

GIORGIO, OR OLYMPIC LOYALTY

By Donato Martucci

During a solemn ceremony on 11th November, the President of the Italian National Olympic Committee Mr Arrigo Gattai presented the Fiaccola Azzura — the Blue Torch — to Mr Giorgio De Stefani, member of the IOC in Italy. The trophy is a prize which the Association of Blue Athletes of Italy awards to a person who has made contributions of merit to sport. A previous recipient of this award is the IOC President, H.E. Mr Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Giorgio De Stefani, now aged 85, graduated in law and is a distinguished sporting personality both in Italy and throughout the world. Born in Verona on 24th February 1904 to a wealthy family, Giorgio right from his earliest years had a passion for tennis. In the country-house where he lived, on the banks of Lake Garda, there was a tennis court where, he explains, his mother played, even when she was pregnant. At 15 he won his first tournament in Montreux (SU). He found that he had to reconcile his studies with his passion for travel and for sport (he also loved climbing). He relates all of this in a biography recently published. His activity was truly exceptional for those times. In 1926 he made his debut as a reserve for the Davis Cup games. He remained on the team for thirteen consecutive years ; out of the 66 matches he played he won 44. He had the occasion to meet the greatest champions of those days: Tilden, Cochet, Lacoste, Borotra, Perry, Hopman. The Italian team twice triumphed over the legendary Australians. And in Milan in 1930, after defeating Harry Hopman, Giorgio was carried in triumph. In the course of his career he was the winner, in Italy and abroad, of 85 singles tournaments and 54 doubles. His playing style was quite unusual ; he was reputed to be ambidextrous and in fact he was. But he never used a backhand stroke : he would transfer the racket from one hand to the other and convert a backhand into a forehand stroke. The last time he played in the Davis Cup was in 1939. In 1940, with Italy now at war, he gave up his tournaments.

His long sporting life is packed with events which he relates without pride, but rather with discreet emotion. In 1934 he was invited to play in a tournament in Aus-



Mr Giorgio De Stefani with the 'Atleti azzuri' Trophy which has been presented to him in tribute to his career as a tennis player and his devotion to sport.



tralia and spent 34 days travelling on a British liner. He discovered to his delight that there was a tennis court on one of the decks, and so he was able to maintain his form during all those weeks. He went to India several times, as a guest of the celebrated Maharajas who enjoyed not only tennis but also tiger-hunting, which was then treated as a festive occasion but is now seen as cruel slaughter. Every trip was an adventure. How different things were then compared to today ! Now, tennis players can go from continent to continent in just a few hours.

After 1940, Giorgio worked in the technical section of the National Tennis Federation. In 1951 he was appointed member of the IOC in Italy, joining Count Paolo Thaon di Revel, who had been a member since 1932. He participated for the first time in an IOC session in 1952 (for the Games in Oslo); since then he has attended a good 46 sessions (he is one of the most assiduous members) and 22 Olympic Games (both Winter and Summer).

At national level, he was President of the Italian Tennis Federation for four consecutive two-year periods. He has three times been President of the International Federation.

In his capacity as an IOC member, Giorgio De Stefani is a full member of the National Council and of the Executive body of the Italian NOC. The Blue Athletes of Italy, and other organizations of ex-athletes, have been honoured to have him as president of their groups. Despite holding so many offices, just tribute to his excellent qualities as an athlete and manager, he was able to exercise to the full what is probably the most important function — that of the IOC member. Appointed to the Executive Board for the period 1964-1968, Giorgio has always fulfilled his duties to the letter. The task of representing the high interests of the Olympic movement is for him an article of faith. He is endowed with clear diplomacy, constant equanimity and a freedom of judgement which are unrivalled. Not a day goes by but we see important international organizations having to struggle to do their work because of interference or prevarication on account of private or international interests. If the IOC has avoided such dangers it is precisely because it has been able to count on a whole group of people just like our "Giorgio". He has incredible faith in the Olympic ideal and in the task with which he is entrusted. With scrupulousness, Giorgio keeps records, documents and mementos which he has dutifully collected over the years. His faith he has drawn from the town of Olympia; and from Mount Olympus, beloved of the gods, he has inherited that Olympic calm which has always been present in everything he does.

D. M.

FRANCO CARRARO ELECTED MAYOR OF ROME



Mr Franco Carraro, member of the IOC in Italy and new mayor of Rome.

Mr Franco Carraro, IOC member in Italy since 1982, was elected mayor of Rome on 18th December last. Previously the Italian Minister for Tourism, Mr Carraro, the first socialist mayor of Rome, is the tenth person to hold the mayoral office in the Italian capital since 1946. His election ends a nine-month interim period during which the Eternal City had been led by a "temporary commissioner", following the resignation of the previous mayor.

"I shall seek to create a city which is human, modern, efficient and pleasant to live in", declared the mayor as he accepted this new responsibility.

This election comes at a time when the city of Rome has to face a number of challenges, particularly the difficulties resulting from a high traffic density and, in six months from now, the World Cup football matches taking place in the Italian capital. It is not insignificant that the candidature chosen was that of Franco Carraro - who is the head of the Organizing Committee.

A former national water-skiing champion, Franco Carraro, who has just celebrated his fiftieth birthday, has headed both the Italian football league and the Italian National Olympic Committee.