

The memorable

Olympic Days of Cortina d'Ampezzo
come to life again in the Film

« VERTIGINE BIANCA »

by Vito RIGASSI "Semaine Sportive"

(This article was written at the end of February, the film is showing now, Ed.)

"May the Olympic Games of the future be held in joy and in concord so that the Olympic Flame may go on burning for centuries for the benefit of a better and saner world."

These were the parting words pronounced by Mr. Avery Brundage, President of the International Olympic Committee, in the speech which brought the VIIth Winter Olympic Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo to a

close on Sunday February 5th 1956. Under the glow of a spectacular display of fireworks, the dark background of the wooded hills appeared and vanished in turn, in the bright red glow of a setting sun which tinted the peaks of the Dolomites a lovely shade of copper red. Friendly handshakes and beating hearts marked the farewell of a throng of people, the great manifestation is ended but its remembrance remains still vivid.

Yet is there a better way of remembering an experience lived, loved and appreciated

to the full than by a film ? By this means, thousands of people who were not present will be able to see at close quarters young people fighting for the highest ideals : competitors will at last have the opportunity to see themselves in action, and thus be able to judge and appreciate their own efforts, also to detect and correct certain errors which occurred in their performances. For a long time now, the International Olympic Committee has recognized the importance of the film in the field of sport. In view of this, it has drawn UP a clause n° 39 of the general rules of the Olympic Games, stipulating that the Organizing Committee must make the necessary arrangements for having a "complete record of the final events at the Games by means of photography and movies in order that they should live for ever". The International Olympic Committee also stipulates that this taking of films and photographs must in no way interfere with the good running order of the events". It is for this reason that the Organizing Committee has the right to allocate the exclusivity of the rights to a qualified film producing company for turning a full size film of the official version of the Games.

In 1948, on the occasion of the Winter Olympic Games in St-Moritz, the Organizing Committee also intended to grant the exclusive rights of the official Olympic film to a qualified firm. For various reasons these rights were eventually shared by various firms, this almagamation and collaboration proved, one must admit, a great success and gave excellent result, notably in the case of the collaboration between a Swedish and a Swiss firm. But in the last 8 years, the film production has improved and grown by leaps and bounds, especially in Italy ! It was therefore quite natural that the Organizing Committee of Cortina, anxious to avoid any inconvenience to the competitors by an excessive number of technical operators, opted in favour of the exclusive propriety rights for the filming of the Games which have just taken place at the foot of the Dolomites. It is fair to add that this was subject to a free and open competition. If finally, the exclusive rights were allocated to the National Production Company "Luce", it was on account of the glorious past record of this firm which possesses the most up to date technical equipment. A real cinema city had to be

created in Cortina with an armada of technicians, operators, an helicoptere, a plane, a fleet of lorries, jeeps, specially equiped cars, a recording van, a sound tuning car, "Rallenties" "Tyansfocators," etc.

The official film of the Cortina Games will bear the title of *White Vertige*. As it has not yet been released it is impossible for us to criticize it *a priori*. But on several occasions, we saw the operators at work on the bobsleigh run, along the magnificent springboard "Italia", in the Olympic Ice and Snow stadias, or in the woods which the marathon skiers traversed at top-speed. We watched closely the producer with his close collaborators, and we were struck by the spirit of "team work" which pervaded throughout this team composed of sports and mountain lovers. The natural beauty of the surroundings made a perfect background to the staging of the various events. We saw Mario Fantin, the intrepid operator of K2 perched on a turret in the vicinity of the spring-board "Italia" who, in order to take a better close-up of the skiers as they shoot forward in their decisive leap, placed himself in this precarious position. But we noticed best of all busy man moving near the cameras, issuing sharp well timed orders and who gave the impression of living the happiest moments of his life : I mean the producer Giorgio Ferroni, the main-spring of *White Vertige*.

As we watched him standing on the top of Tofana, steeped in the beauty of the landscape in front of him, we were under the impression that Giorgio Ferroni was being inspired by Pierre de Coubertin, the genial Renovator of the Olympic Games of ancient Greece when he wrote in 1913 in praise of the mountains the following : "High above, and at the very of the summits, there pervade purity and peace. The peaks stand out against a vivid blue sky and the contrast of The snow and the sun evoke the image of an unreal world. Mankind is deeply moved when he discovers a new world. Solitude reigns everywhere ; let your skis bear you forward and leap into space while you listen to their cheerful sound in the snow, enjoy to the full a sensation as delicate as it is rare : your arduous effort has brought you to an oasis of peace and poesy."

Is the film *White Vertige* going to recall these sentiments for us ? It is greatly hoped so !