

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM RUMANIA  
TO  
THE HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

by Hristache Naum

Victor BANCIULESCU is probably the latest to join the comparatively small and select company of historians of the Olympic Games. This Rumanian reporter has devoted the last ten years of his life to the study of Olympism, thus successfully completing his daily work as a sports writer.

In 1964 he published, for the first time in Rumania, a comprehensive history of the Games of Antiquity and of Modern Times. His book, entitled "The Olympic Games down through the Centuries" met with great success particularly owing to the inclusion of a chapter devoted to Rumania's continued participation in the Olympic world, from the first Rumanian member of the I.O.C. (Georges BIBESCU, elected in 1899) down to the present day. Very popular with the general public, this volume had a printing of 30,000, which is already exhausted. (However the author promises us a more complete edition for 1972).

In 1967, interested in the idea of the relationship between culture and sport, Victor BANCIULESCU published an original anthology, entitled "Sport and Legend". All passages devoted to physical contests (more or less related to sport) from the great epics of the literature of the world have been collected and commented on in this

book. The heroes of the Iliad, the Odyssey and the Aeniad, the Scandinavian Kalevala and Edda, the Persian Chah-Nâmé and the Song of the Nibelungen live again in this original volume. Vividly brought to life before our eyes, Pollux once again triumphs in his boxing match, Agamemnon throws the javelin farther than anyone else, Nausicaa plays handball on the island of Corfu, Cloantus wins the Sicilian Regatta, Daedelus and Icarus soar once more into the sky, Lemminkäinen skis and Brunehaut does the long jump...

The following year, this Bucarest sports writer prepared the Rumanian sports public for the Olympic Games by publishing his "Mexico 68 - Olympic agenda", in which he presented selectively all the knowledge necessary for a better understanding of the sports and cultural events which were to be held in the Mexican capital. Let us point out that this book also contains substantial extracts from the "Olympic Regulations".

The Rumanian author is preparing for the near future a history of the Winter Games and an essay on the humanism of the Olympic Games.

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The extremely arduous and tortuous path trod each year by countless young men and women, eager to acquire a piercing look and muscles of steel, to become valiant, persevering and courageous, to reach the peaks of perfection in sport, can never be a path trodden alone. The young man, the budding athlete, depends to a large extent upon his trainer or coach for guidance.

The latter, who combines the experience of the years when he himself practised sport with the gifts of a teacher and the knowledge gained through countless similar journeys undertaken by the side of other young people on the steep and thorny path leading to the summit in sport, sees a second sooner than the rest the moment when the wave takes form, feels intuitively when it will reach its crest before breaking, and has learned to recognize in the child the future athlete who, like Hercules, will grapple successfully

with his rivals and with records. The coach has learned too, or rather during his prodigious career he has been forced to learn one thing: to withdraw into the background. to leave the champion - for the first time - completely on his own at the moment he reaps the laurels of his victories, at the moment he is carried in triumph on the wings of the enthusiastic applause of the public. This is the modesty of the diamond-cutter who, after many long hours of labour, has fashioned a sparkling gem, for the sole gratification of the woman who will wear it in her hair or at her throat.

But should this state of affairs be allowed to continue? Have we the right to go on remaining passive forever at the sight of the proud champion who, in his triumph, forgets the man with the furrowed brow and the prematurely white hair, whom he will remember only in the bitter hours of defeat.

No, obviously not! We can create a new tradition, we can give this man with all his qualities the pleasure of entering Olympia, by the side of the god he has created. We can - and we must - ask those who are responsible for organizing the fascinating and moving spectacle of the prizegiving ceremonies to allow the man who "created" the medal winner to mount the podium beside him, to present him too with the laurel wreath he deserves so well. Admittedly, the man with the whitening hair will step down from the podium a more lucid man than the athlete, he will be able better to appreciate the applause of the enthusiastic but fickle public, he will render the laurel leaf truly immortal.

Let us therefore render this man, without whose daring and determination we would have no champions, the homage of which we have unintentionally deprived him.