

THE IIIrd MEDITERRANEAN GAMES

From October 11th to October 23rd 1959, in Beirut (Lebanon)

The IIIrd celebration of the Mediterranean Games, which were placed under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee, were an outstanding success. This was chiefly due to Cheik Gabriel Gemayel, who kindly assumed the leadership of this organization, and who left no stone unturned to achieve the smooth running of this sport manifestation. His presence was a guarantee in itself. His Committee placed under the presidency of H.E. Cheik Pierre Gemayel, Minister of National Education and Fine Arts consisted in a nucleus of devoted citizens interested in the development of Lebanese sport. They gave their assistance and valued help. Let us make a special mention of Cdt. Aziz Ahdah, vice-president, Mr. Antoine Batlouni, General Secretary, Mr. Elie Bassila, treasurer, Mr. Izzet Turc, Head of the Administration Department and Mr. Victor Bercin, technical adviser.

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In his introductory remarks to the Programme of the Games, Mr. Gabriel Brenas very rightly said: 'the word *Welcome* in Lebanon is not a mere form of politeness, but more so than anywhere in the world, it stands for sincerity. In Lebanon hospitality is a tradition which no Lebanese could elude.' And this happens to be true!

Athletes and officials as well as the members of the International Olympic Committee present at the Games soon discovered how true this was and were overwhelmed with kindness and hospitality. There was a stadium recently built, providing accommodations for 50,000 seats (Football, Athletics, and Cycling). A most up to date sports city fully equipped. Numerous social entertainments and the lively bustle of a modern City (of about 500,000 inhabitants) offered a strange contrast with the peace and beauty of the surrounding mountains which speak of the grandeur and wealth of the history of a small country: called the Pearl of the Mediterranean. Lebanon is its name, the Cedar is its emblem.

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We wish to recall the fact that these Games were first celebrated in Alexandria in 1951, and were due to the initiative of H.E. Mohammed Taher Pacha who remained their Hon. President ever since.

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The following members of the International Olympic Committee were present at Beirut: Mr. Avery Brundage, President, Armand Massard, Vice-President, Angelo Bolanaki

(Greece) senior member of the International Olympic Committee, Giorgio de Stefani (Italy), Jean Ketseas (Greece), Suat Erler (Turkey), Gabriel Gemayel (Lebanon) and the Chancellor of the International Olympic Committee.

Fifteen sports figured in the programme, they were: Athletics, Basketball, Boxing, Cycling, Equestrian sports, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Wrestling, Swimming, Weight-lifting, Shooting, Volleyball, Yachting and Water-Skiing. 11 Mediterranean Countries were represented and 980 athletes participated in these Games.

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The Opening Ceremony was held in presence of H.E. Emir Fouad Chebab, President of the Republic, who had the kindness to welcome as his guests in his residence near Beirut, the Delegates of the National Olympic Committee and the members of the International Olympic Committee.

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The cost of the Mediterranean Games was 1,100,000 Lebanese Pounds (L£ 3.15 = 1 dollar). This amount includes the board and 'lodgings' of all the foreign contingents which participated in the Games, a thing that never happened before and which may create a dangerous precedent...

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The number of spectators to the Games attained an average of 50,000 per day, giving a daily receipt of 100,000 Lebanese Pounds. Mr. Gabriel Gemayel admitted that the Treasury is naturally out of pocket but the National Economy is actually making a profit. The hotels were full. It never was the object of the Games to make a profit but one of their aims was to make Lebanon better known to the outside world and to show it what it was capable of doing'.

All the officials acknowledged the efficiency and excellent organization of these Games and congratulated the organizers, a special praise to their President Cheik Gabriel Gemayel. We gladly associate ourselves to these expressions of admiration and wish to thank all those who, by their generous and charming hospitality, contributed to make our visit to Beirut so pleasant.

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An incident however marred the proceedings. The attitude of a *certain* public who used the Games as pretext for a political demonstration. Needless to say that the organizers had no hand in the matter. The

police in charge applied severe measures to maintain order. During certain boxing matches, organized gangs among the 8,000 spectators surrounding the ring, in order to manifest against certain boxer according to his nationality, gave vent to their anger and the storm broke out. The police threatened to evacuate the Stadium! The struggle attracted such an affluence of spectators that the stadium was packed full. Some of those who were refused admittance and were forced back behind the railings at the entrance gates pelted with stones the spectators within. The gymnastics displays executed by the Spanish team but more so by the French took place in a stormy atmosphere and the gymnasts had to perform under the booing and jeering of a rough and uneducated element of the public. We shall end here the enumeration of these unfortunate incidents and we think that it will be necessary to educate this element of the public.

Although as we said before, the organizers were in no way responsible for these disturbances due to political jingoism, we must congratulate them for setting afoot a strong 'police force' (we purposely say police force and not a simple service to maintain order) as it was capable of handling the situation most efficiently and energetically... with bludgeons and guns!

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We admire our Lebanese friends for their initiative and spirit of enterprise, for, in two years, they organized successfully the Pan-Arabic Games as well as the Mediterranean

Games. Mr. Brundage made this remark in one of his speeches: 'Lebanon is the sport centre of the Middle East and the connecting link between the athletes of the Orient and those of the Occident.' Alluding to the excellent spirit of amateurism which prevail among the Lebanese athletes, Mr. Brundage remarked: 'An amateur can be compared to an alpinist who, when climbing a mountain, has no other object but to pursue high ideals. It would never occur to him that when he reaches the summit his effort could be rewarded by the discovery of a gold mine!'

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The French athletes were the great winners of the IIIrd Mediterranean Games when they won 26 gold medals (silver and bronze medals not included), The United Arab Republic contingent followed the French when they won 23 gold medals. The Athletes of the R.A.U. (United Arab Republic) were the outstanding revelation at these Games.

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The Closing Ceremony took place in the presence of 50,000 spectators the Chief of the Government pronounced the speech accompanied by the Minister of Public Works, the Minister for Agriculture and Mr. Gabriel Gemayel, President of the Organizing Committee. Two members of the International Olympic Committee were also present: Mr. Angelo Bolanaki, senior member of the International Olympic Committee and Mr. Jean Ketseas, both members for Greece.



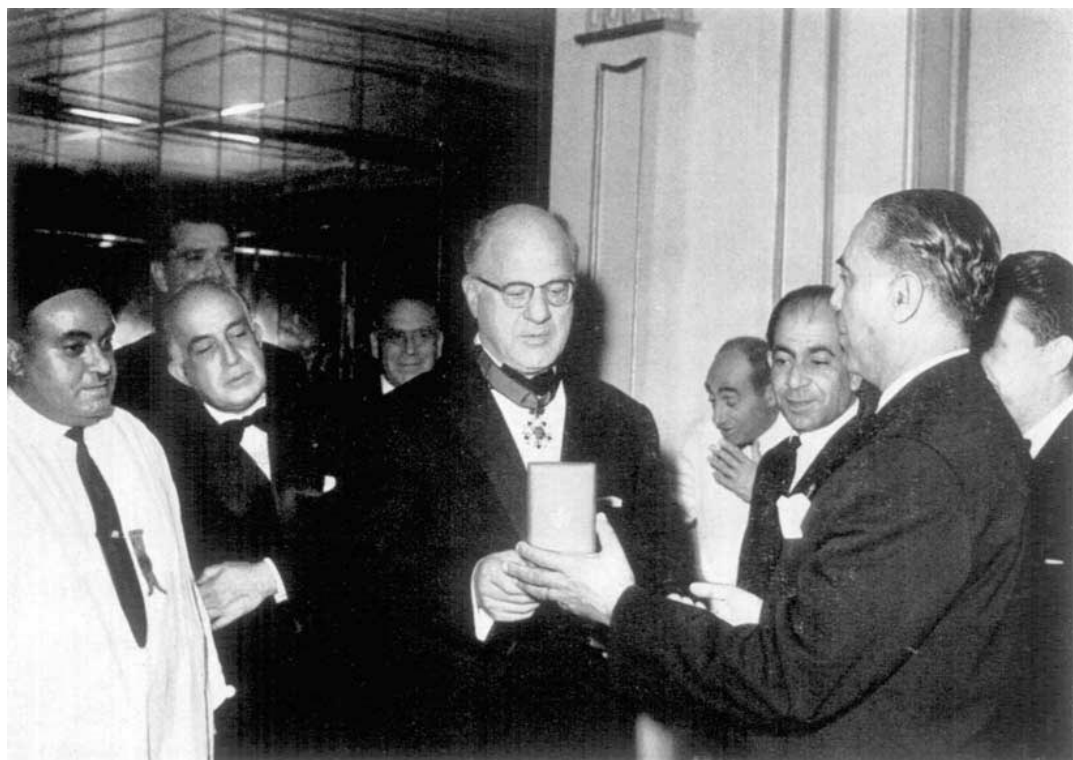
The Mediterranean Games Congress. Eleven Olympic Committees were represented. M. Brundage makes a speech. Beirut Oct. 1959.

Mr. Gabriel Gemayel presiding the Mediterranean Games Congress. On his right the President of the International Olympic Committee and the chancellor; on his left, Mr. Armand Massard, Vice-President of the International Olympic Committee. All three present as observers.





H.E. Emir Chehab, President of the Lebanon Republic (in the center), receives in his Residence near Beirut the members of the International Olympic Committee and the delegates of the Olympic Committees of the Mediterranean countries. October 1959.



Mr. Gabriel Gamayel hands over to the President of the International Olympic Committee the 'Ordre du Cèdre' given by the Lebanon Government to the International Olympic Committee. On the left in white, the President of the Tunisian Olympic Committee.



President Brundage receives from the hands of H. E. the Minister Pierre Gemayel the distinction of Commander of the 'Ordre du Cèdre'

Two Presidents are exchanging their troubles and their satisfactions: On the left Avv. Giulio Onesti, President of the Italian National Olympic Committee and Executive Board of the Rome Games. On the right, Mr. G. Gemayel, President of the Libanon Olympic Committee and the 3d Mediterranean Games. Beirut Oct. 1959.





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At the Residence of the President of the Lebanon Republic. From 1. to r.: M. Avery Brundage, H. E. Emir Chehab, M. Armand Massard (France), M. Jean Ketseas (Grèce).



Laying of the foundation-stone of the new Zahle Stadium (Lebanon), by Mr. Brundage who makes his speech. On the left Mr. Debs of the Organizing Committee.