

# AN OLYMPIC DREAM



by Karl Lennartz

Scholars sometimes have dreams that also now and then “come true”. I would like to report on one such dream. But first a comparison. French presidents make their mark by leaving something behind that is grand and lasting, often connected with their name. I think of POMPIDOU, who had the *Pompidou Centre* in Paris built. MITTERAND built the *Grand Arche de Defence*, the Pyramid of the Louvre and the new National Library. Why shouldn't the IOC-President leave something of meaning behind for the Olympic Movement? They've done so, somewhat. COUBERTIN created the Olympic Movement, EDSTRÖM lead the IOC through the Second World War without being damaged, BRUNDAGE promoted the unified German team and SAMARANCH made the IOC wealthy and built the Olympic Museum. Shouldn't the new president be able to do something similar? He is involved in trying to get a grip on the doping problem. But for us historians, he could perform an even bigger duty.

In the “cellar” of the Olympic Museum is an archive, a library and a study center. They are a part, or negatively expressed, an appendage of the museum. They should and must, however, have a meaning of their own that is just as important.

And now to my dream. A large Olympic Research Centre would be created, consisting of:

1. Olympic Archive
2. Olympic Library
3. Olympic Photo, Film and Video
4. Olympic Information Centre
5. Centre for the development of ideas

1. The archive that has been being built for about twelve years and is well-run, contains, at the most, just 20% of the Olympic resource material. The files of individual sessions, for example, consist of only 2-3 pages each and no minutes are available. The Olympic Archive materials worldwide would need to be recorded. I am thinking about a network of Olympic archives. There were sessions in about 60 cities. There needs to be searcheable

information in those cities and press archives. To date, about 350 IOC members have died. Who's collected their personal documents? Where are they being kept? What's happened to the documents from the Organisation Committees of the individual games. I know, for example, that the materials from both Games in London, the Games in Amsterdam and the Games in Mexico can supposedly no longer be found. They must be searched for. I can imagine that with all the archives, locations or people that could have Olympic materials, a connection will be made to try to get the files recorded electronically or the original or copies brought to the Olympic Archive in Lausanne. All the Olympic resources that still exist would then be available to be researched worldwide, either directly in the archive or online.

2. The library in Lausanne owns about 18,000 volumes, not much more than my own private library. The largest sport library in the world, that of the Sports University of Cologne, has 150,000 volumes cataloged. In my opinion, the largest sport movement of the world should also have the largest library. An initiative should be started worldwide to collect the complete works of newly appearing sport literature and to acquire backdated materials through “second-hand” bookstores.
3. I have the impression that the work in this area is on the right track. It must be continued and additional collections must be acquired.
4. A team of Olympic historians and people that have studied sport history and are truly knowledgeable in this profession should be able to provide correct, comprehensive Olympic knowledge to scientists, journalists, students, organisers of the Olympic Games and everyone else.
5. There has to be an academy created in which young scholars can live for a half or full year and conduct research

undisturbed. The academic leadership of this centre can appoint researchers from the different subject areas who can deal with critical Olympic questions, whereby the Olympic Movement itself can also be critically scrutinized. Days for question/answer sessions about the Olympics will be regularly organized. The Thinking Centre appoints sport historians to publish a *Monumenta Olympica*. To this belongs:

- most importantly, an edition of all the writings of COUBERTIN that should also be translated into English. As is well known, the highly commendable COUBERTIN-edition from Norbert MÜLER embraces only a small part of COUBERTIN'S work.
- a critical edition of the minutes from the sessions of the IOC, the Congress, other conferences, the official reports from 1896-1940 and the Revue *Olympique* from 1894 – 1969.
- A critical examination of the biographies of all the IOC members to-date
- A synopsis of the biographies of all the 100,000 Olympic athletes who have participated through today, most importantly the medal winners. The biographies of the athletes must be a

focal point. The list by Wolf LYBERG is a valuable preparatory work.

- Reliable, official lists of the results from the competitions of the Olympic Games.
- An extensive collection of “oral history” information about the Olympic Games.

The Olympic Research Centre could have its headquarters, a building like the Olympic Museum, either in Lausanne or in connection with a large university in another country.

People don't think about costs when dreaming, but should it materialize into reality, then costs become quickly relevant. An Olympic Research Centre would cost millions of dollars. The IOC has 10 large sponsors who are active in the Olympic Movement and the execution of the Olympic Games, mostly in view of the practical sports. Why isn't a pool of businesses created who devote themselves to Olympic culture sponsoring? I am thinking about large television companies, other media organizations, publishing groups and the like. I am certain that this investment is worthwhile and is of an increasingly great benefit to the investors.

## CHARLES REIDPATH, OLYMPIC CHAMPION

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*by Timothy Evans*

Charles REIDPATH, war hero, civic builder and Olympic Champion, was born in Buffalo, NY in 1889. His cousin Isabelle REIDPATH MARTIN was the wife of Darwin MARTIN, who commissioned one of architect Frank LLOYD WRIGHT'S finest works, the Darwin MARTIN House. At Lafayette high school from 1904-08 Reidpath was an outstanding track competitor, in spite of an unorthodox “flat footed” running style. It was while at Syracuse University from 1908-1912 that Charles REIDPATH became a collegiate track star, winning the 220 and 440 yard dashes in the 1912 intercollegiate games. At one point he held the college record for the quarter mile.

On graduating from Syracuse in 1912 with a degree in civil engineering, Charles REIDPATH was put under pressure by relatives to quit

sports and take a position with the family business in Buffalo. Instead, he made the U.S. Olympic track team, and headed to Stockholm, Sweden for one of the finest Olympics ever held. REIDPATH won the 400 meters in an Olympic record shattering time of 48.2 seconds. This record lasted until 1924, when it was broken by Eric LITTLE, whose story was made famous by the movie *Chariots of Fire*. Running the anchor leg of the 4x400 meter relay, REIDPATH helped the U.S. team set a world record of 3:16.6.

The 400 meter contest was thrilling and controversial. In one of the few serious official miscalculations in the 1912 games, the semifinals were held without lanes for individual runners. The result was a confrontation between German champion