

Participants in the Olympic Games



SYLVIO DE MAGALHAES PADILHA

A top-level athlete, Major Sylvio de Magalhaes Padilha was Brazilian and South American athletics champion. His achievements include some famous victories, as well as records in the 100m, 200m, 400m, 4x100m, 110, 200 and 400m hurdles, and in the high jump, which earned him the Helms Trophy in 1939 as the South American athlete of the year. A 400m hurdles finalist at the Games of the XI Olympiad in Berlin in 1936, he also performed in Los Angeles four years earlier with the Brazilian team. Later, he left track and won the Brazilian championship in basketball. An ar-

my officer by career and an athlete by vocation, he never left the Olympic Movement, since he headed the Brazilian Olympic delegation at the 1948 Games in London and acted on several occasions as chef de mission at the Games. In 1963, he was elected president of the Brazilian NOC and directed the organization of the IV Panamerican Games in São Paulo and the University Games in Porto Alegre. Coopted by the IOC in the same year, he went on to become a member of several commissions before serving two terms on the Executive Board.



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

The first time I took part in the Olympic Games was in 1932 in Los Angeles. It was very exciting. This was my first trip outside South America. I was 22 years old and I was going to take part in an extremely important event. The journey by ship was a twenty-day-long adventure, especially for people like me who get seasick. It was very tiresome.

As much as I tried to image the Olympic village, I only got the real flavour of it when I arrived. It was quite an experience to have the chance to live together, in peace and harmony, with athletes from all over the world. The means of transportation were not perfect at that time, so we had to discover many new things on our own. My first impressions are still the same. The fraternity, respect, will-power and desire to surpass their own limits are what drive all participants.

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

As far as I can remember, the most unusual thing that happened to me was during the finals of the 400 meters with hurdles in 1936 in Berlin, the second time I participated in the Olympic Games. I was one of only six athletes from all over the world. The tension was enormous. The responsibility was even more enormous owing to the fact that my country's name was going to be mentioned in a track and field final for the first time in the whole history of the Olympic Games. I did my warm up and went to my lane. But, when I started to remove the bottom part of my sweatsuit, I realized that I was wearing no shorts. I confess that I cannot remember how I managed to solve that problem in time to start.

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

How many international events last for more than a century with such strength? The Olympic Games are an example of an enterprise which, although its foundations lie in the past, has been very capable of updating and maintaining its ideals in the modern world.

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

The role played by sport which is most interesting to me is that sport is a form of discipline and a vital element in mental and physical health. Sports are also a form of enjoyment and an important way for people to live peacefully together.

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

I advise them to work toward making sport an increasingly indispensable part of life [...] and above all, a means of settling disputes and eliminating war in all forms.