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## Book Reviews

MARTIN, DAVID E., & ROGER W.H. GYNN. *The Olympic Marathon*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2000. Pp. xvi + 456. Photographs, course maps and elevations, appendices. \$27.95 pb.

This descriptive history by David Martin and Roger Gynn provides an excellent overview of the Olympic Games marathon, past and present. The authors follow their previous study, *The Marathon Footrace*, with this account of the marathon competition at each Olympic Games, including a preview of the 2000 Games in Sydney, Australia. Along with the customary historical data, the authors have included blocked highlights and human interest notes, a wide assortment of historical photographs, and maps for each course (including elevation profiles of the 1896 course and the other courses from 1924 onward).

As befits authors with a long-term interest in the statistics of track and field, the text provides massive amounts of data. Each race is represented by a table with the top 10 finishers, along with their nationality, date of birth, and finishing time. The appendices provide substantial further statistics: the abbreviations for each nation or geopolitical entity and the years for which each entity had competitors in the marathon; a summary of the races with the Olympiad number, location, date of the race, length of the course (which varied until 1924), shape of the course, weather conditions, starting time of day, number of nations represented, number of starters and number of finishers; a list of medalists, with the top three finishers and their ages; lists of every known male and female competitor who started the race by name, nationality, date of birth, finishing time, place, and race location and date; and data on the fastest 200 men and 100 women.

As a descriptive history of the Olympic marathon, it is difficult to imagine any historian providing a better overview of what transpired at each Games. The authors have made every effort to illuminate the Olympic courses, competitors, and races. Only one course is not mapped, the “sort-of-official” Games of 1906. As the authors explain, no official reports indicate the course, while both primary and secondary sources give conflicting lengths. While many assume that the Greeks reused the 1896 course, there may have been a deviation in the route. There is no clear evidence to select a distance, so the authors leave the question unanswered. The willingness to admit that we cannot answer every question is a virtue in the light of the clearly extensive searches that the authors have made to acquire factual information.

The multitude of illustrations is another great strength of the authors’ documentary search. Almost 90 photographs show competitors and race scenes from 1896 through 1996. This is a vast improvement over the typical historical work, where publishers or authors tend toward minimalism in their approach to illustrative sources and useful maps to enlighten the reader or clarify a sense of the “who and where” of history.

The work includes nineteen highlighted “Olympic Miscellanies,” listed in the table of contents. These allow the authors to avoid interrupting the core narrative while addressing

such diverse topics as the confusion created in 1896 by the common use of differing calendars (Julian and Gregorian), which hindered athletes in determining when they would compete. As the authors note, the Games both started and finished on Easter—different Easters, different calendars. One item discusses the confusion of nationalities of competitors, citing a 1920s runner from Newfoundland, at that time a part of the British Commonwealth, but not yet part of Canada or a member of the IOC. He successfully competed on the British team, though also not a British citizen (he had World War I running friends on the British team, and they invited him to complete their team).

This book illustrates the difficulties that historians (and statisticians) face when they attempt definitive studies: Large events invariably produce anomalies that cannot fit into the traditional constructs. Put another way, history is messy. In the early years of the century many American athletes were immigrants, particularly Irish Americans. Do we label them Americans or Irish? We are again encountering that question as a new century dawns. The breakup of the Eastern European bloc, along with destructive local conflicts around the world, have led to many changes of nationality by athletes. The 2000 Games in Sydney show widespread effects of those migrations. Martin and Gynn's *The Olympic Marathon* must be considered the definitive work on the Olympic marathon footrace.

—WILLIAM H. FREEMAN  
*Campbell University*

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WHIMPRESS, BERNARD. *Passport to Nowhere: Aborigines in Australian Cricket 1850-1939*. Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 1999. Pp. 298. Notes, illustrations, index. Aus\$29.95.

The first Australian cricket team to tour England was the group of thirteen Aborigines led by Charles Lawrence in 1868. In the context of Aboriginal involvement in Australian cricket, however, the venture, as the subtitle of this book reminds us, led nowhere. Of some 3,200 Australian first-class cricketers to have appeared since the inception of the game in 1851, just nine have been Aborigines, only two of whom have appeared in the last fifty years. A recurring motif in the histories of these cricketers is the sense of talent denied and thwarted so that, early in the twentieth century, the fast bowler Albert Henry died of tuberculosis having been sent to remotest Queensland as a punishment for perceived insubordination to white authority, while his brother in speed, Jack Marsh, was beaten to death in the street in rural New South Wales and his attackers were legally exonerated. In the 1930s, Eddie Gilbert succeeded in defeating the sociolegal obstacles facing Aborigines in the Queensland of his time to become one of the best fast bowlers of his era, only to be cast aside peremptorily. So, we are confronted by an absence; it is the purpose of the present volume to chart and explain this absence in one of Australia's national games.

Based on extensive research, Whimpress describes the diverse origins of Aboriginal involvement in cricket, emphasizing that there has been a tendency to overestimate its extent. The origins include the activity of missionaries, such as Archdeacon Hale in South Australia and pastoralists in western Victoria and southern New South Wales who, in their individual ways, saw the game in the context of the colonizing ethos. In contrast, cricket at such places as the Deebing Creek reserve in Queensland appeared largely through the efforts of Aboriginal players, who were quickly suspected by white authorities of potentially disruptive autonomy and independence.