

# JOURNAL ARTICLE REVIEWS

A new section of review scholarship, *Journal Article Reviews*, appears for the first time beginning with this volume of *OLYMPIKA*. The intent of this new dimension is to present short reviews of articles on Olympic themes appearing in the major sociocultural journals of the world. In this issue, ten articles from the *Journal of Sport History* and *The International Journal for the History of Sport* are reviewed by Gordon MacDonald and Douglas Brown, Centre for Olympic Studies at the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.

Stephen R. Wenn, "Give me the Keys Please: Avery Brundage, Canadian Journalists, and the Barbara Ann Scott Phaeton Affair," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Summer 1991), 241-254. Reviewed by Gordon MacDonald, Centre for Olympic Studies.

In 1947 Barbara Ann Scott became the World Figure Skating Champion and was given a car by the city of Ottawa for her efforts. This article investigates the reaction of the Canadian press to the decision by the Canadian Olympic Association (COA) to ask her to return the car or face the loss of her amateur status. The investigation was prompted by Avery Brundage, then vice-president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and the one blamed by the press for the COA's decision. Wenn argues that the Canadian press attacks on Brundage were motivated primarily by anti-American sentiments and post-war Canadian nationalism.

The issue arose when Brundage wrote to the IOC President Sigfrid Edstrom telling him about "the gift". Brundage's position was that Scott probably did not realize she was breaking the rules. Edstrom wrote to the COA asking them to investigate. To Brundage's consternation, the press found out he had started the process and blamed him for interfering.

Because of the massive Canadian reaction to the whole issue, Wenn examines the importance to Canadians of Scott's exploits. He argues that she gave Canadians an international sporting heroine to acclaim at a time when there were few others of her stature. Scott became the press's version of an ideal Canadian woman, thus making Brundage's comments, and his perceived attack on Canada in general, worthy of a nationalistic response.

A second level of nationalism, Wenn argues, is found in the anti-American attitude of the Canadian press. This occurred despite the fact that it was actually the IOC's rules that were in danger of being broken. The press reacted as though Brundage was attempting to control Scott and the COA or, more generally, Canadian affairs. Wenn posits that this was a reflection of the undercurrent of anti-American feeling that was present in the post-war years. This feeling resulted from the superpower status the U.S.A. had gained after World War II. The

insecurity this caused Canadians, many of whom never felt that Americans took them seriously, was reflected in the aroused press.

Wenn provides quotes from Canadian newspapers which even hint at an American conspiracy to prevent Scott from competing for the Olympic gold medal. He goes on to note that the papers also struggled with the contentious issue of amateurism which Brundage promoted so religiously, despite the fact that an increasing number of press members saw the standards as being hypocritical and outdated.

The article concludes that much of the Canadian press reaction would have been the same if any other American had raised the issue. However, because of Brundage's pedigree in amateur sport, he was particularly vulnerable to attack.

The primary sources for this article came mostly from various Canadian newspapers and microfilm material from the *Avery Brundage Collection* at The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada. Secondary sources include various books and journal articles, written mostly from Canadian perspectives.

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John D. Windhausen, "Russia's First Olympic Victor," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol 3, No. 1 (Spring 1976), 35-44. Reviewed by Douglas Brown, Centre for Olympic Studies.

Russian figure skater Panin-Kolomenkin won a gold medal at the 1908 Olympic Games in London, England. Although this was the first Olympic gold medal won by a Russian, the details of the victory and the controversy that surrounded this particular athlete have been curiously absent from the history books. Panin-Kolomenkin's gold medal was earned in a short-lived event referred to as the "special figures." In a sense, this article describes how history failed to remember an early Olympic controversy. Panin-Kolomenkin won the gold medal in the special figures and was apparently favoured to win the gold medal in the free-skating competition. In a nationalistic match-up, he lost to the famous Swedish figure skater, Ulrich Salchow. After losing to Salchow, the Russians launched a protest based on the Swedish skater's deliberate unsportsmanlike behaviour, and the prejudicial scoring of the Swedish judges. The author questions the British Olympic Organizing Committee's failure to record the protest. Furthermore, it is suggested that the lack of attention paid to the Panin-Kolomenkin controversy is reflective of its minor status amongst all of the other controversies that seemed to plague the British organizers.

This article focuses on a very small detail of Olympic history. The descriptive nature of the study offers the reader an interesting sense of international sport in the early years of the modern Olympic Movement. There are also some interesting facts about the sport of figure skating which makes one realize that this sport has likely never been free of controversy. The author greatly overstates the significance

of Panin-Kolomenkin's figure skating career in Olympic history. Indeed, the main contribution of this article is to Russian sport history. This article also makes a modest contribution to the social history of Russia. By attempting to determine the nature of Panin-Kolomenkin's family background and his success in sports, the author reveals interesting insights into the class struggle that was prominent in Russia during the pre-revolution decade.

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Mark Dyreson, "Melting-pot Victories: Racial Ideas and the Olympic Games in American Culture during the Progressive Era," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (May 1989), 49-61. Reviewed by Gordon MacDonald, Centre for Olympic Studies.

This article examines the reactions of U.S. citizens towards American victories in the early Olympic Games, and how the resulting perception reflected an American attitude of superiority. Such athletes were referred to as being members of "the American race." Superior performances in the Games of early Olympiads resulted from a perceived American character that was present in the athletes. A concept of an "American race" was popular in the Progressive era and the successes of U.S. athletes were used to support this contention.

Dyreson argues that the ideas of an American "race" went from being genetically based (Anglo-Saxon) to nationally based. Progressives argued that any immigrants could become Americans if they were willing to assimilate the values of American democracy, fairness, work ethic, etc. Sport was claimed to be a way of teaching these values. Olympic victories were further proof of the validity of this claim and of a perceived superior stage of development of the United States.

At the same time, a "mixed-race ideology" rose in America. Dyreson cites a number of writers who proclaimed that the United States' successes (particularly in track and field) at the 1908 London and 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games were due to the "mixed race" composition of the American team. He goes on to state that the American press incurred the wrath of journalists from European countries because of its continual praise for this "race." This did not deter the Americans, who continued to argue that their country and its supposed equal opportunity for all athletes insured that they would continue to field better teams.

Dyreson concludes that the Olympics provided an occasion for Progressives to promote the equal opportunity that the United States was supposed to offer all its citizens. Although that equal opportunity did not really exist and has yet to fully come about, at least it was proclaimed and sought after to a certain degree.

While equal opportunity was not present in the United States in the period under consideration, this is not the point of the article. It seems from the evidence

presented that journalists certainly believed that America was the melting-pot with equal opportunity for all. It would have been helpful if the criteria for choosing these particular reports was given. For example, were there other journalists in the U.S. at that time who had dissenting views on this "mixed race" ideology?

Dyreson relies mostly on monthly and weekly magazines as the primary sources from which to distill the journalistic attitudes of the period. He also cites a significant number of sociological works on the progressive era which provide a theoretical background to this work.

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John Lucas, "American Preparation for the First Post World War Olympic Games, 1919-1929," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1983), 30-44. Reviewed by Douglas Brown, Centre for Olympic Studies.

The problems that plagued American participation in the 1920 Olympic Games were the result of legitimate administrative shortcomings. Disregarding the realities of participating in a major international sporting event in post-World War Europe, the United States approached the whole venture with naive and lofty expectations for their own Olympic Team administration as well as the administration of the Olympic Games by their Belgian hosts. Rather than accepting the economic and administrative problems of this era, American athletes, government officials and newspaper journalists ignored the realities of the situation and demonstrated their unique American egocentrism. Incredibly high expectations were placed on the American Team's participation in Antwerp.

John Lucas's article highlights the negative reactions to the humbling experience offered by the 1920 Olympic Games. These were difficult times. For example, the simple act of securing a boat to transport athletes to Europe became a national controversy, one involving the House of Representatives and the U.S. military. Financing the team on short notice, especially in a restrictive economic climate, forced the AOC to approach the Federal government requesting assistance. This was the first time in American Olympic history that such a request was made.

Four major factors contributed to the preparation difficulties faced by the Americans. There was a lack of leadership in the U.S. Olympic Movement, the result of several deaths, including that of the efficient but dogmatic amateur sports czar James Edward Sullivan. The prolonged trauma of World War I was a global reality. American athletes sought independence from the authoritarian leadership of their Olympic Committee administrators. Then too, Lucas claims that the frenzy of Pierre de Coubertin to re-establish the Modern Olympic Games with all the associated pomp and ceremony, contributed to an already taxed administrative burden on Antwerp, the local hosts. For the Olympic Movement in the United States, the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp represented the beginning of a new era.

Lucas's article reveals how difficult it was for the Americans to accept compromises as part and parcel of beginning a new era.

Lucas makes excellent use of diverse and descriptive primary sources. Of particular value is the April 6, 1920 Congressional Report on the *Hearing Before the Committee on Military Affairs* where the "Transportation of Olympic Teams" was discussed. Lucas' interpretation of the transcript reveals a great deal about the relationship between the American government and the AOC at this time in American history.

This article is an important contribution to American Olympic history. Lucas examines the issues that were facing the Olympic Movement in the United States at a pivotal time in history. He also provides an overview of the individuals who were addressing the issues. Highlighting the views of athletes, officials and journalists, Lucas vividly describes troubled times in the administration of sport and underscores this by elucidating an American reluctance to accept adverse conditions that may have compromised its international reputation in sport.

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Bill Murray, "Berlin in 1936: Old and New Work on the Olympics," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (April 1992), 29-49. Reviewed by Gordon MacDonald, Centre for Olympic Studies.

Murray begins this survey article by briefly discussing some of the athletes involved in the 1936 Olympic Games. He then moves directly to an examination of the various works published on the Berlin Games, starting with Richard Mandell's *The Nazi Olympics*, which he considers a landmark work on this topic. This particular investigation has spawned numerous articles and further research, many of which Murray cites in extensive endnotes.

The second major work covered in the text is Duff Hart-Davis' *Hitler's Olympics: the 1936 Games* (here Murray becomes confused, incorrectly citing the book as *Hitler's Games* in the text, and *The Berlin Games* in the endnotes). Hart Davis' work focused on the situations surrounding the Games rather than the festival events themselves. Murray summarizes some of the key issues covered by Hart-Davis, such as the complacent attitude of the British and the Americans, each of which knew what was happening in Nazi Germany but feigned ignorance. Murray also notes the book's focus on racial attitudes present in Germany at the time.

Murray maintains that there have been few biographies of sports figures that are good history, but argues that Bill Baker's *Jesse Owens: An American Life* is an exception. Through a study of Owens, Murray argues that Baker has presented unique asides of the 1936 Berlin festival, including the arrest of such a well known myth as Hitler's refusal to shake the American sprinter-jumper's hand after his victory in the 100 meters. A third work that he surveys in some detail is Allen Guttman's biography of Avery Brundage, *The Games Must Go On: Avery*

*Brundage and the Olympic Movement.* Unlike Baker's work, this one receives little praise for its style. Murray feels that it was well researched, but somewhat "unevenly balanced," and goes on to offer some of his own comments on Brundage, most of them critical.

Cooper C. Graham's work, *Leni Riefenstahl and Olympia*, is covered in detail as well. Murray argues that this is more a book about Riefenstahl's film of the 1936 Olympic Games than a biography. A well-researched account of the making of the film, it reveals that Riefenstahl's work was supported by the Nazi regime, despite claims to the contrary by the filmmaker herself. Murray spends a fair amount of space relating Graham's account of the trials Riefenstahl faced in producing the film.

Murray finishes by including comments on works by John Hoberman and Jean-Marie Brohm. However, these works are more general, treating the 1936 Berlin Games in a less historical manner, focusing instead on general ideological issues in sports. He concludes that there are still areas of research concerning the Berlin Games that have not yet been explored. Specifically, attitudes towards the Games held by various European countries have not been brought to light in much detail.

Overall, this article provides some useful summaries of several of the major works on the Berlin Games and the extensive notes are a good bibliographic source.

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Stephen R. Wenn, "A Tale of Two Diplomats: George S. Messersmith and Charles H. Sherrill on Proposed American Participation in the 1936 Olympics," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring 1989), 27-43. Reviewed by Douglas Brown, Centre for Olympic Studies.

This paper readdresses the frequently scrutinized American participation in the Berlin Olympic Games. Stephen Wenn examines the proposed boycott and eventual American participation in the Berlin Olympics by focusing on two individuals, George S. Messersmith and Charles H. Sherrill. According to Wenn, the conflicting views of these two individuals regarding American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games represents the ideological extremes that existed in American society on this issue. The diplomatic reference in Wenn's title may be considered misleading. In this historical event, Sherrill and Messersmith were fulfilling diplomatic roles for very different parties, the IOC and the United States government, respectively. Although Sherrill was a professional diplomat for the government of the United States, this paper focuses on his extracurricular diplomatic activities on behalf of the IOC. Sherrill was the American IOC member and supported American participation in the Berlin games. In this capacity, he was a

champion of the Olympic Movement and stood by the ideal that the IOC had to keep the Olympic Games apart from international political confrontations.

Messersmith, on the other hand, served as the American Consul-General in Germany and Austria in the years immediately prior to the Olympic Games. Contrary to Sherrill, Messersmith could not allow the idealistic expectations of the IOC to eclipse the political and moral ideals of the American foreign service. For Messersmith, the possibility of American participation in Hitler's Nazi Olympics was a serious issue for the State Department.

This article is significant in the broadest sense for the area of sport history. The effectiveness and benefit of international sport boycotts remain an issue for politicians and sport administrators today. This article demonstrates that international sport (including the Olympic Games) is no different than other foreign policy tools used by national governments. As Wenn aptly points out, the lack of support for an American boycott by President Roosevelt parallels the general American foreign policy of the time that attempted to address the Jewish problem in Germany. Examining American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games from the perspective of international diplomacy makes a valuable contribution to the study of sport, particularly Olympic sport. Furthermore, this article emphasizes the moral difficulty that international organizations, such as the IOC, face by espousing non-political ideological orientations.

Wenn's use of primary sources in this article is to be commended. There are extensive references to the George S. Messersmith Papers at the University of Delaware (1932-1946). Citations from the correspondence of Franklin D. Roosevelt also provide an impressive but disturbing understanding of the American foreign policy directed towards Germany in the years leading up to the Olympic Games in Berlin. Wenn's article admirably extends the critical and analytic body of knowledge that pertains to these particular Olympic Games and the Modern Olympic Movement generally.

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Martin Polley , "Olympic Diplomacy: The British Government and the Projected 1940 Olympic Games," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (August 1992) 169-187. Reviewed by Gordon MacDonald, Centre for Olympic Studies.

While the British Olympic Association (BOA) has long been known for its independence from politics, Polley states that the British Government, conversely, has actually been involved with international sports for some time. In this article Polley examines the role the British Foreign Office played in pressuring the BOA to withdraw its support for London's bid to host the 1940 Olympic Games in favor of Tokyo. He argues that the British Government realized the advantages

of this particular strategy as it attempted to better its relations with Japan, a country of increasing adversarial strength and power in the Far East.

He begins by citing the minor involvements the British Government had with the Olympics prior to the 1936 Olympic Games when it realized the political role sport could play. The British Ambassador to Germany was a key figure in apprising the Foreign Office of the importance that the Nazis were attaching to the Games. From this, the British Government was quick to realize the impact that the bidding for the 1940 Games could have on British-Japanese relations.

While initial overtures from Japan in the early 1930s soliciting British support for Tokyo's bid had been rebuffed, the attitude changed when relations between Japan and Britain worsened in 1936. The Foreign Office realized that its support of a Tokyo bid might be a useful tool in an attempt to calm Japan's increasingly militant behaviour.

However, as Polley shows, in a classic case of bureaucratic mismanagement, the Mayor of London was told by one section of the Foreign Office that there would be no objection if he supported a bid by London to host the 1940 Games. Polley notes that the Foreign Office changed its tone when the oversight was discovered, and quickly asked the BOA to withdraw London's candidacy. The BOA obliged and withdrew from the bidding, although Polley does not give an indication of what its feelings were on the matter. Tokyo subsequently won the bid, causing much celebration in Japan. The British won temporary favour with the Japanese for their gesture.

Polley concludes the article by noting that sport in Britain was far less politicized than in other European nations in the 1930s, citing as evidence a lack of a government structure to deal with international sporting matters. It was not until after the war and the 1948 London Olympics that a more structured approach to deal with sport was created by the British Government.

Polley makes extensive use of British Government archival documents as primary sources, as well as several volumes on British foreign policy, to reconstruct the events examined. Numerous political and military histories are cited to provide the diplomatic background of Anglo-Japanese relations of the period.

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George Eisen, "The Voices of Sanity: American Diplomatic Reports from the 1936 Berlin Olympiad," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter 1984), 56-78. Reviewed by Douglas Brown, Centre for Olympic Studies.

**T**his noteworthy article provides an extensive sociopolitical history of the events leading up to and including the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Eisen describes the intriguing and hypocritical decision of the IOC and National Olympic Committees regarding participation in the Nazi Olympics. Eisen demonstrates that national governments, particularly the United States, ignored information that

accurately described the deplorable treatment of Jews under German National Socialism. By examining the reports of three American diplomats of the U.S. State Department, Eisen argues that the Americans were fully aware of the true nature of the racial and religious discrimination that was being practiced by the Olympic hosts. Although the article focuses on the American diplomats, Dodd, Geist and Messersmith, one is given a sense of the broad and general awareness throughout Europe of German policies. The moralistic diplomatic perspectives of the Americans are contrasted with the British and French passiveness. This is a very pointed article and hypothesizes that the international community in the early 1930s turned a blind eye to the racial and religious discrimination that Hitler's government had legislated and put into practice.

This article reveals more than simply Olympic history. Eisen takes considerable care to describe the suppression of Jews in sporting activities preceding the selection of the German Olympic team. For example, there is an explanation of the Nazi Party's interference with German Jews' participation in the Maccabi sport festival. This provides valuable insight into the characteristics of international sport competitions, apart from the Olympic Movement. The focus on U.S. diplomacy in Europe prior to World War II gives the reader valuable insight into the political culture of pre-war Europe. The characterizations of Dodd, Geist, and particularly Messersmith, reveal a great deal about the foreign service during this important period in world history. At the same time, Eisen emphasizes the decision of the United States to uphold the private and non-political orientation of the American Olympic Movement. Perhaps the greatest significance of this article is its sociopolitical treatment of a sporting event. This approach to history demonstrates the usefulness of examining the politics of sport when attempting to understand the true value systems from the past.

The author makes an impressive use of primary sources ranging from reports of the diplomats, Dodd, Geist and Messersmith, to personal correspondence between the president of the German Olympic Committee and a German-Jewish athlete. Eisen's use of diverse and scholarly secondary sources also contributes significantly to this paper. Finally, the incorporation of photographs adds an interesting and pleasant dimension to this article.

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Wendy Gray and Robert Knight Barney, "Devotion to Whom?: German-American Loyalty on the Issue of Participation in the 1936 Olympic Games," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Summer 1990), 214-231. Reviewed by Gordon MacDonald, Centre for Olympic Studies.

This article examines the motives of several prominent German-American individuals and organizations favouring support for American participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, and the impact each had on securing that participation. The individuals and organizations examined were based in the city of New York which, the authors argue, was an important center of German-American activity.

The first individual examined, one Dietrich Wortmann, was an American citizen and former Olympian (1904) who was a member of the American Olympic Association (AOA). He sided with American Olympic Committee President Avery Brundage in supporting American attendance at the Games. (It would have helped here to explain the difference between the American Olympic Committee and the AOA.) The authors conclude that Wortmann's motivation was as a patriotic American sportsman who was more pro-Olympic than pro-Nazi. However, the comments about Wortmann's connection to the New York Turnverein (arguably pro-Nazi) do not appear to help the argument much. The fact that Brundage supported Wortmann is also seen as evidence that Wortmann was not pro-Nazi despite Brundage's own indifferent attitude to Germany's National Socialist regime.

Second, the activities of Reynold Oeschler, a banker, are probed. President of a German-American Olympic group, Oeschler had contacts with high ranking officials in the German Government, thus helping his attempts to arrange promotional sports tours in the United States by German athletes. The authors conclude that Oeschler was simply pro-German, rather than pro-Nazi. This conclusion was based partly on Brundage's support for him and the lack of evidence to suggest otherwise.

A third individual, Ernst Schmitz, was associated more closely with the Nazis. A representative of the government-controlled German Olympic Organizing Committee in America, he promoted American participation in the Games strongly. Gray and Barney conclude that his loyalty to the Nazi Government was likely stronger than those noted above.

The article also examines the *Amerikadeutscher Volksbund*. This organization supported the German fatherland and, in turn, was likely supported by the German Government. A strong proponent of the Games, the group had some impact on the American decision to participate in Berlin in 1936. The authors conclude that the *Amerikadeutscher Volksbund* was loyal to the Nazi Government.

The authors also briefly note the impact of a German-American newspaper in New York (the *New York Staatszeitung und Herold*), as well as that of the New York Turnverein. They conclude that the newspaper was motivated more by German patriotism than by a sense of allegiance to the Nazi Government, while the Turnverein probably behaved more like the *Volksbund*.

The article concludes that collective German-American support for the Games

was influential in helping to secure American participation. Further, such support was motivated by a combination of the following: (1) promotion of the Olympics, (2) gaining prestige for Germany, and (3) political devotion to the Nazi Government.

Significant primary sources for this article came from National Archives material in Washington, D.C., the *Avery Brundage Collection* at The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada (microfilm copy), and newspapers, specifically the *New York Times*. Secondary sources included various books and articles in both German and English.

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D. A. Kass, "The Issue of Racism at the 1936 Olympics," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Winter 1976) 223-235. Reviewed by Douglas Brown, Center for Olympic Studies.

Understanding the proposed United States boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games has fascinated many scholars over the years. This article offers a basic descriptive history of America's considered action to boycott Berlin's Olympic Games as a demonstration of disapproval toward Germany's National Socialist policies. The author presents arguments from both sides of the boycott debate. References to most of the prominent Americans involved in the decision-making process are included in this article. George Sherrill and Avery Brundage are recognized as the strongest detractors of the boycott movement in the United States. The author includes some interesting and lesser known references on the supportive side of the boycott. Despite this, the analysis of the issue is still cursory. For example, there is no mention of George Messersmith, an American diplomat initially stationed in Germany and eventually in Austria, who was a severe critic of American foreign policy on the issue. This omission may be the result of the author's almost exclusive use of the *New York Times* as a primary source.

The author makes extensive use of quotes from the *New York Times* in order to elucidate the various arguments that developed in the debate. These quotes are particularly effective when Kass deals with nuances of the individual personalities involved. Avery Brundage and Charles Sherrill are developed most colorfully in this paper (as though Brundage's character has ever lacked color). The author has also quoted several of the boycott supporters who were responding to the arguments offered by Brundage and other opposers of an American boycott.

The strength of this article lies in its presentation of the wide range of issues that confronted the Americans in their ultimate decision to participate in the 1936 Olympic Games. Presentation of the issues relating to the corrupting nature of national politics in the Olympic Movement and the power of the IOC are also themes in this article.