

Messinesi, Zenophon Leon. *A Branch of Wild Olive*. New York: Exposition Press, 1973. 97 p.

This slim volume presents a bird's eye view of the ancient and modern Olympic Games from a purist's standpoint. The author, who died shortly before this book was published, was a product of British schools sporting heritage and classical Greek idealism. A true gentleman of aristocratic mien, Mr. Messinesi, while admitting of weaknesses in the Olympic Games reality would brush them aside gently, always keeping his eye firmly on the golden grail of the de Coubertin dream. His book perfectly embodies this position.

For the majority of the book the author pursues a reasonably logical historical development of his topic, going back to the ancient Olympics and progressing forward through time to the Games of today. However he obviously feels constrained to discuss two special areas which do not fit his historical sequence and tacks them on at the end of the book. These are "Women and Olympic Games" (a concession to western trends, not Greek) and "The International Olympic Academy" (a reflection of his close involvement with this relatively unknown institution).

A third "extra" to the central theme is a chapter entitled "Ideology and Problems" in which the Brundagean attitudes are loyally presented and problems summarily dismissed.

The historical section of the book is brief but well done. Mr. Messinesi as a devotee of Greece and sport history is well qualified to present this information. His description of Olympia, the Games and the life of the times is informative and colorful, if not new.

The period between 393(4) A.D.—the cessation of the ancient games—and 1896 A.D.—their re-institution in the present cycle—is presented to a degree superior to other books dealing with Olympic history. His stress on the sport developments of 19th century Britain,

and the Greek efforts to re-establish Olympic Games set the stage for the chapter on de Coubertin and his efforts in the Olympic struggle.

This leads naturally to a series of brief comments on each of the Games held since 1896, an outline of the organization and function of the International Olympic Committee and the role of Fine Arts relative to the Olympic Games. The book concludes with the three added topics alluded to earlier.

The student of the Olympic Movement will find little new information has been provided by Mr. Messinesi. However, a novice in the field, who sees only the Games and knows nothing of the philosophy they celebrate would find a couple of hours spent with this little volume both pleasant and enlightening.

Jean M. Leiper