

Caroline Alexander, "The Great Game"

MULTIPLE CHOICE

Caroline Alexander, *The Great Game*

In 1977 I spent what was to be the first of three summers at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio, Texas, working out in blurring near- hundred- degree heat at the U.S. Modern Pentathlon Training Center, opened that year for the first time to women. Modern pentathlon is a composite competition, devised in 1912 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, to mirror the prestigious pentathlon centerpiece of the ancient games. The eccentric selection of modern events, however — show jumping, épée fencing, pistol shooting, swimming, and cross-country running — was predicated on the belief, already anachronistic in 1912, that these were the skills a good soldier should possess. In my day, the majority of American male pentathletes, as well as a sprinkling of the inaugural group of women, held rank. The indelible military cast of some memories of this time now seem surreal, such as practicing cavalry drills on the parade field, or shooting, dueling style, at the range. “How you score is between God and your conscience,” our marine- sergeant coach would say. America’s most conspicuous modern pentathlete was the twenty- six- year- old West Point graduate George Patton, who came in fifth at the event’s premiere in 1912, having performed poorly in the shooting.

The equation of sport with war, or more dangerously, war with sport, is universal and enduring, but occasionally lurches into particularly sharp focus. As is made clear in *The War Lovers: Roosevelt, Lodge, Hearst, and the Rush to Empire, 1898*, Evan Thomas’ new book about the easily avoidable steps that led to the Spanish American war, personal fixations on exercise and competitive strife morphed with appalling ease into national policy.

“In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the young men of the upper and middle classes took to sweaty gyms, lifting weights and tossing medicine balls,” Thomas writes. Although manifested in very different ways, this susceptibility to sports mania was shared by three of the key figures directing America’s rush to war with Spain. Henry Cabot Lodge, the influential senator from Massachusetts, had been “a frail boy and, though he tried, never very adept at games,” reading books of tales of derring- do as a substitute for action. For William Randolph Hearst, the publisher of the war- mongering *New York Morning Journal*, sports could be counted on to sell papers: one of the first big stories he had commissioned when taking over the *Journal* had been the annual Princeton–Yale football game. When the battleship *Maine* was blown up in Havana harbor by what was trumpeted as enemy action but was probably an accident, Hearst, with shrewd understanding of the potent sports–war equation, had “proposed recruiting a regiment of giant athletes — heavyweight boxers, football players, and baseball sluggers — to overawe the pitiful Spaniards.”

The last man in Thomas’ triumvirate is Teddy Roosevelt, whose devotion to manly sporting activities is too well known to require much amplification. As a young boy suffering from myopia and asthma, “Teedie” heaved himself into a regime of weightlifting, mountain climbing, and boxing, the bloody details of which he reported proudly to his father. Blood was an important aspect of Rooseveltian sport, hence the organization he founded in 1887, the Boone and Crockett Club, whose membership was limited to men who, in his words, “had killed with the rifle in fair chase.” The club’s purpose was “to promote manly sport with the rifle.” The distance between “manly sport with the rifle” and the perceived sport of war was perilously short. Roosevelt’s own ardently desired military blooding was achieved with his eventual command of the First U.S. Voluntary Cavalry, the eccentric “Rough Riders,” whose exploits in the battle for San Juan Heights in Cuba were both significant and overplayed by the press and later by himself. The volunteer regiment was top heavy with sporting men, including an America’s Cup yachtsman, reputedly the best quarterback who had ever played for Harvard, a steeplechase rider, a “crack” polo player, a tennis player, and a high jumper.

Informing Roosevelt's sporting ethos was the belief, widely prevalent at the time, 53
 that without physical strife America would lose her frontier spirit to effete-ness. In an 54
 1896 speech that Thomas characterizes as a "paean to the ideal of sports as prep- 55
 aration for war," Lodge urged his Harvard classmates to consider that the "time given to 56
 athletic contests and the injuries incurred on the playing field are part of the price 57
 which the English-speaking race has paid for being world conquerors." 58

1. What statement can be inferred from the opening paragraph of Caroline Alexander's essay?
 - a. Sports are by definition violent.
 - b. The pentathlon has a demonstrably martial origin.
 - c. Only military veterans should be allowed to play professional sports.
 - d. Great generals have always been great athletes.
 - e. The case of George Patton proves that very few soldiers are actually good at shooting.

2. Which of these rhetorical pairings does Alexander use in describing the modern decathlon?

a. misplaced/sadistic	d. eccentric/anachronistic
b. misguided/anarchistic	e. obtuse/voyeuristic
c. opaque/opportunistic	

3. In the second paragraph (lines 17-22), Alexander calls the equation of war with sport more dangerous than the equation of sport with war. Which of these reasons seems to be most in keeping with her line of argument?
 - a. Equating war with sport means that athletes are more likely to be killed while engaged in sports.
 - b. Thinking of war as a kind of sport might make us think of it as a pleasant diversion.
 - c. War is better equated with politics than with sport.
 - d. A war hero does not have to be an athlete, but an athlete has to be a war hero.
 - e. War and sport should not be equated at all, since different scorekeeping is employed in both.

4. Which of these historical figures constitutes a "triumvirate" (line 37), as Alexander employs the term?
 - a. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Louisa May Alcott, Henry David Thoreau
 - b. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, William Randolph Hearst, and Henry Cabot Lodge
 - c. Caroline Alexander, John James Audubon, and Evan Thomas
 - d. Henry David Thoreau, George Patton, and Margaret Mitchell
 - e. Henry Cabot Lodge, William Randolph Hearst, Theodore Roosevelt

5. What rhetorical device does Alexander's use of George Patton at the end of the first paragraph serve?

a. litotes	d. hyperbole
b. irony	e. parallelism
c. paronomasia	

6. In the expression “kill with the rifle in fair chase” (line 43), which Alexander cites in the fourth paragraph of her essay, which of the following terms is an antonym for “chase”?

- a. pursuit
- b. hunt
- c. following
- d. quest
- e. none of the above

7. According to Alexander, Theodore Roosevelt believed that “without physical strife America would lose her frontier spirit to effeteness” (line 54). Which of these terms is the closest synonym for “effeteness”?

- a. effeminacy
- b. enervation
- c. weakness
- d. exertion
- e. energy

8. In the final paragraph, what does the word “ethos” (line 53) mean?

- a. an ethical inquiry
- b. a set of beliefs
- c. a mathematical equation
- d. a scientific proposition
- e. a superstition