

# PARALLELS

## between the Ancient and the Modern Olympic Games

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There is nothing new under the sun, runs an old proverb. What once happened may happen again. I will try to give a modest collection of parallels from the modern Olympic movement with the ancient one.

The highest number of judges, called *helanodikai*, at Olympia was 12. Pausanias V. 9. 5.

The Olympian competitors had their separate quarters built on the western side of the Gymnasion adjoining the colonnade. They were at a distance of about 320 m. from the Olympic stadium. Pausanias, VI.21.2.

Herodotus, the great Greek historian appeared at Olympia 444 B. C. According to Lucian he held there the first public recitation: he published here one part of his historical work in the Opisthodomus of the Temple of Zeus. The pilgrims assembled from the whole Greek world were fascinated and feted him more than the victors of the games. Herodotus was honoured with the wreath of olives. He became the first writer laureate of fine arts. Lucian: *Herodot.* 1-2.

Leonidas of Rhodes won the Olympic wreath in the short distances: stade-race, *diaulos* i. e. double stade-race and race in armour 12-times at 4 games. 164-152 B. C. Philostratos: *De arte gymnastica*, p. 33.

Polymnestor, the winner of the stade-race for boys in 596 B. C. as a young shepherd once captured a running hare. Philostratos: *De arte gymnastica*, p. 13.

The first Int. Olymp. Comm. elected on June 23rd 1894 had 12 members. Coubertin, *Mémoires olympiques*, Lausanne 1931, p. 20.

An Olympic village was erected for the first time at Los Angeles in 1932. It was about ten minutes walk from the Olympic stadium. « Here athletes from the four quarters of the globe with foreign customs, strange languages, and different ideas, lived associated and fraternized for the period of the Games. » Brundage, in the *Report of the American Olymp. Comm.*, 1932, p. 20.

The first competition in the fine arts at the mod. Olympic Games was arranged at Stockholm, 1912. In the literature were proclaimed as winners the German G. Hohrod and M. Eschbach with their poem: *Ode to sport*. Their names are to be found in the Official Report and in scientific literature too, except *Wagner's Olympische Spiele*, Zürich-München 1912. In which Hohrod as the German, and Eschbach as the Frenchman were denoted p. 120, further on the basis of it in some of my articles and in my Olympic Guide, 1936, too, p. 190. About 15 years ago it was established that these names were only pen-names and the real author of the congenial poem was Coubertin himself. He wrote it with the only aim to give to the fine-art competition a stimulation. So the first winner of the fine-art competition was the unforgettable founder of the mod. Olympic movement himself. Diem: *Coubertin*. Olympia Pressdienst, Berlin 26. Febr. 1934. The Germans are poorer by one Olympic victory, but the history of the Olympic Games is richer by a twinkling example of the altruism of the founder.

Ewry, U. S. A., winning the standing high and broad jump four times, 1900-08, inclusive 2 victories at the Panhellenic Games in 1906 and the standing hop-step and jump twice, 1900-04, is the most successful competitor of the modern Ol. games.

Owens the hero of the XI. Ol. games as professional defeated a horse over 100 yards by 19.6 yards. Owens outfinished his opponent in 9.9 sec.

Hermogenes of Xanthos, Asia Minor, by winning eight times, A. D. 81-89, in the stade-race, diaulos and race in armour got the title: « Hippos ». horse. Paus. VI. 13. 3.

The famous athletes of Kroton, South-Italy, were the best sprinters for at least one century, 588-480 B. C. Once they triumphed completely: the first seven to finish were representatives of the city. Strabon: *Geogr.* VI. 12. p. 262.

The sprinters of Sparta obtained the Olympic wreath between 640 and 620 B. C. six times without any interruption. Sextus Julius Africanus: *Olympiadum descriptio*, ad ol. 35-40.

The Spartan Ladas, the greatest distance-runner of the ancient world obtained the crown of wild olive for his forehead in 440 B. C. After his victory — it is said — he died for the exhaustion in some hours. Between Orchomenos and Sparta a stadion was built where he used to train himself. It was called « Ladas stadion » even in Pausanias. time II. cent. A. D. Paus. VIII. 12. 5.

Lasthenes of Theba winner probably in the dolichos i. e. long distance race, 404 B. C., competed against a racing horse between Karoneia and Theba, about 30 km., and reached the goal as first. Diodorus XIV. 10. 5.

Chionis of Sparta in the short foot-races seven times winner, 668-656 B. C., took part in the pentathlon too. It is recorded that he once made a distance of 52 feet, i. e. 16,66 m., in the broad jump, without having won the pentathlon. Jul. Afr. to the 29th Olymp.

At the 177. Olympia, 72 B. C., all the six equestrian events were won by Eleans. Phlegon: *Fragm.*

In the history of the Olympic games Kyniska of Sparta, sister of king Agesilaos was the first woman who was decorated with the Olympic wreath. She won it in two successive Olympic Games 360 and 376 B. C. in the four horse chariot race. Plutarch: *Agesilaos* 20.

In the seventy-seventh games (472) B. C., so many competitors took part, that the pankration reached for into the night. Owing

Nurmi, in possession of 9 Olympic championships got the complimentary title: The running-machine.

Czechoslovakia's great distance runner, Zatopek, Nurmi's possible successor, the Olympic champion in 1948 of 10 000 metres has too a pet-name: « Whirlwind ».

In London, 1908, the individual competition of the miniature rifle shooting at 50 and 100 yards was a marvellous British triumph, the first 9 places being taken by representatives of the United Kingdom.

Sweden's series in the modern pentathlon was unbroken at five games between 1912-1932.

The struggle of struggles was fought at the Swedish Olympia in Stockholm between the French Bouin and the Finnish Kohlemainen at the 5 000 metres flat. In the peerless duel Kohlemainen ranked first but only by a tenth of a second. Bouin lost his life in World War I. on the battlefield. Grateful posterity gave his name to one of the stadions in Paris.

Dorando, the tragic-fated Marathon-runner in London 1908 having turned professional showed his outstanding qualities in Rosario, Argentine, in 1910 against a trotting horse over a distance of 5 English meiles. Dorando proved his superiority by winning in 27 min. 43 sec. He ran in quite freshly while the horse was hardly able to stand on its feet.

Legendre, U. S. A., started at the pentathlon in the VII. Ol. Games, Paris. In the broad-jump he broke the world-record with a leap of 776 cm.; in the pentathlon-event he got only the bronzemedal. Legendre was not even entered for the special broad-jumping contest, which was won by his country-fellow De Hart Hubart only by 744,5 metres.

At the IX. Ol., Amsterdam, five of the eight gymnastic events went to Switzerland.

In the new era Miss Cooper, G. Britain, won the first Olympic championship. She became a double Olympic winner in lawn-tennis, single women and mixed double, at Paris, 1900.

The wrestling contest in the « Middle Weight A » at the V. games, Stockholm, 1912, between Max Klein, Russia, and A. Asikainen,

to this fact the period of the contest-days was extended from one to three. Paus. V. 9. 3.

Ikkos of Tarentum, South-Italy, won the Olympic olive-wreath in pentathlon, 476 B. C. Later he became one of the best coaches in Greece. Paus. VI. 10. 5.

Straton of Alexandria as youngster incessantly suffered from his sick-liver. He was advised to train himself in gymnastics. On following the advice he soon became the best athlete of his age and winning in Olympia, 68 B. C., the wrestling and pankration on the same day he got the proud epithet: « Successor of Herakles », Aelianus IV. 15.

Krison of Himera, Sicily, the triple victor in stade-race, 448-40 B. C., is praised by Plato because of his austerity in training. Plato: *Leges* VIII. 7.

Finland, lasted no less than 11 hours carried on under a burning sun with a short pause for refreshments every half hour. This struggle — won by Klein — is one of the greatest proofs of unconquerable energy and endurance in the history of sports and shows the value of the Olympic championship. Bergvall: *The fifth Olympiad* 1913, p. 763.

In honour of Alvin Kränzlein, the preeminent all round athlete the American National Anthem was played four times at the second Ol. games. The outstanding athlete became a very expert coach and he was elected by Germany to manage the VI. Olympics planned at Berlin 1916.

Karoly Takacs as sublieutenant belonged to the best Hungarian shots, when during manouevres 1938, in consequence of an explosion he lost his right arm. After his recovery he began to train his left arm and owing to his endurance, energy, and strong will he won not only the Olympic laurel at Bisley in the Rapid Fire Pistol event at 50 metres in 1948 but set up a new worldrecord too with a total of 60 /580. After his marvellous success he was promoted as captain.

The Greek Louis, the first winner in the Marathon-race, 1896, prepared himself for the competition by fasting and praying and spent the last night before icons among lighted candles.  
Coubertin: *Mémoires olympiques*, p. 40.

These examples may prove too that the high Olympic spirit will be — eternal.

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