

BOOK REVIEWS

FROM SOPHIE TO SONIA - a history of women's athletics, by Noel Henry. Published by Noel Henry, 61 Rathdown Park, Greystones, County Wicklow, Ireland. Price: Ir.£9.95, incl. postage. Reviewed by Séamus Ware.

The history of women's participation in athletic competition is one of an uphill struggle for many years, and especially in Ireland. Thus this book, written by a former marathon runner and author of *Irish Marathon Legends*, fills a wide gap. Noel Henry spent 3 years doing meticulous research for this book. He starts with an historical survey, which is confined to Ireland although the title of the book does not make that clear. This is followed by brief biographies of all the prominent female athletes (from the Republic of Ireland) down to the present. One unusual and welcome aspect is the inclusion of disabled athletes, such as those who competed in the Paralympics. The book's value as a reference source is enhanced by a list of Irish championship winners from 1966 onwards, including cross-country, and Dublin and Belfast marathon results from 1980. The one lack I detected is that there is no mention of athletes from Northern Ireland, except Maeve Kyle (a three times Olympian) who was born in the Republic of Ireland, but has lived in Northern Ireland since her marriage in the mid-1950's. The "Sophie" in the title is Sophie Peirce from Newcastle West, County Limerick, who well deserves a special section since she is largely unknown even in her native country. She went to England early in the First World War and served as despatch rider with the Royal Flying Corps. She was married and divorced three times and achieved prominence in varied fields. Sophie, then Mrs. Elliott Lynn, started her athletics career in 1921, and set a world record for the high jump of 4 ft. 10½ in. (1:48 metres). She represented Britain in two Women's world Games, coming 4th in

the javelin. Sophie became involved in athletics administration on the formation of the women's A.A.A. in 1922, and wrote a seminal coaching manual "Athletics for Women and Girls" in 1925. As an officer of the W.A.A.A. she was invited by the I.A.A.F. to present the case for the inclusion of 'track and field' events for women on the Olympic programme, at the I.O.C. Congress in Prague in 1925. Her presentation was obviously effective as five women's events were included in the 1928 Olympic Games, where she (now Lady Heath) was a judge. This contribution by her is interesting as the W.A.A.A. preferred separate women's championships, and at the Amsterdam Olympics, Britain (and Ireland) were not represented. Sophie later became a pioneer aviator, made the first solo flight from Cape Town to London and became a pilot with K.L.M. Sadly, she died in a road accident in London in 1939, aged 42. The "Sonia" in the title is of course Ireland's most successful female athlete, Sonia O'Sullivan - fourth in the Olympic 3,000 metres in 1992; second in the 1,500 metres and fourth in the 3,000 metres at the World Championships in 1993; European Champion 3,000 metres in 1994, and unfortunately hit by illness at the 1996 Olympics. The book, for which Sonia wrote the 'Introduction', concludes with an "Afterword", which brings the story to the end of 1997. Throughout, the author shows his deep knowledge of the subject.

WHITAKER'S ALMANACK INTERNATIONAL SPORTS RECORDS and RESULTS, by Peter Matthews. Published by The Stationary Office, P.O. Box 276, London SW8 5DT, United Kingdom. Price: £14.99 plus postage. ISBN 0-11-702248-9. 498 pages. Reviewed by Ian Buchanan.

Since the general reference book Whitaker's Almanack was first published in 1868 it has become something of a British institution but it is only now, 130 years later, that the decision has been taken to extend the range beyond the annual publication of a "mini-encyclopedia". Sport is the first subject chosen for its entry into wider fields and ISOH member, Peter Matthews, has compiled an excellent comprehensive and convenient reference book. Champions, winning teams and record holders for sports ranging from American Football to Wrestling are listed and the Olympic Games is given full coverage in this book of almost 500 pages. During his years as Sports Editor, and later Editor, of the Guinness Book of Records Peter Matthews edited similar record books but I find this latest version more attractively produced with the clarity of the print adding considerably to its appeal. The book does not claim to provide new information but I am sure that readers will find it useful and convenient to have the results of the major sports contained in a single volume. I know that I certainly will.

OLYMPIABOKEN 1998 (The Report by the Swedish Olympic Committee on its participation in the 1998 Olympic Winter Games 1998 in Nagano). Editor Ulf Pettersson. Published by Strömbergs/Brunnhages Förlag, Box 65, 162 11 Vällingby, Sweden. ISSN: 0567-4573; 0347-274. 1998. 365 pages in Swedish. Price: EU-countries: SW.Crowns 987; other countries: SW.Crowns 790. Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

This book is the continuation of a series that began in 1948, and from 1964 onwards became the official report of the Swedish Olympic Committee on its participation in the Olympic Games. Richly illustrated with beautiful photographs, this volume is again a fine addition to the series. In leather bound, with a high quality paper, it contains a wealth of information, which, unfortunately, is only available for people reading Swedish.

Wolf Lyberg, I should almost say "as usual", was requested by the editor-team to open up the book with an interview.

This time Lyberg went to the Swedish Court and with his King H.R.H. Carl XVI Gustaf as his companion on the interview-bench, he asked his well-thought-out questions. King Carl Gustaf in a free atmosphere honestly answered all the questions Lyberg put before him, even those on items as 'politics and the IOC'; the abandonment of the use of national anthems and national flags at the medal awarding ceremonies (the King was fully against this); and of course the current issue of "doping". The interview shows us a person dedicated to sports, who visited many Olympic Games, both Summer and Winter from 1972 onwards. A few pages are dedicated to the 'Prince of Sports', the late Prince Bertil from Sweden, who passed away in 1997. He served the Swedish Olympic Committee from 1948 to 1988, when he retired. The pages on the Nagano Olympic Winter Games are interesting, colourful and very complete. Special emphasis is given, a matter of course, on the performances of the Swedish participants, but the Olympic heroes from the other countries also get their well-deserved attention. Again, the editor-team used the well-proved system:

- The Nagano diary, by Ulf Pettersson, the editor himself of the Olympiaboken.
- Profiles of comparable sportsmen/women from today and "yesterday". This chapter is very interesting for us: historians, because the author: Lars Sandlin, compares Sixten Jernberg and Björn Dählie; Shimizu and Ballangrud; Dominik Hasek and Vladislav Tretiak; Herman Maier and Franz Klammer and finally the pairs: Platov/Grisjtjuk and Dean/Torvill.
- Thoughts on the Olympic Winter Games, by Sven Plex Petersson.
- A short biography of Gunilla Lindberg, by Wolf Lyberg.
- A retrospection of Sweden's participation in all the pre-

vious Olympic Winter Games, by Anders Janson.

- A description of the 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games, by sport.
- Biographies and photo's of all the Swedish Olympic entrants for Nagano.
- And finally, the special all-time statistics by our ISOH member Ove Karlsson, who as usual made it into a very useful chapter!
- Gunilla Lindberg, as Secretary-General of the Swedish Olympic Committee, ends this book with her report on the activities from 1996 to 1998.

2000 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE OLYMPIC GAMES, by Kevin Berry. Published by Pan Macmillan Australia, St Martin's Tower, 31 Market St, Sydney. Price \$A12.95. ISBN 0 330 36115 5. Reviewed by Harry Gordon.

Kevin Berry was among the harvest of outstanding youngsters who were part of the great renaissance of Australian swimming of the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s. This golden era began at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, when Australia won every freestyle event in the pool, male and female; it ended in Munich in 1972, when the Australian swimmers won six gold medals. Berry's stroke was the butterfly. At 15, he was the youngest member on the team that went to Rome in 1960; he did creditably to reach the final, indeed to finish sixth; four years later, in Tokyo, he won the 200 metres butterfly gold medal in world record time. That was one of the 12 individual world records of his career. (Kevin Berry is now an ISOH member as well!) Afterwards he became involved with the media (as photographic manager of a major newspaper and as a television sports director) and sports consultancy. He was bewitched by the experience of Rome and Tokyo, and those of us who have been lucky enough to hear him speak publicly have never failed to be impressed by his knowledge, his honesty and the depth of his passion for the Olympic movement.

This book is the first published evidence (there will be more) of the passion and the knowledge. Berry has not set out to create any sort of literary work. What he has done is produce a kind of a string of Olympic pearls: a loosely connected mass of capsules of information, much of it about the simply superlative, much of it in the oh-my-gosh category. Thus we learn about the seven-year-old Dutch coxswain, the 13-year-old gold medallist, the man who won gold for two different countries, the only archer ever from the Solomon Islands, the underwater swimming event, the cricket match of 1900, the slowest marathon. And so much more. This book is not just a gold-mine of facts and trivia, one that will sit on many a bedside table, available for late

night dip-reading. It is also a diverse celebration of one man's love for the Olympic Games.

NATION WITH NATION: The Story of Olympic Village Heidelberg, Olympic Games - Melbourne 1956, by Geoffrey Ballard. Spectrum Publications, PO Box 75, Richmond, Victoria 3121. ISBN 0 86786 366 8. Reviewed by Harry Gordon.

The opening ceremony of the Olympic Village for the 1956 Games in Melbourne did not begin auspiciously. The VIPs were there in force, plus a brass band from the Royal Australian Air Force and a variety of military escort parties. Three teams --- Malaya, Hungary and Ceylon -- had taken up residence in the Village, and another, from Taiwan (then called Formosa China), had just arrived just minutes before. The first hitch came as the flag of Hungary was hauled up a flagpole -- upside down. This was rectified promptly, and everyone watched attentively while the Chinese flag was raised. Then the unthinkable occurred. As the rolled-up flag was broken and fluttered from the mast it was seen to be the wrong one. It belonged to Communist China, then enjoying a quite hostile relationship with the Formosans. The arguments and the inquests that followed were torrid, and for a while it seemed that Australia's prime minister would become involved.

The story is told in this very frank and comprehensive history of Melbourne's Olympic Village, written by Geoffrey Ballard. He makes it clear that after that embarrassing episode, one person was given the sole responsibility of checking flags, and making sure they were correctly flown. This is by its nature a rare kind of book: if other histories have been written solely on the subject of a single Olympic Village, I haven't seen them. This was a time when such villages didn't have mayors. This one had a commandant, and Ballard was the deputy commandant. It was also a time when there were separate, neighboring villages for men and women, divided by a high wire-meshed fence. Quite apart from any kind of dread about possible unauthorised mixing of the genders, it was a nervous time for the organisers and administrators. Great international tension existed, with the Hungarian Revolution, fighting around the Suez Canal, and the two Chinas both moody and sensitive. The Games had never been to the southern hemisphere, and there was apprehension about the task of hosting 4500 athletes from 67 nations.

The Russians elected to keep their team out of the village; they remained on a liner moored in Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay. Ballard neglects no detail of the planning and operation of the village - from the menus in the 10 main dining rooms to the housekeeping and medical services. He even explains how cakes would be prepared for every

member of every team who happened to have a birthday while in residence. Despite the international unrest, those Olympics became known as the Friendly Games. This rewarding account helps to explain why.

OLYMPISCHE SOMMERSPIELE - DIE CHRONIK II, by Volker Kluge. Published in 1998 by SPORTVERLAG BERLIN, Postbox 8840, 10888 Berlin, Germany. 848 pages, in German. ISBN 3-328-00740-7. Price: DM 88.00; or Ösch 642.00; or Sw.Fr. 80.00, exclusive mailing costs. Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

This volume is the second of a series of four; the first one, Band I, covering the Olympic Games from Athens 1896 up to Berlin 1936 (in fact up to the period of World War II) was published in 1997. This second Band II deals with the Olympic Games from London 1948, Helsinki 1952, Stockholm/Melbourne 1956, Rome 1960 and Tokyo 1964. The author points out, once again, that research is sometimes very difficult, Olympic archives being neglected, or being no longer available!

This makes it unavoidable that some information will be lacking. In his description of each Olympic Games, the author gives a "Historical Overview" of the world situation, a preview of how the Games were attained and organized, a complete overview of all paraphernalia, issued by the Organizing Committee, from posters to medals, badges, etc. the designers of each, and the amount of such items issued/published. For his German readers, he also gives a historical description of the joint co-operation between East and West Germany to attain a combined German team in this period; the influences of the Cold War, the Hungarian conflict and in general the sports-history of the two Germanys leading up the Olympics of this period. Again, with each Olympic Games, Kluge, through his foot-notes at the end of each chapter, supplies his readers with a wealth of information on each event, and especially on many members of the Olympic Family, whether they are participants, IOC-members, or in other ways attached to the Olympics.

This is for us, Olympic historians, in fact the most valuable part of his book(s). This volume contains no less than 2504 foot-notes! Like its predecessor, Band I, this new volume can be described as a "masterpiece" and should be added to every Olympic library.

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