

BOOK REVIEWS

JORDEN RUNT på 80 ÅR - ett resande liv i idrottens tecken 1917-1997. By Wolf Lyberg. Published by Strömbergs Bokförlag, Box 65, S-162 11 Vällingby, Sweden. 240 pages, in Swedish, illustrated. ISBN 91-7151-091-5. Reviewed by Ove Karlsson.

“Around the world in 80 years - a travelling life devoted to sports” is the loose translation of the title of this autobiography by the renowned Swedish sports journalist and official. The deadline of the book was June 1997, shortly before Lyberg turned 80. In Sweden people usually retires at 65, to live a quiet life. This has never bothered Lyberg. After an ordinary working life of 45 years, Lyberg just went on, and is still going strong!

A founder member of the ISOH, Wolf is still working, and working hard, every day. His enthusiasm for sports in general and Olympic matters in particular is amazing. He sounds like an eager, young boy when on the phone to report of some interesting details in Olympic history he has found during many hours of “digging” in libraries and archives.

Lyberg is also travelling the world as he always has. Soon 81, he has probably went around the world a total of 81 times - at least! For someone mostly used to stay in the office/at home, it is fascinating to hear Wolf mention, often incidentally, his itinerary. He can say, “Well, I am going to Los Angeles tomorrow”, just as calmly as I am telling my wife that I am popping down to the corner to buy the evening papers...

“Words don’t come easy”, the title of a popular song some years ago, is completely unknown to Lyberg, who is writing with an easy flow and in a very entertaining way. Pity the book is limited to people reading Swedish. It covers Lyberg’s rich and eventful life as a journalist, nearly 30 years at *I d r o t t s b l a d e t* (once famous also outside Sweden), and sports official, mainly at the Swedish Sports Confederation (Information Director, Head of the International Department) and the Swedish Olympic Committee.

Outside the Olympic sphere, Wolf Lyberg has - among other assignments - been Secretary-General of the Swedish Handball Association (1944-50) and Treasurer of the International Handball Federation (1946-50), Chairman of the Swedish Sports Writers’ Association (1966-71), and Chief of Press Services at several major sports events in Sweden. In football, Lyberg has, for example, organized tours, mainly to the Far East, for Swedish club sides, and he was - in the mid-50s - one of the initiators of the European Cup of Club Champions. Multilingual, he has been correspondent for the sports daily *L ’ E q u i p e* (1945-81) and

has contributed to several other publications in various countries. He is also known to have turned down a lucrative offer from the legendary Santiago Bernabeu to become Secretary-General of the Real Madrid Club de Fútbol!

One out of five chapters in the book covers “Olympic memories”. Lyberg attended his first Games in 1936 in Berlin as a student/spectator. From 1948 in London he has been present at most Games as a journalist and/or official. He was the Liaison between the Press and the Swedish team in Tokyo in 1964 and Chief of Press Services at the venues for Nordic skiing and Luge at the 1968 Winter Games. As Assistant Secretary-General (1969-84) and Secretary-General (1984-88) of the Swedish Olympic Committee he was Chef de Mission or Assistant Chef de Mission of the Swedish teams in the 70s and 80s. An odd note from his “Olympic memories”: Lyberg played an important role in the “match-making” of Sweden’s then crown prince, now king Carl XVI Gustaf, and Miss Silvia Sommerlath, a VIP Hostess at the the Munich and Innsbruck (1976) Games! The king and Miss Sommerlath married in 1976, in between the Innsbruck and Montreal Games, and both have kept a very special affection for the Olympics.

Awarded the Olympic Order in 1988, Lyberg continues to work with Olympic matters, nowadays mainly for the IOC. By compiling facts and figures from the Games and the entire Olympic Movement he is making a great contribution to the documentation of the Olympic history. His work has resulted in one publication after the other. Currently he and Ian Buchanan (the ISOH President) are researching a book about every single IOC members since the committee was founded in 1894. Keep going, Wolf!

THE ANNALS OF THE PRE-OLYMPIC GAMES PERIOD, Athens 1895-1896. By Thanassis Tarassouleas. Published by Athanassis Tarassouleas in July 1997; translated into English by Elizabeth Albani and Diana Fakiolas. Printed by Alexandros Matsoukis S.A.; 124 pages. Available in Greek and in English in a limited edition. Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

ISOH-member Thanassis Tarassouleas, was the author of the volume *The Olympic Games in Athens. 1896-1906*, published in 1988. With this new book, he partly opens up the minutes of all the meetings of the Organizing Committee for the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens, for the true researcher of Olympic history!

In his PROLOGUE, Mr. Tarassouleas claims to have found the minutes of the 1896 Organizing Committee ‘after persistent and endless research in every possible direction’ and the world of Olympic historians should be grateful to Mr. Tarassouleas for his find!

According to the ‘Introduction’, which was written by Mr. Petros Linardos, the complete minutes of the twenty-

five meetings of the first Olympic Organizing Committee, consisting of twelve members, have been recovered from the dusty archives, informing us about many unknown facts. They give us a look behind the scenes and inform us about the dedication of these members. Especially interesting is the important role of the Crown-Prince Constantinos as president of the Organizing Committee. He never failed to attend the meetings and many of the decisions can be related to his personal influence.

Many interesting facts, discussions, locations etc. are discussed in these minutes, not in the least the many 'claims' the Committee received for funds to cover expenses of every kind! It makes for most interesting reading!

It is with regret that nevertheless I have to mention that this book has a few flaws. In the first place I think that the author should have published a translation in the English language of the complete minutes as they were found. What he has published in the ANNALS is but an extract of the total information and for us, true Olympic historians, only the complete story will suffice! Further, the author publishes the minutes according to the various subjects he describes: like the stadium, the padded cushions, the rifle range, cycle track, medals, diploma's and tickets, etc.

All of these subjects are of immense value, but the author would have done better to write down a 'word-correct' and verbatim translation of the minutes, for us Olympic historians to study with regard to each aspect of the 1896 Olympic Games

I can imagine that the author wants to lay a claim that he, and no-one else found these minutes, and I can even understand such a claim, but history, and especially the 1896 Olympic Games history should belong to us all!

Maybe, the Hellenic Olympic Committee, now that this book has been published, can arrange for an English 'verbatim' translation of these minutes, because I think that many Olympic historians would like to know about each line written in those days by those valiant members of the first Olympic Organizing Committee. Let's not forget that these people paved the way for many generations to follow!

100 OLYMPISCHE HIGHLIGHTS WINTERSPORT - Momentaufnahmen 1908-1998, by Volker Kluge. Published by Sportverlag Berlin, 1998, 128 pages, in German. ISBN 3-328-00757-1. Price: DM 39.90/ÖS 291. Reviewed by Karl Lennartz.

Volker Kluge, ISOH member, journalist, sports historian, sports statistician, has published many standard works concerning the history of the Olympic Games. For example "Winterspiele Olympia Kompakt", "Olympische Sommerspiele - Die Chronik, Band I".

As a preparation for the Olympic Games 1996 in Atlanta and on the occasion of the Centennial of the Olympic

Movement, he wrote: "Olympische Highlights 1896-1996" (Olympic Highlights 1896-1996).

Moreover, he compiled two Olympic planners on the occasion of the Games in Atlanta and Nagano. Atlanta: "Der totale Olympia Planer" ("the total Olympia planner"), and Nagano: "Der Olympia Planer" ("the Olympia planner"). All these books met with approval of his readers. Now, analogous with the snapshots of the Summer Games, he is producing the highlights of the Winter Games. Starting with the efforts in London and Antwerp(en) up until the Games in Nagano, he gives a description of the most important events. On the one hand the articles are written in a fresh lively fashion and easily readable, on the other hand, Kluge maintains the historical truth which demonstrates his detailed research. The book enriches the history of the Olympic Winter Games. It should be read by each and every sports historian. It would be worthwhile to translate the text into English and French.

OLYMPISCHE WINTERSPIELE NAGANO '98, by Sven Simon, in cooperation with Sport-Informationen-Dienst (SID). Published by Copress Verlag, Munich, 1998, 129 pages, in German, 150 pictures (coloured). ISBN 3-7679-0505-1. DM 29.80/ÖS 218/Sw.Fr. 29.80. Reviewed by Rupert Kaiser.

In contrast to the centennial of the Olympic Games, and the Atlanta Olympics 1996, when the German bookshops were overflowing with Olympic books, the 90th anniversary of Olympic winter sports is represented by a few books only. We can say: "the traditional publishers have published their traditional Olympic books" - in this case about the games in Nagano - in the traditional manner of 'hotshots' some days after the final fanfares of the games. The quality is equivalent.

So, it was not too difficult for Copress Verlag in Munich to produce the best memorial book about Nagano '98. The publisher continued his reliable concept of the cooperation between the photo-agency of Sven Simon and the Sport-Informationen-Dienst (SID). The result is once again a colourful book with brilliant photo's, in which the photographic art has the distinction of the real dramatic moments and completeness (not even every gold medallist is represented), informative texts and - this is the real advantage - extensive statistical material. The first ten of every contest are mentioned, together with a lot of additional information.

The appendix includes - also traditional - the medallists of the Winter Olympics since 1924, and the complete roster of the German, Swiss and Austrian teams for Nagano 1998. In the excellent statistics, I missed the names of the members of the medal-winning teams in curling and ice-hockey. And further, I missed a short retrospective of 90 years on

winter sports in the Olympic Games. In my opinion, no Olympic book about Nagano 1998, should miss such a great opportunity to make a comparison between yesterday and today.

But beside these critical remarks, the idea of Nagano '98 to be "Games of the Hearts" is transported by the reviewed book in an excellent manner. That is the main thing to consider. Nagano '98 is a good buy for all friends of the Olympics.

ORANJE OP OLYMPISCH IJS, by Marnix Koolhaas and Huub Snoep. Published by Uitgeverij "De Vrieseborch", Zijlweg 1, 2013 DA Haarlem, Netherlands, 1997, 255 pages, in Dutch, many photographs in colour and black & white. ISBN 90-6076-429-3. NFL. 49.50. Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

This book contains the full history of Dutch Olympic speedskating. It starts with the first participation in St. Moritz 1928 and gives a preview for Nagano 1998.

Biographies from many of the Dutch skaters are given, and not only of those that already passed away. Many of the Dutch Olympic skaters even tell their own stories in a very readable way, but then you have to be able to read Dutch of course!

But, even the few Belgian speedskaters, five in total over a period of 74 years, pass the review, including the former Dutch Olympic gold medallist (1992/Albertville-10.000 metres) Bart Veldkamp, who won a bronze medal for his new country in Nagano.

In speedskating-crazy Netherlands, this book was such a tremendous success, that the first printing sold out within a few weeks, and already a second edition is planned to be published later this year, but then will include the for the Netherlands very successful Nagano Winter Olympics.
