

Olympic Gold Medallists



KING CONSTANTINE OF GREECE

Sport was an integral part of the upbringing of the man who would one day reign over Greece, the birthplace of the Games and homeland of Olympism. Diadoch Constantine, an outstanding horseman, is also an excellent shooter, but he enjoys the pleasures of team sports such as basketball or hockey, as well. Keen to show the royal family's commitment to the Olympic Movement, he agreed to become president of the Hellenic Olympic Committee in 1957. As sailing is the favourite sport of

the royal family, in 1959 he took part in his first official regattas, winning the Panhellenic championships. The following year, he tried his hand at the Dragon class, entered international competitions and won the gold cup in Amsterdam. His greatest success, however, was winning the gold medal for Greece in the Dragon class yachting events of the Games of the XVII Olympiad, the only gold medal which the Greek delegation brought back from those Games.

OR : What is your earliest image of the Olympic Games?

Being a Greek, the Olympic Games were always important to me and I knew about them from the time I was very young. Visiting Olympia, the home of the Olympic Games, increased my feelings about the Olympics. But I became really interested during the Games of the Olympiad in Melbourne in 1956 and hoped that I would one day compete. My first interest was the equestrian events, and I spent a great deal of time on my horsemanship. My father then got me involved in sailing and yachting, starting me off with a small dinghy; from then on my interest changed. By the time we began preparing for the 1960 Games in Rome where I was to compete, I was practising six hours a day.

OR : What is your best memory or favourite anecdote from the Olympic Games?

In the racing event in which I took the gold medal, the competition last-

ed seven days. There were four days of competing, then three days off, and then a final three days. On the seventh day I was slightly ahead in points, and as I approached the starting line I passed a Greek journalist who shouted at me, "You have no right to lose. Greece has not won a gold medal in fifty years". I have never forgotten that message.

OR : In your opinion, what is the significance of the Centenary of the Olympic Games?

The fact that the Olympic Movement has lasted one hundred years shows how important it really is. It shows that countries which are adversaries in other areas can compete peacefully. And it unites the world. Through the United Nations, the Olympic Movement fosters the idea that for a few days before the start of the Olympic Games, during the Games and for a few days after, hostilities should come to a halt, and I hope that this will come into effect.

OR : What role do you feel sport and Olympism play in modern society?

King Constantine returning from Rome in 1960 accompanied by his sister, now Queen Sophia of Spain.



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Both provide the world with something positive. Sport helps to develop youth both mentally and physically and gives them a sense of accomplishment whether they participate in individual or team sports. Olympism has brought this sense of accomplishment to the world stage, and even the smallest country can produce a gold medal winner, which creates a feeling of pride. There is no doubt that Olympism has a positive effect on the

world's imagination from the opening to the closing ceremonies, and that it sets a standard of excellence.

OR : What message would you like to give to today's youth?

To participate in the Olympics is a great honour. To win a medal is a great accomplishment. But this is not only true in the Olympics. It is true in any sporting competition. Sport builds the mind and body. It is not always

necessary to win to feel a measure of accomplishment. Equally or more importantly, I urge young people to avoid one of society's greatest problems: drug abuse. I have personally seen the havoc which it can cause within a family, and it violates every principle which the Olympic Movement has always stood for.

