

The American Women's Experience in the Games of the Tenth Olympiad

D. MARGARET TOOHEY

California State University, Long Beach

While political controversies, financial disasters and great sporting feats captured some of the newspaper headlines in 1932, no story was as great as the successful staging of the Games of the Tenth Olympiad in Los Angeles.

Keeping the Olympic torch ablaze during the historic weeks of July/August 1932 under distressing circumstances was no easy accomplishment. However, it was done with innovation, artistry and profit. Sixteen world records were broken, two others were equalled and thirty-two Olympic marks fell. A record 1.35 million spectators marvelled at the splendor and beauty of movement provided by the international athletes.

This was a time of many firsts; first Olympic Villages, Victory Podium, and the trial of a photoelectronic device, the Kirby camera. Other firsts included the first time each nation's official anthem was played at award ceremonies, the first time Black American women participated in the Olympics, and the stadium press box concept was originated, when a network of teletype operators instantly transmitted results to newspaper and radio operators and to Olympic officials.

This paper examined the life of Evelyn Hall Adams, silver medal hurdler in the 1932 Olympic Games. It provides insights into the political, economic and social elements which provided the backdrop for the women's experiences in 1932 and gives yet another look at the controversies which surrounded Babe Didrikson.

The controversial final of the 80 meter hurdle race won by Babe Didrikson is discussed in detail. A discussion of Jean Shirley's defeat of Babe Didrikson in the high jump provides further illustration of the many officiating irregularities which occurred during this time period.

An insiders view of the personal experience of the women athletes in 1932 is provided through interviews with 1932 Women Olympians, the official Olympic hostess and a woman sports reporter of the time period.



Phyllis Martin Ian Jobling