

PARALLELS

between the Ancient and the Modern Olympic Games

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(See artikel I in *Bulletin* Nr. 19.)

Olympia, the undying pride of all Greeks was the birthplace of classical sport, religious centre of Zeus cult and the place of the Olympic Games for about 12 centuries, but the preparatory work, the organisation of the Games took place in the city of Elis, a distance of 55 km from Olympia, in the so-called Hellanodikeon, beginning at about 576 B. C. Pausanias VI. 24,3.

Iphitos, who is said to have renewed the Olympic Games in 776 B.-C., was an Elean, king of Elis. Paus. V. 4. 5.

Early, at about the revival of the Games by Iphitos Ekecheiria i. e. Sacred Truce was established. Its substance was: when the Games were announced, stopping of the hostilities among the different tribes usually envious of each-other, cultivation of brotherhood and comradeship. By the Eleans, leaders of the Games it was formed as follows: «You should abstain from war and foster friendship.» *Eusebius Chronica* I. 192.

Herodes Atticus, the great benefactor of the ancient Greek world built an aqueduct at Olympia that had to supply the Sacred Grove, the Altis with good drinking water. It benefited the spectators who suffered very much from thirst in this tropical country (cf. *Aelianus* XIV. 18.). The grateful city of Elis who managed the Games for centuries, erected for his honour his statue in the Exedra, in the artistic adorned central structure of the water system. Herodes rebuilt also the obsolete stadia at Athens and Delphi. Philostratus, *Vita sophistarum*, p. 550.

At the Olympic Games not only the competitors, officials, relatives, pilgrims appeared, but it was regarded as the best occasion also for the merchants to buy and sell the goods of their country. Cf. Mercatus Olympiæ i. e. Olympic fair. Justinus: *Hist. Philippicæ* XIII. 5.

The Spartan Chionis, one of the most celebrated Olympians of the ancient Games, seven times winner, took only dried figs for nourishment. Jul. Afr. *Olympiadum descriptio* ad. ol. 28.

Up to the present the Modern Olympic Games have been celebrated at nine cities. In 1919 Lausanne was selected as the spiritual centre of the Games. Coubertin: *Mem. Olymp.*, p. 155.

Coubertin, the founder of the Mod. Olympic Games settled at Lausanne during World War I. and also lies buried there.

Edström, President of the I. O. C. expressed the idea permeating the London Games 1948 as follows: « In my visits to the Olympic venues and camps I found everywhere young athletes meeting in comradeship and making ties of friendship. These, I am sure, will remain all their lives, and will one day, I hope, help to create the brotherhood of man which is so necessary for the peace of the world ». *Off. Report*, p. 6.

George Averoff, the Greek born citizen of Alexandria, knowing that the General Committee of the I. Ol. Games at Athens had struggled against almost insuperable money-difficulties, undertook the restoration of the Stadium of Herodes Atticus. For this purpose he gave a sum of 920 000 Drachmas, about 60 000 dollars. When the first — or resuming the chronological order of the ancient times: the 294th. Games were opened, the stadium shone from the glaring marble of the mount of Pentelic. The Greeks were also at this time grateful and erected a statue of Pentelic marble to the « second » restorer and benefactor of the stadion in front of its entrance.

The II.-III. Olympic Games of the new era were arranged in connection with World-Exhibitions. It has not been proved to be a sound idea because the Games were considered by the laymen only as side shows. Thus the ideal content of the Games — so brilliant at the inauguration of the mod. Ol. Games at Athens — almost entirely disappeared.

Voigt, Olympic victor in the five-mile run, London 1908, is said to have been the only vegetarian among the 2059 competitors participating the Games. Cook: *International Sport*, London 1910, p. 233.

At the Olympic Games also boys were allowed to compete. Their age-limit seems to have been between 17 and 20. The discretion of the judges sometimes stretched the lower limit: so Damiskos of Messene (368 B. C.) was only 12 years old when he won the wreath in the stade race for boys. Paus. VI. 2. 10.

Pentathlon for boys first saw the light in 638 B. C. but the wisdom of the Eleians cancelled it immediately: they found that kind of competition harmful to growing constitutions. Plutarch: *Quaest. conv.* II. 2 13.

Eupolos of Thessaly bribed his three opponents in 388 B. C. to allow him the wreath for boxing. It was the first example of corruption at Olympia! All the four were fined by the judges: their country had to pay a considerable sum and from this money six bronze statuettes of Zeus — the so-called Zanes — were erected outside the entrance to the Stadion. Their inscriptions proclaimed for centuries that victory is not attainable at Olympia with money but only with speed of foot, and strength of body. Paus. V. 21, 2-4.

Phlegon, author of a Greek Olympic Register in the second century B. C. enumerating the crowned Olympians in 72. B. C. named two distancers: Hypsikles of Sikyon and a Roman one, Gaios as winners. As far as we are informed, this was the only event when two runners reached the goal at the same time i. e. the heat was qualified as dead. Some scholars — as Corsini, Rutgers, Scheibel — were of the belief that such a result could not have occurred. We can easily imagine it though it should be remarked that the place quoted by the patriarch Photios *Bibl. cod. XCVI. 83. b.* is somewhat mutilated.

In the new era the Dutch girl Den Ouden was fourteen years of age, when she scored two silver medals at Los Angeles. The American Margi Gestring was on the right side of fourteen and yet she could take first in the springboard diving in 1936.

Throwing competitions in discus, putting the weight and javelin with both the « right and left hand » were for the first time introduced at Stockholm in 1912, but the so-called « ambidexterity » could not gain ground on the Olympic programme and was abolished.

At the III. Olympiad, St.-Louis 1904, without any doubt, the marathon run was the most interesting and also exciting competition. Fred Lorz, one of the American athletes, was ahead till about the 15 km; getting cramp gave up the contest and took a car. Recovering, after the 30,5 km got off the car, continued running, got ahead of the leading Hicks, his countryman and entered the stadium as first. His arrival was a real triumph for his compatriots, because it happened for the first time that an American athlete won this event. When Hicks finished in second place a few minutes later, the fraud came out, the dishonest athlete was disqualified and the American Athl. Ass. excluded him from the ranks of its athletes.

Tie is not unknown in the modern Olympic Games either. At Stockholm, 1912, the Swedish Ahlgren and the Finnish Böhling fought for the gold medal. All their tricks were unsuccessful and neither of them was able to win, though their combat lasted for about nine hours. « As neither man would give in to his adversary » — say the *Official Report* — there was nothing else to be done than do declare both men winners of a second prize, a result which after such fine work, could not but be regretted. » But the judges would have been right in deciding the contrary, i.e. as neither of the contestants lost, there was nothing else to be done than to declare both men winners of the first prize! This happened at Berlin, 1936, in the weight lifting, light-weight. Robert Fein, Austria, and Mohammed Ahmed Mesbach, Egypt, equally scored in the world record total of 342,5 kilos. According to the rules of the Int. Weight Lifting Fed. the victory had to go to the competitor whose body-weight was lighter. After the weighing showed that their weight was the same, both were declared — Olympic victors. Cf. *Official Report, Amtlicher Bericht, II.*, p. 710. The American Olympic Committee's Report is erroneous when writing: « ... the victory and first place went to the Egyptian because of his lighter body weight », p. 290.

Arrchachion of Phigaleia, Arkadia, the famous pankratiast was victorious at two Games in succession, 572-568 B.-C. He appeared at Olympia for the third time, in 564, too. Also then he got the victor's wreath, but only after his death. His opponent strangled him both with his hands and legs. The unfortunate Arrchachion to free himself twisted one of his rival's toes, who in consequence of this counter-attack, gave up the struggle but too late: Arrchachion died at that very moment. The judges crowned his body and the grateful native town erected to the memory of his endurance a statue both at home and at Olympia. Philostratus *Gymnast.* 21.

Athletes who won the wreath both in wrestling and in the pankration on the same day, got the distinguished title of « Successor of Herakles ». The hero was said to have won both these disciplines on the occasion of the first « mythical » Olympic Games — according to the Roman historian, Velleius Paterculus in 1221 B.-C. — and on the same day. During a period of 250 years there were only seven athletes who achieved this success. Velleius Paterculus: *Historiae Romanae* c. 2.

Polites, of Keramos, Asia Minor, in A. D. 212 captured the heaviest event: the long distance, the so called dolichos, 4614.5 m., then the stade-race and finally the diaulos at the same day. Paus. VI. 13. 3-4.

Milon of Kroton, the greatest athlete of the Greek world after winning in wrestling six times entered at the Ol. stadium also for the seventh time to get the Olympic laurel. At that time — being defeated by his countryman — he was at least 41 years old. Paus-VI. 14. 5.

The first datum concerning discusthrow remained in an epigram written about Phayllus

An almost unbearable heat prevailed on the day of the marathon race at Stockholm, 1912, so that many of the competitors got ill. The Portuguese Francisco was in a good position when he was struck down by sunstroke and had to be taken to hospital, where he died next morning. The highminded leaders of the Swedish athletics helped Lazaro's family with the considerable sum of 14 000 Swedish crowns (3850 dollars). *Off. Rep.*, p. 389-390.

The first and so far the only athlete is the Esthonian Kristian Palusalu winning both the wrestling and the catch as catch can — which is nearly a copy of the pankration — each in the heavy weight in Berlin 1936.

Alfred Hajôs, Hungary, distinguished himself in swimming at Athens, 1896, first winning the 100 m free style, then with an interval of half an hour took the laurels of the 1200 metres event too. It seems to be noteworthy that Hajos is the only one amongst the Olympic champions who gained an event at the ast competition (architecture) too. (Paris 1924.)

Also Nurmi's performance at those Games belonged to the most outstanding results ever achieved in the history of sport: he finished and won both the 1500 and 5000 m running with an interval of an hour and a half equally by Olympic records.

At London, 1948, in wrestling, heavyweight class, free style, the Hungarian Gyula Bobis carried off the premier honours. Bobis was in his 39th year and father of five children. According to Lt. Col. F.-A.-M. Webster, London, Thomas-W. Green of Great Britain was 49 years of age and the father of four children when captured the 50 000 metres walk in Los Angeles. In the « *Report of the Olympic Com. 1932* » we find: « Thirty nine year old Th.-W. Green won the gruelling walk. », p. 112. Thus the best Sportlexikon of the world, the Swedish Nordisk Familjeboks Sportlexikon vol. III., p. 803 knows it too. It was an outstanding achievement also at that age. Webster: *Some prospects for the Olympic Endurance Tests.* London 1947.

The first victor of this classic event at the Mod. Ol. Games, Athens 1896, the American

of Kroton, the pupil of Milon. (Anth. Graeca App. III. 28.) According to that he threw 28.17 meters. Phayllus must have been a famous athlete: he won the pentathlon twice in Delphi early in the V. century and once the stade-race. The scholion to Aristoph. Acharn. v. 213 tells us — as opposed to Paus. X. 9.2. — that he was double winner in Olympia too in the pentathlon and in the rae in armour.

There were many families in Greece in which the Olympic wreath was hereditary. Hippo-sthenes of Sparta became six times victor in wrestling, 632, 624-608 B.-C., his son Hetoimokles was five-times victorious. Diagoras of Rhodes earned world-wide reknown in boxing, 464 B.-C. Also his sons Damagetos, pankration 452-448, Akusilaos (boxing 448), Dorieus pankration (432-424), and grandson Eukles (boxing 396), Peisirodos (boxing 388 B.-C.), continued winning at Olympia. Thus that family was celebrated for about 3/4 of a century winning seven times the wreath of olives. They immortalized the name of their family. Paus. VI. .7 1-4.

Rulers and leaders of the Greek states regarded the gymnastic exercises, athletics, sports as ancillary to war, i. e. its suitable preparatory means. On the other hand well-trained athletes, sportsmen, victors at the sacred games did their best when their land needed their help. Thus it his to be understood that some of the Olympic victors lost their leifes on the battlefield. Timasitheos of Delphi was double-victor in pankration about 520 and 516 B.-C. He exceled many times in war too till he was killed in the Akropolis of Athen in 507. Paus. VI. 8. 6. Eualkidas of Elis, double-winner in boxing for boys, expired at Ephesos, Asia Minor, as leader of Eretria during the revolt of the Ionians in 499. *Herodot.* V. 102.

Garrett scored 29.15 m. In the modern era to him went the honour of being the first double-victor winning also the weight throwing.

At the modern Ol. Games there is only one family, the Finnish Järwinens that can boast of such honour. Werner Järwinen, the father was decorated with the gold medal winning the Greek-style discus at the Greek Olympic Games at Athens in 1906. Also at London (1908) he was placed third in this event. His youngest son, Matti Henrik, triumphed in the javelin in Los Angeles with a new Ol. record of 72.71 m, while Akilles placed second in the decathlon both in Amsterdam and in Los Angeles, here by 37 points over his own world record. Also Kaarlo was outstanding in the shot-put.

Julius Beresford, Great Britain, was member of the fours outriggers that represented Great Britain at Stockholm in 1912 and placed second. His son Jack Beresford is the most successful rower of the modern Ol. Games attending five Games, 1920-1936, and winning the gold medal three times single sculls 1924, coxwainless fours 1920, double sculls 1936, and two silver ones, single sculls 1920, eights 1928.

Sonja Hennie, Norway, undoubtedly the greatest representative of the women's figure skating held the title of Ol. champion three times in succession, 1928-1936. It is perhaps interesting to record that her father William captured the 100 km world championship road race for amateurs at Antwerp in 1894, in 2h. 35 m. 53,4 secs.

In modern times we know of a real hekatomb of such heros. The sad roll of them includes a series of outstanding Olympians; among them the most famous were: Walker, the magnificent sprinter of South Africa, 1908, 100 m, Halswelle, the British lieutenant, 1908, 400 m, then the world record holder of the one hour running for 16 years, the French Bouin, 1912, 5000 m II.; they fell at the beginning of World War I. while the remarkable German runner Braun, 1912, 400 m II, etc., followed them in 1918.

During the World War II. captain Charles Paddock, U. S. A., the fastest man of his time, 1920, 100 m I., Höckert, the first-rate athlete of Finnland, 1936, 5000 m, were glorified. The fine Polish distance-runner, Kusocinsky, 1932, 10 000 m, and the marvelous Hungarian fencer Petschauer, 1928-1932, sabre team I, suffered the martyr's death. *Their names and memory will be for ever honoured by every sincere friend of noble competition.*