

MORNING FINALS

BY ROGER CLÉMENT

On the whole, the Federations concerned rejected the suggestion of bringing the finals of the major Olympic sports forward to the morning in the 1988 Games in Seoul. It is claimed that the athletes would have suffered from this reform... but their performances ? The debate is still open.

The early bird catches the worm. So popular wisdom would have it. This saying could be particularly true in the case of the competitors in the Seoul Olympics in 1988. American television has declared itself willing to double the sums it pays to the organisers to obtain broadcasting rights if the finals in the major Olympic sports (track and field, swimming, gymnastics) take place in the morning. Indeed, the spectacle of these finals would then appear live on American TV screens during peak viewing times.

This suggestion has not been given a very enthusiastic reception by the International Federations for the sports concerned. Would not the "morning calm" that gave Korea its poetic name be threatened by untimely finals at the start of the day? At all events, this ancient morning serenity seems to have found some stout defenders.

The most forceful argument of the Federation officials concerned is that the interest of the athletes must come first. The vast majority of officials, trainers and champions believe that the quality of results would suffer if the finals were brought forward to the morning. That was also our first thought. However, anxious to avoid all prejudice and preconceived ideas, we decided to investigate, to research into all the evidence available which would provide an answer to the question as to whether the athletes could compete in the morning in conditions which would not be injurious to them. Would it be "intolerable" to hold the finals of major Olympic sports in the morning ? Our investigation led us to look into sporting and Olympic history, into the coldly objective (and sometimes deceptive) lists of hard results, into the experiences of athletes, gymnasts and swimmers, both active and retired; to interrogate trainers, technicians and specialists in sports medicine and the new science of chronobio-

logy, still in its infancy; in short, all those who seemed best qualified to give an opinion.

It is very difficult in the case of gymnastics, a subjective sport, where marks are awarded, to measure the implication of the time of day a performance took place. The mark may indicate at least as much about the state of euphoria of the judge as it does about the form of the performer. This sport will therefore be excluded from the scope of this article. Material for investigation does however exist for those sports where results and records are precisely quantified, such as weightlifting, swimming and track and field.

Track and field has from the outset been a sport steadfastly attached to the afternoon and evening. Out of twenty one Olympic Games, the number of finals which took place in the morning is minimal. At Los Angeles in 1984, there was the famous "first", a women's marathon, which started at 8 o'clock in the morning and finished at 10:25 am for the finalist and a little later for those who followed. Long-distance runners are very keen on the benefits of evening races; nonetheless, Joan Benoit achieved, in spite of the heat at the end of the race, the second best world performance of all time, and those immediately behind her also achieved excellent results. No-one can say that they would not have run faster in the afternoon, but equally, no-one can say (and up to now no-one has) that they would.

It is also worth taking a look at the 50 km walk, also at Los Angeles, which started at 8 o'clock in the morning and finished just before 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Traditionally, four of the ten events of the Decathlon have always been held in the morning. Of course, such skimpy material is not sufficient to give much of an idea of the effect of a performance before noon on the form of an athlete.

The results of qualifying heats held in the morning could be examined next and may provide some valuable evidence.

There can be no serious comparison between the performances of the most brilliant finalists in the heats and their performances in the finals. In the heats, the champion is not trying to win, but merely to qualify - sometimes brilliantly, sometimes with something to spare. Anyone with a safety margin in the heats in the morning will always find it to his advantage to conserve his strength or, for tactical reasons, to keep the opposition in the dark.

In short, elements of strategy come into the picture, making comparisons difficult. It is also possible to draw conclusions, on the other hand, from the occasions when an athlete achieves a performance in a qualifying heat that he is unable to repeat in the final in the evening.

It will no doubt be remembered that in 1964, the unforgettable sprinter Bob Hayes, after strolling home in the heat in 10"4 at ten o'clock in the morning, then in 10"3 in the quarter finals at 2:40 pm, went on to achieve an excellent time of 9"9 in the semi-finals at 2:00 pm, before making his mark in the final one hour later in 10" flat. More important than the time of day in influencing these four results were, in addition to the degree of determination of the athlete and the way he sized up the opposition, the factors of temperature, humidity, and above all wind, which was blowing with the athletes at a speed of 5.30 m per second for the semi-final and 1 m per second for the final. The most influential external factor in the case of sprinting performances is undoubtedly not the time of day. The quality of the track, the temperature, the strength and direction of the wind, the humidity of the air, the atmospheric pressure, the altitude (do you remember the great records set up in Mexico in sprinting and jumping events - long jump and triple jump?) and, over 200 m and 400 m, the lane number, all play a more significant role. The organisers of the Seoul Games, in defending the principle of holding finals in the morning, are not unaware of these factors; indeed, if one is to go by a statement made in the Korean capital, they state that "from the 17th of September to the 2nd of October, the morning is generally cool and pleasant in Seoul, whereas the temperature and humidity level rise in the afternoon, making it inevitable that we hold the finals of outdoor sports such as track and field in the morning".

Inevitable is putting it too strongly, in this



GRETTE WAITZ: "DON'T THINK ABOUT IT"

The Swiss journalist and writer Noel Tamini, Chief Editor of the international running journal "Spiridon", was kind enough to lend us the proofs of a chapter of his book on running to be published shortly, in which he deals at length with questions of chronobiology linked with long distance racing.

In these extremely interesting pages, Mr. Tamini recalls the evidence of Circadian rhythms (biorhythms on a 24-hour cycle) which would our existence and to which we, like all living things, are subject. He quotes the European 400 m hurdling champion, Harald Schmid, who "refuses to stay in the Antilles" in the bad season and adds: "When I went to New Zealand in 1981, I did not feel at all comfortable".

The Norwegian, Grete Waitz, who came second in the women's Olympic marathon in Los Angeles, emphasises the psychological aspect of the problem: "I don't think about time differences. I think if you believe they have an influence on you, they will."

Mr. Tamini also reports on an experiment carried out at Liverpool Polytechnic. Swimmers were timed over different distances at different times of day, between 6:30 am and 10 pm, with adequate warm-ups beforehand. Over 100 m, an improvement of 3.5 % of the total swimming time was observed and over 400 m an improvement of 2.5 %.

Finally, Mr. Tamini develops the clinicians' view that introverts and extroverts have different efficiency curves in relations to the clock. According to this theory, introverts wake up more quickly in the morning, whereas at the end of the day extroverts experience an increase in energy levels. According to the studies quoted, it should therefore theoretically be possible to determine an optimal daily curve for each individual.

case ; but is it desirable ? That is a question worth discussing.

Certainly, the complaints about the women's marathon, inspired by the spectacular televised collapse of a Swiss competitor, insofar as they concerned the time of day, were to the effect that the sun was rather too strong at the end of the race, in other words everyone wished the ladies could have set off even earlier.

Before going any further, the impression gained after a detailed examination of the question is this : the times of competitions have not always been chosen with a sole view to the comfort of the athletes, but with the aim of attracting a large paying public. Just as duellists in olden times used to arrange to meet at dawn in order to avoid the curiosity of the public and the sanctions of the police, it has always been towards evening that the theatre, cinema, sport and their common denominator TV, have been able to attract the greatest audiences. To deny this would be perhaps to idealise too much the motivation of competition organisers, and also to misrepresent the athletes, who want to be seen, admired and encouraged and expect the greatest possible publicity for their feats. Professional boxing at its "gala hours", the finals at the end of the day, takes place just at the moment when the public, the business of the day completed, is most likely to go and relax in the sports stadium.

It is equally true that week-end programmes often offer a "matinee" on Sunday to follow the Saturday evening show. So far as we know, the delicate "inner clock" of the champion does not work differently on Sundays !

All of that makes no difference, it will be objected. Just because the interests of the athletes have sometimes been neglected in the past, that is no reason not to start defending them today. Similarly, no-one can deny that the great middle-distance runners are particularly fond of competitions in the cool of the late evening. Were not the finest middle-distance records over shorter and longer distances achieved in the idyllic setting of the dusk at the Septentrion ?

Distance athletes like it cool, sprinters like it hot, but both hate it humid.

Let us take to support this theory, some fine examples from the past: the races of Wilma Rudolph, the American black gazelle, Olympic champion in Rome in 1960 over 100 m and 200 m. In her heat at 9 o'clock in the morning, Wilma ran 100 m in 11"5, in the quarter finals at 3 o'clock

in the afternoon she ran it in the same time ; the next day in the semi-finals at 3 pm she ran 11"3 and then in the final at 420 pm with a following wind she achieved a time of 11" dead. Obviously, the tougher it gets, the harder the champion tries. The later the hour, the more Wilma felt she had wings on her feet

But over 200 m it was a different story ! Wilma Rudolph started with a brilliant time in her heat:



SEBASTIAN COE :
" INTOLERABLE " .

The British multiple world champion and double Olympic champion in the 1500 m put his point of view on morning finals during the SISMO meeting in November in Lausanne.

"As a competitor, a veteran of two Olympic Games, and a member of the Athletes Commission of the IOC, I would strenuously fight any pressure that was placed on the Organizing Committee of the Seoul Olympic Games to hold (as is rumoured) the finals of major sports such as athletics, gymnastics and Swimming at a time of day so as to furnish the Americans with prime-time viewing.

I am afraid that those closely involved with the preparation, coaching and administration and not least the competitors, would find this an intolerable intrusion into the integrity of a championship. Such events should never be staged and simply designed, simply to attract "Media" interest and coverage. While this is a recognized part of the equation, the wishes and requirements of the competitor should always be of paramount importance. It would be equally wrong of the IOC to be seen compromising itself and its principles in this matter."

INDEPENDENT VIEWS

23"2, then her performances fell off : 23"7 in the semi-final and 24" in the final (which she won, so great was her lead over the others). This decline could be put down to tiredness or nerves or even deliberate choice on the part of the athlete. The fact remains that her fastest 200 m was run early in the day.

We note, however, that when she achieved the time of 23"2 in the heat, the temperature in the

Rome stadium was at its highest and the humidity level at its lowest, whereas for the finals the reverse was the case: it was less warm and more humid, conditions which are not so good for warming the muscles and for the breathing of the athlete.

At these same Games in Rome, Irina Press won the 100 m hurdles in 10"8 in the evening with no wind, whereas she qualified in the heat in the morning, against the wind, in 10"7. In four

TIMETABLE OF OLYMPIC SWIMMING FINALS

Events	Tokyo 1964	Montreal 1976	Moscow 1980	Los Angeles 1984
Men				
100m	15.30	16.55	20.15	19.00
200m	16.00	16.50	20.10	16.00
400m	15.00	16.00	18.46	16.45
800m	16.40	17.15	20.20	17.50
1500m	13.20	18.00	17.30	18.55
3000 m steeplechase	16.50	18.25	19.15	19.05
5000m	16.05	17.50	18.35	19.30
10000 m	16.06	17.05	19.35	19.45
Marathon	13.06	17.30	17.15	17.00
4 x 100m	13.50	18.45	17.50	16.50
4 x 400m	14.50	19.20	18.50	17.50
110 m hurdles	15.50	17.50	19.00	18.05
400 m hurdles	16.00	17.30	19.55	18.55
20 km walk	15.20	17.30	17.00	17.15
50 km walk	12.20	*	17.00	08.00
High jump	14.00	16.30	16.30	16.30
long jump	15.00	15.00	17.50	17.40
Triple jump	14.30	15.00	18.40	18.00
Pole vault	13.00	12.30	16.30	16.10
Shot-put	15.06	15.00	18.35	18.00
Discus	14.30	15.00	17.30	17.30
Javelin	14.00	14.30	17.15	18.30
Hammer	13.00	14.00	17.00	16.10
Decathlon	17.00	18.20	20.20	18.55

Events	Tokyo 1964	Montreal 1976	Moscow 1980	Los Angeles 1984
Women				
100 m	16.20	17.50	19.40	18.35
200m	14.40	18.10	20.20	17.55
400m	15.40	16.20	20.20	17.20
800 m	15.30	18.20	18.10	17.35
1500m	.	17.30	18.05	18.20
3000m	.	.	.	18.40
10 000m
Marathon	.	.	.	08.00
4 x 100m	14.20	18.30	17.09	16.20
4 x 400m	.	19.00	18.20	17.20
100 m hurdles	15.20	15.00	19.15	18.15
400 m hurdles	.	.	.	16.25
High jump	14.00	14.00	18.00	16.00
Long jump	15.00	15.30	18.50	18.00
Shot-out	14.00	17.40	18.45	18.15
Discus	14.30	15.00	17.00	16.00
Javelin	14.06	15.00	17.20	18.15
Pentathlon	14.00	17.50	20.55	19.30

* Event not in the programme.

TIMETABLE OF OLYMPIC SWIMMING FINALS

Events	Tokyo	Montreal	Moscow	Los Angeles	Events	Tokyo	Montreal	Moscow	Los Angeles
	1964	1976	1980	1984					
Men					Women				
100 m freestyle	20.40	20.15	20.00	16.15	100 m freestyle	20.00	19.15	19.00	16.15
200 m freestyle	.	20.00	20.00	16.15	200 m freestyle	.	19.45	20.00	16.15
400 m freestyle	20.35	19.15	19.06	16.15	400 m freestyle	11.10	19.45	20.06	16.15
1500 m freestyle	21.05	19.30	19.00	16.15	800 m freestyle	.	19.00	18.30	16.15
100 m back stroke	.	19.30	19.00	16.15	100 m back stroke	20.20	19.30	18.30	16.15
200 m back stroke	20.20	20.30	20.06	16.15	200 m back stroke	.	20.00	18.30	16.15
100 m crawl	.	20.00	20.30	16.15	100 m crawl	.	19.15	18.30	16.15
200 m crawl	20.55	19.30	19.30	16.15	200 m crawl	20.20	19.45	18.30	16.15
100 m butterfly	.	19.15	18.30	16.15	100 m butterfly	19.35	19.30	18.30	16.15
200 m butterfly	11.35	19.30	19.09	16.15	200 m butterfly	.	20.45	20.00	16.15
200 m individual medley	*	*	*	16.15	200 m individual medley	21.35	20.00	20.00	16.15
400 m individual medley	20.40	19.30	19.09	16.15	4x 100 m relay	21.15	20.45	20.00	16.15
4 x 100 m relay	19.55	*	*	16.15	4 x 100 m medley relay	17.40	19.45	20.00	16.15
4 x 200 m relay	18.05	20.00	20.09	16.15					
4 x 100 m medley relay	19.55	20.00	20.00	16.15					
Diving					Diving				
Springboard diving	18.30	21.00	17.30	16.30	Springboard diving	10.00	21.00	17.30	16.30
Platform diving	10.00	20.00	17.30	10.09	Platform diving	17.00	21.45	17.30	16.30
Waterpolo					Synchronized swimming				
Waterpolo	16.00	19.06	17.00	19.30	Solo	.	.	.	13.30
					Duet	.	.	.	13.30

* Event not in the programme.

women's 100 m races, the American girls beat the world record in the heats in the early afternoon, but did not improve on their performances in the finals at 6 o'clock in the evening. Finally, the winner of the men's 100 m, Armin Hary, ran the distance in 10'2 at 10:30 am, then again at 5:30 pm, and in 10'3 at 1:40 pm.

For reasons connected with the organisation of their sport, swimmers do not feel ill-at-ease when it comes to taking to the water at dawn. In Australia, in the United States and in most other countries, swimming pools are closed to clubs at peak times, when they are reserved for school children and the paying public. During the entire school season,

competition swimmers, boys and girls, tackle their first training session of the day at 6 o'clock in the morning. The great Australian Olympic champion Shane Gould used to get up at five in the morning and her countrywoman Jenny Turrall an hour earlier still!

Tradition has it, however, that in the Games and in other competitions, only the qualifying heats are held in the morning and finals are held in the evening. Only an apparent oversight on the part of the organisers of the swimming events in the Tokyo Games led to two finals taking place before noon. It was on the 19th October 1964, last day of the swimming, and the women's 400 m freestyle,

followed by the men's 200 m butterfly, took place at 11 :10 and 11:35 am respectively.

The results were, to say the least, mixed in their implications. Over 400 m, a performance 6 seconds off her best time by the world record holder Marylin Remenafski lost her the gold medal to Jenny Duenkel, perhaps more of a "morning person" ?

The 200 m butterfly was a dream of a race : a world record for the winner, Ken Barry, second best world performance for Carl Robie in second place. A perfect result. The time of day had evidently done nothing to impair their ability.

In major swimming competitions, world or continental records rarely fall in the heats, although national records are often broken. Apart from the stars, who have nothing to gain from straining their talents and hold something back for the final, most swimmers have to give their all in the hope of qualifying. When they manage it, they can often do no better in the final.

Weightlifting is the third major summer Olympic sport to which we shall refer. The records give an exact picture. Until 1960, the programme contained six, and subsequently seven, categories, whose events took place over three days, non-stop. The events in three of the categories, bantamweight (56 kg), lightweight (67.5 kg), and light-heavyweight (82.5 kg), were held in the morning. In 1960, five world records and fourteen Olympic records were achieved in the morning events. Four years earlier, in Melbourne, sixty Olympic records and two out of a total of three world records fell before noon. Interestingly, the "evening" weightlifters did not do better.

There are plenty more examples of this kind. The experience of the stadium shows that the champion, by virtue of his state of preparedness, can take in his stride risks and difficulties which would handicap more severely a less highly trained organism. Is that the reason why doctors, who treat people in all physical conditions, are more cautious ? A whole school of "chronobiology" has been developing for some years, and science has succeeded in isolating a series of phenomena outlined here by Dr. Lob from the laboratory of industrial medicine in Lausanne : "A certain reduction in levels of vigilance and a greater frequency of industrial accidents have been observed at certain times of day".

Professor Hans Howald, head of the research institute of the Ecole Fédérale des Sports in Macolin, Switzerland, is one of the best-informed men in the

world on this subject He has worked in close co-operation with the Federation Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron (International Federation of Rowing Societies), FISA, which, in Los Angeles, held all its events, including finals, between 7:30 and 10 am. Lake Casitas became too choppy after mid morning.

What is the opinion of Pr. Howald, with all his experience ? "It is not possible to test precisely the relative capacity of an athlete at various times of day. This lies beyond the scope of science because it cannot be measured under laboratory conditions. Having said that by adjusting his preparations to a change of timetable, and changing the rhythm of his training, an athlete can reduce the handicap of a morning competition: in sporting terms, it is possible, there is no problem there. Of course, it will depend on the people. Some are in their best form in the morning, others wake up at night, etc."

"I have worked with a FISA group," went on Pr. Howald, "and it worked out very well in Los Angeles. That is not to say that general conclusions can be drawn from our experience. It is up to the Federations to make the decisions and the interest of the athletes should be the first consideration."

Nature governs men, and the weight of traditions also plays a part. It is difficult to go against long-standing habits. In absolute terms, anything is possible, and the best athletes in the world, faced with extraordinary difficulties, could overcome, thanks to a special approach, the handicap of finals held in the morning. Is the game worth the candle ? This article, which merely puts forward a point of view, stops short of a debate of that kind.



JUST REWARD

The President of the IOC, who will be present at the first World Indoor Games, will be presenting a bronze medal to the French 700 m hurdler Michéle Chardonnet at a ceremony taking the same form as the medal ceremonies of the Games of the XXIIIrd Olympiad.

On the basis of photographs of the finish enlarged twenty five times, the IAAF recognised last December that Michéle Chardonnet was well and truly equal third with the American girl Kim Turner last Summer.