

This Day and Age: ‘ The Olympics ’

Six interviews given by Roger Bannister

On the eve of the Games of the XVIIth Olympiad — or more exactly, in October and November 1956 — the British athlete Roger Bannister gave, on the program of London Calling of the British Broadcasting Corporation, a series of interviews with eminent British sporting personalities about the

Olympic Games. A Selection of six of these have been kindly communicated to us by the Marquess of Exeter Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee for the benefit of our readers. We take here the opportunity to thank London Calling of the B.B.C. to have allowed us to publish them.

I. The spirit of the Olympic Games

A conversation between Professor Gilbert Murray O.M. and Roger Bannister

Bannister : I have with me today, Professor Gilbert Murray, Britain and possibly the world's most distinguished classical scholar, who is now in his ninetieth year. And he is, very interestingly, an Australian, which of course is relevant since the Olympic Games will be held in Melbourne.

Murray : Yes, I am very proud of that.

Bannister : The ancient Olympic Games were held from 776 B.C. to 393 A.D., a span of nearly a thousand years.

Murray : I think the date 776 is a sort of guess. It's the first time they can get any record. But it must have been going on much earlier than then.

Bannister : Was it originally a festival in connection with the harvest and the crops ?

Murray : More or less. It was one of these Eniotos Festivals. Eniotos means a year or a definite period. And as the early Greeks were, of course, an agricultural people, there's one constant anxiety : you have the spring and the summer and the harvest, and then that's cut, and the earth is quite bare and there is nothing to eat — will it ever come to life again ? So the great excitement is whether there will be a new king or a new Zeus or a New Year god, as it were. And then come innumerable myths all of the same form — that there is a person who is born of the Zeus, of the sky god, and a human virgin, and you recognize him as the son of god.

Bannister : Why if the festival was annual were they held every four years ?

Murray : That must have been a much later correction. They wanted to get a circle, you see, which was complete. Namely, a sun cycle and a moon cycle. And they worked away at it with very primitive algebra and they thought that they got a proper cycle in a set of four years. They got roughly within some minutes.

Bannister : Was the prize for an Olympic victor a crown of wild olives ?

Murray : It was still a crown of wild olives and our authorities differ slightly between two things. One says that's to show that he is vegetation, that he is the new life of the year. The others say that it's the great distinction of the Olympic victory, is that it is of no value, it's glory simply.

Bannister : Do you think that the honours were shared fairly equally among the city States of Greece ?

Murray : I think so ; people came from all over Greece, and there was that very interesting thing, there was a truce everywhere. And if two States were at war, nevertheless competitors from any of those States could come through quite peacefully.

Bannister : What would you pick out as the most important ideal of the Games at their best ? Was it the magic of victory ?

Murray : I think it was this curious idea which is the Roman *virtus*, which means goodness, quality. It was to find out who is the best man, or how you could be your best. The love of excellence was the great thing, wherever it might lie. And then what did goodness really consist in ? First, it's the very simple race ; then there are other things, there are complicated athletic competitions ; and then people thought what about intellectual competitions ; why shouldn't poets come and recite, and so poets came and recited. We've got two very interesting Olympiads orations, one by Isocrates and one by Lycias. When a man had a great political idea, a great public idea, which he wanted to put forward to all Greece, he would go and recite it at Olympia.

Bannister : Are you sorry that that has vanished from the Olympic Games ? Or do you think it's impractical in the world today ?

Murray : I think it's not practical. What you do now is to advertise.

Bannister : There is one question — the original race run by Pheidippides to Athens took place in the 4th or 5th century. So presumably the marathon race was never a feature of the ancient Olympic Games.

Murray : No, oh! no, that was a special event, a very remarkable event.

Bannister : It's odd that the event which most people associate in their minds most with the ancient Olympic Games should never have taken place at the ancient Olympic Games.

Could you describe some of the factors which changed in the ancient Olympic Games ? Gradually they became discredited. Why was that ?

Murray : Well they became bigger and bigger and consequently money mattered more and more. Expense mattered. And when expense comes in, vulgarity comes in. And so that...yes, Cicero once... somebody thinks he's gone to the Olympic Games and he thinks: "Goodness, good gracious... I wouldn't go".

Bannister : Did the victors win prizes of money ?

Murray : Not from the Games. But I think it would lead to other things. There are two or three passages in which people complain of the undue attention that is given to athletes.

Bannister : Why do you think Theodosius, the Christian emperor, abolished the Games ?

Murray : I suppose it was associated too much with all the old paganism and it was just a great pagan festival.

Bannister : The Bishop of Pennsylvania when he spoke in 1908 before the London Olympic Games, said that the important thing is not so much to have been *victorious*, but to have taken part. This is quite a modification of the Greek ideal. What do you feel of that change ?

Murray : I don't know that there's anything in that. Of course to have competed in the Olympic Games you must have been pretty good. I think originally victory was important. You wanted to find the victor — you find the man who was really to be the king of the new year.

Bannister : Well, you've said it was important and I'm sure it still is. Thank you very much.

II. 1912, Stockholm ; and 1920, Antwerp

A conversation between The Rt. Hon. Philip Noel-Baker M.P. and Roger Bannister

Bannister : I have with me today the Right Hon. Philip Noel-Baker, one of Britain's most distinguished Olympians. He has every qualification; he was second in the 1500 Metres in the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp. Eight years before that he'd run in the final of the same event in the Stockholm Olympic Games of 1912 and in 1952, he was the Commandant of the British team at Helsinki. Since then Mr. Noel-Baker, who is a Member of the House of Commons, has gone on to enjoy a distinguished career in British political life. I would like you to tell us something of the Games of 1912 and 1920. First of all, what sort of people competed in those early Games ?

Noel-Baker : Well, they were mostly Club members from the different athletic clubs round the country, with a sprinkling of University people who in 1912, did not take the matter as seriously as they should have done.

Bannister : You yourself were one of the few competitors who competed intervening the span of the Great World War, in which you were working in the Ambulance Brigades, both in France, and in Italy. What effect would you say the 1914-1918 War had on the competitors of the Games ?

Noel-Baker : Well, a good many people began to take athletics quite seriously in the Forces during the War. Certainly, after the War, the University people played a much bigger part and with their great facilities at Oxford and Cambridge and their good trainers, they played their leading part in British participation in the Games.

Bannister : What are the personalities you remember most from the Games ? would you rank Kolehmainen as one of the greatest ?

Noel-Baker : Oh ! I think Kolehmainen was the first great distance-runner in the Games and the first great Finn. I remember a charming story about him. The Finns had a dressing room next to ours and we saw them every day and as he came in from his first victory in the Five Thousand Metres over Bouin. I shook him warmly by the hand and through a translator, said that it was magnificent, and through the translator he said to me: "I would almost rather not have won than see the Russian flag go up for my victory."

Bannister : That's a very great reminder to me of the Games at Helsinki when again, there was this Finnish-Russian interplay of political significance.

Who else do you remember particularly — do you remember Hans Braun of the German Team ?

Noel-Baker : I remember Hans Braun very well because a year or two afterwards he was my clubmate in Germany when I was studying at

Munich University. We ran a lot of Relays together. He had very bad luck in the 800 Metres and was a magnificent 2nd in the Four Hundred Metres. But I think he was the greatest Middle-Distance runner before the War — the true forerunner of Harbig and Hans Braun was a very fine fellow in every way. He was a wonderful sculptor whose work ought to live and he was killed in October, 1918, in a German aeroplane.

Bannister : Most interesting perhaps to us is your part in your own races. These have been handed on to successive generations of athletes as an example of how team running should best be deployed in the Middle Distance races. When did you decide that you were going to help Strobe Jackson — the Britain's representative in the 1500 Metres in 1912 ?

Noel-Baker : Well about four or five days before the Race, he and I had a work out together — a final trial over three quarters of a mile and he was running so awfully well that I made up my mind that he was a probable winner whereas with a foot that wasn't wholly sound, without very long training, I didn't think I'd much chance myself. So I thought I'd better help him though I didn't tell him till we'd lined up for the start.

Bannister : I can imagine his reactions being told this — just as he walked up to the start. I am sure that his feeling of appreciation for your generosity must have known no bounds, because to have — a companion in a race of fourteen runners over that short distance, means everything to an athlete. Then what happened in the race itself ?

Noel-Baker : Well, he'd never run in a big race with a lot of starters before and particularly in a race of that class, so as we called up to the start, I said to him : "Jacko — you stick close to me and I'll see that we both get to the right place at the right time. And don't you try and do it ; leave it to me".

Bannister : And what was the right place ?

Noel-Baker : The right place was just before the bell. We sprinted a little sooner than the others and we just managed to get Jacko in behind the leader, who I think was Kiviat the then World record holder.

Bannister : And what did you do when you saw that Jackson had won ?

Noel-Baker : Well, I waved my arms in the air.

Bannister : Well, that was a magnificent performance, and then tell us about Albert Hill in 1920.

Noel-Baker : Well, Albert Hill was in wonderful condition. It was his fifth day of consecutive racing, and I expected him to be run out by the fifth day because he'd been through there very hot Heats of the 800 Metres but actually he had a fairly easy do in the Heat of the 1500 Metres and he came like a lion at the bell in the 1500 Metres and all I had to do was to run behind him and make sure Shields for the United States didn't get in a good position to pass him.

Bannister : In these days, I wonder whether team racing and pace-making can play such an important part ; do you think it can ?

Noel-Baker : Well, I think nowadays, it's a case of everybody looking after themselves — mainly because firstly the standard is so high that anybody in the finals, broadly speaking, has an equal chance of winning.

Bannister : Yes. As a politician, you must have had an unrivalled opportunity for assessing the effect of the international incidents which have occurred at various Olympic Games. In your opinion, is their importance vastly exaggerated ?

Noel-Baker : Well, their importance for evil, in my view, has always been a journalist's legend. I remember shortly after 1908 meeting A. J.

Balfour, later Lord Balfour, who'd been Prime Minister and he said to me : "I am against your Olympic Games : they only create trouble and ill feeling between the nations and always will." I don't think it ever was true ; whereas the positive effect on the minds of thousands of young athletes going back to their own country — immensely proud of having taken part in the Games — immensely proud of having run with the great athletes of the world — and of the friendships which they formed, and of the spirit with which all the contests were imbued, I think that has been a magnificent thing.

Bannister : I am very glad to hear you vindicate the Games in this way.

Bannister : Mr. Noel-Baker, you've certainly shown us that not only did you compete but that throughout your life, you have cherished and tried to safeguard the Olympic ideals which you believe in and which, I think, we all believe in. No one could have done more than you to uphold the Olympic Games. Thank you very much.

III. 1920, Antwerp ; 1924, Paris; 1928, Amsterdam

A conversation between Harold Abrahams and Roger Bannister

Bannister : With me in the studio is Harold Abrahams who ran for Britain in the Olympic Games at Antwerp in 1920 and at Paris in 1924 when he won the 100 metres title, incidentally being the only Englishman ever to win this particular title. He equalled then the Olympic record on three occasions. He was also captain of the British athletic team at the Games in Amsterdam. And the first question I'd like to ask him is his outstanding memory of Paavo Nurmi, what was it ?

Abrahams : Well there are so many memories of Paavo Nurmi in 1928 because he won four titles and probably could have won eight I should think, and the most astonishing performance was on one afternoon, Nurmi winning the 1500 metres in Olympic record time and an hour and a half later winning the 5000 metres also in Olympic record time.

Bannister : I know comparisons between athletes of the present day and the past are always difficult, but would you say that he was a better athlete than say Emil Zatopek ?

Abrahams : It's always difficult to compare because one likes to think one's own generation is much better than the next. I do think that Nurmi is the greatest distance runner I've ever seen — and I've seen a good many others — because he was so much better than his generation, which you can't really say of any of the modern competitors.

Bannister : Do you remember any particular incident in connection with Douglas Lowe's victory ?

Abrahams : Douglas Lowe had victories in 1924 and 1928 when the second time he became the first man ever to win the 800 metres twice. Lowe would himself, I think, say he was lucky to win in 1924 because he was still up at Cambridge and a comparative novice. By 1928 he'd become a polished athlete with a great knowledge of tactics and in that final, when he did a new Olympic record in 1928 the outstanding memory is how he dominated the whole field. He seemed to be shepherding them into running the way he wanted to run, from about third or fourth position.

Bannister : The other British runner who was thought to have very great chances in the 100 metres besides yourself was Eric Liddell, could you tell us about him ?

Abrahams : I'd like to correct one point Roger, I wasn't thought to have a great chance in the 100 metres and that was really a very great asset. I was lucky in the sense that Eric Liddell who had set up a British record the previous year, felt with his strong religious conviction that he oughtn't to run on a Sunday. Of course the final of the 100 metres was on a Sunday. But he turned his attention to the 400 metres and again the outstanding memory is of somebody who was really regarding winning a race as a tremendous experience and putting the whole of his being into his running. He had probably the worst style of any great athlete that's ever been seen.

Bannister : You have said that you considered yourself lucky that Eric Liddell was not running in the 100 metres, what is your own memory of that particular race ?

Abrahams : It's very, I think I can remember every inch of that final, but I can remember every millimetre of the semi-final. I went to Paris knowing that I was facing four expert American sprinters and really not regarding myself as having much chance of winning. In the semi-final I was left at the start and I still managed to win. Many people think that that was the best effort I ever made and they tend to say well what would have happened if you hadn't been left at the start, wouldn't you have done a better time ? My answer is no, because I produced something that I never would have produced if I hadn't been left behind.

Bannister : Were you furious with yourself for being left behind ?

Abrahams : I was furious for three seconds and then the whole of my training came to my assistance and I realized the only way I could win was by not throwing all I'd learnt in training myself to the winds.

Bannister : You say your training came to your assistance, do you regard yourself as being one of the better trained athletes in 1920 and 1924. Do you think that the general standard of training among the competitors was low ?

Abrahams : Training in 1920 of course I hardly trained at all. By 1924 I had learnt that to be any good at sprinting I had to study it as a science and I did study it very closely and I would say that I probably trained as hard as any athlete in the world in those days. Compared with modern training it would probably be laughed at.

Bannister : Were the competitors in those Games restricted to Members of universities, members of the services and were not artisans, not working people ?

Abrahams : In the United States most of them would be college people and in Great Britain we had a much higher percentage of people from universities than we do nowadays. Athletics has become much more popular in the last twenty years.

Bannister : Turning now to the 1928 Games could you tell us something of the amazing performance of Lord Burghley ?

Abrahams : It was an amazing performance because Burghley, one of the greatest athletes we've ever had, was not, I believe, naturally a great athlete, but he was from the beginning a tremendous fighter : When I saw Burghley just get through the semi-final of the 400 metres I wouldn't have given you anything for his chances in the final ; but he won that final decisively against world record holders simply because he had enormous courage when he wasn't 100 per cent fit.

Bannister : Do you remember anything else about the 1928 Games, ?

Abrahams : I remember lots of things, but I think one of the things that always comes to mind most because of this complete change in public opinion was that in the 1928 Games women appeared in athletics for the first time with a very limited programme, including the 800 metres race which has since been dropped in the Olympic Games entirely because at the finish one or two of the women athletes — and note it, the beaten athletes — collapsed, one or two of the girls cried, men have been known to cry when they've been defeated, and the Press made a tremendous sensation about it and it was dropped from the Games.

Bannister : I'd like now just to ask you if you can compare the growth of the Olympic Games in 1920 and 1924 with the growth which took place after the recent 1939 to 1945 war ?

Abrahams : In 1920 we had hardly recovered from the 1918 war at all and the Antwerp Games were really very amateurish indeed. The Americans and the Finns practically dominated those Games : The standard was low, it was lower than it was before the war. In 1948 the same is very nearly true. If you compare 1948 with 1939 you'll find that the nations haven't recovered but there was much more recovery between 1948 and 1952 than there was between 1920 and 1924.

Bannister : The Greeks used to talk about a certain magic of victory, what do you think is the importance of winning an Olympic title ?

Abrahams : I think my own good luck in winning has made an enormous difference to my whole life. I like to feel that if I had been second by 6 inches I still would have managed to achieve a number of things I've been happy to achieve, but the start given by being a victor — they don't say how much you're second by — you're second or third, the winner is outstanding in people's minds, far more importance is attached to winning that I believe ought to be attached, but that's human nature.

Bannister : We can argue of course for hours on who might have won this particular title and who might have won that, but the fact was that on that particular day in Paris on that particular track you won the 100 metres for Great Britain and even if somebody else might have won the day after that victory is yours and will remain yours for all time. That I suppose is the great attraction of athletics and particularly of the Olympics. Thank you very much indeed Harold Abrahams.

IV. 1932, Los Angeles

A conversation between Tommy Hampson and Roger Bannister

Bannister : I have with me in the studio Tommy Hampson, who won a most heartening victory for Britain in the 800 metres in the Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles in 1932. He then broke a world record and set up a new Olympic record, and was the first man to break the barrier of 1 minute 50 seconds for the 800 metres. He was a member of the team which ran 2nd in the 1600 metre relay and also beat in that event the previous world record. Mr. Hampson is now Social Relations Officer in one of our new towns, Stevenage. And I'd like to ask him first of all how did you travel to the Games ?

Hampson : Oh ! we travelled in the traditional way in those days of course by boat and by train. I think that the slower journey by boat probably gave a chance to do some training en route, and certainly wherever the transcontinental train stopped at the various wayside halts on the journey

we had an opportunity of getting out and taking at least 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour's exercise, sometimes a little longer ;

Bannister : Must have been strange to see the train stopping and lots of Olympic athletes jumping out to hop up and down and get rid of their excess energy. What effect did the distance from home have on your feelings as you competed ?

Hampson : Well, one felt rather isolated, And I think one had a feeling of competing very, very far away from home.

Bannister : That interests me very much because I know my reaction, competing in New Zealand or Australia, was one of tremendous contact with people at home who, one imagined, might be listening to broadcasts about one's races.

Hampson : Yes, I am sure it would be.

Bannister : What was the Olympic village like ?

Hampson : Oh ! this was the first village of its kind. There had been all sorts of methods used of accommodating visiting competitors in previous Games, none of them very satisfactory, and the Americans had the wonderful idea of housing all the men competitors in a complete self-contained Olympic village, with its own shops, cinema, services of various kinds, and they were able to have their own food of their own country cooked in their own dining hall and canteen.

Bannister : Did you notice that the climate affected your running.

Hampson : Undoubtedly the climate — of the western coast of America was responsible for the large number of new records which were set in the 1932 Games. It's very warm there but not oppressively so, the air tends to be a little more rarified and light than in Western Europe, and certainly, the competing conditions in the stadium owed a great deal to good climatic conditions.

Bannister : And the track itself ?

Hampson : It was the most wonderful surface I'd ever encountered up to that time, and I can only liken it in texture to a piece of satin and in resilience to a piece of rubber.

Bannister : Well, in the photographs which I have seen of your race you do appear almost to be gliding over the surface of the track. Of course these Games were the greatest that had ever been held. In the course of 26 Olympic events there were 23 new Olympic records. And I'd like to ask you whether you can pick out some of the particular personalities and events of those Games.

Hampson : One of the outstanding memories I think is of the duels between what the Americans called the Two Midnight Expresses — Eddie Tolan and Ralph Metcalfe — their two very strong, very powerfully built negro runners. Tolan won the 100 metres with Metcalfe 2nd and Tolan again won the 200 metres in which Metcalfe was 3rd.

Bannister : Did they use a photofinish to time the race for the first time then ?

Hampson : There was a form of photofinish used which was synchronized with the starting gun, but it was not the sort of mechanism which is in use nowadays. It — no results of course were taken from the — the mechanical timing.

Bannister : They still preferred to rely on human error and judgment, whatever that might be.

Hampson : Yes, yes that's so.

Bannister : D'you remember the dispute towards the end of the 5,000 metre race ?

Hampson : I have a fairly good recollection of that. Lehtinen of Finland and Hill of the United States came into the straight almost neck and neck with about 70 or 80 yards to go to the tapes. Halfway down the finishing straight Hill crossed very sharply in front and took the inside berth, throwing Lehtinen off his stride. There was a certain amount of elbow jostling and the two of them arrived at the tape almost together; the

judges gave the verdict to Lehtinen, but both Hill and Lehtinen returned the same time.

Bannister : D'you think the importance of incidents like this is exaggerated ?

Hampson : I think very largely exaggerated, because Hill and Lehtinen were the greatest of friends and they went off the track with their arms round each other's neck.

Bannister : Most people don't realize just how excited one can get during the course of a race, I think that's certainly true. During the steeplechase there was an extra lap run by one of the runners, was this true ?

Hampson : There was an extra lap run by all the runners. It was the fault of the recording judges for lap recording and it was just one of those human errors which may creep in even into the best organized festivals.

Bannister : I think it's interesting that in these Games, which were probably organized more efficiently than any of the previous Games, there should be some mistakes that cropped up.

Bannister : Now perhaps most important it would be very interesting to hear something about your own very great race, the 800 metres, tell us what happened, can you ?

Hampson : There were nine of us who went to the starting line and the most feared opponents were Phil Edwards, the Canadian negro, Alex Wilson, also representing Canada, and Eddie Genung of the United States. Edwards went off at a tremendous rate and covered his first 200 metres in just outside 24 seconds, I know that he was running too fast but nevertheless I was in a little bit of doubt as to whether I ought to let him go so far ahead. He covered the first 400 metres in about 52 ½ seconds and I was about 12 to 15 yards behind, following him with quite a bunch of four or five others. We gradually closed the gap as we went round the third bend and into the back straight and it was at the top of the back straight that I decided to make my effort to get up to Edwards' shoulder. No sooner had I started than Alex Wilson came dashing by me, got in close behind Edwards and him. I had to make a split second decision whether I would take the risk of running an extra 4 or 5 yards by trying to go round the outside of Edwards round that bend or whether I would stay behind Edwards and hope to save that extra little bit of energy for a final onslaught on Wilson in the finishing straight. I happened to choose the second course but Wilson had 7 or 8 yards lead when we came to that 80 yards stretch and I shall always remember the terrific effort of getting up to him, overhauling him, and passing him just in time to feel the worsted break across my chest.

Bannister : Well, that's a thrilling description of a very great race. I know that to me your race in Los Angeles was always held up as an example of perfect middle distance running. The timing and the pacing of the race being such as to take the maximum out of yourself so that you crossed the line, as I think you said afterwards, so exhausted that you didn't think you'd ever run again.

Thank you very much, Tommy Hampson.

V. 1936, Berlin

A conversation between Godfrey Brown and Roger Bannister

Bannister : I have with me today Godfrey Brown, who was one of Britain's representatives

at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. At that meeting, he was a very close second in the four hundred metres and a member of the British team that won Britain's Gold Medal in the sixteen hundred metre relay. He's now the head-master of the Royal Grammar School at Worcester. These games at Berlin, I think, were probably the most fantastically organized games that had hitherto been held. Could you tell us something about the organization behind the games ?

Brown : Oh ! undoubtedly they were most splendidly put on. No expense was spared, both in the provision of the stadium, the swimming stadium, the Olympic Village, and a vast programme of advertisement, which had gone out before the games took place, to all the competing nations. A deliberate attempt was made, for the first time, I should say, to make them a piece of national advertisement — advertisement, of course, for the Nazi Government.

Bannister : Can you remember any particular incidents that outlined this ? There are several that are handed on about the influence of negroes first of all on the competition, and the fact that Hitler did not actually meet Jesse Owens. Was that in fact true ?

Brown : That was true, but of course it's also true that he didn't meet any other of the outstanding competitors. What I felt was unfortunate, was the attitude of the German press. They did make — they did set out to try and prove that the German people were the master race, and there were some curious arguments put forward, that the Gold Medals won by the American negroes could be discounted, because they were not a true race.

Bannister : Could you tell us something about the competitors whom you remember in the games? First of all, Jesse Owens.

Brown : Nobody who's seen Jesse Owens can forget him, I should say. He was the most magnificent athlete I've ever seen., taken all round — had a superb physique, glorious muscles, and in movement he was the epitome of ease and power. And furthermore, of course, he was a very modest and charming person, and a quite remarkable competitor. I was fortunate enough to be standing just close to the take off board, during the final of the long jump. And Luz Long, the German, with his 12th and last jump, took the lead. He cleared something in the region of 25 feet 10 inches, and Owens, who had been leading up till then, had to jump. Well, Long got an enormous ovation from the crowd — Nazi salutes in all directions ; and I noticed Owens taking his place on the run-up, while this was going on. And then there was a hush while Owens ran up for his last jump, and he cleared 26 feet 5 inches — that is within 3 inches of his own world's record.

Bannister : It seems to me that's almost one of the best examples of what is really needed for Olympic competition.

Brown : Absolutely.

Bannister : Not only the quality to do a particular performance at some specific time, but to be able to do it when the whole world waits, especially your own compatriots, when 99 % of athletes and men would simply crack under the mental strain. Could you tell us about Jack Lovelock's great race in the 1500 metres ?

Brown : Well, I will never forget the devastating effect of Jack Lovelock's early finish. He finished from 300 metres — and this had never been done before ; and I clearly got the impression, as soon as Jack started his finish, that the race was over. And so I thought did most of the other competitors. I've never seen anything to equal it.

Bannister : I remember when I met Jack Lovelock in America that he told me that the one rule, if

there was a rule, that could be adopted in middle-distance running was to time one's finish at the least expected moment ; and in every race there was an unexpected moment. The only problem was to decide where it came — at the beginning or at the end of a bend. But certainly that was a triumphant piece of strategy, which fooled a field of extremely fine runners.

Brown : And I may say there, the thing that astonished the German crowd most was to see Jack Lovelock running on round the track when he'd finished. They obviously thought he couldn't stop.

Bannister : He of course was interested medically in the theories of warming-up and certainly wouldn't have allowed himself to collapse straight afterwards. Do you remember our only Gold Medal of the 1936 games, and incidentally, the only Gold Medal that we have won since then, in the track events of the Games — Harold —

Brown : Yes — Harold Whitlock in the Road Walk.

Bannister : Yes.

Brown : I saw that victory, and it was of course expected, but at the same time very impressive in its ease and confidence, and very uplifting, needless to say, to us.

Bannister : Most interesting of all — could you tell us something about your own race ? You were extremely unlucky — it's a case almost unparalleled I'm sure in the history of the Olympic Games — that you should have drawn either the next to outside lane or the outside lane in all four rounds of the 400 metres, the position from which it's most difficult to win. What was your reaction when you discovered in the final that you'd got the outside lane ?

Brown : Well, very devastating, because one hasn't very long to react to that, and put it right, and I remember feeling that first of all it had removed a large part of my chance, secondly trying to screw up my courage, and not let it affect me. But I think — really, you know, looking back at that race, the essential mistake that he made was to think it was going to be run in 47 seconds, whereas of course it was won in 46.5 seconds — slow time nowadays, but rather unexpected in Europe at the time.

Bannister : Well, the result of the 400 metres was certainly made up for in the four by four hundred metre relay, which Britain won. Tell us about that ?

Brown : Rampling ran second, and at the beginning of the second leg, we were lost. And at the beginning of the third leg, we were leading. And I've never experienced such a thrill myself as to — as when Godfrey Rampling swept past the whole of — all his competitors in the last 50 yards, and gave us the lead. I was so excited I quite forgot I'd got to run myself in a very short time. And when it came to my turn to run, I really had an easy passage, because I knew when I set off that unless I fell down or did something very silly, at the end of it we should have won four Olympic Gold Medals.

Bannister : Well, I didn't see the 400 metres — 4 by 400 metre relay in 1936. I did see the team from Jamaica that won in a new record time at Helsinki in 1952. I can only say that that's the most exciting race I never saw, and one in which two world record holders — one record holder and one previous record holder — were running, and I must say I would have liked to have seen a race between your team in 1936 and the Jamaicans in 1952. That's the sort of thing we're never privileged to do in the Olympics.

Thank you very much, Godfrey Brown.

VI. 1936, Berlin; 1948, London; 1952, Helsinki; 1956, Melbourne

A conversation between Roger Bannister and Mrs. Dorothy Tyler

Bannister : Today I have with me Dorothy Tyler the famous high jumper. When she competes at Melbourne it will be her fourth Olympic Games and as far as I know no other athlete has competed in the Olympics over a period of 20 years, certainly on the track of field events. Mrs. Tyler was only sixteen in the Ladies High Jump at Berlin in 1936 when she came second and then she was second in London in 1948. She also competed at Helsinki in 1952. The first question I would like to ask you, Dorothy, is some impressions of the 1936 Olympic Games and in particular the reason why you were unfortunate then not to win a gold medal instead of a silver medal.

Tyler : Well, in 1936 the rules were that in case of a tie you went on jumping until one of you either failed or got over it, so that although I tied for first place I was beaten in the jump off afterwards.

Bannister : And is it true that if the rule had remained as it was in 1936 you would have won your gold medal in 1948 ?

Tyler : Well, after the 1936 Games they were a little tired of us having to jump off. It took so long that they altered the rules. These rules applied in 1948 and I tied again for first place as you know and the old rules would have given me a gold medal.

Bannister : You were one then of the married women competing in the Games, and could you tell us something of the effect this had. Do you think that your standard of competition was as high then in 1948 as it had been before the war ?

Tyler : Well it was better. I did higher as a married woman with two children than I had done as a young girl, but of course the war years would have been my best years. The fact both Fanny Blankers-Koen and myself competed in the 1948 Games, both of us having two children, has encourage women, who normally would have married and settled down and had a family, to come back again.

Bannister : Did you watch Fanny Blankers-Koen's victories in the 1948 Olympic Games ?

Tyler : Yes, I was very interested in the 80 metres hurdles and the 100 metres because we had girls who came second in both events, but I was a little disappointed that she didn't compete in the high jump, because she had taken my world record during the war in 1943, and I was hoping to be able to beat her.

Bannister : Did you watch Zatopek's races in 1948, and do you remember the 5,000 metres ?

Tyler : Yes, the one where Gaston Rieff beat him. I was watching I'm afraid on a television set as it was pouring with rain outside, but it was extremely exciting and I think he left his effort just a little late.

Bannister : I think that stands as one of the great acts of gamesmanship of Zatopek but one of the few which did not come off.

Tyler : Yes, he usually manages to do it and is a great favourite of the crowd.

Bannister : During the 1948 Games there was another event in progress during your high jumping :

did you see that or were you too bound up in your own event to take any notice of what was going on ?

Tyler : Well, in the marathon we were all expecting Jack Holden to come in the first two or three and as I was watching during the jumps for the marathon runners to come in. I suddenly saw an old club mate of mine coming in the stadium third, and as you know the second runner was just about dead on his feet and I knew that with a little bit of encouragement Tommy might get past so I rushed to the side of the track, completely forgot I was high jumping and cheered him on. I suppose I shouldn't have done because I needed the nervous energy myself.

Bannister : Well I think that shows extraordinary generosity to be able at your moment of crisis to be able to spare the thought for a club mate. So then after 1948 you turned still to high jumping but you changed then your style. Why did you jump for so long with the scissors style ?

Tyler : Well, before the war there wasn't really anybody who could teach a roll in this country, at least I hadn't heard of them and I had been very impressed by Cornelius Johnson who won the Olympic gold medal in 1936. But it wasn't until Sheila Lerwell, who broke the world record, beat me in the European championship with a straggle that I really thought it was time I did something and there was a great amount of poohing about it because I was 30 years old and they thought it was ridiculous.

Bannister : So you then went on with you Western Roll and competed in Helsinki in 1952. Could you tell us something about the Russian athletes, particularly the women who were competing in Helsinki for the first time ?

Tyler : Well, we were rather keen to see what they were like and watch them because we had heard so much about them. We had actually met them at the European championships in 1950 but they weren't at the strength that they were in 1952, but I has a pulled muscle and so I wasn't really quite up to their standard, but they only came third in the high jump.

Bannister : Are the Russian women stronger and tougher than the British and American women do you think ?

Tyler : I don't think they are actually stronger or tougher. I think it's tougher to get into their team and whenever it's tougher to get into a thing the standard immediately becomes higher.

Bannister : Did you see any of the men's events in the Helsinki Olympic Games ?

Tyler : Well, of course Zatopek was the one name that stood out, he'd won the 5,000 metres and the 10,000 metres and everybody was very keen to see whether he was going to win the marathon without ever having run one before. The high jump and the marathon started at the same time and we were all together in the waiting room and we spoke to our own competitors and to Zatopek who, as you know, speaks several languages. And as usual the field events were trying to high jump while the marathon was finishing, but even we had to stop and cheer Zatopek as he came in the winner.

Bannister : I think it is one of the few occasions on which a runner winning the marathon has not tottered into the stadium in the stages of extreme exhaustion.

As a field events performer, what do you feel about the interruption of your event by these track events. I know sometimes people look at it the other way around, but as a field events performer do you think you get a raw deal.

Tyler : Well yes we do, but of course it is one of those things that can't be helped. You are just about to make your effort at one of the higher jumps and you get the announcement of the result of a race that everybody is very anxious to hear and they rather forget the poor little high jumpers in the corner trying to put their best into it, and unfortunately if a gun or an announcer makes you fail it still counts as a failure.

Bannister : Well you, Dorothy Tyler, are coming back again with a history of three very great Olympic Games behind you and you still have your gold medal to win, and I wish you every success for Melbourne.

Tyler : Thank you very much.

(It is to be understood that in 1936 Mrs. Dorothy Tyler competed under the name of Miss D. ODAM, while she was not married yet. As, in this interview; it is spoken about Helsinki and Melbourne, let us add that Mrs. Tyler has not been placed amongst the 3 medalists at those Games. *Ed.*)