

## MORE ECHOES OF ROME

*Raymond Boisset, former pupil of l'Ecole Normale Supérieure of Paris, Associate member of the University and former champion and recordman of France in the 400 m., published an article concerning the Olympics in Rome which we think may prove a source of interest to our readers. We are publishing herewith some extracts of this article:*

No one can contest the undeniable success of the World Olympics, since Rome registered the greatest number of participating countries ever seen at Olympic Games. In spite of the fact that, on one hand, the team sports had been reduced to 16 participating teams, and on the other hand, the athletic events had been submitted to a tightening of rules, more or less loyally observed, which aimed at preventing top athletes from wearing themselves out in innumerable eliminating contests against athletes who could never reach top heights or aspire to win olympic medals. This compromise, when all said and done, gave the means to conciliate the twofold objects aimed at by the Olympic Games: the participation of the representatives of the World's Youth as well as the selection of the best man in each special contest.

The very fact of the enormous success of the Games has to be paid for: the gigantic proportion assumed by the Games, sets a problem which has been solved superbly by Italian National Olympic Committee, but, as the Games get bigger, the countries desirous to compete in a great number of events are faced with increased expenses and liabilities.

The problem is raised once more: which sports are to figure on the Programme of the Olympic Games?

The matter has been under discussion for a long time and raised the following criticisms: in some sports there are too many titles holders, too many medals, too many contests, in other sports practised by professionals and in World Championships open to all, amateurs, professionals, etc..., (other categories are classed as intermediaries), the Olympic Games do not compel recognition, far from it; lastly, in certain events, the judgement and decisions of the referees on one hand, and the behaviour of the athletes in team competitions on the other, are sometimes questionable and therefore apt to create a feeling of distrust which, in some ways, mars the ultimate placing.

Is it necessary to take the development of world sports (such as volley-ball, for instance) into account? Is it judicious to admit that the maintenance of certain sports in the Games is due to the influence of modern or ancient tradition? Must we take as basic references the actual number

of the participants? Of course these problems are within the competence of the International Olympic Committee who agrees on these points with the National Committee organizing the future Games. We must admit that the opinions of the International Federations expressed in their interventions along with public opinion expressed in the press weigh heavily in favour or to the prejudice of one sport or another.

At all events, it seems more and more imperative to find a device which will permit to stop the Olympic Programme assuming alarming proportion, it will gain by being reduced in the future, as it will soon become a matter of life or death for the Games.

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The great Festival of the youths of the World, as conceived by Pierre de Coubertin, was indeed realized on this 'Stadium of the Hundred Thousand'. The Olympic truce was not a vain expression, it was effectively there, under our eyes, in front and around us. A breadth of warm friendship pervaded everywhere and succeeded in sweeping aside for a few days, all fears, doubts and resentment. While witnessing the exploits of the best athletes gathered in the stadium, men enjoyed to the full the joy to be alive, another type of *dolce vita*.

Did it not start by a fine gesture of good fellowship and sport solidarity between athletes, when they gave spontaneously the promised assistance to Chili, a country suffering from the hardship of seism, this allowed that country to send a delegation of her athletes to the Games in Rome? We saw the American Budd and the Cuban Figuerola ran side by side in the same event, the semi-final of the 100 m., when, in the final, Figuerola came in 4th, behind D. Sime, in front of Budd and Norton, nobody ever dreamt of drawing any inferences or comparisons between the different régimes or opposed ideologies which exist between Cuba and the U.S.A., Asiatics, Oceanians, Americans belonging to North, Centre or South America, Africans and Europeans competed side by side, smiling and recognizing each other, without ever being reminded that in other spheres, Governments and even peoples abide by their differences of opinions. The essential point in these records is not so much that a champion contrived to set up an exceptional record but more so that the record obtained is not beyond him and his next efforts. It often happens that competitors seem of such equal value that only the favour of the gods determine who, among them, is the eventual lucky winner of the gold medal.

Great champions indeed, they all were, as well as very fine specimen of manhood

who represented the five continents. Although one could observe that the placing of the Olympic champions is the following, the countries of old Europe (5), Oceania (2), Africa (1), and America (1); the six finalists in the various events represented 18 European countries, 6 from America, 4 from Africa, 2 from Oceania and 2 from Asia. By what process did the problem of potentialities and different standard of sports assets undergo such a change among the various races? The coloured men did not show off their acknowledged supremacy in speed and in the art of relaxing, yet Americans and Africans vied with each other in the events testing their qualities of endurance. Asia is waking up to olympic sport and the Tokyo Games in 1964 will most likely set a new progressive march in Asiatic sport both with regard to quality and quantity. What magnificent symbolical display of equality and fraternity among all races united in their love of sport, common interest and their deep belief in olympic ideals was seen in the protocol ceremonials of the decathlon which brought together on the rostrum one Black (Johanson), one Yellow (Yang Chuan Kvang) and one White (Konznetsov)!

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It is an undeniable fact that systems and technique in sport have been progressing steadily and the rational scientific study applied to some sports have brought a distinct improvement in the standard of the performances. Since ideas know no frontiers, technique has become universal. Every country knows what to do and how to do it. However, in these Olympics in Rome, it seemed that technique and style were not the only determining factors in the placing of the winners. Thus in the swimming contests, some of the swimmers, and by no means the less skilful, did not appear to be chiefly concerned with conventional 'style', the body half above the water, they raced shoulder forward, leaving a foaming track behind.

In athletics, we saw more and more technique, lots of different styles and methods owing to the fact athletic sports are specifically an individual sport. Henceforth, sport problems are set in clear well defined terms, but the real difficulty consists of finding a special solution applicable to each athlete. Natural aptitudes as well as technique are no more sufficient, it wants unremitting hard work. According to Voltaire, the essential attributes for succeeding are talent, hard work and luck. Beside these – and it is in this respect that athletes and coaches have reached olympic standard – the dedicated athlete, who is always striving for perfection, must be able to retain his top form at the right moment. Too many champions reached their peak performances too late, when the Games of Rome were already a thing of the past. This constitutes

the tragedy as well as the beauty of Sport, the part played by the mind still remains the vital element to winning, the essential attributes of great champions is a rooted distaste for defeat and a marked talent for avoiding it. Without these spiritual qualities, the finest specimen of physically fit man cannot aspire to reach olympic fame.

I purposely made no allusion to women events at the Olympic Games, yet they were far from spoiling the beauty of the Olympic Stadium. On the contrary they added grace and elegance to the performances and it would be unfair to pretend that women competitors lacked plastic beauty – with the exception of the women competing in the shot-put event – but one could say the same of men competing in the same event. Most of the women competitors were admired for their good looks, among them, beautiful Wilma Rudolph from America and the pretty Polish girl Janiszewska were acclaimed enthusiastically when they started their races. Sincerely, one must admit that women performances reached a very high standard since out of 10 events entered on the programme, 10 former olympic records were beaten of which 4 were world records.

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It is impossible to exclude women from the great sports manifestations of the youth of the World, but if women athletics is to be placed on the Olympic Programme, it should stand apart, in a class of its own. Women athletics cannot stand comparison with men athletics and suffer by it. After witnessing the performance of Chavlakadze and Brummel reach the record of 2 m. 16 in the high jump, it is hard to enthuse over Balas score of 1 m. 85 in the same event. The day may come soon, when the Olympic schedule may devote a few days specially for women sports, and these not for courtesy sake, should precede the men events.

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The Rome Games have undoubtedly marked an important date in the history of modern sport. They brought a brief interlude of peace and friendly understanding in the troubled time in which the world lives at the present time. By bringing nations together and giving people opportunity to meet and forge ties of friendship, Olympism realizes a vital work of Peace which was witnessed at the Closing Ceremony, when the flagbearers of the different nations paraded in an impressive simplicity which did not lack grandeur, when the Olympic flag was removed by the Japanese seamen who stepped out slowly, basking in the light of powerful projectors. Solemnly, and in deep silence, spectators lit up thousands of improvised torches which threw their glimmering light in the dark Roman night, taking the place of the Olympic Flame which had just died down, thus emphasizing the permanent character as well as the universal diffusion of Olympic ideals.

I happened to be in Berlin on the eve of the last day of the Games of the XIth Olympiad. I can still recall the dull booming of the olympic bell of the Reichssportfeld and the powerful loudspeaker which called out to the youth of the world to meet in Tokyo in 1940! I earnestly hope that the call from the Stadium in Rome will be heard

this time, and that the Games of the XVIIIth Olympiad in 1964 will bring together the peoples of the world united in universal Peace, a Peace which will prevail when Youth must never again experienced other fights but those carried out in the Olympic arena for the honour of ones country and for the glory of Sport.