

THE SPORTSMAN KING

The death on 17th January last of King Olav V of Norway at the age of eighty-seven years has cast a pall over the entire international sports community. He devoted his life to his country, Norway, and gave it distinction on several occasions, particularly in sport, winning an Olympic gold medal...



"My father, such a sweetly smiling hero..." For the Norwegian nation, in King Olav there was doubtless something of Victor Hugo's paternal hero. Enveloped in the snowy folds of a huge white shawl, he arrived in the land of the Vikings in the arms of his father Haakon VII, the first king of independence restored...an image which still haunts the memories of schoolboys and girls. Brought up on skis like every good Norwegian, he found his people on the school playing fields, experiencing at once the ups and downs of victory and defeat, the camaraderie of the team and the joys of sportsmanship with the equanimity which was to become proverbial. Adult, with his massive frame and the mettlesome spirit that we ascribe to legendary kings of old, he was well assured of popularity in a country in which sagas reign supreme and are the very foundations of the nation's history. Sport came naturally

to such a man. In England, where he continued his studies, he rowed for his Oxford college, Balliol and was a blue in sabre and épée for the university teams. But, a Norwegian first and foremost, he had his finest moments on skis and at the helm. He won many prizes in skiing competitions abroad and at home in the famous Nordic combined events at Holmenkollen, the sporting challenge par excellence for a top skier at the time, with a vertiginous leap over a frozen lake in a mountain cirque just outside the city of Oslo. However, it was as a sailor that he earned his real laurels. In Amsterdam in 1928, Crown Prince Olav won in 'Norna' Norway's first gold medal in the six metre class, since dropped

King Olav smiles after winning in the Norna in Amsterdam, 1928.



OBITUARIES

from the programme. It was during these Games that he met Princess Martha of Sweden, his future wife.

The Second World War turned the Norwegian Prince into the hero and champion of national resistance, even before he ascended the throne.

In 1948 at the Games in London, he was present once again, this time as a judge of the Olympic regattas in Torbay, Devon. Four years later, he was in Helsinki, in the same capacity. In 1953, he took the helm of a Norwegian yacht in a race entitled the "The New World Against the Old Continent" held in Oyster Bay, Long Island. Honorary President of the IYRU since 1958, he won a second place in the World Sailing Championships in 1976 at the age of seventy-three.

But for King Olav and his winter kingdom, of which he graciously and convivially shared the sovereignty with skiing, the greatest Olympic victory of all was doubtless to obtain on two occasions the Olympic Winter Games, to which he felt Norway had a rightful claim. In 1952, the death and funeral of the King of England prevented him and his father from attending the Opening Ceremony of the VI Winter Games in the Bislett Stadium at the heart of the capital, but in 1984, to support Lillehammer's bid, he made the journey to Sarajevo. In awarding him in 1981 his Olympic Order in gold, the IOC paid its most glowing tribute to one of the Movement's most illustrious followers, who, not so long ago, would still negotiate the snowy pistes in winter and take to the seas in more clement months.

A man who chose to give his all for Norway, he served both sport and Olympism no less well and history will not fail to record that both were intimately linked to his reign.

MAGDA JULIN

Magda Julin (SWE), Olympic champion in figure skating in 1920 at the Games in Antwerp and the grande dame of Swed-



The IOC President awarded the Olympic Order to the King in 1981.

ish sport, died in Stockholm on 21st December. The oldest Swedish gold medalist, born on 24th July 1894, at 96 Magda was as old as the IOC, and she remained active within the Olympic Movement all her life. As late as April 1990, the "Ice Princess", as she used to be dubbed by the Swedish press, was out skating in Oestersund on the occasion of the inauguration of a new indoor skating rink in order to support the city's bid for the 1998 Games.

She was also well remembered and loved for her typically sprightly performance during the NOC's 75th anniversary celebrations in 1988, when she received her pin from the IOC President Mr Samaranch with style and alacrity and regaled those present for the IOC Executive Board meeting in Stockholm with many a lively anecdote.

The daughter of the musical director Edouard Mauroy, she moved to Sweden from France with her family at the age of seven, winning her first of three national titles nine years later, and going on to take two Nordic championships.

Magda Julin in 1989.

