

BOOK REVIEWS

Gouden boek van de Nederlundse Olympiërs (Golden Book of the Dutch Olympians). by Ton Bijkerk and Ruud Paauw. Haarlem: De Vrieseborch. 192 pp. ISBN 90-6076-412-9. Reviewed by Roland Renson.

The Golden Book of the Dutch Olympians is in many ways a remarkable publication. It combines two different approaches: on the one hand, the painstaking research by Ton Bijkerk on the personal data of the Dutch Olympians, and on the other hand, the lively sketches of the sporting careers of these Olympians, based on interviews by sports journalist Ruud Paauw.

Bijkerk provides us with the exact biographical data and Olympic statistics of more than 99% of the Olympic participants from the Netherlands. This is a stunning “tour de force” which has taken him more than 35 years of research . . . and his search is still going on. Only nine Dutch Olympians are still missing of which four were boxers who competed either at the 1920 or the 1924 Games. Bijkerk got infected with this benign form of Olympiamania in 1960, when he discovered that the Netherlands were already competing in the 1900 Olympics and even brought some medals home. Until then it was believed that the first Dutch Olympians had appeared at the Intenm Games of Athens in 1906.

As the dedicated “private eye” of the Dutch Olympians, he has discovered several aberrations in Official Reports, such as for instance the tug-of-war results of the Antwerp 1920 Games, and he has completed much of the missing data on Olympic athletes and their performances. ISOH members are familiar with his investigative contributions in *Citius, Altius, Fortius*. The fact that this ***Golden Book*** was published in Dutch is of course an “international” handicap but it does by no means diminish its relevance and importance for a correct and factual Olympic historiography.

Ruud Paauw’s interviews with former Dutch Olympians completes the picture by describing the Dutchmen and -women, who went for gold, silver or bronze. Their hopes, their ecstasies and disappointments reflect the enormous impact that Olympic participation has had on their lives. By the way, apart from the preface by Juan Anton Samaranch, Dutch Olympic judo champion Anton Geesink (Gold medal at Tokyo in 1964) has written an introductory personal dedication as the IOC representative to the Netherlands.

Conclusion: every country should have their own Bijkerk and Paauw to come up with “Golden Books” as profoundly researched and as nicely illustrated (+/-91 photographs) as the present one. These authors, however, are of a rare breed, they are champions of their own kind and it will be nearly impossible to beat their 99% coverage of Dutch Olympians statistics . . . an absolute record?

P.S. The publication can be obtained most easily by sending \$25.00 [US] cash to Toni Bijkerk personally at PO Box 195, 8430 AD Oosterwolde, THE NETHERLANDS.

1896 Athen - Die Bilder der Spiele der I. Olympiade von Albert Meyer und anderen Fotografen. (1896 Athens - The Pictures of the First Olympiad by Albert Meyer and Other Photographers). Edited by Volker Kluge. Berlin: Brandenburgisches Verlags-Haus, 1996. Parallel texts in four languages (German, English, French, Spanish). 207 pp. 108 pictures. Price: DM 58. ISBN 3-89488-098-8. Reviewed by Rupert Kaiser.

ISOH Member Volker Luge, well-known author of many books on the Olympic Games, has recently come out with another excellent work. For the first time, all the photographic and graphic documents of the first Olympics are united in one edition of high quality.

Most of the photos were taken by Albert Meyer. He was the official court photographer of the last Saxonian King and an official member of the German Olympic entourage in 1896. In Athens, Meyer found his niche as one of the first sports-reporters with a camera. During the first Olympics, he and others, like the lesser known Burkos, Lambakis, Melas, Pantzopoulos, and Makropoulos, were the first chroniclers of the Olympic Movement.

Reproductions of their works, masterly done by Peter Frenkel (himself a former Olympian - 1972 Munich 20 kilometre walk), are shown mostly in the duotone method, as was usual in 1896. The book's format follows the chronology of the 1896 Olympics, and each photograph is accompanied by an informative text concerning the picture and the events it depicted, all given in four languages (as above). The statistical part of the book is, in my opinion, too short. It includes only the top three finishers in each event. Given Kluge's mastery of Olympic statistics, I would have expected more - perhaps the first six.

The second part of *Athens 1896*, presents some essays about Meyer and the other cameramen of 1896, concerning the state of sports and photography one hundred years ago. These articles are replete with new and interesting aspects, supplied with authentic documents and are quite important for all insiders into Olympic research.

Athens 1896 is a high quality photographic summary of the first Olympics and it will fill in a gap for Olympic collectors around the world.

Fascination of Boxing. Compiled by the AIBA. Berlin: Association Internationale Boxe Amateur, 1996. In English. 208 pp. ISBN 3-00-000314-2. Reviewed by Bill Mallon.

The AIBA has celebrated the first 50 years of its existence with this nicely produced volume on the history of amateur boxing. It is a beautifully done book, with multiple photographs, many of them in color. The chapters are multi-authored and ISOH members will recognize many of the authors, notably our own member Volker Kluge. Contributions from such literary giants as Bertolt Brecht, Jack London, and George Bernard Shaw add a nice touch.

The book opens with the usual laudatory prefaces, these by Juan Antonio Samaranch and AIBA President Anwar Chowdhry. An early section which I found quite interesting was the timeline of the history of boxing as a sport. It began in 3,000 B.C. noting that evidence of boxing's roots go back to that era in ancient Egypt. The early timeline hardly encompasses only the Ancient Olympics, as it discusses the findings of boxing's roots in China, Etrusca, Egypt, and India and basically throughout the globe. Finally, excellent details of the origin of AIBA and its predecessor, the International Amateur Boxing Federation (FIBA), are contained in this timeline.

The main section of the book is entitled "Boxing Around the World" and contains numerous articles by various authors on the history of boxing in many regions. No region is omitted. This is followed by a section on "International Highlights," which contains chapters discussing the history of the various international tournaments, starting with the Olympic Games, and then followed by the World Championships, and the various continental championships. A large section follows on "Olympic Solidarity" in which the contributions of that Olympic organization to the development of boxing in third-world countries is emphasized.

The book concludes with two sections I liked a great deal. One contains photographs of boxing paintings and art, along with philately's contributions to the history of boxing.

Finally, a statistical section contains the medalists of all the Olympic and World Championship events, as well as a list of the winners of all regional and other international championships. This is a resource unlikely to be found in any other source.

This is a nice book detailing the history of amateur boxing. For faults, I would note that no mention at all is made of the professional sport, which surely has some connection with the amateur. Secondly, little discussion is given to the medical problems caused by boxing, and that discussion which is found herein, is always supportive and did not bring out any mention of several recent articles in medical journals criticizing the sport.

Several other recent books have been produced by our members. Because they were published to come out at the time of the Atlanta Olympics, I will mention them here for reference and to allow members to be aware of them. We will try to get reviews of these books done for future journal editions.

100 Greatest Moments in Olympic History. by Bud Greenspan. Los Angeles: General Publishing Group, Inc., 1996. In English. 224 pp. ISBN 1-881649-66-0.

Triumph of the Spirit: A Centennial Celebration of African American Olympians. Minorities in Business Magazine, 1996. With significant contributions from ISOH Member James Page. In English. 128 pp. ISBN not identified.

Olympic Glory Denied: And a Final Opportunity for Glory Restored. by Frank Zamowski. Glendale, California: Griffin Publishing, 1996. In English. 280 pp. ISBN 1-882180-70-4.

Olympic Politics: Athens to Atlanta 1896-1996. 2nd edition. by Christopher R. Hill. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1996. In English. 283 pp. ISBN 0-7190-4451-0.