

PRAISE TO THE OLYMPIC ATHLETES

When I began my Olympic researches almost 60 years ago, I found an almost untilled field. There were already thousands of Olympic books and articles but almost exclusively they dealt with ethical, pedagogical, and sociological aspects of the Olympic Games. The Olympic historians and scientists were only little interested in the Olympic competitions and athletes and their performances. They preferred and still prefer scientific essays, discussions, and interpretations.

The first among the international sports leaders who tried to record all medal winners of the Modern Olympic Games was the Hungarian professor Ferenc Mező (*1885 - †1961), the 1928 gold medal recipient in the literature contest for his famous book, *History of the Ancient Olympic Games*. In 1956, Mező published the book *The Modern Olympic Games*, which included for the first time the medal winners of all nations with their Christian names, lacking until that time in nearly all Olympic result lists and books. But a number of omissions remained, especially in team sports, because even Official Reports often neglected the names of the team members in those sports.

In my *Encyclopædia of the Olympic Games* (published in 1972) I was able to eliminate numerous errors which had been passed on during 70 years of reporting on the Olympics in other Olympic books. In my *Lexikon der 14,000 Olympioniken (Who's Who at the Olympics)*, published in 1983, all Olympic medal winners from 1896-1980 have been honored by preserving their names, birth and death statistics, and performances for all time.

On a national basis, certain historians and Olympic fans have endeavoured for many years to further knowledge about the Olympic athletes from their nation or in their special sport. Special mention is given to Dr. Bill Mallon (USA), Ian Buchanan (Great Britain), Ture Widlund (Sweden), Lennart Dahlöf (†Sweden), Erik Jüfalt (Sweden), Markku Siukonen (Finland), Boris Khavin (Russia), Volker Kluge (Germany, formerly GDR), Walter Teutenberg (Germany, formerly FRG), Magne Teigen (Norway), Hans Agersnap Larsen (Denmark), Anthony Bijkerk (The Netherlands), Zygmunt Gluszek (Poland), Dr. Jirí Kössl (Czechoslovakia), and Endre Kahlich (Hungary). They will form the core of ISOH to guide future historical projects.

Eventually, all the collection of sources should flow into one large database, which will include all male and female competitors in the Olympics since 1896 (approximately 110,000). Juan Antonio Samaranch, president of the International Olympic Committee, has entrusted the beginnings of this project to Wolf Lyberg (Sweden), one of the most experienced Olympic researchers. Through this work, all of the forgotten Olympic competitors will be honored - many of whom have been unknown for almost a century. To qualify for the Olympics remains today the highest honor in the life of all sportsmen and sportswomen around the world. The purpose of ISOH is to honor these athletes.

Erich Kamper
Recipient of the Olympic Order
Honorary President, ISOH
Graz, Austria