

# Winning and Watching the Greek Pentathlon\*

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Unlike most topics in ancient sport, scoring the pentathlon is a topic for which there is relatively an excess of bibliography. The collections by Scanlon and Crowther show that for some time that extensive bibliography has been feeding off itself.<sup>1</sup> Our evidential basis has not significantly increased since the 1950s and we may not be any closer to a resolution in the 1990s. As Waldo E. Sweet puts it, "Almost all we know from ancient evidence is that there were five events (diskos, jump, javelin, run and wrestling), that three victories were required to win, and that wrestling was the last event."<sup>2</sup> Such antiquarian puzzles should not overly distract us from broader issues such as of the nature of ancient sport and sport's change or continuity from antiquity to the present.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the problem remains and this paper offers yet another suggestion on the method of deciding the victor in the pentathlon, a suggestion based on some reconsiderations of evidence and on some arguments concerning the nature of Greek sport and spectatorship. While it is possible and even probable that there were local or historical variations in scoring the pentathlon, it seems likely that there was consistency in the pentathlon at the *Periodos* or "circuit" of Panhellenic Games in Archaic and Classical Greece, the main focus of this study.

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1. Nigel B. Crowther, "Studies in Greek Athletics." Special Survey Issue, *Classical World*, 79 no. 2 (1985), 77-79 on scoring, 77-86 on pentathlon overall; Thomas F. Scanlon, *Greek and Roman Athletics: A Bibliography* (Chicago: Ares, 1984), 80-82. Studies mentioned here include E. N. Gardiner, "The Method of Deciding the Pentathlon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 23 (1903), 54-70; L. Pihkala and E. N. Gardiner, "The System of the Pentathlon," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 45 (1925), 132-134; G. E. Bean, "Victory in the Pentathlon," *American Journal of Archaeology*, 60 (1956), 361-368; J. Ebert, *Zum Pentathlon der Antike* (Berlin: Akad. Verl., 1963); H. A. Harris, "The Method of Deciding Victory in the Pentathlon," *Greece and Rome*, 19 (1972), 60-64; *Sport in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1972); R. Merkelbach, "Der Sieg im Pentathlon," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, II (1973), 261-269; J. Ebert, "Noch einmal zum Sieg im Pentathlon," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 13 (1974), 257-262; and Waldo E. Sweet, "A New Proposal for Scoring the Greek Pentathlon," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 50 (1983), 287-290; *Sport and Recreation in Ancient Greece: A Sourcebook with Translations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

2. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, 56.

3. For differing perspectives on the issue of change and continuity from ancient to modern sport, see Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978) and Richard D. Mandell, *Sport: A Cultural History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) asserting change; and David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988) asserting continuity. For a compromise, see Stephen Hardy, "Entrepreneurs, Structures, and the Sportgeist: Old Tensions in a New Industry," in Donald G. Kyle and Gary D. Stark, eds., *Essays in Sport History and Sport Mythology*. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1990), 45-82.

First of all, we must recognize that the pentathlon problem is a *modern* problem, a product of nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship influenced by the nature of modern sport. The pentathlon problem survives in part because it has not been resolved, but we are attracted to the problem largely because our thinking is affected by the nature of modern sport. We care about the pentathlon problem because of presentism or historical relativism: our modern games have conditioned us to believe that such technical points must be-and must have been-precisely articulated and perfectly consistent. From the revived Olympics' concern about how to hold events to the instant replay controversy, we are obsessed with systems and control.<sup>4</sup> This obsession and the pentathlon question are modern problems that have gotten out of hand.

Deciding the victor in the ancient pentathlon simply was *not* a problem for the Greeks. The ancient system presumably was uncontroversial and effective; we have no references to any arguments about decisions in the event. In 1903 E. N. Gardiner said of the pentathlon that "The sense of Fairness and Order was characteristic of the Greek mind, and no theory of Greek athletics can be satisfactory which fails to satisfy these two conditions."<sup>5</sup> What, however, did "Fairness and Order" mean to the Greeks? We must confront the ancient Greek pentathlon on ancient Greek terms, and we need to be aware of our modern preconceptions about sport. As identified by Allen Guttmann, modern sport has seven distinguishing characteristics: secularism, equality of opportunity to compete and in the conditions of competition, specialization of roles, rationalization, bureaucratic organization, quantification, and the quest for records.<sup>6</sup> In rational modern sport athletic excellence, careful supervision, and exact measurement are supposed to determine victory. Modern sport is progressive and innovative in techniques, equipment, and even rules of the game. Although ancient and modern sport are not entirely dissimilar, Greek culture and morality influenced all aspects of Greek sport.<sup>7</sup> Greek sport was not standardized: throughout Greece the "sacred foot" and, therefore, stadium lengths differed; styles of starting grooves varied between stadia.<sup>8</sup> Greek sport knew little quantification: athletes boasted of numbers of victories but formal records of distances (and, of course, speeds) were not kept.<sup>9</sup> There was little bureaucracy; judges differed from scribal officials. The Greeks lacked our preoccupation with "fairness": there were mismatches from the time of Homer's Epeius, and the combat events never had weight classes. In the Greek

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4. E.g., in 1925 Pihkala, *op. cit.*, 133, felt that the Greek system was better than the points system of the modern Olympics, and Gardiner suggested, 134, that Pihkala's system had "a very practical application to the pentathlon of the modern Olympic Games."

5. Gardiner, 1903, 54.

6. Guttmann, *Ritual*, 16-55.

7. On various aspects of the ancient Olympic experience, M. I. Finley, and H. W. Pleket, *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years*, (New York: Viking, 1976) and L. Drees, *Olympia: Gods, Artists, and Athletes*, trans. G. Ohn. (New York: Praeger, 1968) give balanced and readable introductions.

8. David G. Romano. "The Ancient Stadium: Athletics and Arete," *The Ancient World*, 7 nos. 1 & 2 (1983). 9-16.

9. Cf. e.g., M. N. Tod, "Greek Record-Keeping and Record-Breaking," *Classical Quarterly*, 43 (1949). 105-112.

mind outcomes were influenced by the gods, chance and morality.<sup>10</sup> Religious conservatism meant that the Greeks were cautious about changing programs and regulations despite increasing “professionalism” in preparations for and rewards given beyond the *Periodos*. Admittedly, we can never think totally like Greeks, but we must try to balance modern notions with ancient information.

In publications since the nineteenth century, in addition to historical and technical studies of the five individual events, disagreement has swirled about three problems: the sequence of the five events, the status (and origin) of the pentathlon in the Greek games, and the method of determining the victor (scoring) in the competition. Concerning the sequence of the sub-events, consensus exists only in that there were five possible events and that wrestling was the last event (if held). Bean comments on the sources that “The order of mention [of events] varies considerably, whether for metrical or other reasons, and no inference can be drawn as to the order of the events on the program.”<sup>11</sup> However, since we know that the first three wins could produce a victor and end the competition, and since the jump, diskos and javelin were the three “unique,” “peculiar,” or “special” events in the pentathlon, it seems probable that these three were held first (in whatever order). Since wrestling was fifth, the run was the fourth event (if held). This arrangement is supported by a passage in Xenophon:

They had already finished the horse races and the run in the pentathlon [ *ta dromika tou pentathlou* ]. The competitors who had advanced to the wrestling [ *hoi d’eis palên aphikomenoi* ] were no longer in the stadium but were wrestling between the stadium and the altar.<sup>12</sup>

Beyond the sequence of events, there is disagreement on the status and origin of the pentathlon. Although the diskos and javelin were events in Patroclus’ Games in *Iliad* Bk. 23, and there was a jump in the Phaeacian Games in *Odyssey* Bk. 8, there was no pentathlon in Homer. The account of the origin of the pentathlon given by Philostratus sounds apocryphal:

10. Cf. e.g., Matthew W. Dickie, “Fair and Foul Play in the Funeral Games in the *Iliad*,” *Journal of Sport History*, II (1984), 8-17; or W. J. O’Neal, “Fair Play in Homeric Greece,” *Classical Bulletin* 56 (1980), 11-14. On morality and piety as well as athletic ability deciding victory in Pindar, see Hugh M. Lee, “Athletic Arete in Pindar,” *The Ancient World*, 7 nos. 1-2 (March 1983), 31-37.

11. Bean, “Victory,” 1956, 361; see his Addendum, 368, on L. Moretti, “Un regolamento radio per la gara del pentatlo,” *Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica* 34 (1956), 55-60, a discussion of a fragmentary inscription from Rhodes, possibly of the first century B. C., which gives instructions to officials concerning the pentathlon, and which may indicate the order of events. Stephen G. Miller, *Arete* (Chicago: Ares, 1979), no. 20 on 35, offers this translation:

[-----] they are in charge of [-----]  
 [-in] turn until each five times [has thrown the diskos -----]  
 [first] shall jump the *one* who threw the diskos farthest [----]  
 [----] they have ? the *skamma* nor the [-----]  
 [-----] of the surface of the stadium [-----]  
 let it be two feet. Similarly [-----]  
 of the *kanon* and the [-----]  
 ? and the one at the *te* [ *rma* -----]  
 of those who are [-----]  
 of the wrestler [-----]

12. Xenophon, *Hell.* 7.4.29: trans. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, no. 5 on 38. On *ta dromika* see n. 48 below.

Before the time of Iason and Peleus, jumping was a separate event, the diskos was a separate event, and winning the javelin throw was enough for a victory in the time of the voyage of the Argo. Telemon was the best at the diskos, Lynkeus best at throwing the javelin, and the sons of the North Wind excelled at running and jumping. Peleus was second in these events but was superior to all in wrestling. Therefore, when they held games in Lemnos they say that in order to please Peleus, Iason combined the five events and that Peleus won the victory.<sup>13</sup>

We need not always defer to such ancient literary texts.<sup>14</sup> Placed very early even in mythical time, this account makes little sense. If Peleus could win wrestling, then Jason need only organize a wrestling contest for him to win. Although Philostratus is a valuable source on contemporary training and excesses, he is often wrong on technicalities.<sup>15</sup> His reconstructions are sometimes like Hellenistic aetiologies and some implausible explanations of the origin of nudity in Greek sport. This remains the only explicit description of the practice of an ancient pentathlon, and the story may strike a chord with moderns familiar with points systems; but explanations of deciding victory in the Panhellenic pentathlon simply should not be based on Philostratus' fanciful explanation of the origin of the event.

To some degree Philostratus probably was influenced by the inconsistency in Greek attitudes to the pentathlon. As Harris comments,

The Greeks themselves sometimes represented the event as the supreme test of the all-rounder [Diog. Laer. 9.37], sometimes as a consolation for the man who could not triumph in running or the combat events [Ps. Plato, *Amat.* 135e]. Suidas [s.v. Eratosthenes] records that a third-century mathematician, Eratosthenes, who almost achieved the highest grade in several disciplines, was sometimes called a Second Plato, sometimes Beta, and sometimes The Pentathlete.<sup>16</sup>

While Aristotle praises pentathletes for all-around beauty, Ps. Plato and Suidas suggest that the event was for second-class athletes. Even if the event was of second-class status, pentathletes could and did compete and win in other events.<sup>17</sup>

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13. Philostratus, *On Athletics* 3. trans. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, no. 5 on 57; 1. Jüthner, *Philostratus, Über Gymnastik* (Leipzig-Berlin. Teubner, 1969 reprint of 1909 ed.), 192-193.

14. M. I. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and Models*. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1985). 21. 104, is critical of the tendency of moderns to try to affirm the reliability of ancient writers' accounts:

The long tradition... that sources in Greek or Latin occupy a privileged status and are immune from the canons of judgement and criticism that are applied to all other documentation, is unwarranted and constitutes a major stumbling-block to any proper historical analysis.

As Finley, 9, notes (with reference to accounts of early Rome): "The ability of the ancients to invent and their capacity to believe are persistently underestimated."

15. Sweet, *ZPE*, 288: "In fact, much of his information and many of his explanations are clearly wrong or at least unsubstantiated. According to the tendencies of the Second Sophistic, he is less interested in the realities of his time than in what he thought to [be] the realities of an idealized past." Sweet goes on to list eight examples of misinformation in Philostratus. Bean, "Victory," 365, finds Philostratus' story inconsistent with the classical evidence and posits a change between Homeric and classical sport. On Philostratus' deficiencies as an historical source, see Michael B. Poliakoff, *Studies in the Terminology of the Greek Combat Sports*. (Königstein/Ts.: Anton Hain, 1982). Appendix 4, "Philostratus de Gymnastica as a Witness to Greek Sport," 143-147; and E. L. Bowie, "Greeks and their Past in the Second Sophistic," *Past and Present* 46 (1970), 3-41 (= M. I. Finley, ed., *Studies in Ancient Society*, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 166-209).

16. Harris, *SGR*, 33. Harris points out (from *GIG* 2758) that the pentathlon of the first century A.D. got only one quarter the prize of a heavy event; but *IG II* 2311 of the fourth century B.C. shows that the pentathlon, while not the most rewarded event, fared reasonably well in prizes.

17. Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.5 (1361b), trans. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, no. 7 on 38: "The pentathletes have the most beautiful bodies, because they are constructed for strength and speed together." As Bean, "Victory," notes in n. 13

We simply do not know and probably will never know the complete circumstances about the introduction and status of the event. However, since the pentathlon is unusual in combining sub-events, and since three of the events were not held independently, we should accept the general argument that the three unique events, lacking sufficient status independently, were combined into one contest. Running and wrestling perhaps were added “to fill out” the event or-as I suspect-to help determine a victor (see below).

Our modern rulebook fetish leads us to wonder about the method of determining the overall victor in the pentathlon but the question may never be answered with certainty because of the weakness and inconsistency of the evidence. Obviously the ancient Greeks knew how to decide the victory without controversy, but such a mundane, widely known procedure was not a topic worthy of discussion in “high” literature, the type of writing with some slim chance of survival. Ancient literature-including history-leaned to literary, rhetorical and moral effects; technicalities were taken for granted. Evidentially, the pentathlon problem is typical of technical questions about ancient sport; scholars must piece together “rules” from asides and incidental evidence because great literature, even when discussing sport, focuses on glory and drama over statistics and details.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, since the Olympic men’s pentathlon was introduced in 708 B.C., around the time of Hesiod, a system was established at a time when writing in Greece was in its infancy. Entrenched by tradition, the system probably was commonly known and accepted by the time of increasing sources in Classical Greece. What remains are scattered and enigmatic references. These have been well collected and discussed by Bean, Ebert, and others, and yet their conclusions remain unsatisfactory for me.

Most interpretations of the scoring of the pentathlon start out by expressing evidential frustration,<sup>19</sup> then they take some stance on the problems of status, origin and sequence, and soon they enter the realm of speculation and mathematical possibility. The range of hypotheses include: numbers of victories, points systems, comparative victories, relative placements, systems of elimination, *repêchage*, *ephedroi* with byes, lots, and more. This topic simply has seen too little use of Ockham’s razor.<sup>20</sup> The main figures are Gardiner, Bean, Ebert, Merkelbach, Harris, and now Sweet; others including myself largely just react to these. There is no need for a detailed review of the history of the scholarship

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on 364-365 (with testimonia), some pentathletes also won victories in the stadion and other events; also see Gardiner, 1903, n. 34 on 61.

18. Emelio Gabba, “Literature,” in Michael Crawford, *Sources for Ancient History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 24-25, explains why ancient historians often omit the very information we desire:

Things which seem of the greatest importance to us may be left out by a historian of the highest quality as irrelevant to his interpretive approach, an approach that we must understand and evaluate. Many things are ignored by historians of contemporary events as obviously known to their readers.

Xenophon, *Hell*, 7.4.29 and Herodotus 9.33 (discussed below) are examples of sources providing information incidental to their narratives but crucial to our investigation.

19. E.g., Gardiner, 1903, 54: “scanty and unsatisfactory;” Sweet, *ZPE*, 287: “inconclusive.”

20. Gardiner, 1903, 59, was moved to say of one theory that “This ingenious theory smacks of the midnight oil but surely not of the oil of the Palaestra.”

on the problem.<sup>21</sup> Gardiner was important for discussing the evidence in 1903 but his conclusion, revised with Pihkala in 1925, is an untenable system of "comparative victories." In an otherwise valuable discussion, Bean offers a suspect system taking account of second place finishes. Ebert theorizes that an athlete was eliminated when shown to be inferior for the third time; Merkelbach disagrees and suggests a system of first and second places with some narrowing of the field before the final event and with the victor in the wrestling becoming the overall victor. These and other theories can all be shown to be unacceptable in some way: e.g., too complicated, un-Greek, allowing the possibility of no victor, allowing unfair advantage to certain athletes. Harris' interpretation of 1972 has had a considerable following but is now challenged by Sweet. We must examine both their systems in detail, the latter as the most recent interpretation and one rejected here, and the former as the interpretation supported in general but modified in detail here.

Owing much to Bean but improving upon him, Harris' system for the pentathlon is based on certain premises, with which I agree:<sup>22</sup>

First places alone counted; the Greeks set great store by victory and generally were little concerned even with second or third places. Any system of reckoning points for places is unthinkable. Also it is highly unlikely that they would have assigned victory to any competitor who had failed to win at least one of the three field events which were the essence of the pentathlon; any system which would have allowed victory to be achieved by skill only in running and wrestling, which were events in their own right in another part of the programme, must be ruled out.<sup>23</sup>

Harris continues:

The most likely interpretation of the evidence is this. The pentathlon was conducted like a five-set tennis match; as soon as one competitor had won three events, the contest ended. The three events peculiar to the pentathlon—the jump and the two throws—were held first. If a competitor won all three, he was 'victor in the first triad,' as the Greeks put it. Otherwise, when this stage was completed, there were either three competitors, A, B and C, with one win each, or one, A, with two wins and another, B, with one. In the latter case, these two ran a 200-yard

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21. Crowther, "Studies," 77-79, covers theories up to 1985.

22. H. A. Harris, *SGR*, 34-35 and "Method," 63-64; a revision of his position in *Greek Athletes and Athletics*. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1966), 77-80. In 1956 Bean, "Victory," proposed a system based on the principle of successive reduction of competitors in three stages down to two men in the wrestling. He suggests, 364, that the three field events, those of the "first triad," were held first with all competing, and then winners only went on to the fourth event, the run. If no triple victor emerged, "those who had earned the right to do so went on to contest the final victory in the wrestling. My own belief is that for this the competitors were reduced to two only: that is, the wrestling consisted of a single bout and no more." He sees support for this in the simile in Plutarch, *Quaest. Symp.* 9.2, on the superiority of alpha to other letters, a simile discounted by Gardiner, 1903. 56. However, Bean, 364-367, goes on to drop the idea that only outright victors in events one to three advanced. His argument becomes unconvincing as he considers Raubitschek's idea that those who came first or second in the triad were allowed to advance; as he entertains the idea that overall victory might not need three clear wins; and as he proposes that "participants in the foot-race were those who in the first triad had gained at least one first place or two second places."

23. Harris, *SGR*, 34. Using Philostratus, Merkelbach, 264-265, disagrees and feels second place finishers could continue on to the wrestling, which could involve a maximum of eight men. Cf. Bean, "Victory," 362: "It is difficult to believe that victory in the pentathlon could be achieved without winning a single one of the separate events, or that the final result could be determined by the gaining of e.g., fifth place in one event rather than sixth or indeed that fifth place over sixth would have seemed to a Greek to be a victory at all."

race. If A won, he now had three wins and was the victor. If B won the race, A and B now had two each and they wrestled to decide the champion. If after the triad there were three athletes with one win each, these three ran the race. One of them, A, now had two wins, while B and C still had one each. B and C now wrestled in a semi-final; in virtue of his two wins, A was given a bye and sat by as *ephedros*. He then wrestled with the winner of the semi-final, who now also had two wins, and the winner of this bout was the victor in the whole event.<sup>24</sup>

In the latest contribution to the pentathlon problem debate, Waldo E. Sweet, in an APA paper in 1982, a *ZPE* article, and his recent *Sourcebook*, has dismissed Harris and offered his own system.<sup>25</sup> By his scholarship and his years of teaching ancient sport at the University of Michigan, Sweet has done much to legitimize and promote the study of ancient sport. However, his interpretation of scoring the pentathlon may mislead future readers, given Sweet's authority and the probability that his will be the sourcebook for generations, generations growing up with even more complex and modern systems of sport.

According to Sweet:

We propose the following solution. All competitors competed in the first three events. If the same athlete won all three events, he was the outright winner, and events four and five were cancelled. If there was no winner at the end of event number three, all contestants competed in event number four, at the end of which there could have been only four combinations:

1. One athlete had won three of the four events; he was the winner, and the fifth event (wrestling) was cancelled.
2. Two athletes had each won two victories; they proceeded to the wrestling, where one of the two would win his third victory.
3. One athlete had scored two victories, and two other athletes had scored one apiece.
4. There had been a different victor in each of the four events.

When there had been a different winner in each event, as in item 4 in the list, the four athletes, whom we designate A, B, C, and D, were matched by lot. Each pair then competed in an event selected by lot from an event *that neither athlete had won* in this competition. For example, let us assume that A had won the diskos and his opponent B had won the running. They would compete against each other in *either* the javelin or the jump, as the lot decided. Athletes C and D then competed in an event chosen by lot in which neither had been victorious, that is, in either the javelin or the jump. [see note 34 below] The victors in these pairs would then have two victories each, and they would proceed to the wrestling, which would decide the winner.

If there was one athlete with two victories and two with one win, as in item 3 in the list, the two with one victory would compete against each other in an event that neither had won; the winner of this match, who now had two victories, met in the wrestling with the other athlete with two victories, to determine the victor.

24. Harris, *SGR*, 34-35. On "victor in the first triad" versus "triple victor," see Harris, "An Athletic *hapax legomenon*," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 88 (1968), 138-139; "Method," 60-64; L. Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche*, (Rome: A. Signorelli. 1953), no. 82.

25. See n. 1.

Such use of lots was common in Greece. An opportunity to compete a second time is used in some modern sports, as in crew; it is known as *repechage* [sic].<sup>26</sup>

Although he adduces no new evidence in support of his system, and he warns against Philostratus as a source, Sweet keeps the idea that second placers were able to advance and win.<sup>27</sup> Although the evidence is inconclusive, Sweet's assertion that "For our purpose the order of the first four events is immaterial," seems illogical.<sup>28</sup> A triple victor could emerge after the first three events, and if the run was among those three then some peculiar pentathlon event would not be held at all. Concerning the key idea that all advance to the fourth event (the run in Harris' system), the only evidence Sweet seems to have is the epigram by Lucillius:

No one was quicker than I in the wrestling, nor ran any slower in the stade. In the diskos, I never got close at all, and as for those feet of mine, I couldn't lift them [off the ground] at all. Cripples used to beat me in the javelin. Out of the five events of the pentathlon I was the first who was proclaimed by the heralds as "Beaten in all five."<sup>29</sup>

On the surface this satiric epigram suggests that all entrants, even poor ones, advanced to event four, but it equally and unacceptably implies that all competitors advanced to the wrestling. Thus everyone would compete in all five events. That there was no elimination along the way seems improbable. Although Robert argues that such epigrams can be useful sources, especially concerning terminology, here we are dealing with comic license and exaggeration.<sup>30</sup> Sweet's own system includes elimination prior to wrestling, and Xenophon's testimony agrees.<sup>31</sup> No interpretation will harmonize all the evi-

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26. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, 58-59.

27. Suidas s.v. Eratosthenes (cited by Sweet in *ZPE*, 287, but not in his *Sourcebook*) implies that pentathletes were second class athletes but this should be used with caution. Like Ps. Plato, *Amat.* 135e, it probably means that in most cases pentathletes would lose to the victors of the independent events. Eratosthenes was probably called the pentathlete for his diversity more so than his individual limitations.

28. Sweet, *ZPE*, 289.

29. Lucillius, *Greek Anthology* 11.84; trans. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, 37. Incidentally, the order of events is probably reversed here.

30. See L. Robert, "Les épigrammes satiriques de Lucillius sur les athlètes," *L'épigramme grecque, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* 14 (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1967), 237-242. Robert says Lucillius makes satiric use of actual athletic terminology but also of hyperbole and parody. He, 240, regards 11.84 as "le type d'éloge à rebours, du contre-éloge," a poem in comic contrast to the reality of the pentathlon; and he rejects its use to support arguments that all pentathletes competed in all five events. Even a quick glance at Lucillius' athletic epigrams in Bk. II of the *Greek Anthology* (trans. W. R. Paton, vol. 4, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956) comes up with other examples of exaggeration: no. 1 on an Androleos who claims to have participated—poorly—in every boxing event the Greeks have; nos. 75-78 on boxers mutilated beyond recognition: no. 80 on a statue of Apis set up by his competitors because he never hurt anyone: no. 85 on a hoplite racer so slow he went on past midnight, the course was closed, he was taken as a statue by the servants, and he was still there the next year.

31. Xenophon, *Hell.* 7.4.29, see above. Pindar's *Nemean* 7 on Sogenes' victory in the pentathlon includes an unclear passage (lines 70-73) which may mean that overstepping the mark in the javelin meant elimination prior to the wrestling, or it may mean that victory in the Javelin can save one from the effort of the wrestling. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, no. 6 on 38, comments: "This seems to mean that the javelin came fourth. However, the meaning of the passage is disputed by scholars." See the discussion in Hugh M. Lee, "The *TEPMA* and the Javelin in Pindar. *Nemean* vii 70-3 and Greek Athletics," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 96 (1976), 70-79. Frank J. Nisetich, *Pindar's Victory Songs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 260, comments: "Pindar imagines a situation in which losing the third event, the javelin throw, would cost a competitor his chance to enter the final event, the wrestling." Cf. Richmond Lattimore, *The Odes of Pindar*, 2nd ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 121: his translation implies that Sogenes won the javelin and therefore did not have to

dence; but, if we must discount testimony, it is probably safer to discount that from later, less reliable sources, such as Lucilius and Philostratus, sources which may reflect later changes or local variations in practice.

Sweet is certainly correct that lots were used in ancient sport, as in matching pairs of athletes or assigning starting positions for races. Lots could be seen as impartial or as reflecting the will of the gods, but there's no evidence for them—and they are not needed in scoring the pentathlon. Although I see a need for some *repêchage* or elimination round (to resolve ties in numbers of wins between victors), Sweet's analogy to modern sports, including crew, is inappropriate.<sup>32</sup> Distinctive features of modern sport need not have relevance for ancient sport. Arguments from psychology or the consistency of human nature (e.g., mankind's instinct for play and competition) have merit but analogies to modern technicalities and procedures lack force. If used, *repêchage* was unusual: the Greeks would not have invited its increased use by allowing non-victors to continue into event four.

The biggest problem with Sweet's system is simply that it is too complicated. When he has everyone—even non-victors and non-placers—advance to the fourth event, the Sweet solution sours. Letting non-victors advance seems ideologically inconsistent with the Greek emphasis on sole, individual victory. We all recall Pindar's image of defeated athletes slinking home through back streets, and Pausanias shows that in running contests only the victors from the heats were allowed to advance to a final round.<sup>33</sup> Letting all competitors advance to the fourth event also would unnecessarily complicate the scoring and record-keeping.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, if the fourth event was the run, letting non-victors advance to the run seems inconsistent with the probable origins of the Olympic pentathlon. I suggest that when the event was introduced in 708 B.C. the run and wrestling were added to the three peculiar events for the purpose of determining the best man of the possible victors from the first three events. No non-victor—even a great runner or wrestler—should be allowed to continue at all—let alone win—after the first three events, for these three events were the *raison d'être* of the whole exercise. We moderns would devise a points system to determine the victor but the Greeks instead added two more possible events. Rather than considerably broadening a limited and conservative program, say by the introduction of a high jump or a torch race, the Greeks chose from the existing program of 708, which included only the traditional running and the contemporaneously introduced wrestling. After the broadening of the program via the pentathlon (perhaps under the influence of funeral game traditions), the seventh century was the century of the greatest increase and experimentation in the Olympic program.

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wrestle. Perhaps Sogenes entered the javelin with two wins already: if he had lost the javelin he probably would have had to wrestle.

32. In *ZPE*, n. 5 on 289, Sweet explains *repêchage*: "losers in the first heats compete against each other." Cf. his definition in his *Sourcebook*, 58: "matching athletes who are tied to eliminate one of them."

33. Pindar, *Pyth.* 8.115-122; Paus. 6.13.4.

34. Sweet even appears to confuse himself in his *Sourcebook*, 59: he has C and D competing "in an event chosen by lot in which neither had been victorious, that is, in either the javelin or the jump." However, since A and B won the run and disks C and D must have won the jump and javelin, and so they should compete in the run and disks. C and D should be competing in *neither* — not either—the jump nor the javelin. This is simply a slip on Sweet's part—it is not a problem in *ZPE* — but it is indicative of problems invited by an overly complex procedure.

A final problem with Sweet's discussion is that he overfocuses on Gardiner and Ebert, whose systems are easily rejected, while Harris' system is treated hastily. In *ZPE* Sweet dismisses Harris in a footnote as unfairly allowing an advantage to heavyweights, that is, they could win the diskos, then the semi-final wrestling, and the final wrestling for overall victory.<sup>35</sup> While Sweet rejects Harris "in tutu," I revise him. I suggest that we return to Harris, with some slight modification, and with possibly increased substantiation from the perspectives of spectatorship and sport management.

A positive tendency in the recent study of sport is our attempt to understand the *whole* phenomenon of sport in its mental, spatial and symbolic as well as physical dimensions. An important but understudied dimension of true athletics is the context of spectatorship, something less relevant to casual sport or exercise.<sup>36</sup> Very simply, spectatorship influences athletics and vice versa. Unlike modern sport, the ancient games were religious festivals which were not dominated by media and spectator priorities. However, spectator involvement and concerns must be considered. Spectatorship is a modern phenomenon only in numbers and degree of influence.<sup>37</sup> Clearly the procedure for selecting the victorious pentathlete had to be intelligible to the masses of spectators, who apparently were knowledgeable and attentive. They had to be able to follow the competition without the aid of modern programs or scoreboards with point totals. Too many competitors, especially (or even) without uniforms, and too many complications or delays would hurt spectator interest.

Sport psychology and sociology agree that fan/spectator involvement is aided by various things such as betting, the lure of violence, and identification or association with individuals or teams. Some Greek spectators could identify with the representatives of their native cities, but most spectators lacked hometown favorites for whom to cheer. Personal identification by reputation, physical features, or previous feats seems probable. In events one to three, there perhaps was novelty, mass excitement, and appreciation of excellence in those field events, but soon individual identification would be needed to sustain interest and drama. The Boston Marathon lacks much interest until the field thins and one can identify with the "contenders." Ancient spectator interest in all entrants through all five events seems unlikely. Even as early as Homer we know that Greek spectators could become bored or distracted.<sup>38</sup>

By Harris' system, identification can start early. After the first event, the

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35. Sweet, *ZPE*, n. 6 on 260. Harris is mentioned in the *Sourcebook* bibliographies for chapters four to seven but he is absent from the discussion and bibliography for chapter 8, "Scoring the Pentathlon," 56-59.

36. See e.g., Finley and Pleket, *Olympic Games*, ch. 4, "Spectators and Facilities," 47-58; and Allen Guttmann, *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 14-18, on Greek spectators. Harris, *SGR*, 34, suggests the boys' pentathlon was dropped for lack of popularity. Possibly the boys' pentathlon lacked drama: one naturally superior boy might easily win, whereas training was more of a factor in the men's event.

37. E.g., Olympia lacked stone seats for normal spectators but an embankment was raised, the truce offered safe passage, and heralds made announcements. Wells were dug to provide water for spectators at Olympia as early as ca. 700 B.C.: see Alfred Mallwitz, "Cult and Competition Locations at Olympia," 99 and fig. 6.11 in Wendy J. Raschke, ed., *The Archaeology of the Olympics: The Olympics and Other Festivals in Antiquity*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1988).

38. Homer, *Il.* 23:448ff.: when the chariot race was out of sight or hard to follow spectators turned to bickering and betting.

victor is announced and highlighted via his sequence in the next event: an inscription from Rhodes shows this was done later.<sup>39</sup> He is followed by the crowd because they know he automatically will be around for three more events; his one win insures that he cannot be eliminated until the run at the earliest. Furthermore, although the odds are against it, this man could win it all early as “victor in the first triad.” By the end of three events, up to three victors are known to the crowd. Each one has demonstrated excellence in at least one peculiar pentathlon event. Thereafter, one could cheer or identify with a contender for various reasons (e.g., your own belief that the jump or some other sub-event is the best event and should indicate the best athlete). Such spectator identification carries into events four and five with an increase of drama and excitement. The end is near. In four and five the skill level is likely going to be less than in the running and wrestling competitions in their own right. That may be the sense of Suidas s.v. Eratosthenes and Ps. Plato. However, personal interest by then easily balances the prospect of a less excellent demonstration of specialized skill. Crowds do not watch modern seniors’ and celebrity competitions simply to observe skills.

Concerns about sport management and time limitations also apply, for the Greek pentathlon was staged and completed in the afternoon of one day. Clearly all competitors were allowed to compete in all of the first three events: those three events were the reason for having a pentathlon, and there could be no victor before at least these three were over. However, since competitors apparently had multiple attempts at the jump and throws, just holding these three mass events would be time consuming.<sup>40</sup> Allowing the whole field to advance to the run would unnecessarily add to the time needed as well as the possible scenarios. There was little time for elaborate procedures involving numerous heats and complex calculations. Moreover, Xenophon indicates that there was a shift of locale-for competitors and spectators-for the wrestling.<sup>41</sup> This was not far but it would still take time to get things resettled.

Practical reasons for keeping the procedures and numbers limited also include record-keeping and officiating. The judges had to control events and remember the names of those who were to advance. Heralds could announce victors but not long lists of placements and points. There were no scoreboards, statisticians or photo finishes. Record-keeping had to be simple.<sup>42</sup> The judges were not professionals; they were nobles whose training emphasized the sacrality of the games. The system of determining the victor was transmitted by non-

39. See Moretti, *op. cit.*, n. 11 above. Line 3 probably indicates that the athlete who threw the diskos the farthest was to be the first to jump.

40. As Harris, *GAA*, n. 24 on 204, notes, Pausanias, 5.9.3, records that in 472 the pentathlon event went on too long and delayed other events. Line 2 of the inscription from Rhodes (see n. 11 above) indicates that entrants threw the diskos five times each. We do not know how many entrants were involved. Events one to three could accommodate large numbers but then a reduction to suit the facilities and time constraints makes sense. That Olympia had twenty lanes for the independent stadion need not have any implications for the number of runners in the pentathlon. For more on the problem of numbers of entrants, see Bean, “Victory,” 362, on Moretti, *IAG*, no. 86, which may indicate a field of 87.

41. See above. Gardiner, 1903, 57, feels the arrangement in Xenophon was an exceptional one.

42. Bean, 363: “. . . no system is likely to have commended itself to the Greeks which required paper and pencil for its working out.”

bureaucratic, sacrosanct officials trained in standards of conduct-not "the rulebook." Their decisions were final and that was generally for the good. If a system involved delays and complications, problems could develop. The Greeks were agonistic in debate as well as physical participation; the judges would not want to give the spectators a reason or a chance to start arguing.<sup>43</sup>

Various considerations thus lead us to re-evaluate Harris' system; with some modification the system can work. After the three peculiar events were held, open to all, all *victors* but not all *competitors* advanced to the fourth event, the run. Contrary to some modern notions about participation, for Greeks an accumulation of placements was not a satisfactory substitute for one or more clear first place wins. Sweet would have all competitors advance, victors and non-victors alike. This adds complications and allows a great sprinter to enter at this point. As Harris said, no one should be able to become a pentathlon victor without a single victory in one of the three distinctive events. It is noteworthy that Philostratus' description of the ideal pentathlete talks about the proper muscles for the three unique events-not for the run or wrestling.<sup>44</sup> Since the pentathlete had to excel in at least one of these three events, he trained to win at least one and preferably all three of them.

An indirect indication that the field was narrowed after three events, rather than all competing in the run (or even the wrestling), may come from the story of Kallippos of Athens. Pausanias, discussing the Zanes and Olympic bribery, records that Kallippos was fined for bribing his opponents (*tous antagōnismenous*) with money when competing in the pentathlon.<sup>45</sup> How many opponents could Kallippos have bribed? He could not have bribed the mass participants of the first three events (or four via Sweet). Moreover, the bribes must have been of significant size to get those bribed to give up a chance for the rewards cities gave to their Olympic victors after the games. Bribery would only work with a limited field, as in the later stages after event three when, by Harris' system, at most three men would be left. I suggest that Kallippos won one of the first three events, and then, facing two men with one victory each, he bribed them before the run. Bribery of plural opponents makes most sense in this context; bribery works less well with Sweet's scheme where the lot and a possible fourth victor add further complications.

The crux of the procedure for scoring the pentathlon is the run. As I have suggested, its purpose was to allow a victor to gain a third win, or to reduce the field in preparation for the wrestling. No one with less than two wins goes to the two-man final wrestling, which thus will produce a triple victor. After the run there would be three possible arrangements, a) a triple victor *akoniti* — not unchallenged but rather literally "without dust," avoiding the wrestling by

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43. As Finley and Pleket assert, *Olympic Games*, 47, Greek spectators were "as partisan, as volatile, and as excitable as at any other period of time."

44. Philostratus, *Gym*. 31; trans. S. G. Miller, no. 15 on 30. Philostratus, *Gym*. 11, suggests that pentathletes in training practiced "in the triad," i.e., the three events peculiar to the pentathlon. Moreover, vase-paintings with pentathlon scenes tend to depict the three peculiar events and not running or wrestling: e.g., British Museum B134.

45. Paus, 5.21.5-7.

having won three of the first four events;<sup>46</sup> b) two men with two wins each, who automatically proceed to the wrestling, where one emerges as the overall victor; c) one man with two wins and two with one. In this case some further elimination would be needed. Again I emphasize that a system of points or comparative victories is unlikely. With excited athletes and an involved crowd this would be no time for calculations or lots. Harris suggests a semifinal wrestling bout with the man with two wins as an *ephedros*. However, since everything was done in one afternoon, the possibility of back-to-back wrestling bouts by the same man seems oppressive. In combat events proper, back-to-back matches are well attested, but it seems unlikely that this was expected of pentathletes as non-specialists in combat sports and as men who had competed thrice already.<sup>47</sup> The man with two wins in a sense had earned a bye but having him face an already tired opponent would make for a one-sided final and poor spectator sport. I suggest that the elimination event added was a second run, a two-man race with the man with two wins getting a bye.<sup>48</sup> Since the man with two wins (and the bye) must have won the race already, the elimination race would be a competitive event between two athletes who had not won the running event—along the lines of Sweet’s suggestion but with fewer complications and no need for lots. Note that a second race proper would have to be held. Three victories were both sufficient and necessary for overall victory. The second-place finisher of the first run would not simply advance—he was not yet a victor in that event; but the winner in the elimination event (without the victor from the previous run) could claim victory in that event. An elimination run would be quick and would leave the new second double victor still in decent shape to offer an entertaining wrestling effort, one worthy of the gods and the crowd. The new double victor had one less impressive victory but he also had expended energy in an extra run, thus balancing things.<sup>49</sup> Event four, the run, held once or twice, thus produces two rivals who will wrestle to determine the triple and overall victor.

Such a system satisfies the criterion whereby Sweet and Harris reject Ebert: a runner or wrestler cannot slip in without previously winning the jump, disks, or javelin. It also satisfies the criterion whereby Sweet rejects Gardiner: here there will always be a victor.<sup>50</sup> In keeping with Harris, the winner will be a triple victor, and at least one of his victories will have come from a peculiar pentathlon event.

This system also deals with Sweet’s rejection of Harris’ system because it

46. On *akoniti*, see Harris, “Method,” 60-64; and Moretti, *IAG*, no. 8.

47. On back-to-back matches in combat event tournaments, see Michael B. Poliakoff, *Ancient Combat Sports: Competition, Violence, and Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 21-22.

48. It is debated whether Xenophon’s use of *ta dromika* refers to running only or to the first four events. Gardiner, 1903, 57 and n. 13, feels it refers to events one to four, all held in the stadium. Miller’s translation, *Arete*, no. 19 on 34, takes it as “the stadium events.” Bean, “Victory,” n. 13 on 364, feels it refers to more than one race. Possibly it refers to the stadium event proper plus a semifinal run.

49. Sweet, *ZPE*, 290, agrees that the wrestling involved two men only: but by his system the wrestling event, via *repêchage* among four victors with one win each, could involve *two* men both of whom had a less impressive victory (i.e., a victory in a reduced field in which the victor from the larger field sat out).

50. It also satisfies Bean’s contention, “Victory,” 366, that “No system can be acceptable if it allows a competitor to emerge victorious over another who is demonstrably the better all-round athlete.”

seemed to allow unfair advantage to heavyweights. Here strong men and speedy men have balancing advantages.<sup>51</sup> A strong man had a good chance at winning the diskos; if he could also win the javelin he was assured of making it to the wrestling where he would be competitive. The speedy man, with a good chance in the jump and in the run, had a good overall chance of entering the wrestling. Wrestling itself demanded both skill and strength, the combination of *mêtis* and *biê* that the Greeks admired in athletes. Consider the famous pentathlete Phayllos. Phayllos won the stadion and the pentathlon (twice) at the Pythia, and an epigram records his distances in the jump and diskos. He thus was proficient in the jump, run and probably the diskos.<sup>52</sup> In the pentathlon his jumping ability insured his advancement to the run; his running ability insured advancement to the wrestling; and in the wrestling he faced good odds. If he was a good diskos thrower, he may have avoided the wrestling entirely and been able to claim victory *akoniti*.

Finally, the system suggested here is consistent with testimonia concerning well-known pentathletes, including Tisamenos:

Competing in the pentathlon he [= Tisamenos] was within one wrestling match of winning the Olympic crown against Hieronymos of Andros.

Tisamenos received a prophecy that he was going to gain the five most glorious crowns. Therefore he trained for the Olympic pentathlon but was defeated, although he did win two events. For he defeated Hieronymos of Andros in running and jumping. But he was defeated by Hieronymos in wrestling and, in failing to gain the victory, he understood the prophecy-when he consulted the oracle the god had promised him that he would win five *military* victories.<sup>53</sup>

Tisamenos won the jump and advanced to win the run, but he was defeated in the two-man wrestling final and thus lost overall. Nevertheless, he could claim that he had been within a wrestling victory of winning; in other words he gained the honor of wrestling and came second overall.<sup>54</sup> Hieronymos must have won two other events (i.e., the javelin and diskos) in order to advance to his victory in the wrestling and his acclamation as triple victor. The system proposed here thus explains Tisamenos' case without resorting to comparative victories, second places or lots.

In all probability the pentathlon problem will never be resolved with cer-

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51. See Gardiner, 1903, 61-62, for his argument that pentathletes were "all-round athletes who combined strength and speed."

52. *Greek Anthology*, Appendix 297; see H. A. Harris, "An Olympic Epigram. The Athletic Feats of Phayllos." *Greece and Rome*, 7 (1960) 3-8. On whether Phayllos' diskos skill was great, see Crowther, "Studies," 82; and Sweet, *Sourcebook*, 44

53. Herodotus 9.33; Pausanias 3.11.6; trans. Sweet, *Sourcebook*, nos. 3&4 on 56. Paus. 6.14.13 also records that Hiemnymos beat Tisamenos in wrestling in the Olympic pentathlon. The system also easily accommodates Automedon, the pentathlon victor who won the diskos, javelin and wrestling in Bacchylides, *Odes* 8.25-36.

54. There is ancient evidence for recording or rewarding second place in the pentathlon: e.g., *IG II<sup>2</sup>* 2311.28.43. Such references probably concern athletes who reached the two-man wrestling final, lost, and therefore came second overall, rather than athletes who placed second in earlier individual components. Ties in the pentathlon would be rare in my system. Recorded ties (e.g., *SEC* 3.335) may represent local variations or "sacred victories" ordered by the judges in the case of injury or if the event ran out of time. Cf. Bean, 361, 367-368, and Merkelbach, 265. Neither such ties nor second place finishers necessitate going back to more complicated systems of points or relative victories concerning the Panhellenic Games of Archaic and Classical Greece.

tainty,<sup>55</sup> and we must remain open to the possibility of variations over time and place. However, the most satisfactory solution concerning the Panhellenic event will be one that accommodates common sense, the ideological environment, and the most and best testimonia (from reliable, near-contemporary sources with a Panhellenic focus). The pentathlon was introduced as a combination of three events of lesser status. Running and wrestling were added, if necessary, to determine the clear victor among the winners of those three events. As Harris says, this was an elimination system; and as Sweet says, *repêchage* might be needed. However, I suggest that, if a semifinal was needed, it was held in running rather than wrestling. Lots were not needed for scoring. If held, wrestling involved only two remaining men, each with two victories. The ultimate victor was a triple victor but not victor “in the first triad” or *akoniti*. Such a system suits the context of Panhellenic competition and it has the virtue of not being overly ingenious.

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55. The new journal, *Nikephoros*, has announced forthcoming articles on the pentathlon. I suspect they, too, are in reaction to Sweet.