

The Birth of the American Olympic Association: A Princess Revolts

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The return of the 1920 United States Olympic Team from Antwerp aboard the funeral ship Princess Matoika may have been the catalyst to the formation of an Olympic organization with different leadership. The Olympians voiced an individual and collective outcry against the work of the committee in charge of American participation. As a result, a change in the structure of the Olympic organization resulted; however, whether or not the change was of benefit to United States participation in Paris and Amsterdam is doubtful.

Although membership within the committee was not substantially altered, the offices did change extensively. Gus Kirby was no longer at the helm, he would continue to be a very strong voice in the movement of the American Olympic program. Kirby along with Frederick T. Rubien and a few others formed a tight-knit circle and they wielded incredible influence. They were amateur sport in the 1920s, at least from an administrative point of view.

This paper will attempt to show the significance of the athlete's revolt and the resulting movement of the American Olympic Association and the American Olympic Committee as they moved through the 1920s. Key incidents and individuals will be highlighted in the paper to illustrate the position of the AOA at the time. Several issues of the day were unique to the ethos of the time, while others were more general in nature and might be relevant today. The battle over womens involvement could be an example of the first and the latter is illustrated by the continued financial dilemma that has plagued the USOC.