

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MODERN OLYMPIC CENTURY by Ekkehard zur Megede

Full Results from AOH NA/Athens to Atlanta - Track and Field Athletics. Published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Leichtathletik-Dokumentation e.V. (DGLD). Price DM 65.00, exclusive mailing costs. To be ordered from Hans Waynberg, DGLD, Grefrather Weg 100, D-41464 Neuss am Rhein, Deutschland.

Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk

This book is a continuation, and an update of a series which began in 1968, when the author published his first volume: *Die Geschichte der olympischen Leichtathletik, 1. Band*, about the history of the Olympic Track and Field events from 1896-1936. This first book was followed in 1969 with: *Die Geschichte der olympischen Leichtathletik, 2. Band*, covering the period from 1948-1968. In 1984 Ekkehard zur Megede added his *Band III*, about the period from 1972 to 1980. In this third volume he, for the first time, published two completely new elements: 1. A list with the German participants in track and field from 1896 up to 1980, including the athletes from the Bundesrepublik Deutschland from 1952 onwards (and excluding those from the G.D.R.), and 2. an alphabetical list with all the other track and field athletes from the rest of the world.

Over the past thirty years, Ekkehard zur Megede must have received so much new information, that the decision to publish an overall update of the accumulated information, plus covering the complete first century of the Olympic track and field events into one volume was made.

He writes himself in his introduction: *"A more or less dense fog lay, and still lies, over some results at the first modern Olympic Games. Nevertheless, I did not desist and continued (with my undertaking) although I felt frustrated about so many blanks and deficiency."*

The result is now contained in this 706 page book, which for each and every Olympic statistician, and of course especially so for those most interested in athletics/track and field, is an absolute must!

In this publication again all results from all track and field events, from Athens 1896 up to and including Atlanta 1996, have been mentioned in detail. Contrary to his earlier *BAND III*, the Index now covers all the participating athletes, and it is no longer split up into a German and a foreign part. This index makes up more than half of the total volume and this enables Olympic historians to look up the results of each individual athlete!

I have in fact only one negative comment on this book, and that is the fact that the printing is 'readable', but certainly not of a good quality. This is due to the fact that the author had to publish the book under his own steam, without any (financial) help from the I.A.A.F., or any other organization. This makes the venture a risky business, but one should have admiration for his daring. The fact that the book is written in the English language gives it a much larger 'audience'.

**THE 1904 OLYMPIC GAMES:
RESULTS FOR ALL COMPETITORS IN
ALL EVENTS, WITH COMMENTARY**
by Bill Mallon.

**THE 1906 OLYMPIC GAMES:
RESULTS FOR ALL COMPETITORS IN
ALL EVENTS, WITH COMMENTARY**
by Bill Mallon.

Published by McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, USA. Price: \$39.50 each

Reviewed by David Wallechinsky.

With these two volumes, Bill Mallon has continued his excellent series of "unofficial reports" for the early Olympic Games. Once again Mallon has made use of years of research to reconstruct the results, for preliminary rounds and finals, of every Olympic event. In addition, he has included accounts of non-Olympic events such as the notorious Anthropology Days that were held in conjunction with the 1904 St. Louis Games. These books are absolute musts for any library, public or personal, that prides itself on its Olympic collection.

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In the 1904 volume, Mallon continues the discussion first begun in his 1900 volume as to what constitutes an Olympic event. The IOC has been remarkably vague about this issue, so it has been left to historians to pursue the matter more fully. Mallon takes the position that an event can be considered official if, in the early years, entry was restricted to amateurs of all nations. In addition, handicap events do not qualify. Following these criteria, Mallon eliminates such previously recognized 1904 events as roque and water polo. However, he leaves in four sports in which only Americans competed: boxing, wrestling, archery and cycling. Unfortunately these competitions were of extremely marginal quality. There were no foreign entrants, much less competitors, in either boxing or wrestling. In boxing, Miles Burke was allowed to compete in the Flyweight Class even though he failed to make the weight limit. In archery, the events doubled as the United States National Championship. An ISOH sub-committee has been formed to explore this issue further.

In his 1906 volume, Mallon confronts another controversial question: should the 1906 Games be considered official at all? The current IOC position is: No. However, this position is based on a decision made in 1949 by a three-man commission headed by Avery Brundage despite the fact that the 1906 Games were considered official at the time they were held. It has been said that they should not be judged official because the Olympic Charter requires that Olympic Games be held in the first year of each Olympiad. However, as Mallon points out, there was no Olympic Charter in 1906. Recognition of the 1906 Games demands further study. Unfortunately, at this time, the IOC has shown no interest in reviewing the 1949 Brundage decision. In the meantime, as Mallon's book clearly demonstrates, the competitions at 1906 Games were of a far higher quality than those at any of the Olympics that preceded them.

OLYMPISKE SOMMERLEKER

i navn og tall - Resultater og statistikker, by Hallgeir Slettan. ISBN 82-91971-01-3, 333 pages, in Norwegian. Normal price: NOK 138,-.

OLYMPISKE VINTERLEKER

i navn og tall - Resultater og statistikker, by Hallgeir Slettan. ISBN 82-91971-00-5, 154 pages, in Norwegian. Normal price: NOK 119,-.

However, for members of the ISOH, the author offers a special discount. ISOH-Members will have to pay NOK 83,- (Winter) and 97,- (Summer). Both books were published by Slettan Forlag, Blakstadmarka 19, 1386 Asker, NORWAY.

Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

Actually, there is no need whatsoever to be able to understand the Norwegian language, because these two books only contain statistics. Yes, sure, you must know that skøyter means speedskating and that langrenn means cross-country skiing, and so on. Yet, these two books contain all the statistics.

I tried to compare them with Ove Karlsson's statistical pages in the last issue of the OLYMPIABOKEN, published last year. They are similar, that should be as it is, but Mr. Slettan added one more statistical list, which I personally found to be a new element. Next to the overall Olympic medal statistics, in the Olympic Winter Games headed by the unforgettable Bjørn Dæhlie from Norway, Slettan added a list, counting only the individual events. This list is, as a matter of course, also headed by Dæhlie, but almost at the same height stands the Russian speedskater Lidia Skoblikova, both with six individual Olympic gold medals, but Bjørn Dæhlie with three more silver medals added to his total. I found this to be an interesting statistics.

However, I have one important objection too. Mr. Slettan only gives the results of the three medal-winners in each Olympic event. Maybe this was done on purpose, because the books would have had many more pages if all six, or eight finishes in each Olympic final had been mentioned. Another lack of

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information can be found in the team-events, where the author only mentions the country and not the actual winners of the medals, the participants themselves! Nevertheless these two books can be useful for many Olympic historians.

TENNIS, A Cultural History by Heiner Gillmeister.

Published by Cassell & Co., Wellington House, 125 Strand, London WC2R 0BB. ISBN: 0-7185-0195-0. Illustrated 452 pages. Price: £19.99 (Paperback edition).

Reviewed by Ruud Paauw.

The author, professor of linguistics at the University of Bonn, ought to be well-known to Olympic and sports researchers. In 1993, he wrote a very thorough and attractive history of tennis at the Olympic Games (*Olympisches Tennis, die Geschichte der Olympischen Tennisturniere 1896-1992, Akademie Verlag*). Moreover, he has published a great many articles on the history of ball games.

TENNIS, A Cultural History was originally published in the German language (1997), but since this sport has so many Anglo-American roots, it is very pleasant that the book now has an English translation.

The hand of the scholar is noticeable in this remarkable, absorbing study. It gives a full account of the development of tennis, from the origins, the Middle Ages, the introduction of it in various countries, up till the first years of this century. Ardent followers of this kind of sport should buy the book, because it gives a wealth of information, I never found before in one book!

Gillmeister is not only an excellent researcher, he also is a good and entertaining writer, which cannot be said of all professors. For the readers of this *Journal of Olympic History*, it goes too far to go into details on the sport of tennis itself, but of special interest are the things Gillmeister writes about the first tennis-tournament in the Olympic Games in Athens in 1896.

In 1994, the British Olympic Association received from an anonymous a parcel containing the diary of

the first Olympic tennis champion, John Pius Boland (1870-1958). Gillmeister calls it "the most intriguing document in Olympic history", which seems to me a slight exaggeration, but it certainly is a very important one. (One wonders inadvertently how many diaries, papers, memoirs, or other writings from former Olympic champions can still be found on dusty ceilings?!).

So, we now know, how Boland went to Athens, why he played tennis there, and against whom. It gives us more information about the tennis tournament as a whole, a description of the closing ceremony, and the distribution of prizes. Boland's participation in the Olympic Games ('As a tourist' . . .) was by no means as accidental as we always thought. He was a fellow-student of the Greek Manos, who as a member of the Athens lawn tennis sub-committee had tried, with Boland's assistance, to invite Oxford athletes to the Olympic Games of 1896.

THE MARTIN SHERIDAN STORY

Researched, edited, and published by the committee of the Sheridan Memorial Community Centre, Bohola, Claremorris, County Mayo, Ireland Price: Irish£7.50, plus postage.

Reviewed by Séamus Ware.

The details of Martin Sheridan's athletic career are well-documented in such publications as David Guiney's book: "Gold, Silver, Bronze", Bill Mallon's article in American National Biography, and in my own book (in the Irish language) on the history of Irish Olympians. However, the book under review is very welcome for giving family background, much personal information, many photographs, and a list of all his discuss records from 1901 to 1911. The book is the fruit of three years' dedicated research and editing, and the thoroughness of the work is shown by the list of sources - parish and school records, libraries in Ireland and New York, police records in New York City, etc.

As is well-known, Sheridan tied with Ralph Rose for first place in the discuss event at the 1904 Olympics, and a throw-off was ordered (for the only time in

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Olympic history) to decide the medals. The distance with which Sheridan won the throw-off was not known apparently to David Wallechinsky, who has mentioned a winning margin of about five (5) feet. However, Joe O'Neill, Chairman of the Committee Centre, on a visit to the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, discovered that the best efforts in this throw-off were:

Sheridan 127ft. 10.25in. (± 39 mtr); Rose 120ft. 6.75in. (± 36.8 mtr).

It was revealing to read a personal profile which shows Martin Sheridan to have been a very modest man, despite his great athletic achievements and the high esteem in which he was held in the New York Police Department. His speaking ability was also shown in his replies to the several addresses of welcome he received throughout Ireland on a month-long visit in 1908. I learned that, on that visit Sheridan met Tom Kiely in competition, not only at Dungarvan (see my article on Kiely in Volume 7, No. 1), but at Ballina and Dundalk; unfortunately, Kiely had been injured and only competed in the hammer throw in the two latter locations.

The book is available from the Secretary, Sheridan Memorial Community Centre.

MINDS, BODIES AND SOULS - An Archaeology of the Olympic Heritage Network, by Don Anthony.

MINDS, BODIES AND SOULS - An Anthology of the Olympic Heritage Network, by Don Anthony.

Published by the British Olympic Association, 1 Church Row, Wandsworth Plain, London, SW18 1EH, ENGLAND. Cost £10 per volume.

Reviewed by Peter Lovesey.

These are the second and third books of a trilogy. The first volume: MINDS, BODIES AND SOULS - An A to Z of the British Olympic Heritage Network, by Don Anthony, was reviewed in the ISOH Journal: CITIUS, ALTIUS, FORTIUS, Volume 4, No. 2, published in May 1996, by Ian Buchanan, and is available free from the BOA.

British influence on the creation of the modern Olympic Games was, for much of the present century, assumed to be of marginal significance. The founding father, Coubertin, referred repeatedly in his writings to visits to England, yet these were merely noted in passing by F.A.M Webster in his two histories of the Olympics. "He visited Rugby School and forgathered with the late Dr. W.P. Brookes at Much Wenlock."

The role played by Brookes in the history of Olympism has since been upgraded by the work of a series of historians, notably Professors John A. Lucas, Richard D. Mandell, John J. MacAloon and David C. Young. Young shows how Brookes as early as 1880 suggested to the Greeks holding international Olympic Games in Athens; and later shared his idea and enthusiasm with Coubertin, who brought the dream to reality. After Brookes died, Coubertin wrote a long tribute, describing him as his oldest friend. It is reproduced in full from the *American Monthly Review of Reviews* in the third book of this trilogy.

Sadly, Coubertin seems to have distanced himself from Brookes as the years passed. By 1908, he was dismissed as "an English doctor from another age, who had made his little village into a metropolis of popular sports".

NEXT ISSUE

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Please forward all submissions and letters to:

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Note: All submissions must be supplied in electronic format with accompanying hard copy.

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Don Anthony, a passionate Olympian, has now completed his extraordinary trilogy, *Minds, Bodies and Souls*, giving a documentation of Britain's Olympic heritage. The books are not, he points out, a history of the British Olympic Association. Rather, they set out dates, facts, documents and biographical data with extensive use of source texts. He chose an ambitious structure and the entire work runs to 343 pages in an A4 format, with illustrations. The first volume is an A to Z, with useful chronology, bibliography and list of sports museums. Volume 2, "An Archaeology", seeks to "uncover what has been buried" from Brookes to the foundation of the IOC and beyond. Volume 3, "An Anthology", adds a selection of articles by other writers intended "to give some muscle to the flesh".

The advantage of Dr. Anthony's method is that for the first time general readers can examine the documentation confirming that William Penny Brookes created a model for the modern Olympic Games involving ceremonies, competitions for medals in a range of amateur sports as well as literature and music. And this was as early as 1850, thirteen years before Coubertin was born. From it grew the Shropshire Olympian Society (1861) and the National Olympian Association (1865). Joachim Rühl and Anette Keuser demonstrated in a paper reproduced in Volume 3 how the series of Olympic Festivals held at Liverpool in the 1860s virtually provided a template for the first official Olympics of 1896, event by event and sport by sport.

The role of Brookes in Olympic history has been well argued elsewhere by the American historians named above. Less well known internationally is the figure of Captain Robert Dover and his Cotswold Olympic Games, dating from 1612. A history of the Games by Dr. Francis Burns is reproduced in Volume 3. Other sports of peculiar interest to British Olympism such as gymnastics and skiing also have their place in this wide-ranging trilogy.

A new insight (to this reviewer, anyway) is Dr. Anthony's discovery that the "Souls" - a group of nineteenth century English aristocrats who aspired to aesthetic and intellectual pursuits - had a notable

influence on the British Olympic movement. They are the Souls of the title, among them the sports enthusiasts William Grenfell (Lord Desborough), A.J. Balfour and Lord Wenlock. Lord Charles Beresford is said to have given the group its name - though whether he was a Soul himself is debatable. Until the history of the BOA is written, I think the significance of the group per se must also be open to debate. Dr. Anthony is a great cross-referencer. One might equally cross-reference to the House of Lords or Oxford University.

However, the parade of characters in these pages is dazzling: Robert Dover, Penny Brookes, Sir John Astley, Charles Herbert, Willie Desborough, Sir George Robertson, the Rev. de Courcy Laffan and Philip Noel-Baker - what brilliant tales they could tell between them. And the pages are strewn with nuggets such as Robertson's scathing comment on the organisation of the first Games - and his grovelling apology to Coubertin; and Desborough's correspondence to Coubertin about the 1908 Games ("The plans are set for a stadium to hold 134,000 people, but I think that is too big").

What else could one ask for? An index, certainly, and better printed illustrations. Little else. The three books are a huge tribute to Don Anthony's energy, scholarship and enthusiasm. When the history of the BOA is begun, these will be the massive foundation stones.

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OLYMPISCHE WINTERSPELEN - VAN CHAMONIX TOT NAGANO - hardrijden by Drs. Johannes Lolkama.

Published in December 1998, by ADREM publishing Group, Postbox 313, 9200 AH Drachten, Netherlands. Price: appr. N Fl. 44.00 or EURO 20.00, plus postage. ISBN 90-71293-18-1. 128 pages, in Dutch

Reviewed by Tony Bijkerk.

Johan Lolkama has two obsessions: speedskating, and then especially the famous Frisian 'eleven-cities-race', and the Olympic marathon. His publication on the Frisian 'eleven-cities-race' is accepted as the most complete work on this gruelling race, ever written. In his latest book, which came out almost one year after the closing ceremony of the Nagano Olympic Winter Games in 1998, he wrote down the history of Olympic speedskating, with special emphasis on the results of the Dutch competitors. Fortunately, he did not forget some of the real heroes of early Olympic speedskating and with the assistance of among others, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, and even Russian sources, he highlighted the lives of early speedskaters, like Clas Thunberg, Charles Jewtraw, Julius Skutnab, and the Dutch champion of those early days Siem Heiden.

From each Olympic Winter Games, Lolkama gives a description of the details of the speedskating races, per distance, of course. Further, he gives the final results of each distance, restricting himself to the number 1 to 6, but with the Dutch participants added for national exposure.

The book is very complete, especially for insiders in the sport. And since almost every other person living in the Netherlands regards himself to be an expert on speedskating, there is little doubt that this book will find its way to the readers.

Personally, I especially liked the details Lolkama provided about some of the early skaters, like for instance the simple fact that Julius Skutnab became a fireman in Helsinki and finished his career as its commandant; and that Thunberg offered up all his gold medals, in 1939, when a short time before the Finnish-Russian War of 1939-1940, he supported his country by melting the medals down to help solve Finland's financial crisis. But, of course, to be able to fully appreciate this book, be prepared to learn Dutch.