

## The VIIth Central American Games

Last March in Mexico City were held the VII Central American Games, the oldest of the Regional Games held under the sanction of the International Olympic Committee. Our senior colleague from Mexico, Marte-R. Gomez was chairman of the Committee which organized and staged these Games and it was due to his knowledge of Olympic rules and regulations and his expert personal supervision of this festival that they were such an outstanding success. This was the first great international event held in the

beautiful new stadium in Mexico City, one of the finest in the world. It is located in the wonderful University City just built to house the oldest University in the Western Hemisphere.

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*A. Brundage.*

The VIIth "Juegos Deportivos Centro-Americanos y del Caribe" were held in Mexico City, Capital of the Mexican Republic, from the 5th. to the 20th. day of March, this year. In the history of amateur sport

and the Olympic Movement these Games are very important, and this is perhaps the best moment to emphasize this importance. They were the first Games of a regional character organized under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee at the direct suggestion of President Count Baillet-La Tour and they have served as a school for countries new to the world of sport which otherwise would not have participated for many years in the Olympic Games, and as a training ground for young athletes who, without the opportunity more modest but irreplaceable of the Regional Games, would never had attained an Olympic level.

It was in Paris and under the auspices of the President of the International Olympic Committee that the idea of organizing the Central American Games for the benefit of young athletes from Mexico, the countries of the Caribbean and the nations of Central America, had its origin.

In the year of 1926 the athletes of only three countries participated : Mexico, Cuba and Guatemala, and they competed in the stadia and sport grounds provided by Mexico, which, certainly, do not resemble in the least the magnificent installations now available in the capital city of the Mexican Republic.

Only 336 athletes competed in these first Games and only 7 events were included in the program.

In spite of these modest beginnings, the Juegos Deportivos Centro-Americanos y del Caribe have had a brilliant career. The II were held at Havana, in 1930 ; the III at San Salvador in 1935 ; the IV at Panama in 1938 ; the V at Barranquilla, Colombia, in 1946, and the VI at Guatemala in 1950.

To the three countries taking part in the first Games there have been added : Panama, El Salvador, Colombia, Puerto-Rico and Jamaica in 1930 ; Costa-Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua in 1935 ; Venezuela in 1938 ; Curacao, the Dominican Republic and Trinidad in 1946 and Haiti in 1950. The Juegos Deportivos Centro-Americanos y del Caribe have thus become a great festival of sport for the youth of all the Central American and Caribbean Countries.

If we pay attention to the *records* and observe the number of events in the program, we may realize immediately the vast progress that has been made in these Regional Games, which were, among other things, a model for the organization of the Pan American Games for the Western Hemisphere in its entirety, which are to be held, for the second time, also in the City of Mexico next year.

In 1926, for example, only seven sports were included in the program, namely : athletics, basketball, baseball, fencing, swimming, tennis and shooting ; in 1930 the events reached the number of twelve ; in 1935 they were augmented to fourteen ; in 1938 the total was eighteen, and in 1946 we find the greatest number of events ever included in a Central American Games

program, namely, twenty two ; in 1950 the number 'descended to eighteen,' and in 1954 there were twenty. Nevertheless, if we take into consideration the fact that in 1946 — for instance — there were included chess, billiards and softball, it is easy to understand that the twenty sports staged in Mexico are the fundamental ones, and from this particular point of view, the Central American Games have already attained a status of full maturity and stability in the matter of the sports to be included.

As to the records, the progress has also been noteworthy and constant: In 1930, at Havana, 14 records in track athletics and 5 in swimming were surpassed, and successively :

1935,	11	records	in	athl.	and	5	in	swimming
1938,	14	»	»	»	»	8	»	»
1946,	16	»	»	»	»	10	»	»
1950,	16	»	»	»	»	7	»	»
1954,	19	»	»	»	»	9	»	»

To have an adequate idea of this progress, it is necessary to add that the records are reaching toward the Olympic level, although they do not equal, as yet, the Olympic ones ; and that many athletes, coming to these Central American competitions with their laurels still fresh from their Olympic victories, found themselves matched against courageous and competent contenders, and more than once suffered defeat.

The circumstance that Mexico has been, on this occasion, the grave of 28 Central American records, constitutes by itself a well deserved praise for the good technical conditions of the several stadia and sport grounds ; it is also a complete answer (fortunately for Mexico) to the doubts expressed some times about the difficulties, from a sport point of view, of contending at the altitude of the City of Mexico (about 7340 feet above sea level), considered by some unfavorable for the visiting athletes who dwell nearer sea level. The confirmation that the Olympic Games may be held normally, not only at sea level but at an altitude of 7000-odd feet, serves to strengthen the expression adopted as a motto by the International Olympic Committee, and thence, by the Olympic movement in the whole world : *Citius, Altius, Fortius* ».

Since I was honored with the Presidency of the Organizing Committee for the VII Juegos Deportivos Centro-Americanos y del Caribe, I am not qualified to comment upon my personal work : but I feel it my duty to praise the efforts of the brilliant group of collaborators-managerial and technical — who shared with me the organization of the Games, and left, (independently of the unavoidable stains in all things human) a very valuable lesson from which Mexico shall undoubtedly profit, for the organizing of the Pan American Games, near at hand.

Above all, falls upon me the pleasant duty of expressing the highest testimony of gratitude amateur sport owes the authorities

who sponsored the VII Juegos Deportivos Centro-Americanos y del Caribe. In the first place, the President of the Mexican Republic, the Hon. Adolfo Ruiz Cortines ; in the second place, the three Honorary Vicepresidents : Mr. Angel Carvajal, attorney-at-law, Secretary of Public Education ; Mr. Antonio Carrillo Credit, and Mr. Ernesto P. Uruchurtu, attorney-at-law, Head of the Department of the Federal District. They were the principal sponsors of this great sport festival, attended by 1,246 male and 294 female athletes, all of them animated by the most genuine spirit of goodsportsmanship extremely avid of success, but equally ready to recognize the merit of the winners.

The presence of eminent personalities in the field of International Sport, enhanced these VII Games. The Honorable Avery Brundage, President of the International Olympic Committee, indefatigable leader of amateur sport, attended the inaugural ceremony, inspected with utmost care all the installations, was present at several meetings, and honored many athletes by presenting the medals, symbols of their victories. Another personality present — together with the two Mexican Members of the International Olympic Committee, i. e., General Jesus Clark Flores and the undersigned — was Architect Miguel A. Mœnck, Member of the Executive Commission of the I.O.C. In the different branches of sport, other persons of high significance were also there representing the International Federations.

Only a few more details, in order to show the great heights attained by these VII

Games of Central America and the Caribbean. The athletes were lodged at the "University City" of Mexico, one of the most ambitiously conceived and accomplished architectural projects in the world. Their meals were served in the building of the new "Cafeteria", in the same University City. In no other set of international Games had the athletes a better conditioned dining room ; and the food, prepared according to the best dietetic standards, left nothing to be desired.

The dormitories of the University were used as a village for the competitors and officials and the athletes and their coaches had at their disposition there several assembly halls, service of Mail, Telegraph, Telephone, Bank, and so forth. All the area of the Central American Village was connected by telephone and loud speaker, so that it was possible to cage anyone by means of a in whatever place he happened to be megaphone.

Finally, the principal judges and officials were specialists in their fields, and none of them was a native of the host Country, so that Mexico could leave well established her traditional hospitality and her exemplary impartiality.

Should these praises be considered excessive, I hope that my colleagues of the International Olympic Committee, and in general all persons connected with the olympic movement who may happen to read this short account, will grant me their indulgence, taking into consideration that my pen has been moved not so much by a narrow nationalism, as by a broad and generous olympic spirit.