

“Who’s that chap in the red corner...?”

by Harry Carpenter



British television spectators have for a long time appreciated Harry Carpenter's sports commentaries.

Sports columnist for the "Daily Mail" (London), he then joined the BBC, for which he has covered all Olympic Games since 1956.

We are very grateful to him for this contribution to the "Olympic Review".

Having watched six Olympic Games (and worked as a journalist at the last five) I am torn between being proud of the fact and regretful at having become so ancient.

However, I do feel qualified to speak on the subject of information available to journalists at the Games and, having been privileged with space in this excellent magazine, intend to do so specifically on my own sport of boxing.

At the last Games in Munich, I attended every session of the boxing and watched every bout, more than 340 of them, thus achieving a personal best for endurance. I work as a commentator for BBC - television. Although we do not, naturally, focus our cameras on every contest, we do televise a considerable number, either on video-tape for future use, or "live". It follows that information on the boxers is of importance.

I find it paradoxical that, in this modern age, frequently the only method to obtain biographical facts about many of the boxers is to knock on doors in the Olympic Village, beg, borrow or steal a team handbook (you might be surprised to know how many countries come without one) or simply buttonhole a competitor and conduct an impromptu interrogation, often in sign-language.

Even the team-book can be of limited use. A member of the Taiwan delegation handed me theirs and I stared dumbfounded at the Chinese writing. He understood my problem. He turned it over to the back page. "You start there," he said helpfully.

I keep extensive records of international amateur boxing and if you want to know what Egg of Austria did in the 1969 Euro-

pean Championships or Bhimrahadur of Nepal achieved in Tokyo 1964, I can tell you.

But when I am confronted, as I was in Munich, with 357 boxers from around the world, most of whom are competing in the Games for the first time and some have never crossed their own frontier before, the basic problem of knowing something about them is much more difficult than you might imagine.

In Munich, we were promised access to the new computer service. This, we were told, would provide a run-down on every competitor's background. In the event, all it provided was his age, sometimes his job, plus any outstanding international success (if he has this, he's already known to me).

When I mentioned to the charming computer people that my own records on amateur boxing were considerably more informative than theirs, they reasonably suggested it might be a good idea if I fed *my* information into *their* computer. In the cause of international goodwill and fellowship, this I did. I hope my fellow-journalists were duly grateful.

Far be it from me to tell the Organising Committee how to run their event. Their problems are vast enough. But perhaps I may be permitted to ask why it could not be possible for every nation to provide a reasonable biographical record for each of its competitors, and for this invaluable information to be collated and reproduced at some central Olympic source, for the use of many thousands of journalists whose responsibility it is to report accurately and informatively on



“Who’s that chap in the red corner...?” Certainly, the manager is none other than the well-remembered Laszlo Papp, triple Olympic champion in 1948, 1952 and 1956, who then became trainer to the Hungarian team.

the most important sporting occasion in the world?

This would, in my case, at least, banish forever the necessity of saying on television: “And this is so-and-so from such-and-such a country, in the red corner. I am told he is a very skilful boxer by the man sitting next to me, who happens to be a reporter from that country and by good chance last night was having a quiet drink with a friend of the team trainer who told him he thought this boxer would do very well in the Olympic Games...”

At that moment, the boxer is knocked down and counted out.

Me, too.

H.C.



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