. . . [Zubiaur] kept permanent epistolar vinculation and was consulted by Coubertin to integrate the first International Olympic Committee, responsibility that he accepted.” Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Olimpismo. Historia y Proyección*, (Buenos Aires: Servicios Informativos Parlamentarios Argentinos, [1997]) 57. “Argentina, through Juan Zubiaur [sic] was one of the twelve founding countries of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and was represented at the Board of Directors [sic] on 23 June 1894, sharing the ideals of Baron Pierre de Coubertin.” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 9 June 1997, Ediciones Especiales, 4.

4. See Vicente Cutolo, *Nuevo Diccionario Biográfico Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Elche, 1968), vol. 7, 817-818; Ricardo Piccirilli, Francisco Romay and Leoncio Gianello, *Diccionario Biográfico Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Históricas Argentinas, 1925), tomo 6, 893-894; Diego de Santillan, *Gran Enciclopedia Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Ediar Editores, 1963), tomo 8,542-543; Fontenla Fatal P. A., *Primer Diccionario Biográfico Contemporaneo Ilustrado* (Buenos Aires, 1921), 180; *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada Europeo-Americana* (Bilbao: Espasa-Calpe, 1930), tomo LXX, 1463; *Diccionario Enciclopédico Espasa* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1978), tomo 12, 881-882; Ione Wright and Lisa Nekhom, *Historical Dictionary of Argentina* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1978) 1058-1059; Ione Wright and Lisa Nekhom, *Diccionario Histórico Argentino* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1990), 868; Angela Goncavat de Reggiardo, *José Benjamín Zubiaur. Una Pasión Educadora* (Sante Fe: Ediciones Colmegna, 1985); Tomàs Garrone, *La Obra Cultural del Doctor Zubiaur* (Buenos Aires: Damiano, 1916) and Federico Bardi, *El Pedagogo Zubiaur* (Buenos Aires: Perrotti, 1926).
5. See *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), *El Diario* (Buenos Aires), and *La Razón* (Buenos Aires), 6 September 1921.
6. Detailed accounts of Coubertin’s ideas can be found in Yves-Pierre Boulonge, *La Vie et L’œuvre Pédagogique de Pierre de Coubertin, 1863-1937* (Ottawa: Lemeac, 1975) and John MacAloon, *This Great Symbol* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).
7. See Jorge Luis Borges, “A Biography of Tadeo Isidoro Cruz (1829-1874),” *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 1998).
8. José Benjamín Zubiaur, Testament, 31 March 1919, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires, 1. Throughout his life, Zubiaur referred to himself

as José Benjamín. In keeping with his preference, I will do the same.

9. The sources disagree regarding the accuracy of the name. There are three similar versions: José de Zubiatur, José de Zubiatu and José Zubiatu. See Cesar B. Perez Colman, *Paraná 1810-1860. Los Primeros Cincuenta Años de la Vida Nacional* (Rosario: Talleres Gráficos Emilio Fenner, 1946).
10. Mariano Zubiatur was a member of the Municipality of Paraná. He was also a member of the provincial judicial system.
11. José Benjamín Zubiatur, Testament, 31 March 1919, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiatur, Buenos Aires, 1.
12. See Garrone, *La Obra Cultural del Doctor Zubiatur*, 10.
13. See Tomás Garrone, "El Educacionista José B. Zubiatur," *Sarmiento. Boletín de la Protectora de Niños, Pájaros y Plantas*, n. s., 42 (1921) : 2.
14. Ibid. See also, José Benjamín Zubiatur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita* (Buenos Aires: Perrotti, 1916).
15. A National government's decree dated 30 November 1880 forced all the Law Schools annexed to the *Colegios Nacionales* to finish their teaching by the end of that school year. For a full discussion see Filiberto Reula, *Historia de Entre Ríos* (Santa Fe: Librería y Editorial Castellví, 1969) tomo 2, 130-131.
16. José Benjamín Zubiatur to Dolores Pujato, undated (circa 1884), Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiatur, Buenos Aires.
17. John Lynch, "From Independence to National Organization," *Argentina Since Independence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 38.
18. Zubiatur's connections with other Argentinian liberals can be found in Nestor Tomás Auza, *Católicos y Liberales en la Generación del Ochenta* (Cuemavaca: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1966). Colección Sondeos, Nro. 6, 10/19, 13/14; Nro. 7, 17/22.
19. Garrone, *Sarmiento: Boletín de la Protectora de Niños, Pájaros y Plantas*, 6.
20. Some statistics show this profound process of transformation. For example, during the 1880-1910 period Argentina's economic growth had an annual average rate of more than five per cent. Argentina's population grew from 1,736,490 in 1869 to 7,885,237 in 1914. Between 1871 and 1914 a total of 3,194,875 immigrants settled in the country. Likewise, the literacy rate rose from twenty two per cent in 1869 to sixty five per cent in 1914. The railroad system increased from 1,500 miles in 1879 to 18,000 in 1901. For a full account of this period's economic development see Alejandro Diaz, *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Benjamín García Holgado, *De Mitre a Roca - Política, Sociedad y Economía (1860-1904)*, (Bue-



nos Aires: Editorial El Coloquio, 1975); and the essays on section 3 of Gustavo Ferrari and Ezequiel Gallo, Comp., *La Argentina del Ochenta al Centenario* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana: 1980).

21. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*.
22. *El Monitor de la Educación Comùn* was the official organ of the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*. The November 15, 1891 edition offered a brief paragraph describing the history of *La Educación*.
23. Only Catholic marriages were recognized in Argentina at that time. Uruguay permitted secular unions. The *Ley Nacional 2393* dated 2 November 1888 established the secularized marriage in all the country. For more information see Victor Anzoátegui and Eduardo Martiré, *Manual de Historia de las Instituciones Argentinas* (Buenos Aires: La Ley, 1967).
24. To learn more about this controversy, refer to José Benjamín Zubiaur, *Las Escuelas del Sud* (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Tipográfico El Comercio, 1906) and Pedro Marabini, *Los Salectianos del Sud* (Buenos Aires: Escuela Tipográfica del Colegio Pio IX, 1906).
25. The Catholic Church, as a traditional ideological force, has influenced the constitution of Argentinian political and social institutions, as well as the popular and hegemonic classes. Nevertheless, the liberal governments that predominated in Argentina from the 1880s to the 1920s questioned the Catholic Church's role in society. During this period Congress passed laws that were anticlerical and marked a critical point in Argentine Church-state relations. However, the Catholic Church retained until 1995 its constitutional establishment and some prerogatives such as a law stipulating that the nation's president and vice-president had to be Catholic. To know more about the relationship between the Argentinian state and the Catholic Church see Michael Brudick, *For God and the Fatherland. Religion and Politics in Argentina* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1995); John J. Kennedy, *Catholicism, Nationalism and Democracy in Argentina* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958); Juan Carlos Tedesco, *Educación y Sociedad en la Argentina (1880-1900)* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1982); Carlos Alberto Torres, *The Church, Society and Hegemony* (Westport: Praeger, 1982).
26. J. Alfredo Ferreira to José Benjamín Zubiaur, 18 November 1891, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires.
27. Victoriano Montes to José Benjamín Zubiaur, 16 October 1889. Ibid.
28. On 13 June, after Jules Simon opened the Congress, Coubertin delivered a paper entitled "Physical Exercises in the Schools of England, America, Australia and the English Colonies." See Alejo Peyret, "Informe sobre El Congreso de Ejercicios Físicos," *La República Argentina en la Exposición Universal de París de 1889* (Paris: P. Moullot, 1890).

29. José Benjamín Zubiaur, *La Escuela Primaria en Francia*, (Buenos Aires: Taller Tipográfico de la Penitenciaría, 1891), 288. Coubertin's books were, *L'éducation en Angleterre. Colléges et Universités* (Paris: Hachette, 1888) and *L'éducation Anglaise en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1889).
30. See José Benjamín Zubiaur, *La Enseñanza Práctica e Industrial en la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Felix Lajouane, 1900), 351; and José Benjamín Zubiaur, "Una Nueva institución Escolar," *Tribuna Libre*, n. s., 58 (1919) : 288.
31. José Benjamín Zubiaur, to Pierre de Coubertin, 22 June 1907, International Olympic Committee Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland.
32. David Young, *The Modern Olympics: A Struggle for Revival* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 108.
33. See *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 20 June 1894, p. 4; and *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 21 June 1894, p. 4.
34. See *The Times* (London), 25 June 1894, p. 6.
35. For a complete account of this issue see, Robert Knight Barney, "Born From Dilemma: America Awakens to The Modern Olympic Games, 1901-1903," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, 1 (1992) : 92-135.
36. José Benjamín Zubiaur to Pierre de Coubertin, 4 August 1901, International Olympic Committee Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland.
37. Barney, op. cit., p. 115.
38. In the May 30, 1904, edition of the *El Monitor de la Educación Común* there was a news item informing readers about the St. Louis Exposition Olympic Games. At the end of the note Zubiaur was mentioned as South America's corresponding member of the IOC. This is the only account found associating Zubiaur and the IOC at that time. Some of the ideas proposed by Zubiaur in relation to the St. Louis exposition can be read in his book, *La Enseñanza en Norte América* (Buenos Aires: Canter, 1904).
39. The May 1907 issue of the *Revue Olympique* noted that Zubiaur was declared "démissionnaire" by the IOC.
40. Wolf Lyberg, *Fabulous 100 Years of the IOC* (Lausanne: IOC, 1996), 75.
41. José Benjamín Zubiaur to Pierre de Coubertin, 22 June 1907, International Olympic Committee Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland.
42. See Bill Mallon, *The 1900 Olympic Games* (Jefferson: McFarland, 1998), 124.
43. J. Alfredo Ferreira to José Benjamín Zubiaur, 24 February 1892, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires.

44. José Benjamín Zubiaur, *Ideales Practicados y Practicables* (Buenos Aires: Perrotti, 1913), 5.
45. *El Colegio Nacional del Uruguay en el 75 Aniversario de su Fundación* (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Gráfico Argentino, 1925) 23.
46. Celomar Argacha, *Un Educador de la Generación del 80: José Benjamín Zubiaur* (Concepción del Uruguay: Ediciones El Mirador, 1986).
47. *Ibid.*, 26.
48. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 169.
49. *Ibid.*, 11.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Argacha, *Un Educador de la Generación del 80: José Benjamín Zubiaur*, 47.
52. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 215.
53. *Ibid.* Zubiaur also compared the University of Cordoba to Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard. See Garrone, *La Obra Cultural del Doctor Zubiaur*, 61.
54. Victor Mercante to José Benjamín Zubiaur, 27 April 1898, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires.
55. The *Ley Nacional 1420* dated 8 July 1884 included gymnastics as part of the basic instruction, but it was the National government's decree dated 18 April 1898 by which physical education became compulsory. Nevertheless, and in spite of the advanced legislation, physical education did not become a reality in schools until much later.
56. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*.
57. See Reula, *Historia de Entre Ríos*, 213.
58. The motto of the association was: "Children are the future of the nation. Let us educate them. Birds are the assistant of agriculture. Let us protect them. Trees provide health, pleasure and goods. Let us cultivate them. Children, birds and trees are the delight of the home. Let us love them." See Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 344.
59. Zubiaur, *La Enseñanza en Norte América*, 9.
60. *Ibid.*, 19.
61. *Ibid.*, 23.
62. *Ibid.* See also, Zubiaur's book, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita* and *La Enseñanza*

*Práctica e Industrial en la República Argentina.*

63. Zubiaur, *Ideales Practicados y Practicables*, 11.
64. *Ibid.*, 74.
65. See, *Journal of the Proceedings and Addresses of the Fortieth Annual Meeting* (Winona: National Educational Association, 1901), 42.
66. The three members were William Sloane, Theodore Stanton, and Caspar Whitney.
67. See *Memoria de la Comisión del Centenario al Poder Ejecutivo Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Coni, 1910); *Guía-Programa de los Festejos del Centenario, 1810-1910* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Heliográficos de Ortega y Radaelli, 1910). See also *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 29, 30 and 31 May 1910; *El Nacional* (Buenos Aires), 28 May 1910; *El Pueblo* (Buenos Aires), 23 and 24 May 1910; *O Estado de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 26 and 29 May 1910.
68. See, *Caras y Caretas*, 7, 14 May and 4, 11 and 25 June 1910; *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 29, 30 and 31 May 1910; *El Nacional* (Buenos Aires), 28 May 1910; *El Pueblo* (Buenos Aires), 23 and 24 May 1910; *O Estado de Sao Paula* (Sao Paulo), 26 and 29 May 1910.
69. *El Pueblo* (Buenos Aires), 23 May 1910, p. 1.
70. *O Estado de Sao Paulo* (Sao Paulo), 22 May 1910.
71. See *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 22 May 1910, p. 12; and 29 May 1910, p. 8 and *Caras y Caretas*, 4 June 1910.
72. *Guía-Programa de los Festejos del Centenario, 1810-1910*, 165.
73. *El Pueblo* (Buenos Aires), 22 May 1910, p. 2.
74. *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires), 25 May 1910, p. 42.
75. Zubiaur had conceived of the centennial celebrations as early as 1906. In that year he presented the project to the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*. The project was very ambitious, including the organization of an American pedagogic congress, and a universal schooling exposition. He wanted the universal schooling exposition to be a kind of legacy, a permanent schooling museum. In a broad sense, Zubiaur wanted to pay homage to public schools and teachers, and the role they had played in the Argentinian life and community up to that day. The project did not try to encompass the wide array of sports activities or competitions that he was known to support. Despite Zubiaur's effort, his project did not materialize. See, Jose Benjamin Zubiaur, *Conmemoración de la Revolución de Mayo por el Consejo Nacional de Educación* (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Tipográfico El Comercio, 1906), and Jose Benjamin Zubiaur, *Solidaridad Edu-*

*cacional Americana* (Buenos Aires: Perrotti, 1919), 5-6.

76. See the turn of the century sports recollections of Cesar Viale in *Cincuenta Años Atràs* (Buenos Aires: Piatti, 1950) and *Estampas de mi Tiempo* (Buenos Aires: Julio Suarez, n.d.).
77. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, VII.
78. *Ibid.*. VIII
79. Garrone, *Sarmiento. Boletín de la Protectora de Niños, Pàjaros y Plantas*, 6.
80. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 265.
81. José Benjamín Zubiaur, *Surcos y Semillas Escolares* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Encuadernación de la Fabrica La Sin Bombo, 1907), 172-173.
82. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 345.
83. José Benjamín Zubiaur, *Decíamos Ayer* (Buenos Aires: Perrotti, 1917), 41.
84. See José Benjamín Zubiaur, *Memoria Correspondiente al Ejercicio Administrativo de 1920. Consejo Superior de Educación de la Provincia de Corrientes* (Corrientes: Establecimiento Tipogràfico de B. Fages, 1921).
85. *Ibid.*
86. Garrone, *Sarmiento. Boletín de la Protectora de Niños, Pàjaros y Plantas*, 12.
87. José Benjamín Zubiaur, Testament, 31 March 1919, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires, 1.
88. José Benjamín Zubiaur to Pierre de Coubertin, 22 June 1907, International Olympic Committee Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland.
89. Zubiaur's six children were Argentino, America, Aura, Aítor, Benjamin, and Acela.
90. José Benjamín Zubiaur, Testament, 31 March 1919, Private Collection of Guillermo Zubiaur, Buenos Aires, 2-3.
91. Zubiaur, *Labor Dispersa e Inédita*, 350.
92. Zubiaur, *Tribuna Libre*, 288.