

## THE OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS' PAGE

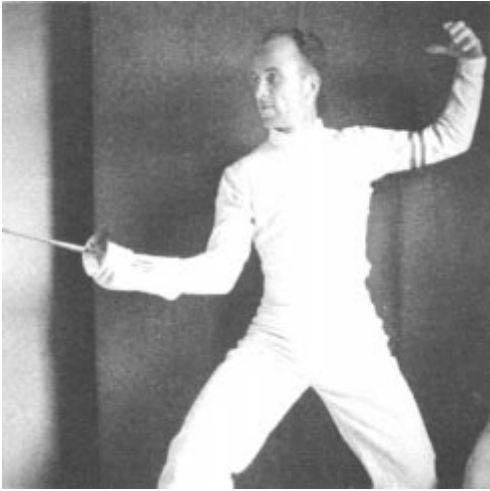
*We would like to quote below the declaration made by Deborah MEYER for the "Newsletter" of the United States Olympic Committee on the problem to which we have been referring in our recent issues : what is the significance of the Olympic Games for Olympic champions? We thank Mr. Robert PAUL, editor of the magazine, for this testimony.*

"At the age of 16, Debbie MEYER became the great swimming star of the Mexico Games. She won the women's 200, 400 and 800 metres free-style event and played a large role in the victory of her team in the relay.

"The Olympic Games fulfilled every dream I had had for a long time. Really, all I had wished for was an Olympic medal, either for an individual event or on a relay team.

The Games were everything that I thought they would be, a meeting place for all of the world's greatest athletes, a place for true competition in sports rather than a political convention.

Here is an opportunity to meet many persons from many countries both in the village and in actual competitions and some of them have turned into what I hope to be lasting friendships.



*Jacques LATASTE*



*Debbie MEYER*

The feeling of winning a medal in the Olympic Games is almost indescribable. There are really no words to express my feelings. Since I achieved my dreams and hopes I won't trade the medal for anything in the world.

I represented my country, the United States of America, and I am proud to say "I'm an American. "

Anthony TAYLOR, is at the age of 23, Britain's top amateur cyclist. He prefers to lose £ 300 a year on his sport rather than turn professional.

"People say that I won the best all-rounder title this year because I live the life of a professional.

What they mean by that, I suppose, is that I didn't work from April to September but lived on money I had worked hard to earn last winter.

That's not being a pro. to my mind. A professional is someone who earns money. Do I make money from cycling ? You must be joking! At best I lose about £ 300 a year.

I don't care what people say about me or my way of life, I'm in sport for what I can get out of it - and I don't mean money - and to get the best out of myself.

In an interview dedicated to the daily sports paper "l'Equipe", Bernard VALLEE, 4th year law-student, as well as sabre fencing champion of France and university champion of the world, declared:

"My studies only suffered because of my sports activities during my first year at college. I have always been able to combine the two. It's all a question of being organized and having faith. "

On reading the declarations of Bernard VALLEE, ex-Olympic foils champion, Jacques LATASTE, wrote the letter given below to the "Equipe" :

His sports career was as follows : Olympic team champion in 1948 and 1952; team silver medallist in 1956; individual Olympic finalist in 1952; team world champion in 1950, 1951 and 1953; individual world champion in 1952; third in 1950; fourth in 1951; third in 1953; third in 1955; selected in France for international competition from 1946 to 1959.

His professional career is just as eloquent: Professor in the Faculty of Medecine and Surgeon for the Paris Hospitals. At the time of his brilliant sports career he was one of the youngest professors in France

Here is the letter that he addressed to the newspaper :

"It is a very long time since I have read an objective interview by a competitive sportsman - and for this reason I want to mention the one given by the sabre champion, Bernard VALLEE. I cannot resist my desire to thank him as for several years, I have been beginning to despair of the French sporting mentality. I only read about "sacrifices", "loss of earnings". . . even from the mouths of sportsmen who do not need this to be able to live.

As for the problem with which I am familiar, that is, that of the university student (of which I was one until 1960!) I can confirm that one can spend 12 hours a week, plus one or two whole Sundays a month on competitions - and that from 18th January to 31st December, apart from the three or four weeks surrounding important examinations. Holidays are devoted to sports travels (world championships, Olympic Games). I did this with great pleasure for the French foils team for 15 years, 1945 to 1959, without getting the impression that I had suffered or given up part of my youth as so many international athletes seem to delight in repeating. Out of this came bribes and litigations.

I only regret one thing: and that is not being able to continue.

Finally, with regard to fencing itself, the present-day leaders must have a short memory when they think the fencing of grandpa's days, are over. Or else they have never seen fencing for entire days, the Eduardo MANGIAROTTI's PECHEUX . . . who had certainly as much strength as contemporary fencers, and a quite different mechanism! We must not look for the wrong reasons, particularly when it can be noticed that the majority of foils fencers are physical education teachers! That may well make one smile."

In reply to our circular letter asking *"What, for you, does your participation and victory in the Olympic Games represent?"* Juan ANTONIO VALENCIA (El Salvador) states:

"I would like to say that to represent my country in an Olympiad which unites the finest athletes in the world, was for me both a stimulant and an honour, as well as being an unforgettable page in my life. As for my victory, I think this was just another experience in my sport - shooting. In fact the competitions taught me a lot.

I can only transmit my warmest congratulations to the IOC and the NOC of El Salvador for having contributed towards the realization of such a great event".

Liese PROKOP, Austria, holder of the world record for the women's pentathlon, with 5.333 points, silver medallist in the pentathlon at the Mexico Games and European Champion in Athens, declared that she was giving up competition sport. "to dedicate herself entirely to politics". Elected to the Diet of Lower Austria, he will be responsible for questions concerning sport.

Dr. Ivan OSIER, Denmark, is quoted as the athlete who has had the greatest Olympic career up till now: he represented his country for wrestling in: 1908, 1912, 1920, 1924, 1928, 1932 and 1948.

Mary RAND, Great Britain, 5 times Olympic Pentathlon Champion is the author of a book entitled "Mary, Mary", (Hodder and Stoughton). It is an autobiography devoted to her life as an athlete, beginning with her youth as a "tom-boy" and concluding with the bitter struggle for triumph at the Tokyo Games.

Nina DUMBADZE, U.S.S.R., ex-holder of the world record for throwing the discus, and head of the Tbilissi Physical Education School, has predicted forecasts from existing records to a marked improvement which will be confirmed in the year 2.000.

Let us quote, for example:

"Men will put the shot at a distance of 28 m.  
women 22 m."