

Howell, Reet, and Howell, Max. *Aussie Gold: The Story of Australia at the Olympics* (Melbourne: Brooks Waterloo, 1988).

This is an honest book, the authors stating from the beginning that it is their intent to be both scientific and inspirational. Only Hungary, Greece and Australia were represented at every single Summer Olympic Games; and the authors of this book, the husband-and-wife team of sport historians Reet and Max Howell, take care to remind us of this fact. Australia's commitment and success at these summer quadrennial festivals is powerful, matched in an individual way by the enthusiasm, thoroughness and skill of the well-known peripatetic Ph.D.s, Howell and Howell, who presently make their home in Indooroopilly, Queensland, Australia.

Australia, exactly 200 years of age, was born of adversity as a prison colony. Australian independence from its "mother country" also was born of adversity amidst World War I and the slaughter of thousands of Australian soldiers at Gallipoli in the Dardanelles between December 9, 1915, and January 9, 1916. So, according to the authors, nothing came easily to Australians, and at a level far less important than war but far more interesting, in Olympic Games, the quest for gold medals was intense. *Aussie Gold* is a paean to national courage, to athletic success through hard work, and to that special moment given to so few that "they were the best in the world" in one given area. The book is also a skillful anecdotal narrative history utilizing impeccably reliable primary sources. The "table top" 8½" x 11" Olympic story contains 359 pages, over 100 photos, scores of charts/graphs, and a text exceeding 100,000 words. A foreword by Kevan Gosper, Olympic silver medalist, national Olympic Committee president and senior International Olympic Committee member, gets the book off to the kind of start desired by the authors. The "Pursuit of Excellence" is the subtitle of the preface and a give-away as to the double reason for the book, the other hope being to write for the first time an "accurate and complete history of Australia's participation in every single Summer Olympic Games." The ancient Olympic Games and Baron Pierre de Coubertin's vital role in the whole enterprise are given brief, error-free treatment-an excellent beginning for any new Olympic historian.

There are twenty-one chapters dealing with all the Summer Olympic Games (one of them, on the 1906 Panhellenic Athenian Festival, may be inappropriate in this study) and a concluding sum-up titled "The Gold Medalists in Retrospect." Someone in a big hurry might profitably glean the essence of this book by reading this last section. The big middle section of twenty-one chapters invariably follows a pattern: (1) some basic statistics on that year's Games plus Australia's medal winners; (2) a short section of several general paragraphs dealing with organization, high drama at the Games, and "politics"; (3) anecdotes of Australian men and women at the Games; (4) husky biographies of all Aussie gold medalists. It is a formula that seems to work.

Another double dimension of the book, by design or inadvertent, is the umbrella plan of writing high-minded, inspirational and patriotic dialogue of young men and women, almost all from poverty backgrounds, who went on to win the gold. Also uppermost in the minds of the Howell team is to get the soundest documentation, the most creditable sources, the testimonies of living witnesses, eyewitness accounts and the most disinterested private and government documents possible. One can take issue with this last statement because the footnotes themselves are not included in the book—the authors promising that "a list of references is available from the authors." The dual approach of inspirational journalism and attempts at Germanic historical thoroughness stamp the entire manuscript.

Australian bronze and silver medal winners are only listed in this text but the 84 gold medalists are etched most sharply and frequently with great drama attached. These champions have contributed to Australia's "social scene, helping the nation's self-image to evolve," state the two authors who, late in their careers (at least for 61-year-old Max), have become master storytellers. Edwin Flack, Freddie Lane, Mackintosh, Rowley, the 1908 Rugby Union Champion "Wallabies" come alive for this reviewer. Photographs of every one of these winners add much to the text. A half-page photo on page 52 of the very great Sarah "Fanny" Durack (1889-1956) is simply stunning! Cecil Patrick Healy gained a measure of immortality in agreeing to delay the semi-final of the 100 meters in order to allow America's Duke Kahanamoku to get poolside. "Healy should have been the 1912 winner, the Duke should have been disqualified." It was only Healy's magnanimity "as a sportsman of the loftiest ideals" that denied him the gold; "he was killed in his first action" in World War I. In the hands of these two authors, *Aussie Gold* emerges as a big book of heroic Australian men and women.

Continuing in this vein are lengthy visual and written images of five-medal swimmer Andrew Murray "Boy" Charlton (1907-1975), "Nick" Winter, Dick Eve, and double-gold sculler Henry Robert "Bobby" Pearce in 1928. The trail of gold continues through 1932 (Clare Dennis, Edgar Gray, Pearce) and 1936 with triple jumper Jack Metcalfe. A pattern emerges here as Australian track and field, swimming, equestrian, cycling and rowing stars become international champions. The post-World War II success culminated on home ground, at the Melbourne Cricket Club in 1956, at the pool and on cool green equestrian grass

as 270 men and women (the authors apologized for the consistent disproportionate numbers of men and women throughout the country's Olympic history) produced 13 gold, 8 silver, and 14 bronze. The baker's dozen winners are all in the swimming, athletics, and cycling halls of fame.

Some of the more recent Olympic Games' gold winners were "the courageous school girl Maureen Caird"; the 59-year-old winner in the 5.5 class yacht, Sir William Northam; and 45-year-old equestrian gold medalist (1960) "Laurie" Morgan, who uttered the classic psychology of the winner: "If I set my mind on anything, it is do or die. The likelihood of being beaten would only make me work harder." Dirt-poor Ralph Doubell was trained to physical and, especially, psychological sharpness by the wizard Franz Stampfl and won the Mexico City 800 meters in world record time. Ralph had "a deep inner drive and a psychological set that refused to admit defeat." Max and Reet Howell continue their portraits of physically talented young men and women of extraordinary motivation who culminated athletic careers with Olympic gold. So we are treated to vivid images of Brad Cooper, Shane Gould, Michelle Ford, Dean Lukin, Glynis Nunn, Jon Siben and the 1984 cycling pursuit team of Grenda, Nichols, Turner and Woods. It's all grand reading, and for those who wish it to be, inspiring and uplifting. It is also, with a dozen pesky exceptions, extremely accurate Olympic Games history.

Let us immediately get to my primary irritation about this book which is the classic criticism of the scholarly specialist. There are 310 notations here and none are contained in footnotes or end notes. We are left with the small caveat, "A list of references is available from the authors." I fully intend to write for these references, but in the meantime . . . there are two Olympic Games, and this book is about the Summer Games even though the word "Summer" is not in the title. There is no scientific evidence in Baron de Coubertin's two autobiographies or anywhere else to substantiate the Howells' claim that "Coubertin naively believed that awarding the (1916) Games to Berlin would be a deterrent to Germany's military ambitions" (p. 68). The good baron had not the foggiest idea in 1912 (when the next Games site was selected) that the world would be at war four years later. Dates and birthdays occasionally got the better of the Professors Howell. On page 71 we have Frank Beaurepaire 33 years of age in the year 1924, but on page 75 we find that, in 1923, he was 37 years old! There is no Beaurepaire biography in this book and that may account for the confusion. "Boy" Charlton was born in 1907 (p. 74) and yet, on that same page, we are told that he was "14 years old in 1924." This is poor arithmetic . . . or something else. May I continue "picking" at small points that some may correctly perceive as large errors? Both Mel Patton (p. 93) and Dave Bolen (p. 108) were white Americans and *not* black. On page 117 the authors, in the same sentence, contradict themselves regarding Emil Zatopek, stating that he won "a silver in the 5000 meters" and a moment later "On the same day as his 5000 victory . . ." Almost everyone knows, including the authors, that the Czechoslovakian "Train" won three gold medals at the Helsinki Games. I looked hard and found few errors, no small task in so ambitious an effort.

Any sport historian anywhere who might be tempted to think or even say that the research and publishing team of Howell and Howell are “passé” (I’ve heard it said) would be premature. This is a sophisticated Olympic history, blending excellent biography, pride-filled social (but not political) history and some first-time insights into Australian Olympic organizational history (which is a form of politics). The authors criss-crossed the continent for two years collecting primary documentation. They read the best the IOC library had to offer and read everything in sight during their European and North American wanderings. The book is a reflection of this Germanic thoroughness. The book is also, just as important, a song of thanksgiving from two persons of very humble origins—an old-fashioned reminder that the way up the mountain is arduous but rewarding. These two, Reet and Max Howell, are presently engaged in this climb and I recommend this book as proof of their energy and progress.

Penn State University

John Lucas