

## **ANCIENT GREEK ATHLETES: AMATEURS OR PROFESSIONALS?**

K.G.B.B. Ranasingha

*Department of Classical Languages, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka  
bbranasingha@gmail.com*

Until the 1970s, Olympic Games were only for amateurs and hence professionals were not allowed to participate. For, it was the Ancient Greek Olympics that they were constantly referring to when devising the above rule for the Olympics. With such a legacy, it is essential to clarify whether ancient Greek athletes were really amateurs or professionals. "Amateur athletics" is considered as a concept that was developed in the 19th century AD. "Amateur" is a French derivation of a Latin word *amator*, meaning 'lover'. Thus, it is defined as 'a lover of' indicating someone who does something because he/she loves it. 'Professional' is someone who does something for money. These are the two extreme perspectives with which modern critics look at both modern Olympic athletes and ancient Greek athletes, trying to categorize them as either amateurs or as professionals. Going through the legacy of athletics in ancient Greece it is obvious that they were not either amateurs or professionals. It is apparent, that at an initial stage the geographical division of Greece has marked it an essential necessity for them to engage in athletics, further, the double motive of religion and sport, their epic models and legendary heroes have further inspired the agonistic spirit of the whole nation to crave for honors and personal distinction through athletic prowess. Later, we also see that ancient Greeks treat athletics as an essential component of their traditional education system. Moreover, the reception of the society on victors of athletic games and the immortalization of athletes through sculptures and art would have obviously induced the contemporary and future athletes of ancient Greece. Thus, more than their love for the athletics it is the geography, religion, society and their agonistic spirit which made them athletes. In conclusion, this study shows that Greeks were neither amateur athletes nor professional athletes since they did not have such idea of praising only the virtues of uncompensated athletes. Hence, the ancient Greeks were simply athletes in a setting where honour along with winning of a valuable prize was considered as an important part of being an athlete.

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