

Mandell, Richard D., *The First Modern Olympics* (University of California Press, 1976), 194 pages, illustrated.

Dr. Mandell has written an excellent account of the atmosphere and circumstances leading to the establishment of the modern Olympic Games, and the situation surrounding their first presentation in Athens in 1896.

After beginning with a survey of the ancient Greek Olympics, the author then investigates various "Olympic" revivals of the 16th to the 19th centuries, and mentions the state of international sport competitions in the late 1800's before approaching his title theme. At this juncture the text explores the background and motivation of Pierre de Coubertin, the driving force behind the Olympic revival. Coubertin's careful planning of the "Congress of Paris" and his subtle stage managing of the meetings and social events are made crystal clear in Mandell's recital of the conference which approved the re-establishment of the Olympic Games.

Troubles began when Athens attempted to make the Games a reality. Dr. Mandell's description of the political and economic problems militating against the Games ever occurring makes it obvious that contemporary difficulties in producing the Games had their legitimate antecedents in Athens 80 years ago. The enthusiasm of the Greek people, the festive preparations of the city and sites, and the spirit of anticipation of athletes and spectators carries the reader through the trials and tribulations of the preparations to the moment of the contests. Most of the sporting events are scrutinized by relating anecdotes and incidents involving specific athletes—a technique which enhances the story-telling air of the whole book.

The final chapter looks at the second Olympic Games in Paris in 1900 and briefly mentions the subsequent festivals until the time of Coubertin's death in 1937.

This book must be considered a valuable addition to the storehouse of Olympic literature. Certainly it is the most explicit description of the first Olympic Games that exists in the English language. Casual readers may be surprised to discover the similarity between modern Olympic production problems and those of 1896. Students of Olympic history will find that many

bits of information not previously available are contained in this source, including an analysis of the political, social, and sport atmosphere of the 1890's in which Coubertin's Olympic idea had its genesis.

In spite of a plethora of data and detail, Dr. Mandell has succeeded in retaining a most enjoyable style of writing. Occasionally it is obvious that the author has not remained completely neutral in his view of events (particularly in some references to Coubertin) but his interpretations lend even more colour to the presentation. For most readers the documentation will be satisfactory, but the Olympic historian may find some of Dr. Mandell's most interesting points of view insufficiently referenced. Even so, Dr. Mandell is to be congratulated on the extent of his documentation and the breadth of his sources; a rarity in books intended for popular consumption, particularly Olympic ones.

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