



Orienteering - an initial set of themes

by Giuseppe Sabelli Fioretti

What is Orienteering ? Orienteering is a sport which is popular in many countries, particularly in Scandinavia, its place of origin. It is not a very new sport, since its birth goes back to the beginning of the century, and it was already quite widely spread in the world in the period between the two world wars. It is governed by the International Orienteering Federation, which has its headquarters at Grankulla, in Finland. Although this International Federation was founded only in 1961, it has been recognised by the IOC for some years. It comprises about thirty national federations.

The country with the greatest fervour for orienteering is, of course, Sweden, where the national federation has more than 300,000 members, and three million people practise the sport. The importance which the Swedes give to this discipline is such that for two consecutive years, in 1960 and 1961, the title of "Athlete of the Year" has been awarded to a champion of orienteering, despite the competition of two Swedish champions of great world renown, the skier Ingemar Stenmark and the tennis player Bjorn Borg.

The IOF considers the appearance of orienteering on the sports programme of the Olympic Games to be very close. The last congress of the IOF decided to ask for the inclusion of ski-orienteering and orienteering on the programme for the Games of 1968 which will be held in Calgary (CAN) and Seoul (KOR), as demonstration sports. However, the

IOF authorities are so certain of success that there seems to be no doubt amongst them that the sport will be officially included on the programme of the Games in 1992. That is, from the XXVth Olympiad.



From the point of view of athletics, this sport should certainly not be overlooked. The competition consists of a race against time over a fairly mountainous course, (forests and prairies) unfamiliar to the participants, who must work out an itinerary and find their way back to the arrival point using only a compass. They must also pass through all the control points, scattered over the course, which they must also locate by means of the compass and a topographical map which they are handed at the moment of departure. Ski-orienteering, the winter version of the sport, is, needless to say, in the same category as cross-country skiing.

rhm sport has probably not, as yet, attracted the attention of Olympic philatelists. Nevertheless, three postal administrations have already provided material, which should open up philately to this truly remarkable sport. The first of these postal authorities was that of Sweden, which back in 1966 had already devoted two stamps to the first world winter championships, organized at Linköping : a 40 öre violet and Lake brown, and one at 2,80 crowns, green and violet. There are in fact four examples, since the 40 öre stamp was also issued in a booklet, with the wellknown perforation on three sides. The subject is a competitor running with a compass in his right hand and a map in his left.



This initiative was followed in 1974 by Denmark, which also issued two stamps with two different subjects: a 70 rare blue and brown, and an 60 øre brown and lilac blue.

Finally we come to Finland, which dedicated a stamp to the eighth world summer championships (1979). with a subject strongly resembling those adopted by Sweden and Denmark. The stamp is in several colours and has a facial value of 1,10 markkaa.

A fourth postal administration has, however, recently indicated a concrete interest. The world ski-orienteeing championships will take place in Italy in February, 1964 at Lavarone, the attractive and well equiped winter sports resort of Trentin. The Consulta Filatelica Italiana has just decided to devote a commemorative aerogram to this event, besides several different obliterations. The preworld competitions will also take place at Lavarone in February 1963 and these will offer a further occasion for a commemorative obliteration.

G. S. F.

