



Olympic Biography of Juan Antonio Samaranch (Pavilion Books Limited, 1992).

With this new volume, a fabulous book, he has written a dramatic account of the complete history of the Olympic Games, starting with the famous

ATHENS TO ATHENS

The Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC, 1894-2004; by David Miller; published by Main-stream Publishing Co. (Edinburgh) Ltd., 7 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3UG, United Kingdom; www.mainstreampublishing.com ; ISBN 1-84018-587-2; 528 pages in English; Price: British Pound Sterling 35.00 (hardback); reviewed by Anthony Th. Bijkerk.

David MILLER is very wellknown as an author on Olympic subjects; earlier he wrote *Olympic Revolution, the*

first meeting and establishment of the International Olympic Committee in June in the Sorbonne University in Paris 1894, up to the last Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City in 2002.

The very 'appetizing' view of this great book will soon take away any doubts you might have that it is 'just one more of those regular volumes' which appear every four years.

With a really impressive introductory chapter, titled: "Survival", the author opens the long range

of chapters. Impressive, because in this chapter, which he starts with an interview with Cathy FREEMAN, David MILLER gives many highlights, but also mentions many crises within the Olympic movement. He reveals to have an enormous insight in the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Family. This chapter was, for your reviewer, *"Olympic history in a nutshell*, but all told with gusto and precious insight.

In the following chapters, each one beginning with an unusual personal reminiscence by either a famous champion, or a notable IOC figure, he describes each Olympic Games, the main figures and features.

One of those reminiscences, spoken in 1908 by the British Reverend Robert S. de COURCY-LAFFAN, one of COUBERTIN'S most dedicated friends, was very prophetic, as he said:

"Do not let us forget that these Olympic Games in London are only an episode in a great Movement and a great life.[...] What is 12 years in the life of a Movement that sets before it those great ideals: of perfect physical development, of a new humanity, the spreading all over the world of that spirit of sport which is the spirit of the truest chivalry, and the drawing together of all the nations of the Earth in the bonds of peace and mutual amity? You cannot expect that an ideal such as that can be carried out in a year or in a decade or possibly even a century. You are at the beginning of one of those world movements which is going to develop itself long after those of us who are here have departed. You have seen the beginning of something of which no man can foresee the ultimate results."

What prophetic words!

Of specific interest is, that many chapters on an Olympic Games are preceded by a description of a person involved in those particular Games.

Of course, COUBERTIN himself and Demetrius VIKELAS as the first IOC President open up the long line of these celebrities, but they are followed by the American James E. SULLIVAN, one of COUBERTIN'S most outspoken opponents in those early days of the previous century and (of course) the Swede Viktor Gustav BALCK, one of the founders of the IOC.

In later chapters some fascinating interviews with Olympic champions of fame, or with other members of the Olympic family have been used. Jesse OWENS, Fanny BLANKERS-KOEN, Emil ZATOPEK, Jean Claude KILLY, Dick POUND, to name a few of the better known.

In his description of the early Olympic (summer) Games, MILLER restricts himself mainly to stories about the track and field program and in particular about the Olympic marathon, which of course, is one of the most colourful events in the Olympic program. That is understandable,

because athletics are "the mother of all sports". Other sports are mentioned when special persons or circum-stances demanded to be reviewed.

One of those special circumstances gave me personally (a very small) reason for criticism.

In the chapter on the 1900 Paris Olympics, the author repeats an apocryphal story, which was started many decades ago by Ferenc MEZÖ, IOC member from Hungary, who wrote about the youngest ever participant in the Olympic Games, a supposedly less than ten year old French coxswain in the Dutch goldmedal winning two with cox.

This apocryphal story seems to find its way in almost every Olympic historical publication over the last decades, while factual research dictates that the French boy must have been about twelve years old and had been thrown out as cox by his own French club the *Société de la Basse-Seine*, because he was too heavy (weighing 33 kilograms!). In an article in our *Journal of Olympic History* 5(Spring 1997)¹, I already wrote about this subject informing our members about this mistake.

Several of our members, all involved with the "Story of the Rings", may also feel a bit slighted by another small mistake by the author. Writing about the newly designed Olympic flag with the Olympic rings in 1914, he states that: *"Coubertin adapted the five rings on the altar at Delphi to signify the unity of the five continents" !*

Bob BARNEY in his article "This Great Symbol" (Olympic Review, 23, 1992), and Karl LENNARTZ in his deepdiving article "The Story of the Rings" in our Journal [Commemorative issue, 10(December 2001/January 2002)¹] explained that the five rings on the altar at Delphi were chiseled by a mason in 1936 to commemorate the passing of the first ever Olympic torch relay through Delphi. COUBERTIN could never have seen those rings before 1936.

Back to the contents of the book.

This book does not spare the International Olympic Committee. All boycotts, the problems around 'apartheid', the question of the credibility of its own members as the scandal of the Salt Lake City bribery unfolded, and last but not least the threat of drugs abuse and the following birth of WADA are told in detail.

In several appendixes, assisted by experts like Wolf LYBERG (for the one on all IOC members [1894-2003]) and other leading statisticians (for the full series of medallists in both the Summer and Winter Olympic Games up to Salt Lake City 2002, and medal tables), data and statistics on all Olympics, the IOC Sessions and Congresses, the book finally ends with an appendix on Olympic Logistics, which gives an overview of what the IOC received [-s] and distributed. A Bibliography and an indispensable Index form the last pages of this



valuable book, which could not have been published at a better moment, when the Games will return to their ancient [and modern] origin in Greece.

Despite some mistakes and typographic errors, this book is very readable; the contents are enhanced with many photographs, some of which

were completely new to me and all is told in a very special innovative context.

It is an absolute MUST for anyone interested in the history of the Olympic Movement, the Olympic Games, and the people involved: the Olympic Family.