Sports Policy, Batllismo, and the Complexity of Party Politics in Uruguay (1911-1933)

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Abstract

This paper analyzes how Uruguay's sports policy was shaped and affected by the turbulent political developments of the first decades of the twentieth century. As part of the radical welfare reform implemented by the Batlle y Ordóñez regime, the newly created Comisión Nacional de Educación Física (CNEF) developed a series of advanced policies that stimulated civil sports culture during the 1910s. However, the political management of this state agency made sport into an arena for conflict and maneuvering between Batllismo and other parties. During the 1920s, political antagonism and financial crises severely jeopardized the work of the CNEF.

Keywords: Uruguay; Sports policy; Batllismo; Reform; Political parties

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la manera en que la política deportiva uruguaya de principios del siglo XX fue formada y afectada por los sucesos políticos del período. Como parte del reformismo radical impulsado por Batlle y Ordóñez, la Comisión Nacional de Educación Física (CNEF) implementó políticas progresistas que estimularon enérgicamente el desarrollo de la cultura deportiva uruguaya. Sin embargo, el manejo político de esta agencia estatal convirtió el deporte en un terreno para luchas y maniobras partidarias durante la década de 1920. El antagonismo político y la crisis financiera obstaculizaron fatalmente el funcionamiento de la CNEF.

Palabras clave: Uruguay; Política deportiva; Batllismo; Reforma; Partidos políticos

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Sport and Batllismo: An Apparent Relationship?

The country with the smallest population in Spanish-speaking America, Uruguay nonetheless stands as a classic powerhouse in football: *La Celeste*, as the national team is known, has won four major world titles and fifteen South American championships throughout history. Particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, Uruguay not only dominated the football scene in the continent but also won the gold medals in the football tournament of the 1924 and 1928 Olympic Games. This was topped off with a remarkable triumph at the first FIFA World Cup in 1930, which the country hosted.

While these achievements on the football field perpetuated the name of this small nation in the minds of sport fans, social scientists may recall the Uruguay of the same period as a singular example of political democracy and social welfare: as two-term president José Batlle y Ordóñez and his *Colorado* allies pushed forward a series of radical reforms in favor of participatory democracy, the promotion of workers' rights, the enhancement of education, secularization, and industrialization, Uruguay left behind the caudillo-dominated agri-pastoral society of the nineteenth century to drastically transform into a modern, centralized, and stable sovereign political entity that pioneered in many aspects of public welfare.

It is by no means a wild speculation to associate the "golden age" of Uruguayan sport with the contemporaneous prosperity of the once so-called "Switzerland of America." In fact, an American sports sociologist made the case for a connection between Uruguay's success in sports and its political and socioeconomic indicators that could be observed throughout the twentieth century.[1] However, he essentially limited himself to suggesting a vague parallelism between trends in two different sets of statistics and failed to reveal the concrete way in which sport and state formation could shape, influence, and alter one another.

Some Uruguayan authors provide empirical evidence on the possible connection between sport and politics. For instance, Andrés Morales traces how a group of important figures from Batllismo and other political forces were associated with the upper echelons of football organizations during the 1910s and 1920s.[2] However, he primarily focuses on the politicians' "personal" involvement in sport (which is not unique to Uruguay) and leaves aside any insight into a more structured relationship that could have existed.

These authors tend to overlook the fact that *Batllista* Uruguay was considered a pioneer in the development of sports policy. The Comisión Nacional de Educación Física (hereafter CNEF), a state agency in charge of the promotion of sports founded in 1911, developed and implemented an innovative public policy that was praised by contemporaries from the continent and the northern

hemisphere alike. In 1918, for example, a member of the Argentine Chamber of Deputies mentioned Uruguay's sports policy and declared that "in this sense [Uruguay] today occup[ied] the first place among South American countries."[3] The spokesman of the International Olympic Committee Henri Baillet-Latour, who had toured around Latin America, acknowledged at the IOC session in 1923 that the Uruguayan sports policy "surpass[ed] that of almost all the countries of the world."[4] The assessments of foreign observers authentically tell some truths about the CNEF's policy-making and its originality; however, they also mask the intricacy, contradiction, and conflict that the sports reform fundamentally involved, just as any other reforms implemented by Batlle's administration.

Based on these considerations, the present paper examines the vicissitudes of Uruguay's sports policy vis-à-vis the political developments from the beginnings of this policy in 1911 to 1933, the year in which the CNEF experienced a major institutional breakdown. The CNEF was born and grew as part of the strikingly expanding state bureaucracy—a key feature of the Batllista reform—that aspired to assume "multiple roles and functions that by far exceeded the strictly political."[5] Moreover, its organizational structure and its policy development were inevitably embroiled in the turbulence of party politics that surrounded Batllismo's radical proposals during this period. Hence, instead of discussing the "progress" of Uruguay's sports policy or the number of medals won by the national team as a proof of the "success" of Batllismo's political project in general, this article sheds light on how a cultural policy, defined as part of the comprehensive reform, was shaped and affected by the changes and conflicts that it brought about in the political scenery of Uruguay.

Batllismo, reforms, and party politics (1904-1933)

Before analyzing the CNEF and its policies, it is relevant to assess the major political features of and the changes that occurred during the period under study, since the formation of sports policy in Uruguay was intrinsically interwoven with Batllismo's vision of the state-society relationship, as well as with its political and administrative strategy and the complexity of party politics.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, politics in Uruguay was defined by a sharp antagonism between two major parties, the Colorado and the Blanco. Essentially rooted in historical reasons rather than ideological or social differences, the power struggle between the two parties often boiled over into armed conflicts in which rural caudillos took center stage. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the political leaders sought to work out a formula to achieve order and stability by way of the peculiar idea of *coparticipación*, a power-sharing

system in which the opposition also had a degree of input and representation in political decision-making.

Batlle y Ordóñez's first administration (1903-1907) was mostly dedicated to controlling the Blancos' intention of revolting and to achieving sound political order, which built a ground for him to undertake an enormous challenge during his second presidency (1911-1915): political democratization and the development of a welfare state. Soon after being elected president again in 1911, Batlle began to announce a "rain of projects" that sought to refashion almost every aspect of the Uruguayan state and society.

In the political sphere, Batlle proposed the *colegiado* system, in which a group of politicians should assume leadership of the executive in the place of a single president. The electoral reforms brought about a fairer and more participative democracy, in which parties played a pivotal role.[6] Batlle also created a series of state enterprises to effectively intervene in different areas of the economy, compete with foreign capitals, protect and promote national industries, and provide Uruguayan citizens with a wide range of social services. He also introduced legislation in favor of the working class such as the implementation of eight-hour workdays and the establishment of pension systems, and provided tuition-free education at all levels. Concerning religion, he promoted a strict separation of church and state and legalized divorce by the sole will of the woman.[7]

Among this vast and complex array of reforms envisioned by Batlle, the one considered most vital to his ideal, and at the same time most polemical, was the reform of the executive. In 1913, Batlle published in *El Día*, the newspaper that he had founded, a blueprint for constitutional reform that advocated the replacement of the president with a Junta de Gobierno composed of nine democratically elected members. As Batlle believed that presidentialism inevitably led to despotism, this plural executive should guarantee that political decisions are more impersonal and founded on careful deliberation. However, this radical proposal totally disrupted the political scene. Shortly after its publication, various Colorado legislators distanced themselves from Batlle to establish a dissident faction called *Riverismo*. Under the leadership of the archetype of Uruguayan conservatism Luis Alberto Herrera, the Blancos, more hostile than ever to Batlle, who did not accept *coparticipación*, rejected the *colegiado* and any other reforms suggested by Batllismo. Other analysts also feared that the collegiate executive would technically hinder prompt and bold decision-making which was sometimes necessary in politics.

Batlle's reforms faced a serious test at the election of the members of the Constitutional Assembly in 1916. This was the first time in Uruguayan history that male universal suffrage and the secret ballot were introduced, and thus a genuinely popular and democratic election was contested. Paradoxically, Batl-

lismo failed to gain popular support: Batllismo won only eighty-five delegates compared to the Blancos' 105, while twenty-two seats went to Riverismo. Soon after this defeat, Feliciano Viera, who had succeeded Batlle as president in 1915, announced a "halt" to the radical reforms.

The new constitution, approved in a referendum in 1917 and put into force in 1919, was the result of a political deal painstakingly negotiated between the Batllistas and the Blancos. While many of Batlle's aspirations, such as the complete separation of church and state, were successfully codified, the *colegiado*, the core of his vision, was only half realized: the executive power was now divided between the president—who controlled the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, and Defense—and a collegiate body named *Consejo Nacional de Administración* (hereafter CNA), which oversaw all other functions of the government. The CNA was composed of nine councilors each elected for a six-year term, three of whom were to be elected by proportional representation every two years.

Under this "bicephalous" system, politics in Uruguay evolved into a highly complex and intense competition. The Colorado Party split up even further as Viera broke away from Batllismo in 1919 to form his own faction, commonly referred to as *Vierismo*. In 1927, division once again emerged among the Colorados when Julio María Sosa, Batlle's longtime internal rival, formally became independent. It must be noted, however, that under the peculiar electoral system, the so-called "double simultaneous voting" implemented in 1910 for all national elections, these independent but internally disciplined factions within the party were legally termed *sublemas* of the same *lema*, namely the Colorado Party, and, as such, they were systematically allowed and even encouraged to compete, negotiate, and (if necessary) unite at once.[8] Since the Blancos' electoral base nearly matched the Colorados' overall base, although Batllismo remained a principal force in the party, the smaller factions—Riverismo, Vierismo, and Sosismo, with their own programs and their own lists of candidates—could play a decisive role in electoral battles. In fact, Batllismo alone was never able to obtain a majority in any of the national elections held between 1919 and 1933, so they were constantly compelled to enter into negotiation with, and give concessions to, other Colorado factions.

Logically enough, the radical reforms initiated by Batlle were substantially watered down. Whereas the presidency was reserved for Colorado leaders, the CNA, where spokesmen of Batllistas, non-Batllista Colorados, and Blancos coexisted, became the central stage for party politics rather than an executing authority, and as a result of this, political controversy, compromise, and stratagem tended to preclude efficient and reasonable decision-making. Accurately characterized by Gerardo Caetano as the "República Conservadora," Uruguay

between 1919 and 1933 nonetheless witnessed a remarkable deepening and broadening of democracy as different opinions, perspectives, and ideologies were exhaustively contested both inside and outside political circles around the reforms proposed and implemented.[9]

By the end of the 1920s, the fragmentation of the Colorados had become even more complicated and irreparable, particularly after the death of Viera in 1927 and, more significantly, that of Batlle in 1929.[10] The Great Depression dealt a crushing blow to the Uruguayan economy, which still depended on the export of cattle products. The CNA appeared incapable of dealing with this acute crisis. Then came a move from President Gabriel Terra who, despite his lack of competence in economic matters, did have control over the police and the armed forces.[11] In 1933, backed by many non-Batllista Colorados, the majority Blancos, and the socioeconomic elites, Terra moved the police to suspend the constitution, dissolve the Congress and the CNA, and set up a dictatorship. The new constitution of 1934, although formally approved through a democratic procedure, actually came about from a personal pact between Terra and Herrera: the CNA was abolished and a single presidentialist regime was reestablished; all the positions in the cabinet and Congress were distributed among the followers of the two bosses, while other factions in both parties were excluded from official posts.[12]

Although the 1933 coup d'état dealt a fatal blow to the centrality of Batllismo that had characterized Uruguayan politics in the first three decades of the twentieth century, it did not overturn the political, social, and cultural legacies of Batllista Uruguay. There is no doubt that the reforms envisaged during this period, as well as the heated discussions among different political and social actors around them, contributed to laying the foundations of modern Uruguay as a pioneer in social welfare and democratic stronghold. Also, many of the state enterprises, public welfare agencies, and other official institutions founded in these years survived Terra's coup and even the more crucial political breakdown in the 1970s, enduring throughout the twentieth century. One such institution was the CNEF, the state agency for sport policy development.

CNEF: Foundation and initial experiments (1911-1914)

Considering that Batllismo's key aim was that the state, through its bureaucratic apparatus, should lead the development of civil society and that political parties played a crucial mediating role in this process,[13] sports policy presents an interesting case through which to examine the intricate way in which this relationship between state, parties, and society was consolidated, since it implies

state intervention in a leisure activity that is essentially private. The history of the CNEF must be analyzed in this light.

In his youth, Batlle was known as a dedicated sportsman. In the 1880s he presided over Tiro y Gimnasio Montevideano, a leading athletic club of the time, to which he presented a proposal to institute the Juegos Atléticos Uruguayos, an annual festival featuring different sports such as wrestling, boxing, swimming, fencing, and shooting.[14] In 1906, under his first administration, Batlle submitted a bill based on this inchoate idea, advocating the annual celebration of national games. An internal commission of the Chamber of Deputies examined the bill and sent it back with amendments, one of which indicated the creation of the CNEF, a permanent institution responsible for the organization of the national games and other initiatives to promote physical culture. The amended bill was passed and sent to the Senate, where it was abandoned until 1911 when it finally became law amongst the "rain of projects" at the beginning of Batlle's second presidency.[15]

According to the law, the CNEF was assigned an annual budget of 50,000 pesos, and was composed of four "ex-officio" members (the president of the University, the National Inspector of Public Instruction, the president of the National Council of Public Hygiene, and the director of the Military Academy) in addition to seven members designated by the executive (that is, the president of the republic up to 1919 and the CNA afterwards).[16] They served two-year terms on an honorary basis and gathered at least once a week to discuss and implement any national project related to sport and physical education. Juridically speaking, although the budget was allocated through the Ministry of Public Instruction, the CNEF was not a subordinating branch of any existing bureaucratic organization but was an autonomous agency since the committee of the members had the highest decision-making authority.

In August 1911, the first meeting of the CNEF was held. Batlle designated as CNEF members presidents of important sports associations such as the Liga Uruguaya de Football, the Montevideo Rowing Club, and the YMCA Montevideo. An exception to this trend was Juan Smith, a Blanco politician and Batlle's friend, who assumed the presidency of the CNEF.[17] The first four years of the CNEF under Smith's direction were fundamentally dedicated to preliminary experiments in search of an adequate sports policy: it organized competitions in long-distance running, cycling, tennis, and swimming, awarded prizes to several institutions, and tried out other isolated measures to stimulate national sports development rather sporadically. However, from these incipient trials would spring the three "pillars" of Uruguay's sports policy, which are: 1) the institutionalization of national sport through federations; 2) the establishment

and administration of public playgrounds called "plazas de deporte"; and 3) the professional training of qualified physical education teachers.

Uruguayan sportsmen viewed the creation of the CNEF as an unexpected chance to draw financial assistance: sporting clubs from all over the country soon began to submit so many applications for subsidies that it was impossible for the CNEF to rationally analyze and decide on each one.[18] In August 1912, the CNEF resolved that all petitions from football clubs should be filed with, and examined by, the Liga Uruguaya de Football, the national federation of this sport, before being considered by the CNEF.[19] Around the same time, the CNEF instituted an organizing body for boat-racing named Unión de Remeros.[20] These measures constituted an initial effort undertaken by the CNEF to establish an institutional channel through which the state was able to provide civil sports organizations with efficient assistance.

One of the initiatives for the popularization of sport that was most in demand was the provision of public playgrounds and gymnasiums, since many of the existent facilities were reserved by private sporting clubs for their paid members. In 1912, the CNEF entered into an agreement with L'Avenir, a leading gymnastics club in Montevideo, for the use of part of its facilities as a *gimnasio popular* in which the CNEF was able to operate a free gymnastics course open to all citizens.[21] The same year, the CNEF received the donation of a plot located in Montevideo city center from the real estate mogul Francisco Piria, on which the CNEF resolved to build an outdoor sports center named Plaza Vecinal de Ejercicios Físicos. According to Smith, this playground was to be equipped with a field, showers, and other facilities, and, most importantly, it was to be overseen by a physical education teacher, under whose scientific supervision children and adults of both sexes from the neighborhood would be able to dedicate themselves to physical exercise in a salubrious environment.[22] The Plaza was inaugurated in 1913 under the directorship of Jess Hopkins, an American physical education teacher at the YMCA Montevideo. This in fact was a pilot project of what would later be known as the "plazas de deporte," which would multiply in the following decades.[23]

The third line of the CNEF's policy development was the expert training of physical education teachers. Playgrounds had to be supplied with knowledgeable and experienced personnel, which was scarce in Uruguay since there were no public schools for the professional training of physical education teachers. As the CNEF members often expressed in their criticisms, the Dirección General de Instrucción Primaria, the supreme organ of public education, was not able to adequately address this situation, although this material had been incorporated into the school curricula since the late nineteenth century. In 1912, the visit of Enrique Romero Brest, the Argentine authority in physical education, sparked

a candid discussion in the CNEF as to whether it was relevant for the country to establish a school for aspiring physical education teachers, but a definitive decision only came about in the 1920s.[24]

CNEF: Political turn and expansion (1914-1923)

From late 1913 to early 1915, the composition of the CNEF board members changed radically as all seven "designated" members resigned successively: although they hardly expressed the reason for their departure, it seems reasonable to assume that this was the result of a decision made by Batlle who, after the two electoral triumphs that definitively consolidated Batllismo's political base and before the end of his term as president in February 1915, decided to change the course of the CNEF's management. Instead of figures from the world of sports, now the CNEF was formed of four Colorado politicians, all around thirty years old and very close to Batlle (Francisco Ghigliani, Atilio Narancio, César Miranda, and César Batlle Pacheco, the president's eldest son); two famed professionals (physician Alberto Galeano and architect Juan Aubriot); and José María Delgado, a poet and long-time president of the Club Nacional de Football. Later in July 1915, Batlle himself replaced his son as a member of the CNEF, a fact that evidences his unusual interest in sports policy.

This total renewal of the CNEF's membership implied that the organization now operated in the same manner as state enterprises. State enterprises, or *entes autónomos*, served as a principal vehicle through which the Uruguayan state had intervened in different areas of the economy, industry, and social services since the late nineteenth century. Although their boards of directors were appointed by the executive, their management was considered to be autonomous from the government and its ministerial branches.[25] In appointments to state enterprises, Batlle carefully combined technical experts in the relevant fields and politicians loyal to the regime, thus ensuring a delicate balance between efficient operation and political support that was key to their successful development.[26] However, the boards of public corporations also typically became a terrain for *coparticipación*: while the political preeminence of Batllismo was secured, Batlle was soundly able to pick his men, but when the electoral contest became more competitive, other political forces would also request a share in the public administration, as would later happen in the CNEF.

Among the Colorado political appointees, the indisputably central figure was Francisco Ghigliani, a graduate of the Faculty of Medicine and promising Batllista militant. Chosen as a CNEF member in 1914, he soon demonstrated not only his broad scientific knowledge of physical culture and his deep passion for

sport but also his robust leadership to fearlessly push through changes, gaining the trust of Batlle as his favorite firebrand.[27] In 1917, Ghigliani was appointed as a writer of sports pages of *El Día* and later promoted to the position of chief editor of the evening edition of this daily. From his first election as deputy in 1919, Ghigliani would quickly emerge in the Batllista faction to become one of its hard-core spokesmen.

One of the changes introduced by Ghigliani concerned the allocation of internal posts: according to the new statute approved in 1914, all eleven members in monthly rotation assumed the roles of president and vice-president, who were conferred no more power than other members, except for purely formal duties. Thus, each member was expected to engage in the CNEF's missions with greater responsibility and freedom of action, while encouraging horizontal collaboration and deliberation among them. This *de facto* abolition of presidency ideologically responded to the ideal of the *colegiado*, the core of Batllismo's political vision.[28]

Under this solid regime, the CNEF drastically expanded its fields of action and became a driving force of Uruguayan sports development. Particularly, it established a steady relationship with civil sports organizations: as none of the sports played in Uruguay, except for football and rowing, had national governing bodies, Ghigliani proposed in 1915 to call for all sporting clubs in the country to hold assemblies to create national federations for each sport. In response to this official announcement, one sport after another established national federations, whose delegates constituted the Federación Deportiva del Uruguay (FDU), an umbrella organization that would function under the supervision of the CNEF.[29] The number of sports participating in the FDU increased from twelve to thirty-one in the following years, while the CNEF provided generous services to sportsmen through the FDU and federations.[30] Particularly, from 1916 the CNEF formally recognized national competitions held by the official federations as a substitute for the "annual athletic games" that the founding law indicated as its prime objective, thus legally binding itself to subsidize the organization of these tournaments.[31] Moreover, the CNEF adopted diverse measures that ranged from subsidy and financial loans to medical assistance, technical advice, and provision of coaches, all of which vigorously stimulated the activities of civil sporting associations and consolidated the CNEF's authority over them.[32]

The establishment of public playgrounds or plazas de deporte flourished to become an emblematic project. The number of plazas constructed and operated by the CNEF throughout the country grew from three in 1913 to eighteen in 1918 to forty-one in 1922.[33] Each plaza was staffed with budgeted civil servants, and the sports programs offered there attracted hundreds of young people from surrounding neighborhoods. In 1922, the CNEF aspired to set up a plaza in every town with a population of more than 500.[34]

Regarding the professional training of physical education experts, the CNEF finally worked out a concrete solution in 1923 when it began to organize an intensive summer course, instead of a permanent institute, so that those who wished to be trained as physical education teachers could acquire essential knowledge ranging from anatomy and physiology to coaching methods.[35] Around the same time, it was juridically acknowledged that the CNEF had the authority over personnel management for physical education in schools, so the technical staff of the CNEF taught both at plazas and in public schools.[36]

CNEF: Crisis and decadence (1923-1933)

Backed by strong Batllista political patronage, the CNEF carried out a coherent and pioneering sport policy envied around the world. However, the heated political climate and the resulting slowdown of Batllismo and its reform restrained the CNEF's policy development in the 1920s. Particularly significant was the new constitution that granted the authority to nominate the members of the CNEF to the CNA, where the intense conflict within the Colorado party and between the Colorados and the Blancos developed.

In the election for the CNA's councilor in 1922, Batllismo was compelled to yield one of the two seats allocated to the Colorado Party as the internal feud intensified. As a result, the CNA in 1923 was formed of two Batllistas, four non-Batllista Colorados (two Vieristas, one Riverista, and one neutral), and three Blancos.

When the nomination of CNEF members came up for discussion in the CNA that year, Blanco councilor Alfredo García Morales proposed to oust all seven Batllista members from the CNEF, alleging that sport in Uruguay had reached such a wide diffusion that there were many other people qualified for the job. The Batllista Atilio Narancio, ex-CNEF member, advocated the reelection of all the members in office asserting that the diffusion of sports to which García Morales referred was due precisely to the merit of the current members. After the debate, each councilor cast a vote: the Blancos and the non-Batllista Colorados voted for total renewal; Narancio insisted on total reelection; and the other Batllista, Julio María Sosa, who would later break off from the faction, symptomatically supported a third proposal that mixed old and new candidates. As a result, the CNEF included seven newcomers, among whom were two Blanco politicians, while Ghigliani and other core Batllistas were kept out.[37]

In the following CNA election in 1925, the Blanco Party triumphed by a narrow margin. Consequently, three Batllistas, one Riverista, one neutral Colorado, and four Blancos constituted the CNA. This paradoxically smoothed

the collaboration between different Colorado factions since if one of the Colorado councilors split off, the Blancos' opinion would go unchallenged. In the nomination of the CNEF's membership held the same year, while the Blanco councilors insisted on increasing the number of their political appointees, all five Colorados agreed to vote for a list of candidates that included Ghigliani, Batlle, and Héctor Gomez, another former Batllista appointee, in addition to four of the current members.[38] Ghigliani, however, furiously criticized the political nature of the vote:

> I have the right to presume that those councilors who are my political adversaries are well aware of what my efforts in the CNEF were when I was part of it, and that, knowing these efforts, only a political motivation could have led them to not vote for me . . . In politics it is an honor for me to be both trusted and supported by my party fellows [*correligionarios*] and opposed by my adversaries, but the work of the CNEF should not be a place for politics and I do not want to contribute to making it so by accepting a designation besmirched by political opposition.[39]

The CNA did not approve of Ghigliani's resignation, and he came back into office.[40] However, now that Colorado and Blanco politicians coexisted in the CNEF, political and personal feelings ran high, jeopardizing sober discussion from time to time.

Another conjuncture in the CNA affected the CNEF membership again in 1927, when the Vierista councilor Luis Caviglia, going against the party discipline, joined the four Blancos in the choice of the vice-president of Customs. Fearing that a concessive attitude toward the "decisive minorities" in the Colorado Party might create new dissidents, the Batllista faction announced that its members were to decline any official posts offered by the present CNA with Caviglia in protest against his betrayal.[41] Ghigliani left the CNEF with resolve: "the party discipline should govern the act of party men . . . the greater the sacrifice I make of my intense enthusiasm for the country's physical education, the more satisfactorily I take this decision as a partisan."[42] The CNEF lost its driving spirit, and the repeated shuffles in its membership hampered long-term policy planning.

With Batllistas out of office, in 1928 the CNEF abolished the rotating presidency, the supreme token of its Batllista character. About this, an ex-officio member expressed: "the current regulation responds to an ideology that, brought to politics, I oppose with determination . . . the rotating presidency, in fact, entails a 'headlessness [*acefalía*]' of presidency . . . I believe in the need for

one strong president."[43] This call for vertical discipline mirrored the political atmosphere of this period.

Besides the political crisis, economic hardship also ruined the CNEF's management. Since its early years, the CNEF was expected to find its own sources of income, but few such attempts were successful.[44] However, as a bureaucratic body it expanded disproportionally in order to develop many consuming projects such as the plazas de deporte. The number of full-time staff, both administrative and technical, escalated from twenty-six in 1914 to 106 in 1926 to 169 in 1929,[45] while the annual budget allocated by the government remained the same. From the mid-1920s, the finances of the CNEF sharply deteriorated, producing a fiscal deficit annually. Moreover, it came to light that the financial administration of the CNEF seriously lacked discipline and control: many invoices remained unpaid due to the negligence of some members; excessive expenses were incurred on "vehicle hiring"; loans that were once generously given to clubs and federations were never repaid, etc.[46] Criticism of the management was often mixed with political criticism of past Batllista leaders who had once prevailed in the CNEF.

By the end of the 1920s, the CNEF's fiscal situation became so weak that it was barely able to maintain the policy outcomes that had been achieved, let alone propose new progressive programs. Federations complained about the lack of support, while many of the plazas de deporte were short of equipment and proper maintenance. Yet, the CNEF was forced to suspend monetary aid for private sports institutions, and to freeze all construction plans for plazas de deporte, the trademark of the CNEF's mass sports development.[47]

In 1929, the members of the Colorado cartel again imposed their nomination for the CNEF, ousting all the Blanco appointees but one.[48] Herrera acutely criticized the Colorados' "most strict exclusivism": "once . . . it was asserted that the posts in the administration belonged to a certain sector because they were 'the best and most suitable.' Ten years later, that unacceptable criterion is resurrected . . . now it is asserted that the Blancos will never be candidates for public positions."[49] The Batllista Baltasar Brum contested that there had been an "absolute exclusivism against Batllistas" in past nominations of the CNEF's membership.[50] Some councilors justified themselves by maintaining that they had voted for candidates from opposing parties, while others observed that personal merit should prevail over political affiliation. However, no one could deny that now the destiny of sports policy was subject to political maneuvering.

Among the newly appointed CNEF members was the former president of the republic, José Serrato. Serrato had a good reputation as an efficient administrator, rather than a party politician, and stood firmly neutral vis-à-vis the divisions among Colorados. His appointment was clearly intended as a remedy for the ailing finances of the CNEF. However, despite his diligent efforts to cut

down on expenses, such a huge amount of debt had been accumulated that there were no other solutions than to allocate additional budget. Serrato pressured the executive, but only in vain: by 1930, the impact of the Great Depression, which began to be felt in Uruguay, impeded the government from investing in sport. Deeply frustrated, Serrato resigned, grumbling that he had "not come to do bureaucracy."[51]

Everyone involved in sports policy experienced the situation as one of crisis. Narancio, who had been part of the CNEF from 1914 to 1915, returned to the organization as president in 1931. However, the atmosphere in the CNEF had become so aggravated that he walked out shortly after: "the action of the president . . . becomes effective only when there is true solidarity among members, something that unfortunately I could not obtain . . . I hope to come back some day to the CNEF with fellows who have similar ideas to mine."[52] Contrary to seventeen years before, when all members shared "true solidarity" as Batllistas, now spokesmen of different political sectors were trying to take command of sports policy.

The coup d'état of 1933 finally put an end to this directive chaos. The junta designated a new CNEF directorate presided over by Nicolás Revello, a former fencing champion of the Military Academy. Revello deployed a harsh initiative: any expenditures, including those considered essential, became subject to reduction, and the members hardly discussed possible measures but rather implemented measures that the president imposed. Under Revello's authoritarian regime, sports policy in Uruguay was to be thoroughly overhauled and restructured.

Conclusion

When the CNEF was created in 1911, it was essentially conceived as little more than a "council of wise men" that was commissioned to embark on an unprecedented venture of promoting national sport: it was nothing but a by-product of a law instituting national athletic games, its position within the state bureaucracy was far from clearly defined, and its budgetary base was fragile. However, Batlle soon decided to provide the CNEF with stronger political backing through his fellow politicians, and this pilot project rapidly transformed into an authentic administrative organization that actively intervened in civil society to implement a unique and wide-reaching sport policy. This institutional shift and expansion can be explained by several factors: the demand among citizens for support for sport was extremely high; the early CNEF members aspired to frame a coherent, long-term sport policy rather than provide temporary and

arbitrary subsidies; and, contrary to many of the Batllista reforms, the promotion of sport in itself did not threaten the interest of any particular social group.

However, all the downsides of political nomination and the corporation's organizational vulnerability soon came to light. During the 1920s, as conservative forces gained support and the Colorado internal strife intensified, other political factions also requested their corresponding quota on the board of directors according to the *coparticipación* principle. Despite the alleged "apoliticality" of the CNEF's mission, political leaders had every reason to influence the country's sports administration.[53] More importantly, being in the position of directing a state enterprise gave politicians the chance to distribute jobs in its corporate hierarchy through their patronage network.[54] Repeated reshufflings of the board, and political antagonism between its members, sharply jeopardized the CNEF's policy-making initiative. Moreover, the high aspirations of its leaders and the rapid expansion of its field of action were not accompanied by a proper enhancement of its juridical and financial basis. As a result, the CNEF, once praised as a unique and progressive institution, tragically degenerated into a conservative, mediocre, and inefficient bureaucracy.

The simple fact that sports policy originated from Batlle's personal ideas is not sufficient to illustrate the dynamics and connections between sport and politics in Uruguay. In consonance with Batllismo's unbounded optimism that the state could and should have a vital role in society, the CNEF developed a set of programs that effectively stimulated a fertile sports culture in Uruguay. Moreover, the partisan management of the CNEF, Batllismo's characteristic approach to public administration, then criticized by the opposition as "exclusivist," contributed to both the efficient elaboration and the eventual collapse of sports policy, reflecting the constant power shifts in the bitterly contested party politics of the period. The early history of Uruguayan sport policy not only points to the political nature of sport, but also reveals the ambivalent mechanism of "impulse" and "brake" (to echo the title of Carlos Real de Azúa's classic study) in Batllista reform.

Notes

1. March L. Krotee, "The Rise and Demise of Sport: A Reflection of Uruguayan Society," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 445 (1979), pp. 141-154.
2. Andrés Morales, *Fútbol, identidad y poder 1916-1930* (Montevideo: Fin de Siglo, 2013), especially pp.121-158. See also, Juan Carlos Luzuriaga, *El* football *del Novecientos: orígenes y desarrollo del fútbol en el Uruguay (1875-1915)* (Montevideo: Santillana, 2009), pp. 255, 256.

3. *Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados (Argentina) 1918*, tomo 2 (July 15, 1918), p. 236.
4. "Rapport fait par le Comte de Baillet-Latour sur la Mission qu'il a remplie pour le CIO dans l'Amérique du Sud, l'Amérique Centrale et l'Amérique du Nord," *22è session à Rome 1923: procès-verbal, correspondance, discours, invitations, mêmes propositions, programme et rapport 1922-1923*, Olympic Studies Centre Historical Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland.
5. Gerardo Caetano, *La república batllista* (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 2011), p. 36, 37.
6. For more on the "centrality of parties" in Uruguayan politics, see Gerardo Caetano, Romeo Pérez, and José Rilla, "La partidocracia uruguaya: historia y teoría de la centralidad de los partidos políticos," *Cuadernos del CLAEH*, 44 (1987), pp. 37-61.
7. For a more comprehensive overview of the reform projects proposed and introduced during this period, see José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahum, *Batlle, los estancieros, y el imperio británico tomo 4: Las primeras reformas (1911-1913)* (Montevideo: Editorial de la Banda Oriental, 1983).
8. According to the Uruguayan *lema* system, voters simultaneously voted for a *lema* (or party) and a concrete list of candidates presented by a *sublema* of that *lema*. Votes were classified first by *lema*, and the party that won a relative majority became a winner. Then, votes were counted according to *sublemas*. In the case of presidential elections, candidates from the *sublema* that obtained most votes within the winning *lema* were elected. In parliamentary and CNA elections, where proportional representation was employed, seats were distributed first amongst *lemas* by proportion, and then within each *lema* these seats were shared out among *sublemas* according to the number of votes cast.
9. Gerardo Caetano, *República conservadora*, 2 vols. (Montevideo: Fin de Siglo, 1991-1992).
10. The Blancos were not free from divisions either since the absolute rule of Herrera, the indisputable party boss, constantly produced dissidents. In the 1926 presidential election, the separation of left-wing Blancos brought about a Colorado win by a small margin. In 1931, the Blancos were definitely divided between the followers of Herrera and his adversaries, a division that lasted until the 1950s.
11. Despite having made his career as a Batllista, Terra became an outspoken critic of the collegiate executive soon after assuming the presidency in 1931.
12. As for the political history of Uruguay between 1904 and 1933, the classical studies by Milton Vanger and Göran Lindahl still remain indispensable references despite their old-fashioned approach. Uruguayan historians such as José Pedro Barrán, Benjamín Nahum, Gerardo Caetano, and Raúl Jacob have incorporated a broader socioeconomic analysis into the political narrative of Batllista Uruguay. Milton I. Vanger, *José Batlle y Ordóñez of Uruguay: The Creator of His Times 1902-1907* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963); Milton I. Vanger, *The Model Country: José Batlle y Ordóñez of Uruguay 1907-1915* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1980); Milton I. Vanger, *Uruguay's José Batlle y Ordóñez: The Determined Visionary 1915-1917* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2010); Göran G. Lindahl, *Uruguay's New Path: A Study in Politics during the First Colegiado 1919-33* (Stockholm: Bröderna Lagerström, 1962); José Pedro Barrán and Benjamín Nahum, *Batlle, los estancieros y el imperio británico*, 8 vols. (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1979-1987); Gerardo Caetano,

República conservadora; Gerardo Caetano and Raúl Jacob, *El nacimiento del terrismo (1930-1933)*, 3 vols. (Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1989-1991).

13. Caetano, *La república bastllista*, pp. 22, 23.
14. *José Batlle y Ordóñez: Documentos para el estudio de su vida y de su obra, Serie I 1856-1893, El joven Batlle 1856-1885,* vol. 1 (Montevideo: Poder Legislativo, Cámara de Representantes, 1994), pp. 29-30.
15. See *Diario de Sesiones de la H. Cámara de Representantes* (hereafter *DSCR*), t.187 (July 10, 1906), p.452; *DSCR*, t.189 (December 4, 1906), pp. 289-296; *Diario de Sesiones de la H. Cámara de Senadores* (hereafter *DSCS*), t.95 (July 2, 1909), pp.17-18; *DSCR*, t.211 (July 4, 1911), pp. 67-69.
16. Many "ex-officio" members did not actively participate in the CNEF, due to which the seven "chosen" members had a leading role.
17. Although official documents appointing members were formally signed by the minister of Public Instruction, sources indicate that it was Batlle himself who handpicked the CNEF members during his presidency.
18. For example, in 1911 a rowing club from Paysandú asked for a subsidy. As reported by *El Día*, a sub-committee formed by two of the CNEF members carefully studied the petition and dispatched a detailed report, upon which the CNEF declined the request. See *Actas de la Comisión Nacional de Educación Física* (hereafter *Actas CNEF*), Libro 1 (September 1, 1911), p. 6. Secretaría Nacional del Deporte, Montevideo; "El pedido de los remeros de Paysandú: Por qué fue negado," *El Día*, December 26, 1911, p. 6.
19. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (August 28, 1912), p. 163.
20. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (October 18, 1911), p. 20; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (November 20, 1911), pp. 42-46; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (August 9, 1912), p. 158.
21. Before the club's inauguration, more than 600 people had subscribed for the *Gimnasio Popular*, a fact that indicates the high demand for this kind of public installation. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (March 11, 1912), pp. 86-89; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (May 15, 1912), pp. 127-128; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (June 7, 1912), pp. 135-136.
22. Juan Smith, *Plazas vecinales de cultura física* (Montevideo: A. Barreiro y Ramos, 1913).
23. For the establishment of the Plaza Vecinal, see *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (July 24, 1912), pp. 145-155; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (October 9, 1912), pp. 179-185; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (December 11, 1912), pp. 209-211; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (May 21, 1913), pp. 271-278; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (July 7, 1913), p. 283.
24. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (February 5, 1913), pp. 232-245.
25. For *entes*, see Marcos Baudean, "Autonomía administrativa y control democrático en la construcción del Estado uruguayo (1919-1933)," *Cuadernos del CLAEH*, 100 (2012), pp. 79-104; Jorge Lanzaro, "La institucionalización de la democracia pluralista y los entes autónomos en la Constitución de 1918," *Revista uruguaya de ciencia política*, 27:1 (2018), pp. 85-106.
26. Vanger, *The Model Country*, pp. 336, 337.
27. In his reply to the appointment letter, Ghigliani announced his fierce determination: "I am happy to accept [the appointment] since it will allow me to fight efficiently to modify the dominant criteria that govern the commission's actions, which I consider wrong." "Carta de Francisco Ghigliani a Baltasar Brum" (May 9, 1914), Caja 0071, Paquete 0049, Carpeta 967, Fondo Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, Archivo General de la Nación, Montevideo (hereafter MIP-AGN).
28. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (June 8, 1914), pp. 367, 368; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (June 26, 1914), pp. 382, 383; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 1 (June 30, 1914), pp. 383-390.

29. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 2 (February 19, 1915), p. 36; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 2 (March 5, 1915), pp. 39, 40.
30. In 1918, the FDU was dissolved as it had completed its task of institutionalizing the connection between the CNEF and civil society, and, instead, the CNEF granted official recognition directly to the federations. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 4 (August 1, 1918), fols. 412r-413v.
31. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 3 (June 27, 1916), fols. 107r-107v; Resolución del Ministerio de Instrucción Pública (July 4, 1916), Caja 0129, Paquete 0119, Carpeta 0811, MIP-AGN.
32. Within this state-led institutionalizing process, football is an exception since the *Asociación Uruguaya de Football* (renamed in 1915 from *Liga Uruguaya de Football*) did not participate in the FDU or obtain official recognition from the CNEF. Although space does not allow for a detailed discussion, it must be noted that football was the only spectator sport in Uruguay that was able to sustain itself financially without governmental support. This does not necessarily mean that the CNEF excluded football from its auspices, but it indicates that the basic criteria were that the priority should be given to other sports that lacked resources.
33. Julio J. Rodríguez, *La educación física en el Uruguay* (Montevideo: Imprenta Artística, 1930), p. 12.
34. Julio J. Rodríguez, *Plan de acción de la Comisión Nacional de Educación Física y conclusiones que se derivan del mismo* (Montevideo: Imprenta Latina, 1923), p. 76.
35. Julio J. Rodríguez, "Preparación de maestros de educación física en el Uruguay", *Uruguay-Sports*, 48 (Dec. 1921), pp.3141-3159; CNEF, *Informes, horario, programa y otros detalles del curso intensivo teórico-práctico* (Montevideo: Imprenta Latina, 1923).
36. "Carta de Elias Regules a Manuel Machado" (November 11, 1922), Caja 183, Paquete 0168, Carpeta 5489, MIP-AGN.
37. *Registro de actas del Consejo Nacional de Administración* (hereafter *Actas CNA*), 1923, tomo 3 (August 30, 1923), fols. 320r-320v, Archivo General de la Nación. The two Blancos to be appointed were Casto Martínez Laguarda and Enrique Andreoli, both of whom were national deputies in office. The only Batllista politician was Andrés Puyol, one of Sosa's followers.
38. *Actas CNA*, 1925, tomo 3 (September 11, 1925), fols. 446v, 447r. Batlle declined the appointment due to the busyness.
39. Carta de Francisco Ghigliani a Carlos M. Prando (September 15, 1925), Caja 0112, Paquete 0100, Carpeta 0251, MIP-AGN.
40. *Actas CNA*, 1925, tomo 3 (September 22, 1925), fol. 518r.
41. *José Batlle y Ordóñez: Documentos para el estudio de su vida y de su obra, Serie VIII 1919-1929, Agrupación Colorada de Gobierno Nacional 1920-1927* (Montevideo: Poder Legislativo, Cámara de Representamtes, 1988), p. 278. See also, Lindahl, *Uruguay's New Path*, pp. 129-133.
42. "Carta de Francisco Ghigliani a Enrique Rodríguez Fabregat" (October 19, 1927), Caja 0112, Paquete 0100, Carpeta 0251, MIP-AGN; "Agrupación Colorada de Gobierno Nacional: La Reunión de anoche," *El Día*, October 18, 1927, p. 6.
43. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 21 (June 1, 1928), fol. 4659v.
44. One of the few projects that stably contributed to the CNEF's finances was a 10% tax on boxing matches, which was introduced in 1918. *DSCR*, t.264 (July 15, 1918), pp. 284-286.

45. As we discuss below, at least part of this increase was due to the appointment of jobs by patronage practiced by some of the CNEF members.
46. "¿Qué pasa en la Comisión N. de Educación Física?" *El País*, October 4, 1928, p. 3.
47. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 21 (June 14, 1928), fol. 4686v; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 26 (September 16, 1930), fols. 5792v-5793r.
48. *Actas CNA*, 1929, tomo 4 (October 30, 1929), fols. 238v-239r.
49. *Actas CNA*, 1929, tomo 4 (October 31, 1929), fols. 244r-244v.
50. *Actas CNA*, 1929, tomo 4 (October 31, 1929), fol. 244v.
51. *Actas CNEF*, Libro 25 (January 9, 1930), fols. nº628858r-628860r; "Carta de José Serrato a Alberto Demicheli" (September 18, 1930), Caja 0112, Paquete 0100, Carpeta 0251, MIP-AGN.
52. "Carta de Atilio Narancio a Juan C. Mussio Fournier" (February 17, 1932), Caja 0112, Paquete 0100, Carpeta 0251, MIP-AGN.
53. Particularly in 1923, Sosa's motivation to intervene in the CNEF was clear: the administration of football was then divided between the *Asociación Uruguaya de Football*, in which several core Batllistas had a leading role, and the *Federación Uruguaya de Football*, presided over by Sosa. Since both groups were struggling to send their own team to the 1924 Olympic Games, it is logical to suppose that Sosa intended to orient the CNEF to push for the participation of his federation. For this schism in football, see Arnaldo Gomensoro, "El borrascoso nacimiento del Comité Olímpico Uruguayo," *ISEF Digital*, 2 (2004), pp.1-17.
54. Jobs in the public administration have notoriously been a hotbed of clientelism in Uruguay. Although it is not easy to determine the scope of its extent in the CNEF, one example corroborates the personal ties between politicians and public servants: Carlos Buela Diana worked for a long time as a general inspector of the CNEF's administration. After Ghigliani quit the CNEF, through a dubious procedure he was entitled to a leave of absence and started to work for the Servicio Oficial de Difusión Radio Eléctrica, a public broadcasting organization over which Ghigliani presided. Later CNEF leaders blamed Buela Diana for the administrative disorder that he irresponsibly left behind. See "Carta de Francisco Ghigliani a Alberto Demicheli" (October 31, 1930), Caja 0268, Carpeta 918, MIP-AGN; *Actas CNEF*, Libro 27 (March 18, 1932), fol. 6200r.