

A PLEDGE FOR THE ATHLETE

by JEAN-PIERRE BOVAY

*"For the Greeks of the archaic ages, "machines"
belonged to the realm of fables and myths."*

H. Harrison

Twelve tons of equipment taking up a volume of eighty cubic metres and worth a million dollars, handled by thirty technicians with the assistance of local staff, such was the effort expended to ensure the smooth running of the athletics competitions at the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

If "machines" were something inconceivable for the Ancient Greeks, it might be feared that man on the eve of the 21st century has no clear notion of the technology, its systematization and application in the field of sport.

Describing and presenting the work of the researchers, craftsmen and workers involved in the timing of sports events is the aim of the exhibition concerned.

Confusion reigns at present between "sponsoring" which represents financial aid for a competition, and "services" which provide technical assistance.

"Sponsoring" is a punctual action. The "service" of timing is ever-present at all levels of competition. It represents a moral guarantee for the athlete and for that reason it cannot be defined by financial criteria, but only by technical criteria.

In situations of extreme physical and psychic stress, automatic timing provides an element of trust based on objectivity.

The direct information it gives puts the technical management of the competition in a "glass-house".

Even sitting in the lounge at home, each of us can appreciate the objectiveness of the results achieved.

This compels all competition services to act as true professionals. The athlete thus enjoys a position of equality towards his partners.

The study and research of new technology and precision are part of the ingrained motivations of the human being.

It is however unfortunate that the geometrical and physical conditions of the tracks and the architectural infrastructures have limitations which curb the pursuit of absolute timing. Too many performances are still shrouded in mystery. To improve the situation, measuring and information-processing equipment must be popularized. They must therefore be easy to install, handle and self-regulate.

Placing each athlete in time and space according to the same judgement criteria is the wish of the timing craftsmen and that is the message of the "Coliseum '32-'34" exhibition, *Ars et scientia temporis mensurae*.

J.-P.B.

We should finally like to mention a magnificent and richly illustrated book which recounts the thrilling technological development of timing in the service of sport. It can be purchased at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne for SFr. 38.—.

Mr. Jean-Pierre Bovay presenting Mr. Samaranch and Mr. Millet with the first copy of the book "Coliseum '32 - '84".

