

Guttman, Allen. *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1992. Pp xii. 191. Black-and-white plates, appendix, bibliographical essay, index. \$24.95.

Although a professor of American studies at Amherst College, Allen Guttman is well known to sport historians, particularly in North America, for his eclectic penmanship on sports and games in their socio-cultural contexts. Having established his reputation with the profound treatise *Front Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport*, Guttman followed with *Sports Spectators. A Whole New Ball Game. and Women's Sports: A History*, demonstrating an encyclopedic knowledge of the role of sport in society. The Olympic Movement, conceivably the modern world's greatest cultural phenomenon, was also subjected to his critical analysis in *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, with the natural follow-up being *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*.

The Olympics is the first volume in the Illinois History of Sports series edited by Benjamin G. Rader and Randy Roberts. Future books in this series will focus on specific sports such as baseball by Benjamin Radar, college basketball by Bill Baker, soccer by Bill Murray, hockey by Stephen Hardy, golf by Howard Rabinowitz, and boxing by Randy Roberts. Guttman is an excellent choice to kick off the series. He has purported "to play a mediating role and thereby to bridge the gap between journalism and scholarship by writing for the serious nonspecialist reader" (p. xi). While many scholars scorn general trade market and "coffee table" books, this concept of publishing relatively short readable books targeted at the ordinary sports fan is to be applauded. The majority of sports history written by academics has been principally restricted to an exclusive group of specialists and has, in the main, remained hidden in university libraries and faculty offices. Critical social historians then assailed such analyses of sport with complex theories and jargon intelligible only to like-minded specialists. While sound academic research and publication is our *raison d'être* (and is certainly vital for promotion!), we should not remain confined to our ivory towers, as we surely have a responsibility to the wider community. In this era of increased accountability, academic sport historians must ensure that their subject area is relevant and meets the needs of students and society as a whole.

Bearing these comments in mind, it can be safely asserted that *The Olympics* does not provide anything new about the Olympic Movement, but such was not the purpose. Indeed, the author has fulfilled his aim in producing a readable narrative on the history of the Olympic Games as a social movement. The approach adopted has been a traditional one, namely a chronological Games by Games story, from 1896 to 1988. Each of the Games is introduced with a general overview of the prevailing economic, social, and particularly political issues intruding and influencing the Olympic Movement. The organization and the facilities are always noted, and then the

stellar sports performances are described. Principally, *The Olympics* has been written from an Anglo-Saxon perspective, with the involvement of the Americans, and British, particularly in the early years, being the principal focus. Up to 1920, interestingly, the struggle of the Irish against the British receives an unusual amount of attention.

The most detailed and comprehensive coverage is accorded to the 1936 games, with an entire chapter being devoted to it (the only Games so designated). Guttman justifies his selection by titling the chapter as "The Most Controversial Games." A comparison of the Turner and Nazi movements and their influence on the German attitude toward modern sport and the Olympic Games provides a fascinating introduction to the 1936 "Nazi" Games. Guttman argues that politics has always been a part of the Olympics, and the 1936 Games has presented one of the most exemplary, and obvious, examples. The Germans publicly guaranteed "the right of all to compete." but then proceeded to carry through their plans as desired. The vulnerability of the Olympic Movement to the whims of a dictatorship and its ideology was aptly apparent as the IOC was powerless to punish Germany for not "playing by the rules." Fundamentally what was demonstrated, and this was repeated on numerous later occasions such as in 1972 and 1980, was that the IOC would accept, tolerate, and cover up any and everything: but, the *Games must go on!* Despite the blatantly political Games of 1936 (Winter and Summer) and all the warning signs, such as the invasion of Manchuria, the IOC incredulously awarded the 1940 Games to Tokyo. According to Guttman, it was the Japanese themselves who cancelled the proposed games as they were "a costly distraction from the more important business of military conquest" (p. 74). In 1939, despite Norway's offer, the IOC unanimously granted the 1940 Winter Games again to Garmisch-Partenkirchen! In the end, Germany withdrew its offer to host the Games, rather than the IOC rescinding its invitation.

Throughout the book the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of the Olympic Movement are probed. As the subject of Guttman's earlier *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, it is not surprising that the sixth IOC President, Avery Brundage, receives an in-depth analysis in this book as well. For Brundage, defending amateurism and maintaining the purity of the games by a restrictive interpretation of the concept of "amateur" was a fundamental tenet, and during his tenure as President, he carried out an obsessive battle against professionalism. The concern with amateurism is treated extensively, as Guttman discusses the original amateur rule and its evolution Games by Games to the modern "realistic" interpretation of 1988.

As always, Guttman has consulted widely in drawing together his story. For the scholar, a criticism will be that while Guttman quotes from specific sources, he does not reference, nor always acknowledge his sources. At the end of the book a bibliographical essay is presented where all the sources are cited and a few general comments are made. Acknowledging the

profusion of literature that has emanated worldwide by academics. Guttman believes his selection of materials in English “ample enough to satisfy most readers.”

As might be reasonably expected when a topic of such magnitude and complexity is covered in 191 pages (which includes the bibliographical essay and index), arguments can be raised regarding interpretation and selectivity of facts. The following are a few issues of contention: The 1980 boycott is covered in great detail, except that it is from the perspective of the United States. Understandably the principal players in the drama were the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union; however, the globalization of the Games should have warranted more international coverage. Australians would be disappointed with the one-line reference to what became one of the most dramatic and political controversies in that nation. The renowned protests by the American blacks at the 1968 Olympic Games are recounted, but Czech gymnast Vera Caslavaska’s protest is ignored. Caslavaska’s demonstration on the victory podium to express her political stance was, though emotionally supportable (Czechoslovakia had suffered military invasion by the Soviet Union), nevertheless an overt political utilization of the Olympic victory podium.

While dealing with the aftermath of World War II, Guttman discusses issues related to the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) in the new Eastern Europe, but neglects to even mention the demise of the NOCs and the murders of IOC members from the Baltic States. After the Soviet Union was admitted into the Olympic Movement in 1952, the media commonly erred in referring to the Soviet athletes as Russians. The recent collapse of the Soviet Union has exposed and publicized the nature of the previously communist Empire. Hence, it is surprising to find Guttman repeatedly interchanging the words Russian and Soviet. For example, in 1972 he states that the Russian, Yuri Tarmak, won gold in the high jump; Juri (*not* Yuri) Tarmak was an Estonian, and was the second Estonian at the Munich Games to win gold for the Soviet Union (the other was Jaan Talts). From 1952 to 1988, Estonians, due to the military occupation, were forced to compete for the Soviet Union and during this era contributed 34 medals to the Soviet sports machine’s overall tally. (Estonians comprised only 0.56 percent of the Soviet population.) Turning to the North American continent, Canadians will be dismayed by the incorrect claim that Edmonton hosted the first British Empire Games. Hamilton was the first host city, Edmonton not gaining that honor until 1978.

Although *The Olympics* appears to end rather abruptly (as if there might have been a rush to publish prior to the Barcelona Games), Guttman has succeeded in writing an informative history of the modern Games. Specialists, as well as non-specialists, will appreciate Guttman’s latest contribution to sports history literature.