

BOOK REVIEWS

The Lords of the Ring. Power, Money, and Drags in the Modern Olympics. by Vyv Simson and Andrew Jennings. (Published in London by Simon & Schuster, 1992, under the above name. Published in the United States and Canada under the name *Dishonored Games: Corruption, Money & Greed at the Olympics* by S.P.I. Books, a division of Shapolsky Publishers, New York in the United States; and by Stoddart Publishing Co, Toronto in Canada.) Reviewed by John Lucas, The Pennsylvania State University.

The very best biographers are always good historians. They are thorough, disinterested, scientifically dispassionate, and fair. There is little chance that any of these rubrics might become attached to the highly successful investigative journalists Vyv Simson and Andrew Jennings. Drug scandals, police corruption, Iran-contra spy scandals are their "beat" . . . and they are very good at uncovering startling revelations. They took on the top administrators within the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the national Olympic Committees (NOCs), and the international federations (IFs) - - that whole "hidden world of men in suits, the men who manipulate sport for their own ends." The two English expose journalists seem obsessed with the winning of power and the use of power by Olympic officials Juan Antonio Samaranch, Primo Nebiolo, and Mario Vasquez Raña, as well as legendary businessman Horst Dassler. Throughout the 280-page, easy to read, hard to put down book, the authors seem not to understand that the elemental act of seeking power, attaining a position of power is not evil. Rather, it is the naked, violent, selfish use of power that is unacceptable. Mahatma Gandhi sought power and won it during his fifty-year struggle. Adolph Hitler's twenty years in the world power eye was an unremitting, successful search for power. And yet everything was different in their lives. The use of power is everything and, in my opinion, the British journalistic detectives fail to prove scientifically that the huge power possessed by Samaranch, Nebiolo, Raña, and Dassler was and is presently used for evil purposes.

Of course, in the very best newspaper tradition, the authors have chosen chapter titles of the most provocative nature and the use of innuendo-veiled implications and eyebrow-raising headlines. Who would fail to pick up the book with chapter titles: "The Cheats," "ISL Rules the World," "Olympia's Black Gold," "Destroy the Olympics," and "Dassler Takes Coke." It is marvelous journalism, occasionally good history, but too often clever sensationalism. Give Simson and Jennings their due. They are preoccupied with many of the issues that present challenges, serious problems, and Olympic danger signals. Drugs, the collection and use of several billion dollars, the gigantic growth of the Olympic Games and the Olympic bureaucracy, persistent rumors of payoffs, and the astonishing range in intelligence, character, and morality among world Olympic leaders. The two writers, long-time masters of journalistic sensationalism -- true to their craft, ignore all the "good guys" and spend the entire book on the alleged amoral influence-peddlers within the Olympic Movement.

Chapters 2 and 3, 26 pages, 10,000 words -- unwavering castigation of Horst Dassler -- finds a single interview with a certain Patrick Nally as the only "source of truth." He is cited 29 times. Not another person is mentioned in "taking down" the German millionaire and his machinations with President Samaranch. It is simply irresponsible journalism and very poor historical investigation. I was not amused by the frequent Simson-Jennings use of a famous and influential leader, "now deceased," who found bribery, corruption, complicity, greed, and omnipresent wrongdoing on the part of the Olympic leaders. It goes without saying that there is not a single footnote, endnote, or bibliography in this work. It is simply not that kind of book.

Samaranch and his family are shot time and time again for their connection with Francisco Franco during the long, unhappy Spanish history from 1930 to about 1960. An angry Samaranch (not in this book) reminded us all that it is the whole Spanish people that are his and his family's judge and not, as Samaranch has said, "manipulative and irresponsible journalists." The 72-year-old IOC president has filed a criminal libel lawsuit against Simson and Jennings.

In reading this review, it may seem that I am an apologist for Samaranch and some of his friends. I meant no such thing. I was disappointed in the book. As an Olympic Games historian, my responsibility is to seek primary sources, credible witnesses, identifiable interviews, and corroborative documentation. There is not here even the beginning of such efforts. Revealing my own prejudice, I'm somewhat irritated that *The Lords of the Rings* will sell thousands and thousands of copies. Personally, I'm glad that I have a copy . . . but it is not worth \$35.75 (US).

The Complete Book of the Olympics by David Wallechinsky (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company; 1992), 763 pages. Reviewed by John Lucas, The Pennsylvania State University.

A thorough look at any human institution involves four scientific concerns: 1) a full compilation of scrupulously accurate and pertinent facts; 2) a re-creation of human achievements and a description of those foibles of men and women that are both important and provocative; 3) a disinterested analysis of the specific phenomenon under scrutiny; and 4) a successful effort at reconstitution, synthesis, and sometimes, suggestions for reform. David Wallechinsky's updated 1992 version of *The Complete Book of the Olympics* is wildly successful in the first two of these four concerns. But this is not a criticism because the author intended from the outset to set a new standard in the two areas of his expertise. He succeeded.

Wallechinsky co-authored with his famous father, Irving Wallace, the provocative three-volume work, *The People's Almanac*. As a child, David attended the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, and for that, and much more, he is indebted to his late novelist father. In his acknowledgments, David is especially grateful to "Mr. Olympics" -- C. Robert Paul; to curator of a half-dozen libraries containing extensive Olympic collections; to several Olympic Games historians, and with special acknowledgments ". . . to my wife, Flora Chavez" and to their children, Elijah and Aaron. His list of "sources" is too short to suit me, only a sample, but he does list some of the very best Olympic Games statisticians.

The book is conventional and complete in its Table of Contents, following a form that reminded me of Erich Kamper's books, *Enzyklopædie der Olympischen Spiele* and *Lexikon der 14,000 Olympioniken* -- both monumental tributes to a man who spent much of his life writing them. In just 28 pages Wallechinsky discusses the Summer and Winter Olympic Games, national medal totals in each Olympics, a brief history of the Games, politics, amateurism, drugs, charts, and key to abbreviations. The remaining sections, "Summer Games" and "Winter Games," are detailed statistics and "plumb pudding anecdotes" (as one journalist put it) of the 34 sports played out at the two festivals. There is much truth to *The Birmingham Post* reviewer's words, who wrote that this book has "incredible narratives . . . mind-boggling tidbits." Following Kamper's important contribution, Wallechinsky has for every sport a section entitled "Discontinued Events." There are 200 small black and white photographs in this jumbo-narrative encyclopædia, contributing to the cost, but at \$29.95 (US), very few potential customers should complain. Those that purchase the book and read it through probably would concur with a writer from *The New York Daily News*, who called Wallechinsky's opus "the supreme guide . . . guaranteed to make you an expert."

Take just one sport, the modern pentathlon on pages 407-418. On every page one finds in meticulous detail the top eight finishers in a particular Olympic Games, and all point totals in riding, fencing, running, shooting, and swimming events. The reader is also treated to brief but richly informative sketches of the athletes. Too often, wrote Wallechinsky, pentathletes took tranquilizer -- Valium and Librium -- before going out on the shooting range. But in 1984 they changed the order of the events. "In order to discourage the pentathletes from taking sedatives and blockers to steady their nerves before shooting, the shooting portion of the compilation was moved to the morning of the final day, five hours before the cross-country run." (p. 412) There are many more anecdotes of this sort that both complement and enrich the Niagara of factual data.

Are there any mistakes in David's book. Undoubtedly, yes. One might find some . . . but only after hours of research checking and double checking. I cannot speak for others, especially the inveterate Olympic statistician, but I find it counter-productive to spend that much time. I was happy in the knowledge that this new book is bigger and better than the 1984 version of the same title. I'm setting aside some discretionary time for a Wallechinsky special in the late 1990's.

The Unofficial Report of the 1920 Olympics. by Bill Mallon. (Durham, NC: MOST Publications, 1992). Reviewed by Anthony Bijkerk.

After no less than 72 years, the mist which was hanging over the Games of the 7th Olympiad, Antwerp 1920 has lifted. Okay, there are still some patches hanging around; but when we now look back over the seven decades we can see real sportsmen and -women competing for the Olympic medals! We are able to recognize them and we are able to see the results of their endeavours on the scoreboard!

Although we can, without any problem, predict that these Games will forever be clouded with mysteries, we owe it to our secretary-general of ISOH, Bill Mallon, that finally a comprehensive study has been made to clear up the many question marks that we all encountered when we studied these Games. Bill Mallon and I have corresponded about this particular study of his since 1983 and I think that, together with all his other Olympic friends, we should honor his perseverance.

This ***Unofficial Report of the 1920 Olympics*** contains, for the first time, a complete study of all the events in the Games of the 7th Olympiad, Antwerp 1920. Mallon used all the available references and resources and compared their usefulness. Many times he had to make a choice as to which source he would use for the final result to be mentioned in his lists. Maybe the future will correct some of these - when still unknown sources will throw a new light on these particular events.

Bill Mallon is not unfailing. On page 171 he mentions in his note 607 that the individual scores from the Free Pistol Team members came from me; but that my source was not known. We all know that Bill is a very busy man, but the solution for this particular problem was in his correspondence with me! I had offered him a copy of the actual source; this being an eyewitness report on the shooting events from 1920, written by one of the team members, Mr. C. van Altenburg. This report was published (in Dutch, of course) in the magazine of the Netherlands Shooting Association from 1920.

If I would seriously look for a flaw in this report, I would hardly be able to find one. You can debate some of the choices; but that is always crying over spilt milk. You might say that the report is a pure statistical work; which of course is the main reason for its publication. But to be honest, I would have loved to look at some interesting photographs from these Games, to enhance its historical value! There are so few books with good photographs from

these Games and although Mallon mentions most of these books, the amount of photos from these Games leaves much to be desired. Going through my own Olympic library, I found only one book, which Mallon did not mention in his bibliography. He probably did not know of its existence. The book is entitled *Den VII. Olympiade/Danmarks deltagelse i de Olympiske Lege i Antwerpen 1920* by Fritz Hansen. It was published in 1921. The book is in the form of a diary and there are some good photographs in it. Maybe Bill Mallon can use this book later for his first addendum to his unapproachable *Unofficial Report of the 1920 Olympics*.

Black Olympian Medalists by James A. Page (Englewood, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1991). Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

James Page is a retired professional librarian who saw the need to compile biographies of the many great black athletes to win medals at the Olympic Games. The result is a well-researched 170-page book which is interesting to read and a valuable reference book for any Olympic researcher.

Each biography contains the athlete's full name, date and place of birth and death, a list of the medals won, a short narrative about the athlete's career and life, and then a list of sources consulted. Biographies include medalists from all nations, not simply the United States. They are listed alphabetically with no regard to nation or sport. Several statistical appendices at the end complete the book.

Page has done an excellent job. You will enjoy it and most ISOH members should be able to use it frequently.

Black American Women in Olympic Track and Field by Michael D. Davis (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1992). Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

Michael Davis has attempted to compile a subset of the work described above in James Page's book. Davis includes only black American female track & field athletes in his book. Other than the fact that the books focus on black athletes they are very dissimilar.

Notably, this book is replete with errors. He omits several black athletes, and even includes one, Doris Brown, who is about as fair-skinned a Caucasian as one could hope to see. The biographies are inconsistent, with the most famous athletes being lauded for pages (virtually chapters in a few cases), while some others are dismissed with barely a sentence. Certainly more research could have been done on those. As an example, of the first two black women to be represented on United States' Olympic track & field teams, Davis gives one, Louise Stokes, 3½ pages, and the other, Tidy Pickett, two sentences in less than ¼th of a page. This is especially galling when one considers that Stokes never actually competed in the Olympics, while Pickett was the first American black woman to compete, in 1936.

I would not recommend this book because of its inconsistencies and its multiple inaccuracies. Page's book is by far a better treatment of a similar subject.

Greek and Roman Sport: A Dictionary of Athletes and Events from the Eighth Century B.C. to the Third Century A.D. by David Matz (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1991). Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

This is a fun book for an Olympic or sports researcher. I have already used this book several times in my research on several other works. For that purpose it is valuable. I own several books on the ancient Olympics, but none like this. Matz has compiled a biographical dictionary of ancient sport, with biographies of many of the greatest athletes. There are also descriptions of the many sources used, a few special essays describing many of the ancient sporting events, and several statistical appendices listing athletic champions.

The book is well-written and easy to use. While far from an expert on the ancient Games, I found very few errors in this work - perhaps a John MacAloon, with his great knowledge of classical athletics, might demur (although he has not yet joined ISOH).

Coins of the Modern Olympic Games: Volume 1 by Michèle Ménard (site unknown: author, 1991 - order from the author at Universal Coins, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada). Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

This is the first of a planned two-volume series in which Michelle Ménard examines the history of Olympic coinage. This first volume discusses coins issued by the host country. The second volume, in progress, will be much larger and focus on coins issued by non-hosting countries. Ms. Ménard is the former Director of Numismatic Products at the Royal Canadian Mint and is now the Vice-President of Universal Coins in Ottawa. She has helped the IOC in researching the coins they hold in their Olympic Museum and is eminently qualified to write this book.

I know of no perfect books. Therefore, I assume that there are some errors or problems somewhere in this book, but they are very difficult to find. This book is superb. The history of the modern Games through 1948 is briefly discussed and then Ms. Ménard begins discussion of Olympic coinage with the Helsinki Games in 1952, the first ones at which the host country issued coins.

The book is beautifully illustrated with high quality reproductions of all the coins. Every coin issued by an Olympic host country is discussed in detail. For each coin, the following information is given: Denomination, Reverse Design, Artist, Obverse Design, Artist of the Obverse Design, Edge, Date of Issue, Finish, Diameter, Weight, Thickness, Composition, Mintage, Mintmark, Who Struck by, and Issue Price. Multiple notes concerning each issue are also included.

As a criticism I would offer only the thought that I wish some information was included about current price or values on the market and where some of the older coins might be obtained. That information might be very difficult to obtain and the prices could certainly vary a great deal. I await Volume Two anxiously.

Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies. Volume 1, 1992. (Published by The Centre for Olympic Studies, Robert K. Barney, Klaus V. Meier, co-editors. Order from Centre for Olympic Studies, University of Western Ontario, Thames Hall, London, Ontario N6A 3K7, CANADA.) Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

Olympika is the first academic journal solely devoted to Olympic studies. Edited by Bob Barney and Klaus Meier at the University of Western Ontario, the first volume of this journal appeared in early 1992. Plans are to publish the journal on a yearly basis.

The first issue consisted mainly of five (5) articles discussing several different aspects of the Olympic Games. John MacAloon wrote on "Sport, Science and Intercultural Relations: Reflections on Recent Trends in Olympic Scientific Meetings." Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes discussed "The IOC and the World of Interdependence." W. J. Murray's article was entitled "France, Coubertin, and the Nazi Olympics: A Response." Mark Dyreson wrote about "America's Athletic Missionaries: Political Performance, Olympic Spectacle, and the Quest for an American National Culture, 1896-1912." The final article was by the co-editor and a member of ISOH's executive committee, Bob Barney, and was entitled "Born from Dilemma: America Awakens to the Modern Olympic Games, 1901-1903." The journal is completed with two shorter articles, a book review by John Lucas on Richard Mandell's *A Munich Diary*, and a list of some proceedings from several academic meetings.

All of the authors are professors of history, social sciences, or physical education and all are obviously well-versed in Olympic issues. The articles are fully footnoted, reflecting the amount of research done by each author. The first volume was an excellent example of what can be done with an academic journal focusing on Olympic issues. Interested members should contact Bob Barney at the above address to be certain to get on the list for the second volume.