



*The 1920 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events, with Commentary*, by Bill MALLON and Anthony Th. BIJKERK  
Published by: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, Box 611, Jefferson, North Carolina 28640, USA, 2003, 541 pp. ISBN 0-7864-1280-1. Price: US\$49.50. Reviewed by Robert K. Barney, University of Western Ontario, Canada.

The 1920 Antwerp Olympics are well known to historians as the Games that restored the Modern Olympic Movement to the modern world of international sport after their cancellation in 1916 and the debilitating consequences of World War I. There was considerable sympathy among those IOC members who had survived the Great War for the Games of the 7th Olympiad to be awarded to the great Belgian port city — reward and recognition for the severe ravages suffered by greater Belgium during the long four year conflict. And besides, if successful the Games would symbolize a great phoenix rising from the ashes of destruction to once again pursue its inter-national agenda. That Antwerp carried off the Games handsomely, despite the harsh realities of post-war reconstruction, is now beyond doubt.

Though much has been written about the Antwerp Games in both journal article and monograph form, no single volume presents as much detail as does this MALLON and BIJKERK work. When measured against two other prominent works, Roland RENSON's *La VII Olympiade — Anvers 1920: Les jeux ressuscités* (1995), and Ellen PHILLIPS' *VII Olympiad: Antwerp 1920, Chamonix 1924* (Volume 7 of the *Olympic Century Series*, 1998), this latest work stands up to, indeed succeeds all works yet written on the subject. But isn't that what historical scholarship should do — push the sometimes opaque and most often incomplete record of the past towards the true record? Of course, historical methodology has yet to produce a process or model by which such an absolute "true record" might be rendered.

Bill MALLON and Tony BIJKERK are both among the elite of insatiable Olympic investigators. They are most often interested in the details of the Games - the participants and their record of performance. This book, however, goes far beyond that fundamental pursuit. English-reading audiences will be both interested and impressed by the material found

in Chapter I, discussion of the 1920 Games in the context of background and analysis, including discussion of how the Games were awarded to Antwerp, the site and its pre-Olympic history, the program and participating nations, the opening ceremony, as well as commentary about the organizing committee and its activities of finance and "getting ready". There follows detailed chapters on each of the festival's sports — from Archery and Athletics, to Wrestling, Yachting, the Arts Competitions, and Other Sports and Events. Each chapter ends with an impressive body of source end notes, some of them with elaborate and important annotated commentary.

Aside from the wellknown stories of gold medal performances (PADDOCK, NURMI, KOLEHMAINEN, KAHANAMOKU, et al.), buried within are some interesting sub-texts. For instance, we all know Victor BOIN, the Belgian fencer who stood on the raised podium at the opening ceremonies to proclaim the first-ever Olympic oath of the athletes and set in place one of the striking rituals of the Modern Games. Beyond that celebratory task, BOIN was a most busy fellow in the Games. He also served as secretary of the Organizing Committee's Press Committee and, as well, though he did not qualify for the final round in the individual epee event, he did fence well enough to aid Belgium's silver medal achievement in the team epee. Another sub-text item caught my interest. An obscure 400 meter hurdler, the Australian war hero and Rhodes Scholar Wilfrid Kent HUGHES, though he finished an ignominious fourth in his trial heat, would rise in time to the most important position of any in hosting an Olympic Games, President of the Organizing Committee (Melbourne's Games of the 16th Olympiad in 1956). Further, it was the same Kent HUGHES who clung steadfastly to a principle some 35 years after his participation in Antwerp that has enriched the IOC almost beyond measure — absolute payment of rights fees by television and film networks worldwide to cover the Olympic Games.

This is the seventh, and further, meant to be the final volume in a series of works covering the Olympic Games held between



1896 and 1920. The Olympic Games of this early 25 year period were the festivals that Bill MALLON originally viewed as those worthy of "true research". While many will challenge that statement with forceful argument as being narrow and presumptuously value-laden, few will deny that the "true research" that MALLON and his co-authors have carried out has been meritorious in every respect. Their initiative has been a worthy contribution to the body of knowledge that undergirds our understanding of the great quadrennial Olympic festivals. And, it now seems we can look forward to more. *McFarland*, the publishers of the entire series, are on the brink of convincing MALLON and his appropriate co-authors to execute the same types of works for the Olympic festivals of 1924, 1928, 1932, and 1936. If MALLON agrees, then I, for one, greatly look forward to the result.

I have only one quibble about this book, indeed the entire series published thus far. Those these are texts without pictures or other graphic material, features that add cost to a publication, each book of the series commands a healthy price. This book and its other "mates" command a price of almost \$60.00 U.S. Equated to most of the world's non-U.S. currencies, the price approaches, if not exceeds, \$100.00. OK, so the book is ruggedly

bound, well indexed, uniformly "clean" in its copy-text, its 541 pages presented in easy-to-read typeset; the fact is, the cost is intimidating. That indemnification aside, for those who can afford it, MALLON and BIJKERK's book should be on the bookshelves of all Olympic historians, as well as a good many sociologists and anthropologists too. This book is a "must" read for those whose bent is to steep themselves in knowledge about a single Olympic Games based on the best possible primary sources. MALLON's and BIJKERK's volume on the Antwerp Games of 1920 is just that, the best of which I am aware, at least in English, and, I have a hunch, in any language.

Note:

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