

The 1932 Lake Placid Winter Games: Dewey's Olympics

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Most of those who deem themselves fairly well acquainted with Olympic history hardly ever think of Winter Olympic matters, let alone write their histories. We all know the controversy surrounding the Italian marathon runner, Dorando, at the 1908 London Games, but how familiar are we with the arguments over the introduction of ice skating? The German Games of 1916 were cancelled because of the war, but how many know that skiing events were planned for the Black Forest for the Winter Games that year? Jesse Owens may be the most familiar of all Olympic figures, but it is remarkable that even the well informed do not realize that the 1936 Garmisch Partenkirchen Games were the first to hold women's ski events, and the first to include the events which we now most associate with Alpine skiing, downhill and slalom. I exaggerate, of course, but I have a feeling that Winter Olympic knowledge rises dramatically every four years and then is almost forgotten. Presently we are on the downhill piste from the recent mega-televised Lillehammer Games. In contrast to recent Winter Games, these have been judged a success, interestingly, not by who was victorious, not by which nation accumulated the most medals, but by individual performance not necessarily associated with victory and records: Katerina Witt singing for Sarajevo, Dan Jansen taking his victory lap with his daughter in his arms, and, most importantly, by the crowd - 'it was a sporting crowd'. What brought about this change? One could posit that this was the first Winter Olympics in a new, unifying Europe and, therefore, political boundaries--i.e. national representation--was not so important and, hence, the crowd could cheer equally for Alaskan or Austrian.¹ One could trace the *Idraet* tradition of the Norwegians and see in Lillehammer the national ski culture in operation, something which would be unattainable in lands where skiing is merely a sport (i.e. everywhere else). And one could supply enough reasons to show that for Americans it really hardly matters who wins and who loses, not in the Baron's ideal of taking part which matters, but in the sense that Americans simply

are not that interested in skiing.

And yet the United States has been one of only two countries (France is the other) to have hosted the Winter Olympics three times: 1932, 1960, and 1984, and Salt Lake City will do so in 2002. This paper concerns only the skiing events of the 1932 Olympic Games held at Lake Placid, a community of 3,000 in the Adirondak Mountains, about 300 miles north of New York City, about two and one half hours south by train from Montreal. Almost single-handedly the Games were brought to Lake Placid by Dr. Godfrey Dewey, officially Vice President of the Lake Placid Club--a social and highly selective private club--but de facto very much in charge of it. His father, Melvil Dewey, of Dewey Decimal library cataloging fame and founder of the Club, died in 1931. It is my contention that Godfrey Dewey's real goal was to make Lake Placid into America's St. Moritz,² and make his Club--it had 1,500 beds available --into the premier winter sports center in the U.S. and rival to any in Europe. Analysis of the historical background of both European Olympic skiing and United States participation in prior Winter Games will give some understanding of how it was possible for Dewey to be successful, but it will not alone explain how the Games of 1932 at Lake Placid can be called Dewey's Olympics.

General societal and sporting changes which took place after World War I bear on these Olympics: a beginning acceptance by much of the skiing world of the alpine 'disciplines'--downhill and slalom. This aroused emotional arguments which spread to a number of other matters, probably most vexing of which was the amateur-professional debate. The skiing world divided between those which remained 'nordic' and those which became 'alpine'. This was not a matter of mere technique; the arguments contained a clash of philosophy. Norwegian *Ski-Idraet* appeared "good," "true," healthy," something one grew up with and, above all, "real." Alpine skiing was "social," expensive, what detractors called "hotelsport," and so invented that it required teaching. Yet, by 1930, the jump--the most man manipulated of all skiing events--had become the centerpiece of any Norwegian competition. Length had always been important, but in the *Idraet* view, "style" mattered more, and an elaborate system of points had been thrashed out by Norwegians and Swedes, and then zealously guarded by the

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Norwegians. It is no mistake that the classic Lake Placid poster features a jumper; these were the last Games which were 'nordic' only. They were the last games in which there were no skiing events for women. They provide on one level a last look at a nordic-only tradition. They also provide a good view on the insider debates at that precise moment when skiing was changing to its modern mode. But they do not, alone, explain why these may be called Dewey's Olympics.

Financial considerations loom large right from the start of all Olympics, but Winter Olympics have to provide facilities--contrary to summer Games--which are bound to have minimum use: ski jumps and bob runs. In the years before air transport, the United States was so far from the more normal venues of winter sports and, therefore, very costly to attend. Money could be found for athletics--part of the traditional Olympic canon, but for skiing? It was so new, so social and elite, or so it seemed to many.

All Olympic Games have political factors with which to contend, but before 1936 these were essentially municipal, regional and nation-wide, and no country which had held them before (France 1924, Switzerland 1928) was so wide as the United States. Lake Placid, itself, was a small community dominated absolutely by the Lake Placid Club. The village was connected to a few other small villages by a meager road system and a railroad line. In between were vast, forested mountain lands owned by the State of New York and by law bound to be "Forever Wild."³ The political issues involved in ensuring the Games a success had to encompass these factors peculiar to the United States.

Since the International Olympic Committee (IOC) always awarded the Games to particular cities, mayors and municipal leadership provided the initial impetus to obtain the Games. In the case of 1932, the impetus for hosting the Winter Games came from elsewhere--the Lake Placid Club management--and local municipalities were then conjoined, not necessarily unwillingly, into supporting the Club's bid to bring the Games to Lake Placid. But the IOC was not in charge of ski events. That duty lay with the Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS) and, therefore, Lake Placid's representatives had to convince these two European bodies (European in spite of their avowed international quality) of their fitness of site as well as the ability to

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provide for, administer efficiently, and officiate fairly the international skiing events.

These tasks rested essentially on Dr. Godfrey Dewey. After the Games were concluded, IOC President, Count de Baillet-Latour wrote a congratulatory letter to Dewey which was published in the Official Report. Speaking conservatively, he told Dewey, the Europeans "were more than pleased at the plans made for staging the Games in Lake Placid, facilities for the conduct of the sports, and other arrangements." He thanked the local communities for their share of the burden, and wanted Dewey to "know how I feel about the exceptional manner in which this obligation was discharged, a great task masterfully handled."⁴

The Technical Committee of the FIS also tendered its judgement which, however, was not published in the Official Report. "Too big burdens were undoubtedly laid on a few men's shoulders, and those did not manage to perform all that was up to them. They also lacked skilled helpers possessing knowledge and initiative. The arrangements of the skiing contests," the report concluded, "must be termed unsatisfactory due to the fact that management was not entrusted to experts."⁵

This was the official way of laying blame on Dr. Godfrey Dewey, Chairman of the Winter Olympic Games Committee which he dominated in the same way that he dominated his own Lake Placid Club. Indeed, his right hand man, Henry W. Hicks, was Secretary of the Club, and his Club Director of Winter Sports laid out the cross-country trails. Just as the Club dominated the village of Lake Placid, so Dewey felt that he could dominate the Committee and other Olympic organizations. Outside of his personal control were three factors: The international problems inherent in the Winter Olympic Games and in skiing particularly; administrative conflicts within regions and institutions of the United States; last, the vast amounts of money raised by people and institutions over which he had no control and to whom Dewey found it difficult at times to be civil. These are the three major factors which will be analyzed in this paper. It is well to remind readers that Dewey was not responsible for the lack of snow that year--something which the FIS report also acknowledged--neither was he responsible for the Depression. Last, once the International

Olympic Committee had voted the Games to Lake Placid, there was an inevitability of their taking place although, as we all shall see, not necessarily at Lake Placid.

Godfrey Dewey was in most ways unsuited for the job of managing the world event, but he had one outstanding characteristic which often times played against him, but in the final analysis was responsible for the 1932 Winter Games being Godfrey Dewey's Olympics: a meddling stubbornness to see things through his own way. He changed the artist's designs on the medals, he dealt in the minutiae of bureaucracy such as giving permission to a local high school principal to bring his students over on certain days for a reduced price, he chose Bjorn Blix, already under his thumb as Club Instructor, to make the rounds of Europe. These were matters he dealt with just as if he were at the Lake Placid Club. No one questioned his authority there, neither did they here. In fact they expected it. Over money, prestige, and institutions associated with the Games, he contested criticisms and arguments at all levels, international, national, state, regional and local.

The International Skiing Background to 1932

The FIS, and particularly the Norwegian dominated Scandinavian members suspected all along that Americans would be incapable of managing such an involved skiing and winter sporting event. Partially this was because skiing itself had a checkered Olympic history. Although Winter Games had been included in Baron Pierre de Coubertin's original Charter of 1894, skiing was only seriously proposed in 1910 but was given short shrift, particularly by the Swedes, who refused to consider skiing because of their own Nordic Games, which they also refused to turn into Olympic Games.⁶

The IOC then proposed skiing as one of the optional sports, and the Germans, with support from Norwegians but not from Swedes, planned on cross-country and jumping competitions in the Black Forest in 1916 but the war intervened.⁷ The question of winter games, winter sports and Winter Olympics was discussed at various sessions but little was resolved by 1920. Coubertin penciled in notes on one protocol, "Les sports d'hiver sont douteux."⁸

The IOC felt increasing pressure to award the 1924 Games to France, "victor and martyr" of World War I. From the Club Alpin Français came support for winter activities. Meanwhile, the Scandinavians had banded together and sent a warning to the IOC that if skiing were included, they would not attend the festival in Chamonix.⁹ At its meeting in Lausanne in 1922, the IOC decided that under its patronage there would be Games, but they were not to be thought of as "Olympic" and that "champions had no right to medals."¹⁰ The Games might be considered, then, merely an extension of the International Weeks of winter sporting which had begun in 1907. The Scandinavians did not approve of this but had gone along with the contract signed with Chamonix (Gérardmer and Superbagnères were mildly considered) on 20 February 1923,¹¹ since they were assured they were not going to be Olympic Games. "It is absolutely essential," wrote Siegfried Edström, the Swedish President of the IOC to French representative Baron W. de Clary, "that the Winter Games do not take on the character of the Olympic Games," but to characterize them as "international" would ensure Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish participation.¹² All parties involved kept this international, as opposed to Olympic, front while the Games were in preparation. The Winter Sports Week was "not an integral part of the Olympic Games," confirmed Frantz-Reichel, the Secretary of the Committee overseeing the plans and installations for Chamonix.¹³ As the opening of the Games drew closer, the difference between an international sports week and a Winter Olympic Games became increasingly blurred, even in the Executive Committee of the IOC.¹⁴

In spite of the admitted success of the Chamonix organization - one Scandinavian even admitting it might serve as a model for the Northern Games¹⁵ - representatives from the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish Ski Associations met in Stockholm on 5 June 1924 to send a strong message that "skiing, as other winter sports must not be part of the Olympic Games."¹⁶ A year later, though, they could no longer hold out, and agreed to the IOC's decision at their Prague meeting that Chamonix should be the First Winter Olympic Games.¹⁷ They remained suspicious of what the Swiss might provide at St. Moritz.

The administrative difficulty involved in having Winter

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Games in a different country than the Summer Games, let alone split between two venues within one country caused much “agitation,” to use de Coubertin’s word in a 1925 letter.¹⁸ The decision for Switzerland was made, finally, at the IOC’s Lisbon meeting on 6 May 1926. As late as 4 January 1927, (i.e. about one year before Games would open), the IOC’s Executive Committee was warning the Swiss Organizing Committee not to split the Games up: St. Moritz was favored by the skiers, Davos by the skaters.¹⁹

Meanwhile the Norwegians remained wary of the Games, and only with persuasion entered the contests. Besides a distrust of continental management, they were uniformly critical of the British who appealed for the inclusion of ‘Downhill’ and ‘Slalom’ into the program. By the 1928 Congress, held in St. Moritz after spectacular Norwegian successes (3 Firsts, 3 Seconds, and 2 Thirds in the four skiing events), they were, perhaps, prepared to be magnanimous. Even Captain Oestgaard, most vocal Norwegian critic of these Anglo-Saxon skiing inventions, showed only mild contempt in agreeing that the two British events should be given a fair trial in the future.²⁰

After the 1928 Games, Norway appeared to be back in its commanding position in international skiing administration, mores and culture, constantly proved by “articles in the foreign press, by requests for instructors from nearly all the skiing nations in Europe and even in Asia, by increased ski export and by many other things,” judged a Swedish friend of the alpine disciplines.²¹

And then the IOC had decided for the United States in 1932. If Scandinavians had had doubts about whether the Swiss would be able to manage the winter Olympic events, they were dismayed to think of what Americans might do to their sport.²² Suggestions for venues, with the necessary guarantees, were to be delivered to the IOC by 1 January 1929.²³

The Chamonix ‘week’ had separated out skiing from the other winter games and sports.²⁴ With the Norwegians firmly in control--they had sponsored international ski congresses whose presidents and secretaries had all been Norwegians since 1910--the Fédération Internationale de Ski was founded on 2 February with sixteen member countries.²⁵ At the IOC’s Prague

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meeting the next year, the FIS had been given jurisdiction over the ski events. Once the IOC had voted for Lake Placid, the 1930 FIS Congress in Oslo, therefore, assumed great importance for the United States.

Representing the National Ski Association of America (NSA) as well as the III Winter Olympic Games Committee was Fred Harris, one of the United States Eastern Amateur Ski Association’s (USEASA) founders and Secretary of the NSA.²⁶ He circulated profiles of the Intervale Jumping Hill among the delegates and heard not a word of criticism. Plans for two 50 km cross-country courses were favorably received with the Sentinel route preferred. However, a special committee of three was formed to look over all the plans and then stated conditions for FIS participation:

1) Specific dates:

- 10 February: 17 km Individual and Combined
- 11 February: Jumping for the Combined
- 12 February: The major Jumping event
- 13 February: 50 km event

(The U.S. had suggested dates avoiding Lincoln’s and Washington’s birthdays).

2) All delegates and competitors be housed at Lake Placid, not at Saranac Lake, a village ten miles away.

3) The Olympic Organizing Committee was instructed to deal with each nation with regards to financial conditions.

4) In the place of the 3-man technical committee, a 5-man committee would be in lake Placid two or three weeks before the Games to make sure that all details were satisfactorily in hand. Harris questioned this new committee and received only a thinly veiled reply which indicated the obvious distrust the FIS had of American expertise.

Harris asked that all documents be printed in English, since it was important that United States officials know the rules! This was agreed to, but not the minutes of meetings and the like because of the expense. Ever since Harris had arrived at the meeting, “the matter of expense has been dinned into my ears.” Serious hope was accorded the rumor that the United States might send a boat over to pick up all the European teams and officials. Only the Japanese said nothing about

expenses.

The delegates balked at Harris' proposal that per diem expenses would come to \$6, \$5, and \$4. The Swiss hoteliers charged at the most \$2 a day for international meets, the Swedes wondered if Swedish-Americans could help. The Germans pleaded poverty: all against the prospective ticket charges of \$10. Since New York City was so near, it was believed Lake Placid would make a killing. Harris was unable to judge how sincere the poverty pleas were, but he was clear that "this was a studied attempt to get as much out of us as they can." On the strength of the formal and informal discussions, Harris advised lowering the \$6-\$4 per diem rate for the matter of expense "will decide the success of the games as far as foreign entries are concerned." Only the Finns, for example, were actively looking to train in the U.S.

The decision to hold the next Congress in the United States was deferred. Harris took this as "an attempt to hold a club over our heads." Yet, in spite of the language difficulties, general mistrust of U.S. abilities, looming world-wide economic disruptions, Harris came away from the Oslo meeting feeling secure that the Europeans would support the Lake Placid Olympics.

American Skiing Background to 1932

Within the United States, American-Scandinavian ski relationships had a history of unease from almost the very start. Norwegian immigrants, imbued with homeland Idraet ideals, had not been able to keep American materialism at bay; the best jumpers in the U.S., all immigrants, had actually struck for more prize money in 1907! Cross-country races, deemed such an important part of an all-round Idraetsmann found little favor in the United States. In the 1920s the already weakening center of control of American skiing, the Midwestern, Norwegian immigrant dominated, National Ski Association, found itself outmaneuvered and almost taken over by the USEASA, one of its five regional associations. It was this NSA which had sent a team--mostly ex-professionals--to Chamonix in 1924.²⁷

The team had journeyed to France under the manager, George E. Leach, the Mayor of Minneapolis. He appears only to have had an interest in securing a future

Winter Games for his city.²⁸ He saw his men only four times during the Games and paid scant attention to one who had broken his leg. It was enough to make Fred Harris' blood curdle, as he reported to the U.S. Eastern Amateur Ski Association.²⁹

'Eastern', as the USEASA was called, was determined to have some say, even control, over skiing, and over Olympic team matters in the future. The NSA never bothered to reply to (Eastern's) queries on team and funding possibilities for the 1928 Games. Godfrey Dewey arranged to act as manager of the U.S. team, when and if one were to be chosen. Eastern did the choosing and Dewey accompanied the team to St. Moritz. His real reason was to sound out the possibilities for the U.S. to host the 1932 Winter Games and, as Eastern's Executive Committee put it, to host them "within the territory of the Eastern Association if any member club qualify for the responsibility."³⁰ There was only one place where this was remotely possible: Lake Placid.

In fact, seven venues across the U.S., as well as Montreal in Canada, put their cases before the IOC meeting in Lausanne in April 1929. There were two from the East: Bear Mountain and Lake Placid, both in New York. Duluth and Minneapolis in the Midwest, Denver in the Rockies, and Yosemite and Lake Tahoe in California.³¹ The only serious contenders were California and Lake Placid.

The rivalry between the two was a rivalry between Dewey and William May Garland, President of the California X Olympic Association. After the bids had been sent to Lausanne, the Californian X Olympiad Association immediately passed a resolution to petition the IOC and International Winter Sports Federations to approve the Winter Games for California.³² Dewey wrote a long letter to William May Garland maintaining that he was "not primarily concerned with bringing the Olympic Winter Games of 1932 to Lake Placid" but going on to point out that California's development was new, that there had been no sanctioned tournaments. He was loath, he went on "to be placed in a position of urging our superior facilities and long experience in winter sports against the express desire of California," which, of course, he was quite prepared to do! Garland's reply was one Dewey could not argue with: "Let the best man win." In February,

Dewey was hoping for “helpful cooperation rather than possible hurtful rivalry,” but rivalry there was as five Californian representatives went to Lausanne to argue their case. But, as Dewey knew well, the lack of experience in California of ski administration favored Lake Placid’s twenty-four years of organization.³³ This twenty-four years was not, in fact, Lake Placid’s at all, but the Lake Placid Club’s record, but in Lausanne, and elsewhere, this distinction was no longer being drawn. And Dewey, as head of the Lake Placid Club, had already metamorphosed himself into the head of Lake Placid, the Olympic Winter Games Committee, speaking for Eastern, the NSA and just about everything else. Only very occasionally did he find himself making remarks that he was not qualified to give a judgment on that, and usually only when, such as on the business of making a luge run, he did not wish it!³⁴

Even when the bid from Montreal was faulted, a number of IOC members wanted to send a special commission to Canada and to the United States to see for themselves. They just did not believe that any venue would be able to handle the Winter Games. Besides, there was the always reassuring comfort in knowing that the Norwegian representative had offered his country should it become necessary.³⁵

The vote went, however, to Lake Placid, much to the disgust of the Californians. Rival games were promised, and others continued to campaign for Olympic events in the Tahoe region. The California State Legislature appropriated \$55,000 for the state to be “the scene of the 1932 Olympic Winter events,” and editorials echoed the Olympic theme, much to the increasing frustration of Dewey.³⁶

Financing problems

Dewey also ran foul of the American Olympic Association (AOA) and in particular he had arguments with Avery Brundage, its president, and with Gustavus Town Kirby, its past president.³⁷ Misunderstandings and increasing financial difficulties as the Games approached caused harsh words. In July 1931 Dewey complained not merely of the refusal of the AOA to cooperate but of some members actively attempting to cripple his independent fund raising efforts.³⁸ Brundage never had any faith in Dewey’s efforts; they

were “doomed to failure,” just as he had told Dewey the previous January. Brundage objected strongly when Dewey pre-empted the AOA’s own fund raising. By this time Dewey would have no luck with Brundage. “The failure of the National Olympic Committee to and or support financially the Organizing Committee for the Games is utterly unprecedented.” Yet the two committees had to get on, and after reminding Dewey that the particular problem was over a \$1000 donation from a man who lived 500 miles away from Lake Placid, the matter rested until it was Dewey’s turn to raise objections.³⁹ This time he had received solicitations from the AOA under the signature of the President of the United States, Herbert Hoover. There was no mention of the Winter Games! Brundage replied that it was impossible to recall the President’s letter, and then added, “I’m sorry I can’t eradicate from your mind that someone in the American Olympic Committee is not friendly to the Lake Placid Organizing Committee.”⁴⁰

In the summer of 1931 further antagonism was brought on over a brochure. “Setting the Stage for III Olympic Winter Games,” prominently set out a letter from Hoover to Dewey as President of the III Olympic Winter Games Committee. This appeared to spike the financial fund raising efforts of the American Olympic Committee, pre-empt the AOA and be a slap in the face to Gustavus Kirby who believed that it was he who had been responsible for IOC recognition of Dewey, and that a letter from Hoover had been his idea in the first place.⁴¹

This was all going on as the dispute over the official Winter Games souvenir book loomed. Brundage objected to the commercial nature of the booklet, that the publisher had been permitted to use the Olympic insignia. Dewey regretted the difference in judgment, he wrote to Brundage, but financially it would have been impossible without the advertising.⁴²

However, the biggest financial concern was the deteriorating relationship Dewey maintained with the State of New York and particularly with its Governor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, mostly over the building of facilities. \$125,000--down from \$150,000 because of the Depression--had been appropriated on the understanding that most of it would be for the construction of the bob run. In 1931 Dewey proposed

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that a further \$375,000--down from a planned \$400,000--be appropriated by the State for an arena. On 9 February, with the Games exactly a year away, the Governor questioned the right of the State to construct a permanent building which would only be in official use for one week and then revert to local use thereafter. Kirby wrote to FDR to make the case that the building would be for the people of New York State and it would keep New York in the forefront of winter sports development. Dewey tried to get others to lobby FDR and wrote an urgent letter to the Governor which was not appreciated. "Frankly," replied Roosevelt, "I somewhat resent the tone of your letter." Dewey backed down...and the \$375,000 was appropriated.⁴³

As the Autumn before the opening of the contests came on, Dewey had growing worries over participation in the Games. Sixty-five nations had been formally invited, but in October Dewey felt it necessary to see if international support could bolster acceptance to compete.⁴⁴ He appointed Bjorn Blix (who had instructed at the Lake Placid Club), the "international secretary of our Committee" to make the rounds of the National Olympic Committees in Europe for three months.⁴⁵ After some problems with the Norwegians, especially the skaters, Blix assured Dewey that fifteen skiers would come, the Czechs would send four, perhaps six, Germany's team would total thirty. The Swedes, too, would send a team, but they lobbied for postponement of the Games. If all this showed at least some positive response, Blix tried to extract more money for his work. Dewey was furious and warned Blix against taking any legal action.⁴⁶

There were efforts to obtain Fridtjof Nansens's endorsement of Lake Placid,⁴⁷ to bring over Crown Prince Olay,⁴⁸ to get Charles Lindbergh to carry the first day's special commemorative stamped mail from Lake Placid,⁴⁹ and to have President Hoover open the Games⁵⁰. None of these were achieved.

There were further calls for postponement from the Swedes, the Dutch cried off for financial reasons, the German hockey team became doubtful. There were complaints from the Spaniards over language, and Dewey then called in the IOC for help. President Count de Baillet-Latour was able to reverse the Dutch decision, and the German hockey team did eventually participate.⁵¹ But the IOC president was not able to

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ensure more participation. Dewey then lowered the daily rate for participants by \$1 a day.⁵² Still, only sixteen nations came to an Adirondaks bereft of snow.

Dewey had offers of help from Ernest des Bailleys, an old Lake Placid European habitue-instructor, and at that time prominent in Californian ski development at Yosemite. Dewey had also met with the fourteen European journalists that the Carnegie Endowment for Peace had brought over; he had refused Milana Jank a role in the Olympics, partially because he saw her expertise as 'alpine'; he became involved in motivating German-Americans to bring over the hockey team; he had to assure an Austrian journalist, writing for three Viennese dailies (as late as 19 October 1931) that the Winter Olympics would be held as planned; he assured a local high school principal that lower prices would be available for his students on certain days; he settled the question of whether Swiss naturalized Americans could be a bob-team; he changed the design on the medals; and he was taken to task by the Baron himself, for not keeping in touch with him!⁵³

Two of the thirteen major criticisms of the FIS report were the "necessity of referring questions partly economic, partly technical to Dr. Godfrey Dewey," and that the Lake Placid Club was not a sporting club.⁵⁴ Here were the core problems around which all others circulated, some enormous, others as minuscule as when the Norwegian jumpers refused to jump because a professional was doing the tramping of the snow.⁵⁵ The professional was Erling Strom, the Norwegian instructor at the Lake Placid Club. The resolution could only be handled by Dewey, hence he was required here, there and everywhere, and all the time.

If this was Dewey's Olympics, his wish was to make the Lake Placid Club the center of American skiing. He must have been heartened to receive a postcard in April 1931 from the president of the Kanaya Hotel in Nikko, Japan, showing "Lake Placid and Dragon Pavillion," so named because the president had enjoyed two visits to the Adirondaks.⁵⁶ After the Games were over he admitted to a friend, "You are quite right that we have still to achieve the society prestige of present day St. Moritz, but on winter sports themselves, we have all and more, or at least better, than they can offer."⁵⁷ The first part of the sentence was certainly true. Lake Placid Club members were mostly from

Eastern moneyed families, white and Christian, people who enjoyed Yuletide festival and skjoring on the golf course, where collegiate competitions were designated “amusements.”⁵⁹ Only a small part of ‘society’ was prepared not to smoke, flaunt their jewelry and certainly not to indulge in “rekles skiing”--any one of which could mean expulsion from the Club.⁶⁰

As far as the remark on winter sports was concerned, this was not true. Dewey was brought up in the Norwegian tradition to which his father and he then added a wealthy collegiate ambience. Instructing at the Club had been Hans Jacobsen (1918- 19), Ornulf Poulsen (who acted as Harris’ translator at the Oslo FIS meeting), Gustav Sundt, Erling Strom and Bjorn Blix. Other glamorous, non-Norwegians gave a different ambience to the Club: Swiss from St. Moritz (where else?), the Marquis d’Albizzi, half Russian, ex Alpine veteran, and Barry Caulfeild gave the right British accent to things. Dewey refused to acknowledge the growing alpine movements.

The self-imposed task of controlling the Winter Olympic bid, constructing the venues, and managing the event did not make Lake Placid, and certainly not the Lake Placid Club into America’s St. Moritz. The skiing future did not belong to logging roads through the woods, but to the downhill piste. The skiing venue in the 1930’s was actually more in New England than in up state New York but would soon move to the Rocky Mountains with their spectacular mile runs above tree line and assured snow. The skiing public of the future would not be the exclusive to whom the Lake Placid Club catered, but a public far more egalitarian and determined to make its own fun rather than be directed by an autocrat.

Dewey’s stubbornness won the Lake Placid Club its 1932 Olympics, one remembered for the appalling conditions, lack of participation and, for those knowledgeable in skiing matters, to use the words of the FIS report, “the necessity of referring questions...to Dr. Godfrey Dewey.” Let that serve for his epitaph.

Endnotes

1. Compare the 1930 reception Norwegians gave Sven Utterstrom, the Swedish winner of the 50 kilometer race in Oslo in which he beat his hosts by more than a

minute. “There was nothing but silence” from the crowd “not a cheer.” Letter, Fred Harris to Godfrey Dewey, Oslo, 4 March 1930. TMS Dewey Archive, Lake Placid Historical Society, Lake Placid, NY. Hereafter DA.

2. This appellation can be found as early as 1915. Lake Placid Club Notes 78 (January-February 1915): 549. It may come as a surprise to discover that in the years before the First World War, St. Moritz was not a favored skiing venue. See the annual resort reports in the Year-Book of the Ski Club of Great Britain, I, 3 (1907): 26; I, 4 (1908): 45; I,6 (1910): 35-36; II, 7 (1911): 31; II, 8 (1912): 141.

3. Bill passed in the New York State Legislature in 1885 and applied to the Adirondak Park in 1892.

4. George M. Lattimer, Compiler, Official Report III Olympic Winter Games Lake Placid 1932. Lake Placid: III Winter Olympic Games Committee, 1932: 9.

5. Winter Sports (February 1933): 4-6, 22; Ski Bulletin (10 February 1933): 6-7. See also Harris’ reply to the censure in Winter Sports (March 1933): 4-5. In 1926, Coubertin wrote, “Winter Sports were put into the 1894 Olympic Games Charter (with) the same title as other categories and I have, since then, indefatigably tried to get them included.” Rapport General du Comité Exécutif des IImès Jeux Olympiques d’hiver (1928): 3. The baron was overstating his efforts.

6. The French and English popular press considered the Nordic or Northern Games the winter equivalent of summer Olympic festivals. “The Olympic Games of Athens have their equivalent in Stockholm’s Nordic Games,” opined La Vie en Grand Air (10 February 1901). Mrs. L.F.K. von Thiele titled her article “The Northern Olympic Games,” Wild World Magazine (1902): 465-73. When organizers in Mürzzuschlag, Styria, Austria wished to give their international competitions more authority, they chose to do so by hosting the “Nordische Spielen,” designed to be on alternate years from the Northern Games in Scandinavia. Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung (15 November 1903): 1491. See, also, IOC meeting, Luxemburg, 11-13 June 1910 in Wolf Lyberg, “The IOC Sessions 1894-1955:” 53. TMS, Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland. Hereafter OM Lausanne; Procès-Verbal, CIO, Budapest, 23 May 1911. TMS, Olympic Archives, Vidy, Switzerland. Hereafter OA Vidy.

7. Norges Skiforbund, Aarsberetning (1914): 43.

Congrès des Comités Olympique Nationaux tenu à Paris en Juin 1914, CIO Sessions 1914-24, 'Annexes, OA Vidy. The Times, London, (20 December 1913); Der Winter VIII, 16 (11 February 1914): 382.

8. Procès-Verbal, CIO, Antwerp, 17-30 August 1920. TMS, OA Vidy.

9. Norges Skiforbund, Aarsberetning (192 1): 17- 18.

10. Henry Cuénot, "Les jeux d'hiver à Chamonix," La Montagne, 166 (November 1923): 281.

11. Raphael Mugnier, "Les sports d'hiver à travers les Jeux Olympiques de Chamonix Mont-Blanc en 1924," Jeux et Sports dans l'histoire. II: Pratiques Sportives. Paris: Actes du 116è Congrès National des Sociétés Savantes, Chambéry, 1991, 1992: 311-13.

12. Letter, J.S. Edström to Baron Pierre de Coubertin, Vesterås, Sweden, 14 February 1922. TMS copy, Coubertin Correspondence: Siegfried Edström 1908-1923, MA 523/1 OM Lausanne; Letter, Edström to Baron Clary, Vesterås, 26 April 1926. TMS, Folder: Chamonix, File Chamonix General/1924, O Vidy.

13. Procès-Verbal, CIO, Rome, 8 April 1923: 14. OA Vidy.

14. Commission Executive de CIO, Minutes of Meetings, Lausanne, 13-15 October 1923. TMS, OA Vidy.

15. See Coubertin's closing speech in 1924; R. Frison-Roche, Secretary of the Winter Sports Committee, Chamonix, "Exposé sur la preparation, l'organisation et déroulement des épreuves des Premiers Jeux Olympiques d'hiver à Chamonix du 24 janvier au 5 février 1924," 7. Folder: Chamonix 1924, File General. Note the use of the term Olympic Winter Games.

16. Letter, Svenska Skiförbundet to President CIO, Stockholm, Sweden, 6 June 1924. TMS, File: Saint-Moritz 1928, Photocopies, Interviews 1926- 1928, OA Vidy.

17. Procès-Verbal, CIO Prague, 27 May 1925: 11-12, 14. OA Vidy. The two best works on Chamonix are Johannès & Pallière, "Les premiers jeux d'hiver de 1924: la grande bataille de Chamonix," L'histoire en Savoie 26. 103 (September 1991); Pierre Arnaud et Thierry Terret, Le Rêve Blanc. Olympisme et Sport d'hiver en France: Chamonix 1924. Grenoble 1968. Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1993. See also Beretning om Norges deltagelse i de Olympiske Leker Sommeren 1924 og Vinter-idrettsstevnet i Chamonix i 1924. Oslo: B. Bentzen, 1925: 71-90.

18. Procès-Verbal, CIO Lisbon, 6 May 1926. HMS,

OA Vidy.

19. Commission Executive de CIO, Brussels, 4 January 1927. TMS, OA Vidy.

20. Arnold Lunn, "St. Moritz Congress," Year-Book of the Ski Club of Great Britain IV, 9 (1928): 478-79.

21. See, G.C.D. Hamilton's review of the Year Book of the Ski Federation of Norway *ibid.* V, 10 (1929): 301.

22. Col. Holmquist (Sweden), for example, believed that although there were skiing organizations in the United States and Canada "neither had the necessary competence to organize ski events." He was supported by Count de la Frégéolière, the French representative. Commission Executive de CIO, St. Moritz, 13 February 1928. TMS, OA Vidy.

23. Procès-Verbal, CIO, Amsterdam, 27 July 1928. OA Vidy.

24. Arnaud et Terret, Le Rêve Blanc.

25. Although these Congresses were labeled 'international', in fact representatives were delegated by clubs and associations, not national organizations. Thus, the Austrians, for example, always objected to representatives from Bohemia, since that was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

26. This follows entirely from Fred Harris, "Report of the Eleventh F.I.S. Congress, Oslo, Norway, Monday February 24th and Wednesday February 26th, 1930." TMS copy, DA.

27. For a fuller analysis, see my From Skisport to Skiing: One Hundred Years of an American Sport, 1840- 1940. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1993: 54-92.

28. The Skisport (1924-1925): 22.

29. Fred Harris Report to USEASA on the NSA Duluth Convention (1926), TMS, New England Ski Museum, Franconia, New Hampshire.

30. USEASA Executive Committee, Minutes, 2 November 1928: 116-17. TMS, New England Ski Museum.

31. Procès-Verbal, CIO Lausanne, 8-11 April 1929. OA Vidy.

32. Resolution of the California Tenth Olympiad Association, Los Angeles, 5 January 1929. File: Lake Placid General 1932, Folder J.O. d'Hiver 1932, Lake Placid General 1928-32, OA Vidy.

33. Letters and Telegrams, Dewey to William May Garland, Lake Placid, 19 January, 2 and 5 February 1929. Garland to Dewey, Los Angeles, 29 January 1929. Dewey to Donald Fair Morgan, 8 August 1929.

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Dewey to John B. Stetson, castigating the incompetent leadership of the NSA, 23 January 1929. TMS, DA.

34. Procès-Verbal, CIO Lausanne, 10 April 1919. OA Vidy.

35. Ibid.

36. Oakland Tribune, enclosed in Letter, Lattimer to Dewey, Lake Placid, 23 July 1931, TMS, D.A. Dewey enlisted the help of Wilbur Maynard of the California Chamber of Commerce to try to put a stop to the continuing misleading publicity. Dewey to Maynard, Lake Placid, 30 July, 8 September 1931. TMS, DA.

37. For Kirby, see John A. Lucas, "Architects of the Modernized American Olympic Committee, 1921-1928: Gustavus Town Kirby, Robert Means Thompson, and General Douglas MacArthur," Journal of Sport History, 22, 1 (Spring 1995): 39-40.

38. Letter, Dewey to Avery Brundage, Lake Placid, 3 July 1931. TMS, DA. This is one of only two letters between Dewey and Brundage in the Brundage Collection, Box 233 University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois. My thanks to Maynard Britchford.

39. Letters, Brundage to Dewey, Chicago, 16 July (also in Box 233, Brundage Collection), 6 August 1931, and Dewey to Brundage, Lake Placid, 15 August 1931. TMS, DA.

40. Letters, Brundage to Dewey, Chicago, 18 August, 30 October 1931, and Dewey to Brundage, Lake Placid, 9 October 1931. TMS, DA.

41. Letters, Gustavus T. Kirby to Dewey, New York, 29 June 1931, Nantucket, Mass, 31 July 1931. Dewey to Kirby, Lake Placid, 6 July 1931. For Kirby's views of his own influence, see Kirby to Franklin D. Roosevelt, New York, 19 February 1931, and Kirby to Dewey, New York, 29 June 1931. TMS, DA.

42. Letters Brundage to Dewey, Chicago, 30 October 1931, and Dewey to Brundage, Lake Placid, 6 November 1931. TMS, DA.

43. Letters, Dewey to Roosevelt, Lake Placid, 5, 14, 18, 24, 27 February 1931, and Roosevelt to Dewey, Albany, 9, 16, 18, 22 February 1931. See also Telegram, Dewey to Jeremiah Moses, Lake Placid, 20 February 1931, and Kirby to Roosevelt, New York, 19 February 1931. TMS, DA.

44. Letter, Dewey to Count de Baillet - Latour, Lake Placid, 8 October 1931. TMS, DA.

45. Letter, Dewey to Captain G. van Roosem, Lake Placid, circa 22 November 1931. TMS, DA.

46. Letters and Telegrams, Bjorn Blix to Dewey, Stockholm, 11 December 1930; London, 23 December

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1930; Telegrams, 21, 24, January 1931, 4 November, 9 December 1931. Dewey to Blix, Lake Placid, 9 January 1931, 1 February 1932. TMS, DA.

47. Letter, Arnulf Poulsen to Dewey, Oslo, 22 January 1930; Dewey to Howard Acton, Lake Placid, 23 September 1931. TMS, DA.

48. Telegrams, Lucius Boomer to Dewey, New York, 2 November 1931. Dewey to Boomer, Lake Placid, 3 November 1931. Blix to Dewey, New York, 4 November, 9 December 1931. TMS, DA.

49. Letters, Dewey to Charles A. Lindbergh, Lake Placid, 7 January 1932, and Lindbergh to Dewey, New York, 12 January 1932. TMS, DA.

50. Letter, Dewey to Baillet-Latour, Lake Placid, 22 December 1931. TMS, DA.

51. Letters, Dewey to Baillet-Latour, Lake Placid, 3 October 1931; Baillet-Latour to Dewey, Lausanne, 22 December 1931. TMS, DA.

52. Telegram, Dewey to Blix, Lake Placid, 9 October 1931. TMS, DA.

53. Letters, E. Des Bailleurs to Dewey, Los Angeles, 4 April 1930, and Dewey to Des Bailleurs, Lake Placid, 11 April 1930. Dewey to Henry S. Haskell, Lake Placid, 13 May 1930; Dewey to Daniel J. Ferris, Lake Placid, 16 December 1930. Edward W. Macy (personal representative for Miss Jank) to Dewey, New York, 5 January 1931, and Dewey to Macy, Lake Placid, 10 January 1931. TMS, DA. Postcard, Coubertin to Dewey, Lausanne, 26 December 1931. TMS, DA.

54. Winter Sports (February 1933): 4-6, 22.

55. Erling Strom, Pioneers on Skis, Central Valley, NY: Smith Clove Press, 1977,59.

56. Postcard, Adele M. Beck to Dewey, Nikko, Japan, 17 April 1931. TMS, DA.

57. Dewey to Morgan, Lake Placid, 13 November 1932. TMS, DA.

58. Melvil Dewey was actively anti-Semitic. He seems to have blamed Jews for the non-acceptance of his 'simplified spelling'. As early as 1904, the Jewish community had tried to oust him from his position as State Librarian. Petition to the Regents of the University of the State of New York Respectfully Asking for the Removal from Office of Melvil Dewey, the Present State Librarian, whose Tenure of Office is Dependent upon Your Actions, 20 December 1904. See also Melvil Dewey's reply on pp. 6-20. New York State Archives, Albany, NY. Dewey received a rebuke. Utica Press (17 February 1905). Folder: Clubs--Lake Placid Club. NY State Archives, Albany, NY.

At the time of the Olympics, the B'nai Brith tried to forestall some of the preparations. George C. Ortloff and Stephen C. Ortloff, Lake Placid the Olympic Years 1932-1980 Lake Placid, Hollywood: Macromedia, 1976: 67-68. There was widespread non-acceptance of Jews in skiing venues in the north eastern region of the U.S. in the 1930s. Lodging advertisements announced 'Restricted Clientele' and 'Good Christian Library'. For one example, see American Ski Annual (1938-39): 44.

59. The Sno-Birds Ski Club was founded in November 1920 to "promote good fellowship and to originate and conduct annually a series of amusing and interesting competitions." Lake Placid Club Notes (November 1920): 886.

60. Ibid. (March 1905): np.; (March 1913): 417; (December 1917): 639; (March 1929): 2017.

