

BOOK REVIEWS

LAOCHRA na hÉIREANN agus na Cluichí Oilimpeacha 1896 - 1996 by Séamus Ware. Published by COISCÉIM, 127 Bóthar na Trá. Baile Atha Cliath 4, Ireland. Illustrated, 358 pages in Gaelic. Reviewed by David Guiney.

Séamus Ware, a dear friend of mine and an historian of painstaking depth, has written a remarkable book on Ireland's participation in the Olympic Games between 1896 - 1996 and the use of the word "remarkable" is particularly appropriate in describing "Laochra na hÉireann". This is an Olympic book, which apart from myself, will never be read by any member of the International Society of Olympic Historians. Séamus, a Gaelic scholar, has written it in our native Irish language, which, while it is widely used and loved here in our small island, is largely unknown to the rest of the world.

However, let me assure you that Séamus Ware has produced a magnificently readable account of all our Olympic champions and competitors, beginning with the victories of John Pius Boland in Lawn Tennis at Athens in 1896, right up to Michael Carruth's gold medal win in boxing at Barcelona in 1992.

Séamus's book was published to coincide with the Centenary Games in Atlanta and, perhaps significantly, one of the outstanding pictures in the book is that of Michelle Smith who was to win three gold medals and a bronze medal in Atlanta to become the most successful Irish competitor in this country's 100 years old association with the Olympic Games.

Séamus Ware, as diligent in looking for old pictures and he has always been in his research, has unearthed some intriguing pictures for "Laochra na hÉireann", notably those of John Pius Boland, John Flanagan, Martin Sheridan, Bob Tisdall, and Pat O'Callaghan.

On a personal note I am delighted that Séamus Ware has joined me in researching Ireland's participation in the Olympic Games. I started out over 40 years ago, for many of those years I worked on my own in producing several books. In recent years, however, I have had considerable help from good friends like Ian Buchanan and Dr. Bill Mallon, M.D.

But it is nice now to have an ally in my own country....and Séamus Ware is a most valuably ally.

THE SEVENTH PRESIDENT OF THE IOC - FACTS AND FIGURES, by Wolf S. Lyberg. Published in the series: "History and Facts", by the International Olympic Committee's Olympic Study and Research Centre, Quai d'Ouchy No.1, 1006 Lausanne, Switzerland, 1997. 248 pages in English, many b/w photographs, ISBN 92-9149-027-X. Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

Wolf Lyberg has done it again! The latest book from his hand is an indispensable addition to his earlier volumes on the history of the IOC and the IOC-members, but most of all it forms the crowning touch on his great work for the IOC as a whole.

Wolf Lyberg and Juan Antonio Samaranch met for the first time during the Games of the XVth Olympiad in Helsinki 1952. In many cases, writing about a person you know quite well, is not an easy task, but Lyberg, who has been one of the foremost sports-journalists in his country Sweden, surpassed himself this time, not only as a documentalist, but especially as statistician, and as an historian. The title of the volume explains the gist of the contents: 'The Presidency of Juan Antonio Samaranch, Marques de Samaranch', from 1980 up to 1996.

Its contents are a mixture of historical documentation, and statistics. The book is illustrated with extremely interesting photographs, ranging from the period when Samaranch was still a very keen roller-hockey player, through his time as president of the Spanish Olympic Committee, up to the present time. The photographs have been carefully selected by Lyberg, with the express intention to show only those photographs that had not been published before. It is a pity that these could not be shown in colour! The photographs show a man totally dedicated to his work and ideals; always 'on the move' to improve the conditions for the Olympic Movement he leads.

Samaranch must be one of the most photographed persons in the world!

With this volume, Lyberg continues his work as an able statistician! He has been fortunate that Samaranch's secretary Mrs. Annie Inchauspe, could assist him with much collected information on a great many subjects.

In this book is shown that Juan Antonio Samaranch is not only one of the greatest travellers in the world today, with almost 3,5 million kilometers of travel around the globe since 1981, in airplanes, cars and whatever (82,8 times around the world), and a total of 4.806 hours of flight-time. But he is a prolific writer of letters too, with an average of over 5.000 letters per year over the last ten years! I'll spare the reader the details; anyone interested should acquire the book from the IOC-address as mentioned above.

Of specific interest for any of us, Olympic historians, are the pages in which Lyberg reproduced parts of an article which the still young IOC-member Samaranch wrote in

1969, and which was then published in the Spanish periodical *Deporte* 2000.

In this article Samaranch already showed an astounding and brilliant view of the course the IOC should take in the near future, not knowing that he, himself, would be elected to stand at the helm of that organization, just eleven years later!

In my opinion, Lyberg is probably the only Olympic historian who has had access to, and thus was able to read, the minutes of all 106 IOC-Sessions plus the minutes of the 206 meetings of the IOC Executive Board from the start in 1894 up to 1996!

In two of his earlier volumes, he wrote down extracts of the IOC-Sessions minutes up to the year 1988, but in this latest volume, he wrote extracts of both the IOC-Sessions and the IOC Executive board meetings, which were held in the period of Samaranch's presidency, leaving out only those elements which were of a delicate character!

It makes for fascinating reading!

Everything else worth knowing about the Olympic Games, the Olympic Movement, and the Olympic Family has carefully been assembled and written down in this enlightening volume. From the number of doping tests, up to the number of visitors to the Olympic Museum; from the Olympic Orders, issued in gold, and silver (and earlier bronze too), up to the evolution of the Olympic sports-programme from 1980 - 2000; etc.

And this information has been illustrated with photographs of an always smiling Juan Antonio Samaranch, who on almost every occasion is meticulously dressed. There is one notable exception on the "Smiling Samaranch"-photography, and that is where he sitting on the same sofa with the Albanian president Berisha, definitely not smiling, but looking very, very skeptical and obviously keeping his distance!

Note: We just learned from the author that this book is currently not available at the source mentioned above. Those interested should do well to ask for information first.

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE. ONE HUNDRED YEARS. THE IDEAS - THE PRESIDENTS - THE ACHIEVEMENTS. Volume III. By Fernand Landry and Magdeleine Yerlès. Published by the IOC. 431 pages, in English, illustrated. ISBN 92-9105-012-1. Reviewed by Ian Buchanan.

The task of producing this third and final volume of the trilogy detailing the history of the first 100 years of the IOC was entrusted to Fernand Landry and Magdeleine Yerlès of the Université Laval, Quebec, Canada and they have produced a book which matches the first two volumes in both

scholarship and appeal,

Their work covers the Presidencies of Lord Killanin and Juan Antonio Samaranch (up to 1994) and as the authors say, they are writing about 'immediate history' and it is not yet possible to assess the long-term significance of some of the more recent decisions taken by the IOC.

It is impossible to do full justice to the wide ranging nature of the book within the confines of this review but every imaginable aspect of the workings of the IOC is covered. Nearly 400 subheadings, each representing a separate subject, are divided among the nine main chapter headings. Boycotts, drugs, relations with the International Federations, the Cold War, the Munich massacre, ecology and the Arts are but a few of the countless subjects embraced by this fine work.

The disadvantage of writing about 'immediate history' is counter-balanced by the amount of information which is now available in Lausanne and the authors have made judicious use of this material by including a number of informative tables and graphs. It is, for example, doubtful if similar facts to those which go to make up such graphics as 'Olympic Sponsors and Public Opinion' were available to the authors of the first two volumes. Personally, I was particularly taken with the chart clarifying the development of the IOC Commissions since the formation of the Medical Commission in 1967. This was the first Commission of the 'modern era' and this is the first time that I have seen the evolution of the Commissions set out in such a clear-cut manner. As I say, this is a personal choice based on my own particular interests but whatever an individual historians specialty may be, I would be surprised if he failed to add to his knowledge by referring to this informative volume.

With the completion of the third volume, historians now have a convenient reference source for information that has previously been scattered throughout a multitude of separate files. We all owe a considerable debt to the various authors and to the Editor-in-Chief, Raymond Gafner, who has shown a sure touch in guiding the series to such an impressive conclusion.

(Note by the editor: The six authors of this three-volume-series have been honoured by the IOC Session, last September, when they received the Olympic Order for their contributions to this historical work. It should be mentioned that with the exception of Magdeleine Yerlès (CAN) and Otto Schantz (GER), the other four authors are valued members of the ISOH! See also the Olympic News Section).
