

---

FINDLING, JOHN E., AND PELLE, KIMBERLY D., eds. *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1996. Pp. 460. Appendices, illustrations, index, bibliography. Cloth, \$79.95.

In the ever-growing body of literature on the modern Olympic games the contests and athletes receive overwhelming attention, but this detailed volume analyzes the context of the games and traces their development from a small celebration of amateur athletes to today's billion dollar events showcasing the world's finest, regardless of classification. This collaboration by John Findling and Kimberly Pelle follows their similar *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988*, also by Greenwood Press.

The editors marshal the services of more than 50 contributors to produce a volume, which is billed as a reference work but also comes close to being a comprehensive history of the modern Olympics. The essays are chronologically arranged capsule histories of each Olympics organized into sections on the Summer Games and Winter Games, respectively. The selections range from five to eleven pages, and each includes a bibliographic essay that discusses the primary and secondary sources related to each event. These essays are preceded by a chapter on the ancient Olympics, and three appendices contain additional essays on the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and U.S. Olympic Committee, films related to the Olympics, and biographies of IOC presidents.

The editors instructed contributors to address issues such as site selection and development, political climate, and the evolution of the athletic competitions

themselves while keeping discussion of winners and losers to a minimum. They have produced a remarkably even set of essays, which generally succeeds in creating a strong contextual understanding of the Olympic movement. As with any such collection, there are exceptions. The entry on the 1972 Munich Olympics is brief and devotes almost as much space to the disputed Soviet-American basketball game as it does to the killing of Israeli athletes by terrorists. But it is a tribute of Findling and Pelle that the vast majority of the essays provide a solid history of each event and even work together to trace the changes of the movement itself.

For example, the essays on the early summer games indicate the fragility of the whole movement. Modern founder Baron Pierre de Coubertin orchestrated a successful inaugural games at Athens in 1896, but the 1900 Paris and 1904 St. Louis games became sideshows to a French exposition and the 1904 World's Fair. These early games were also hurt by a lack of standardization among the athletic competitions, both in terms of contests scheduled and the rules and judging for the events themselves. The nearly forgotten but very successful 1906 games in Athens rescued the event, and by the 1912 Stockholm games the Olympics were well established.

For the later games different themes become common threads that bind the essays together. The sheer size of the games since World War II make simply bidding for the games a treacherous undertaking for prospective Olympic cities, as the essay on the 1976 Montreal games makes clear. The Cold War is inextricably tied to the Olympic movement and the contest between East and West raises its ugly head in most of the essays. A particularly strong essay by Ron Palenski demonstrates how ideological conflict and a divided country provided unusual difficulties for South Korean officials hosting the 1988 Seoul summer games.

An important theme of the book is the evolving meaning of amateurism. The rise in the 1950s of the state-sponsored athlete from Soviet bloc nations challenged the elitist concept of the amateur, and the IOC typically followed policies that discriminated against athletes from the market-oriented western nations. A key figure in this was Avery Brundage, IOC president from 1952 to 1972 and the most important figure in the modern movement aside from Coubertin. The cantankerous Brundage stubbornly defended the amateur ideal even as it became clear the athletes from the Soviet bloc had the advantage of receiving total support from the state while western athletes were punished for any hint of sponsorship. His 1972 suspension of Austrian skier Karl Schranz for having his picture taken with a logo visible on his ski is a testament to Brundage's capricious application of the amateur standard.

Some themes are less well developed. The quiet rise of women's sport deserves fuller treatment, but the method of writing such a work as this legislates against this, as each author focused only on one particular Olympic game. But this cavil should not distract from Findling and Pelle's achievement. This is a well-constructed reference book which puts a tremendous amount of material in one volume. As an historian and avid fan of the Olympics, I can admire this book on both levels. The steep cover price may prevent many readers from adding the cloth version to their collections, but its blending of sports and history make this

a valuable addition to any library collection and recommended reading for Olympic aficionados.

—RICHARD D. LOOSBROCK  
*University of New Mexico*