

Scripting the American Olympic Story-Telling Formula: The 1924 Paris Olympic Games and the American Media

Mark L. Dyreson*

Three years before Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic in 1927, landed in Paris, and became an instantaneous global media star, the American media transformed another group of Americans who traveled to Paris into icons. Print and electronic communication systems marketed the 1924 American Olympic team as the heroes and heroines of a thoroughly modern American republic. Lindbergh's flight provided comfort to a conflicted nation by bridging the chasm between traditional and modern mythologies of American culture. The rugged pioneer Lindbergh who soloed the Atlantic reconfirmed the traditional mythology of a frontier civilization and small town society in which individuals had the power to forge their own destiny. The corporate Lindbergh, who employed cutting-edge technologies and management techniques to make his flight, reassured people that in a modern America where the frontier had closed, Main Street had been paved and "Middletowns" everywhere had mushroomed into suburbia. Engineering efficiency produced a brave new world. Traditional pluck and modern technological innovation built American winners.¹

The 1924 Olympic team performed the same trick--and they performed it before Lindbergh. Metamorphosed by the mass media into American archetypes, the public was told how they set out to conquer the world at the Paris Olympics by merging traditional American ideals such as the Puritan work ethic and frontier grit with modern athletic science and state-of-the-art coaching techniques. Sport offered an easily understood array of ideological symbols capable of being combined in a multitude of tempting patterns by the message crafters of the new consumer culture.²

The most important thing for understanding American civilization in the 1920s about both Lindbergh and the Olympians were the public stories the media crafted about their exploits. The media sold those stories to a massive public audience as entertainment--and something more than entertainment.³ Several important ideas were embedded in the "dizzy, spinning, sports reel" (to borrow a cinematic image from one of the most insightful sportswriters of the era) which comprised the public consciousness of Olympic contests.⁴ Sport stories were laced with lessons about the conflict between modern and traditional values, treatises about global politics, essays about nationalism, rhapsodies about American dreams of global cultural domination,

* Mark L. Dyreson is Associate Professor of History, Weber State University, Ogden, Utah, U.S.A.

theories about the social constructions of race and gender, and discourses about many other things.

Nationalism provided the crucial formula for organizing American stories about the Olympics. When late twentieth-century sages such as sport “super-agent” Mark McCormack predict that very soon Olympians will run in corporate uniforms, they forget that nationalism represents the marketing genius of the modern Olympics.⁵ American interpreters of the Olympics created scripts in which the public was taught that athletic performance allowed an understanding of their own country and other nations. According to *National Geographic* sport supplied “magic touchstones” for deciphering cultures. Sport provided “the surest clues” for understanding “how people live, and work, and think.”⁶

The media made American athletes into protagonists engaged in a struggle to win the title of Olympic champions against a cast of other nations who desperately wanted to vanquish the United States. Foreign athletes, spectators, and national media were often villains in these tales. Occasionally, they served as loyal compatriots of American champions, much like the sidekicks in every Hollywood Western filmed in the 1920s.

Merely winning Olympic medals, while a necessary ingredient, was never enough for American Olympians. They also had to project national power. They had to confirm American ideals. They needed not only vanquish the rest of the world but convert the globe to American athletic manners and American ways of thinking.

The press added a few other ingredients to the basic Olympic script. American victories had to be explained. American defeats had to be explained--and often explained away. The performances of other nations were dissected in order to explain national characters. Controversy sold stories. Liberal portions of scandal and gossip were added to spice up the mixture. Sometimes social criticism leavened flag-wrapped Olympic scripts.

All of the Olympic stories were encased in “ballyhoo.” That term was coined during the 1920s to describe the hyperbole which surrounded the promotion of athletic events by New York *Herald* sports editor W.O. McGeehan. It quickly crossed the cultural frontiers between sport and Hollywood, moved rapidly to Madison Avenue, and spread throughout the American culture-scape.⁷

The basic formula for American media coverage of Olympic Games probably seems very familiar to late twentieth-century television audiences accustomed to “up close and personal” strategies for humanizing athletes and obsessive medal-counting to confirm national virility. These scripts were not invented out of thin air by television networks. They have a much older history in the American print media. One can find distant echoes of the formulas in stories from the first modern Olympics in 1896. During the 1920s the formulas had become well-honed tools for translating the Olympic Games for American audiences. The coverage of the 1924 Olympics marks the beginning of a sophisticated and pervasive use of the formula to shape American perceptions of the Olympics.

The Olympic Movement and American Utopianism

A key ingredient of the American scripts was the promise that Olympism could transcend the grim realities of *Realpolitik* and create a world without war. In the decade immediately after the Great War, the avoidance of another Armageddon became an overriding concern. Many people hoped that the First World War had in fact been the war to end all wars. American pacifists revitalized their movement and won new converts. Novels and movies, like *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *A Farewell to Arms*, depicted the universal horror and insanity of military conflict. Dreamers and politicians offered a variety of proposals to end war forever. The Harding administration convened the Washington Naval Conference, a serious effort to move toward disarmament in the Pacific. The Coolidge administration signed the Kellogg-Briand Pact, a superficial attempt to outlaw war. The sporting world offered its own pacifist panacea--the Olympic movement.⁸

An American group of dreamers crafted its own version of Olympian idealism. They thought that a combination of Olympic Committees, national governments, armed forces, business corporations, public schools and universities, in combination with the Y.M.C.A., could create an international faith in an American ideology of sport.

Elwood S. Brown led the movement. A Y.M.C.A. leader who introduced modern sport to the Far East, directed the athletic activities of the American Expeditionary Force during World War One, and staged the Inter-Allied "Military Olympics" in 1919 to celebrate the end of hostilities, Brown had strong convictions about the power of sport. "It is not too much to hope that this world plan," he proclaimed, "as it increasingly offers the joy of a natural physical life to the individual and brings the nations together on the common and friendly field of sport will do its full share in preparing the way for international good will and peace."⁹ Reporter Katherine Mayo, who shared Brown's convictions, believed sport offered the United States a "dazzling opportunity" to give the world something it really needed. "Here is a chance to better our National fame--freely to offer an eagerly sought, life-giving gift to the stricken, groping peoples," she cried. She commanded Americans to remake the globe in their own image through the gospel of sport.¹⁰

Previews for an Olympian Spectacle

In 1924 many Americans turned away from the complexities of domestic and international problems to search for world peace, and for heroes and heroines, in an Olympic drama. They eagerly anticipated the Games of the Eighth Olympiad, scheduled for Paris. Reports from France marveled at the preparations. Paris was constructing a magnificent stadium in the suburb of Colombes with seating for 100,000 spectators, and an estimated cost of as much as fifty million francs.¹¹ The organizing committee also oversaw the building of "splendid telephone and telegraphic arrangements" which made it possible to send information from the Olympic site to New York "in less than three minutes"--with a "record" dispatch of one and a half minutes.¹²

French sports minister Comte J. Clary constructed a moral framework for the Games in the American press. "On the morrow of the appalling cataclysm of war, which burst upon the world, the Olympic Games through sport and letters and the arts together, ought to offer fertile and valuable ground for the reconciliation of the peoples of the world," intoned Clary.¹³ French newspaperman Georges Lechartier added that "not even the League of Geneva has ever shown such continuous good-will and such a genuine desire for good understanding and concord as had the committee of the Olympic Games since its first international session in 1896."¹⁴

Cables from the European continent depicted a French Olympic craze. The American press reported that runners and bicyclists clogged the Champs Elysees and the boulevards of Paris. The runners were in training for "the Olymp." So were swimmers in the Seine and young men and women at the beach, "as lightly clad as a last reminiscence of decency allows them," marveled *Literary Digest*.

Charley Paddock - American Media Star

In order to meet the French challenge an American "army" of 300,000 athletes was engaged in a series of try-out contests to win the honor of competing on the Olympic team.¹⁵ Charles W. Paddock, the University of Southern California sprint star and one of America's best hopes for a gold medal in the 100 meters, assured the nation that despite keener competition America would again rank "at the top."¹⁶

Whether or not Paddock would help the United States to the top at Paris, however, became a contentious issue between the N.C.A.A. and the A.O.C.. Paddock's victory in the 100 meters at Antwerp had earned him a gold medal and international fame. In May of 1923, Paddock traveled to France in order to participate in the University of Paris games. The A.A.U. and the A.O.C. accused Paddock of competing in Paris without receiving the proper authorization. They also charged Paddock with accepting improper expense money for his performances. The N.C.A.A., which claimed that since Paddock was an undergraduate at the University of Southern California it had jurisdiction in the case, dismissed the charges as groundless. In fact, according to the intercollegiate regulatory agency, the University of Paris had requested that the N.C.A.A. aid it in garnering American collegians to appear in its games. Paddock had been granted permission to compete by the University of Southern California, which was all the authorization the N.C.A.A. required. When the A.A.U. suspended Paddock for running in the Paris meet, effectively banning him from the 1924 Olympics, the N.C.A.A. resolved to go to the "public press" with the facts of the case.¹⁷

If the N.C.A.A. could not get to the press, Charley Paddock certainly knew how. Paddock parlayed his sprinting fame into a lucrative career as a media expert. Paddock's jump from athlete to media expert created a path that numerous athletes have followed. Paddock's medium was print journalism. He wrote for glossy mass-market magazines, including *The Saturday Evening Post*, *American Magazine*, *Collier's*, and even *Scientific American*.¹⁸

The new hostilities sparked by Paddock between American Olympic officials and the N.C.A.A. came just after the two groups had reached rapprochement on the issue of the American Olympic Association. The election of Colonel Robert M. Thompson

to the presidency of the A.O.A. had begun the reconciliation. Thompson's restructuring of the Olympic Association succeeded in appeasing both the N.C.A.A. and the War Department. General Palmer E. Pierce told N.C.A.A. leaders at their national convention that the new version of the American Olympic Association was "worthy of the heartiest support" of the N.C.A.A. The delegates heeded the General's recommendations and supported the Olympic effort.¹⁹

A Winter Interlude

The United States began its climb "to the top" of the Olympic universe at the village of Chamonix in the French Alps. A winter Olympics program had been approved by the International Olympic Committee in 1921 in spite of protests from the founder of the modern Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin. Chamonix, a winter playground for the wealthy in the French Alps, hosted the first Winter Olympics. On January 25, 1924, Olympic contestants tramped through the village streets carrying their skates, skis, hockey sticks and bobsleds to the skating rink for the opening ceremonies.²⁰

On January 27, the opening day of competition, American skater Charles Jewtraw won the 500 meter speed skating sprint--the first event of the Winter Olympics.²¹ Jewtraw remembered bowing his head and thinking, "for my country and God, I'll do my best." Sixty years later, speaking with Olympic chronicler William Oscar Johnson, tears came to Jewtraw's eyes when he recalled the playing of the *Star Spangled Banner* at the victory ceremony. "The whole American team rushed out on the ice. They hugged me like I was a beautiful girl," reminisced the Olympic champion. "My teammates threw me in the air. The loudspeakers were booming out in French 'Charlie Jewtraw of the U.S. of A. wins the first race in the first Winter Games!'"²²

Jewtraw's gold was the only one that the United States won at Chamonix. The United States team garnered two silver medals. Betty Loughran finished second in figure skating. The American hockey side was runner-up behind Canada. Norway "won" the Winter Games with 134 and 1/2 points to Finland's 76 and 1/2, Great Britain's 30, the United States' 29, Sweden's 26 and Austria's 25. "The Norwegians showed splendid form in all the events in which they competed," remarked a *New York Times* reporter. "They were in admirable physical condition and displayed a great efficiency in all branches of Winter Sports, with absolute supremacy in the ski events."²³

The best American ski performance occurred when Anders Haugen of Minneapolis flew 50 meters in the ski jump, 5 and 1/2 meters farther than the nearest competitor. Haugen finished fourth when his "style" points were added to the distance in the complicated process that (in that era) determined the victor. The American team was dismayed by the scoring of the three judge panel. But Albert Stenge, the Czech judge (along with a Frenchman and a Norwegian) insisted that Haugen's form and style were poor. "He could not begin to compare with the three Norwegians placed ahead of him. The American threw all style aside and beat all efforts only on distance." The judges' explanations failed to appease the Americans. The mayor of

Minneapolis was so incensed he wanted to file a protest. He realized it "would not get us anywhere," but lamented, "it certainly is tough."²⁴

In early February, New York City prepared to welcome home the speed skaters. City officials planned to meet the liner which conveyed the Olympians home. A ceremonial band would hail the athletes. Then they would march to a public reception hosted by a committee represented by Mayor John F. Hylan.²⁵ However, the Valentines Day celebration evaporated either because of a lack of public interest or the desire of the skaters to hurry on to Saranac Lake, New York, for the national championships.²⁶

The New York *Times* published an interesting assessment of the first Winter Games. Norway's and Finland's dominance did not surprise the editors; the disappointing showings of Canada, which concentrated too much on hockey, and that of Sweden, however, did. The United States performed "neither better nor worse than might have reasonably been expected," wrote the editors. "There are great sections of this country where there is no ice or snow and it would be surprising if this nation could develop a team capable of defeating those of the North countries where the children learn to skate and ski at an early age and have opportunities for constant practice that are not available here."²⁷

There could be no such excuses made for the American team at the summer Games. The canons of American Olympic history declared that for years the United States proved that American society bred pure hearts, winning spirits and swift, strong physiques. The press traced (contrary to the facts) an unbroken string of American triumphs in modern Olympic Games. Expectations of heroic deeds and substantive contributions to international harmony grew as the summer approached.

The Contrast of Olympic Sport and American Politics

While the American athletes competed in the French Alps, the Teapot Dome oil scandal exploded at the United States Senate chambers in Washington, D.C. Testimony before a Senate investigating committee revealed an unholy alliance between former Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall (he had resigned in the spring of 1923) and oil moguls Harry Sinclair and Edward Doheny. The scandal "gushed" all over the front pages of the nation's newspapers when Doheny revealed he paid several members of the Wilson and Harding administrations for their influence. While the press generated reams of stories about the scandal, Babylon's Puritan (William Allen White's descriptive, label for President Calvin Coolidge) sat in the White House, biding his time.²⁸ A citizen of the republic surveying the political scene in 1924 would hardly find evidence of high ethical standards in the behavior of the guardians of the public trust. That same year the battle between the New York Giants and Washington Senators in the World Series pushed the presidential election off the front pages. Sport, as *The Nation* noted, had been elected. Americans turned away from Babylon on the Potomac in search of affirmations of the American way of life in other arenas.²⁹

The Paris Olympics beckoned. In the spring of 1924 A.O.C. officials sent appeals across the nation for funds to support the Paris expedition. The A.O.C. wanted \$350,000 in public donations to support a 350 member team. They mounted

solicitation campaigns in many areas. New York Governor Al Smith proclaimed May 20th “Olympic Day.” Former A.O.C. pontiff Gustavus T. Kirby led a fund raising rally on Wall Street at which past and present Olympians were introduced and pleaded for support from finance’s moguls. Major General Henry T. Allen, executive officer of the A.O.C., appealed to college students for their aid in raising money, since some seventy-percent of the athletes who “wore the shield” at Olympic Games were from universities.³⁰

The press backed the A.O.C.’s effort. A New York *Times* editorial lauded the committee’s decision to solicit thousands of small contributions from the general public rather than to depend on a few large donations from wealthy backers. The newspaper believed that such a policy would insure the democracy of the American sporting venture. The editors insisted that the crucial issue was “to make the team the representatives of the people as a whole” by giving everyone a chance to contribute money to the Olympic cause. The editorial concluded with the mailing address of Julius H. Barnes, the A.O.C. treasurer.³¹

Actually, the A.O.C. had at first sought large donations, “circularizing the country” with requests for \$150 contributions. But when those tactics raised only \$20,000, the Olympic authorities turned to a mass public subscription.³² The media assured Americans that their donations would serve the interests of the United States. One commentator promised that the Olympian “ambassadors of sport” would prove American vitality to a global audience. Backing the Olympic team made financial sense. “The amount of money they want is trivial when considered as a tax on the whole country, which is what it ought to be, and it would be hard to spend any for results more useful or more productive of pride than the winning of high rank in competition with the world’s athletes,” insisted the commentator.³³ By the time the Paris Games concluded Olympic officials had succeeded in meeting their \$350,000 goal.³⁴

Setting the Stage - Olympic Ballyhoo

A flurry of articles hyping the American team sought to convince contributors that they would not be backing losers. A New York *Times* reporter wrote that “another victory by America is generally considered to be assured.”³⁵ The fact that United States athletes held thirty-five out of ninety recognized world records in Olympic events convinced another source that the United States would dominate the rest of the competition.³⁶ In order to select the Olympians, the A.O.C. arranged to conduct a series of regional qualifying meets at sites around the United States in addition to recognizing the winners from the N.C.A.A. championships. The cream of the crop would meet at Harvard Stadium on June 13 and 14, after which the A.O.C. planned to make official selections.

Despite the confident proclamations, no one expected the United States to romp over the competition as it had in 1920 at Antwerp. Sports authorities warned that the Finns, in particular, as well as England and France, would mount strong challenges to American domination.

The *Literary Digest* printed an ominously titled story, “‘Conquering North’ Threatens to Conquer Olympics.” In the essay T. Von Ziekursh warned Americans

that Europeans believed that Finland would wrest the title of Olympic champions away from the United States. Northern climates produced "a hearty breed," reported Ziekursh. Nordics were stronger, more energetic, had more stamina, and were more virile than other people. Since at least the time of the Roman Empire, hypothesized Ziekursh, Nordics had periodically emerged from the woods to conquer the world in an "avalanche of. . . power." Once upon a time, lamented Ziekursh, the United States had possessed an environment--the frontier--which produced a virile race. In the Olympics contested between 1896 and 1912, when America had just recently been a "pioneer land," American "athletes were sons of men who were not hot-house plants, the products of super-heated offices, and no exercise." Ziekursh's potent mixture of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis with Euro-American theories of Nordic supremacy led him to predict that in 1924 Finland would conquer a modernized and effeminate United States.³⁷

When, shortly before the Games commenced, the French Olympic Committee changed the traditional scoring system, Americans howled that it was a shoddy attempt to "strip the United States of its athletic supremacy."³⁸ A.A.U. president William C. Prout angrily asserted that "there is no question but that the scoring of points has been aimed to rob the United States of many of its points." French officials planned to award first place finishers 10 points, and the next five positions 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. "It's a plan to make countries appear stronger than they really are, and the whole idea is aimed at the United States," railed Prout. He complained that the Europeans had designed it specifically to thwart American depth.³⁹ The system seemed especially advantageous to Finland's chances. "'It is a hard matter for any nation to spot Finland seventy points in athletics and win,'" thought Alan H. Muir, the American representative to the French Arrangements Committee.⁴⁰

After the team had been selected, *Outlook* magazine reassured sports fans that in spite of the scoring system rigged by the French to "disadvantage" Americans, stellar results from the Olympic trials indicated that the athletes would turn the new medal-counting formula into a bonanza for the United States.⁴¹ The Olympic trials produced world-best performances in the 100, 200 and 400 meter dashes, the 400 meter hurdles, as well as in the eight-oared crew race. A *New York Times* reporter remarked that the 1924 assemblage "of Uncle Sam's athletic strength into one great body" assured the A.O.C. that it "now has under its control the strongest athletic team ever entered for America in Olympic competition."⁴² The A.O.C. even relented and allowed Charley Paddock a spot on the squad.⁴³

The oracles of the sporting world lavished their greatest hyperbole on United States sprinters. Grantland Rice, the *New York Tribune's* athletic sage, bombastically plugged "the modern Jasons who sailed the other day for the golden fleece of Olympic fame," as sprinters with legs gifted enough "to keep Old Doc Time, the eternal father, ducking to stay in the ring." Rice opined that the 1924 contingent might well "constitute the greatest sprinting squad ever gathered under one flag since Greece decided many centuries ago that athletic games were the foundation of national fiber."⁴⁴

“Sex Appeal” at The Olympic Spectacle

American track and field athletes had traditionally reigned as the muscular spokesmen of America’s national fiber. But in the new Olympic year some experts were asserting that the United States’ women swimmers might lead the American defense of “national fiber.” “Uncle Sam is depending on his daughters, they tell us, to put over the winning points when the world’s athletes clash next summer at Paris,” maintained the *Literary Digest*. In the El Paso *Times* swimming coach Lou de B. Handley—who in 1926 would train Gertrude Ederle for her challenge of the English channel—prophesied that “if the United States wins the Olympic Games in 1924, ‘the finishing touches’ will very probably be put on by the girls of the swimming team.” Handley revealed that the American swimming “nymphs” were in “spectacular” form. The United States faced severe athletic challenges from many nations. “Luckily the American naiads are well-nigh invincible,” boasted Handley.⁴⁵

American women, in spite of the sentiments of coach Handley and the *Literary Digest*, played an ambiguous role in the American Olympic campaign. So many sportswomen requested information about Olympic track and field entries that it forced the A.O.C. to issue a press release attempting to correct the “erroneous impression” that women would be able to compete in the Olympic track and field events. The A.O.C. warned women that their participation was “confined” to swimming, tennis and fencing. Women were limited to what the male-dominated officialdom considered “graceful” sports.⁴⁶

Grace, as sportswriter Paul Gallico understood, was the key to public acceptance of women’s swimming and diving. Of the many theories circulating about the sudden rise of women’s aquatics to mass popularity in the 1920s Gallico settled on one as the answer. “The simplest and most valid of all is sex appeal,” he declared. Women’s swimming and diving allowed newspaper editors to sell sex without offending the mores of the middle-class masses. Images of female swimmers and divers permitted the print media to titillate covertly, without fear of being accused of selling sex to the public. Newspapers and magazines were jammed with “photographs of handsome young girls in revealing bathing-suits lined up on the edge of a pool, waiting for the starting gun, or poised on the end of a springboard or diving tower, or caught in mid-air in full flight,” noted Gallico. Everyone understood such pictures as “decent, completely privileged, in good taste and at the same time arresting as all get-out,” he revealed.

Gallico pointed out that the pictures surfaced in the section of the paper chiefly designed for men—the sports page. They generally appeared without context or comment, supposedly representative of sport, but really there for sex appeal. “Whether or not the girls and their parents and the swimming authorities and the prissily proper A.A.U. know it, the newspapers have been using the swimmers as circulation-pullers just as the real-estate promoting corporations in Florida, California and New York have been using them for bait for years,” Gallico stated. Gallico considered the arrangement as “pretty much of an even swap. The newspapers got their exciting pictures. The girls got their necessary publicity.” Not a bad

arrangement for swimming, which Gallico honestly pegged as "in itself not a particularly exciting spectacle."⁴⁷

In addition to telling the dirty little secret that sex appeal made women's swimming and diving one of the most popular spectator sports of the 1920s Gallico also asserted that female aquatic stars maintained the highest standards of sportswomanship in women's athletics. Indulging in rather vicious--if typical stereotypes--he declared that "cattiness" characterized the behavior of most female golfers, tennis players, skaters and track and field athletes. He also labeled women track and field athletes unattractive and masculine-looking. Besides, he wondered, "if there is anything more dreadful aesthetically or more depressing than the fatigued-distorted face of a girl runner at the finish line, I have never seen it."⁴⁸

Unfortunately, Gallico's biases were typical of male attitudes in American society. Those biases explained why Americans did not push for the inclusion of women's track and field in the Olympic program. Unfortunately again, his telling insight that aesthetics and sex appeal mattered as much to the promoters of women's sport as health and safety issues was not widely understood nor challenged. Given the realities of American society in the 1920s and the fact that men mostly controlled the scripts written about the Olympics, it was little wonder that the stereotypes of sex appeal and good manners made women swimmers and divers into the heroines--and the sex objects--of the Paris Olympics.

Sometimes women endorsed conservative views of women's sport. Sarah Addington, in the *Ladies Home Journal* and the *Literary Digest*, wondered if the Olympics might be "too hard for the weaker sex." Addington was sure that men and women should not compete in the same way. She was even more sure that they should not compete against one another.⁴⁹ Other women, such as 1920 Olympic double-gold medalist in the 100 and 400 meter freestyle, Ethelda Bleibtrey, warned men that the acquisition of voting rights had not satisfied women. Women planned to compete against and beat men in sports. Bleibtrey predicted "the beginning of an era when the world's sport crowns will fall, one by one, before the conquests of the 'weaker sex'." She proclaimed that "eventually women will wear as many of these prizes as men."⁵⁰

That era would not dawn at Paris. Women were barred from most of the sports contested at the 1924 Olympics. Yet during the 1920s women athletes were making remarkable strides. In 1924 Sybil Bauer broke the world's record for the 440 yard backstroke. The standard which she eclipsed had stood for *both* men and women--a fact from which Ethelda Bleibtrey drew tremendous confidence. An editorial in *The Nation* observed that "no man in all the annals of sport has finished the quarter-mile back-stroke swim within five seconds of Miss Sybil Bauer's time, and naturally Miss Bauer wants to enter the regular event in the games." At the 1924 Olympics the official rules prohibited her from defending her record against male challengers.

Still, noted the editor, women's sport might well have a remarkable future. The editor admitted that the "tradition of the girl athlete" had not yet been fully formed. "But if events move as fast for twenty years as they have in the twenty just past, who can say what the Olympic games will be like or how many world's records will hang at the belts of girl swimmers or hurdlers?" *The Nation's* pundit imagined a New York *Times* editorial in 1944 opening with the line that "sports in general . . . and especially

swimming, are fundamentally feminine pastimes, and thus it is natural that most of the prizes in the contests just concluded at Moscow should have gone to women. After all, the exercise of speed and mere unthinking physical strength are not qualities that men should either desire or seek to develop," joked *The Nation's* opinion maker. "None the less, we are gratified to note that in this feminine field of endeavor our American girls have so clearly outclassed, etc.," *The Nation's* humorist had the *New York Times* editor continue." But perhaps, in 1944, the *New York Times* editorial will be written by a woman, in which case it may be different," he concluded.⁵¹

In a fashion typical of the 1920s the attitude toward women Olympians spanned the Victorian and the modern. The world-beating naiads who would help the nation crow that they were indeed the globe's strongest and boldest people were the only members of Olympic team who required chaperones.⁵²

"Unbearable Americans and Their Rugby Wars"

While the United States prepared its team for the Games and speculated about its Olympic chances, a French representative to the International Olympic Committee, the Marquis Melchior de Polignac, thanked America for its aid in arranging the celebration of the Games of the Eighth Olympiad. "There is no country in the world in which the Olympic idea has been developed to such an extent as in the United States," remarked the Marquis before the American club in Paris. "This year the United States has made it a point to be represented in every event of the Olympic calendar, even those sports in which the rank and tile of the American nation is not keenly interested and in which the American athletes do not practice with regularity, such as European rugby and association football." Finishing his speech with what was either a remarkable slip of the tongue or an audacious insult or an unfortunate typographical error in the newspaper copy, the French I.O.C. member intimated that "we have a feeling that the American team will be practically unbearable in athletics." Polignac concluded by issuing a challenge to the United States. "If, as it is said, the United States loves a tighter, they will simply worship France after the Olympic Games."⁵³

The United States engendered its first fight in May, before the main body of the team was even on French soil. As predicted, the French found the Americans practically unbearable. The United States team won an intensely played Olympic championship contest against the favored French side. The American press reported that when the "Stars and Stripes" was raised over Colombes Stadium to signal the victory, French partisanship exploded. The crowd greeted the American flag in "cold silence, broken only by boos and catcalls." French rugby fans "hissed" at American players.⁵⁴ Another observer reported that "women in the bleachers shrieked instructions at the American players as to what anatomical portions of their visitors they wished destroyed." When a band struck up the "Star Spangled Banner" French policemen shouted insults at the United States team.⁵⁵

The press commended the American rugby team for its behavior during the Parisian outbursts. An Associated Press (A.P.) correspondent noted that "the Americans refused to be ruffled by the attitude of the crowd and won many admirers by their coolness and the bulldog spirit which, together with their superior physical

condition, carried them through under adverse circumstances.” Americans among the crowd of 30,000 fared worse. Several altercations between French and American fans broke out in the stands. Two U.S. citizens were knocked out in the melees and carried unconscious from the stadium.⁵⁶

The American team’s coach, C.A. Austin, claimed that the French spectators had “gathered together for one purpose, and that was to see America trampled upon before their eyes.” But Austin gleefully reported that the crowd’s lust had not been satisfied. He had sent fifteen men in “perfect condition” onto the pitch to “uphold American tradition,” and they had done just that. Austin noted that the French team itself bore no animosity toward the Americans, and that the unpleasantness was confined to the onlookers. Austin revealed that at a banquet following the American victory the French rugby players had apologized for their fellow citizen’s actions.⁵⁷

The French press denounced the crowd’s behavior as “entirely unjustified and uncalled for.” They commended the Americans for their strength and speed while explaining that the French side at the Olympics was stale after the rigors of a long season. The American rugby team seemed not to mind the controversy. They broke training and celebrated their victory. They held a victory party at an exclusive Parisian cabaret. They gave “a good account of themselves . . . on the dancing floor”--just as they had on the rugby pitch.⁵⁸

A New York *Times* editorial dismissed the unruly crowd as a manifestation of the novelty of sporting ideals in France. The New York daily asserted that it had taken World War One to encourage the development of an Anglo-American sporting philosophy in French culture. As France adopted American-style sport in its public education system, argued the editor, the “quality” of French sportsmanship would improve. Besides, “in adopting our passion for athletics the French seem also to have imitated our sporting manners,” chuckled the editor. “Although we usually reserve direct rough action for our own countrymen--special preference shown to umpires--we have been known to express disapproval of some of our foreign competitors with pointed verbal vehemence.”⁵⁹ Other observers avoided challenges to American self-righteousness and chalked up the ugliness of the spectacle to the huge sums which the French had wagered on the game or the latent resentment of Parisian merchants that foreign fans had not brought to Paris the expected gigantic bonanza in revenues.⁶⁰

At least one analyst, Ida Treat of the influential political journal *The Nation*, did not consider the scrums in the stands at Colombes as aberrant manifestations. Treat thought that the ugly mood of the crowd demonstrated a significant fact about athletics. “Sport today is national as war is; it is even chauvinistic,” asserted Treat. Most people in the world, and particularly in the United States, believed that athletic prowess revealed, as Grantland Rice had proclaimed, the “foundation of national fiber.” Victory in Olympic stadiums provided an accurate benchmark of national power. Modern athletic ideology required winning at all costs.

Such a widespread folklore, noted Treat, encouraged the belief in every nation that “our athletes (or our army) must always be victorious.” Anything less than victory had to be explained in other ways. She revealed that the French linked ideas about contests with Germany in World War One to contests with American rugby players at the Paris Olympics. “Only foul means can defeat them (submarines, poison

gas, and slugging).” Losing contests of national honor made citizens of the defeated country feel as if “the game is an attack on the honor, traditions and ideals” of their national culture wrote Treat. “That was the frame of mind of the crowd at Colombes that lynched in spirit, if not in fact, every member of the victorious American team,” she reported. Treat called sport “another war victim,” and attributed the change in sporting attitudes to the psychological effects of the Great War.⁶¹

Defending America’s National Honor

Few of her contemporaries shared Treat’s opinions about the dangers international sport posed to world peace. Most American commentators touted Olympism as a powerful instrument which could create a new and peaceful world order. Even the “tempest in a stadium” at the Olympic rugby final did little to dispel the odes to Olympic idealism which filled the media as the main events approached.

The New York *Times* remarked that in the 1920s “golden age of athleticism” which had swept the global culture of the 1920s, “philosophers say the peoples of the earth may yet be drawn into accord through the common bond of sport.”⁶² Another editorial in the same newspaper, recalling that Colombes Stadium stood less than one hundred miles from the battlefields where just six years earlier “the foremost nations of the world were locked in mortal combat” marveled at the supposed power of Olympic sport to transform the world. “What an inspiring spectacle it must have been for those who lived in Europe in the dreary days of 1914 to 1918 to see . . . representatives from all corners of the world meet for the one purpose of testing their strength and prowess in peaceful athletic competition!” The editor hoped the American Olympians would live up to the high regard in which the rest of the world held them, both in the competitions and in promoting peace through Olympism.⁶³

Indeed, even fewer of Treat’s contemporary’s shared her reservations about equating Olympic victory with national power. On the contrary, the vast majority of American stories about the Olympics indulged in unvarnished nationalism. After all, the American press had played a dominant part in crafting the modern mythology that Olympic performances indicated the political and social strength of nations. The fact that nationalism had contributed perhaps more than any other single cause to igniting the Great War did not bother American analysts of Olympic sport. American nationalism seemed non-threatening--at least to Americans. The American media paradoxically promoted their own brand of nationalism through the Olympics while maintaining that the modern Games would somehow temper the virulent nationalism of other nations. Only a nation conditioned by its own historical mythology to see itself as a “city on a hill,” a bringer of light to the world, could fashion such logic.⁶⁴

On June 16th, “America’s army of athletes, coaches, trainers, rubbers and managers,” set sail on the *America* to, in the words of A.O.C. official Frederick W. Rubien, “uphold the nation’s honor.” The A.O.C. had outfitted the liner, which had carried American troops to France in 1918, with a 220-yard cork track, a boxing ring, a wrestling mat, gymnastic apparatus, a swimming tank, and slides and oars. A contingent of athletes from the United States Navy journeyed to France on the U.S.S. *West Virginia*. Rubien considered the 1924 team “the most remarkable assemblage of

athletes ever gotten together.” Others warned that the burden of victory lay on Olympic rookies, many of them college and high school stars.⁶⁵

The team arrived in Cherbourg, France, on June 25th. The *America* had provided the 1924 Olympians with a much more comfortable Atlantic passage than the miserable troopship-crossing the 1920 American team endured. The A.O.C. had done a far better job in organizing the Paris expedition than they had in mounting the Antwerp campaign. Paris also provided a much better site than Antwerp. The center of Western literary and artistic life in the 1920s home to many ex-patriate American artists who posed as a “lost generation,” Paris was a vibrant city stocked with modern amenities and one of the capitals of an emerging modern global culture. Paris had also been spared major damage in the First World War, while the six years since the end of hostilities had allowed France to recover. The American Olympians found Paris much more to their liking than Antwerp.⁶⁶

The motto of the American team, printed on the official prospectus, read: “To meet defeat courageously and accept victory modestly--that is the test of true sportsmanship.” Apparently the A.O.C. felt that true sportsmen and sportswomen also should not vent their frustrations in public. In 1920 several American Olympians had been commissioned by their hometown newspapers to report on the Antwerp Games. They had been very critical of A.O.C. management. The officials had learned from their experiences at Antwerp that a lack of control over access to the press could create a public relations disaster. The A.O.C. had finally figured out that, on one level at least, the Olympics were entertainment, and they moved to control the product. In order to make sure that the athletes met the test of true sportsmanship (which included refraining from criticizing the A.O.C.) the A.O.C. sought to bar members of the American team from writing press accounts about their experiences. A newspaper writer applauded the proposal, noting that it would seem “to impose on the men an obligation to attend all of their energy in faithful training: not in tiring themselves running around writing stories.”⁶⁷ The press apparently wanted to craft scripts portraying the American Olympic experience without too much competition from the athletes.

The A.O.C. quartered most of the team at a spectacular venue--Prince Murat's Chateau de Roquencourt, twenty miles distant from Paris. The athletic officials hoped that the distance would protect the team from Parisian distractions and focus the athletes on the competition. The A.O.C. also shipped American cooks to Paris so that the team would not be disturbed by any change in diet. Buses had been procured to carry the team to Colombes. The A.O.C. planned to make the stay “idyllic.” Tours to Fontainebleau and battlefields had been arranged, and “dignity dinners” with other Olympic contingents scheduled.⁶⁸

Efforts to Americanize the Olympic experience leaked out of the American compound at Chateau de Roquencourt. Some of the Olympians stayed at the Olympic village which the French had constructed in Colombes. As if importing chefs was not enough to identify themselves as hopelessly parochial puritans, the A.O.C. adopted a resolution insisting that the American area in the village be “dry.” They also requested that the French committee get rid of all the bars in the area and remove “all signs advertising spirituous liquors.” The *New York Times* justified the A.O.C. actions by announcing that “the committee does not fear that the American

contenders will overstep the bounds of training rules, but believes that safety first should be the policy and that temptation should be kept out of sight.”⁶⁹ The United States Olympians celebrated the 4th of July with a barbecue (presumably dry) at the Chateau de Roquencourt. General John J. Pershing attended and gave “the troops” a pep talk.⁷⁰

Opening Ceremonies

The summer Olympics officially opened on July 6th, months after competitions had commenced. Cardinal DuBois began the ceremonies with a mass at Notre Dame cathedral. “You are the upholders of modern chivalry,” DuBois announced in his sermon to the Olympians. The festivities continued at Colombes Stadium. A “rainbow of flags of forty-five nations” paraded around the brick-red track in the stadium. Thirty thousand spectators (seventy percent of them foreign according to the *New York Times*) witnessed a grand pageant, including a cannonade from a battery of “French 75’s,” the release of a flock of pigeons and a concert of martial music.⁷¹ One American observer claimed the French were staging the Games as an athletic *Folies Bergère*, or as sportswriter Elon Jessup called it, an adult “circus with tinsel gone.”⁷²

The parade of nations marched past the box of French president Gaston Doumergue and his guests, the Prince of Wales, the Crown Princes of Sweden and Rumania, the Regent of Abyssinia and General Pershing. Athletes from the new countries of the old Austrian empire, Bulgaria, Hungary, Turkey and Austria, received pleasant welcomes. Germany and Russia were noticeably absent. The I.O.C. had left the decision concerning Germany’s participation to the French hosts. France refused to allow their ancient enemies to compete.⁷³ The English squad marched to the strains of Scottish bagpipers. The smallest teams were Cuba and China with two men each. Egypt appeared in green blazers and red fezzes. The long-haired, turbaned Indian team seemed the “fakers of the Olympics.”⁷⁴

The United States contingent swaggered into the stadium wearing navy blue coats and white trousers. “Burly Pat MacDonald [four-time Olympic champion] dipped the stars and stripes” in front of President Doumergue. The flag-dipping betrayed an American fiction created at the 1908 Olympics in London when Irish-American flag-bearer Ralph Rose refused to lower the stars and stripes, growling that “this flag dips for no earthly king.”⁷⁵ Late twentieth-century American journalists continue to insist that American teams never dipped the flag before a foreign leader at an opening ceremony. But American flag-bearers did in fact lower the American banner in 1912 at Stockholm and in 1924 at Paris. French athlete George Andre recited the Olympic oath and Doumergue officially opened the Games.⁷⁶

The parade seemingly inspired everyone present, excepting a man from Cleveland who grouched: “I don’t care a whoop about seeing the boys walk. I want to see them *run*.”⁷⁷ And run they did, as well as jump, throw, swim, dive, box, wrestle, shoot and row. World records fell in profusion at the Games of the Eighth Olympiad. Competitors established twelve new global marks.⁷⁸ The assault on the record books left, in Grantland Rice’s breathless portrait of the spectacle, “time and space dizzy

and reeling from successive thrusts by the greatest galaxy of athletes ever assembled.⁷⁹

Conquering the World

In their quest for the crown of Olympic dominance the United States team faced competitors pictured in the press as the most remarkable group of athletes ever assembled in one place. "From the rugged lands of the north came a small band of men of steel and iron," wrote a New York *Times* reporter. "From the east came the Turks with their soccer team; from under the Equator came the South Africans with their tennis and boxing stars; from the southwest came the Argentine horsemen who swept past the United States to world honors in the polo division of the games." The New York scribe sketched "little men from Haiti, as tan as the khaki of their uniforms, but with eyes as sharp as diamonds," who "met the United States riflemen on the field of friendly conflict and exchanged volley for volley with the world's best shots, ever threatening to take the lead and always a front rank contender."⁸⁰ The press accounts from the Paris Olympics had taken on the character of a Hollywood script, complete with plenty of ballyhoo and a cast of thousands bent on stripping the Olympic championship from America's heroines and heroes.

The Americans did very well indeed against the conquering "hordes" from the earth's four comers. They won the team shooting championship, despite the challenge of the "diamond-eyed" Haitians. United States tennis players, led by Helen Wills and Vincent Richards, swept all five of the tennis contests. An editorial in the *Outlook* crowed, "in tennis of the Olympic brand one may almost say . . . 'America first, the rest nowhere.'" American Olympians also carried off top team honors in boxing, catch-as-catch-can (freestyle) wrestling, diving, swimming, rowing, and track and field, as well as the rugby title garnered in May.⁸¹

The contests were frequently marred, at least in American eyes, by the unsporting behavior of French crowds. The A.O.C.'s official report downplayed anti-American hostilities. But United States sportswriters filled their dispatches with evidences of French ill-will.⁸² According to the press, the French continued acting in the manner they first displayed at the rugby championship. The French showered "indignant 'Assis!' (Sit down!)" on cheering American fans during track and field events. They regularly booed American swimmer Johnny Weissmuller, winner of three gold medals.⁸³

A typical incident occurred at the women's "fancy" springboard diving event. Three Americans, Elizabeth Becker, Aileen Riggan and Carol Fletcher, swept the event. According to the New York *Times* the American divers' "flawless work" convinced the judges of their superiority. However, the French fans greeted the official diving scores with "hoots and jeers." One group of irate spectators was so displeased with the results that they threatened to toss the judges into the pool. Of course, histrionic crowds were something of Parisian tradition. Revolutionary theater crossed into farce when the crowd complained that the Austrian diver should not have placed last. "It was remarked by neutral observers that in this and other cases the French spectators seemed to err on the side of partiality toward the representatives of their former foes." concluded a caustic New York *Times* account.⁸⁴

American women swimmers and drivers, given parts as both the sex objects of the Olympic spectacle and the defenders of national fiber, performed as expected. *The Outlook*, *Literary Digest* and the official American report heralded their achievements.⁸⁵ Becker, Riggin and Fletcher swept the “fancy diving” competition. Caroline Smith and Becker finished first and second in platform diving. Ethel Lackie, Mariechen Wehslau and Gertrude Ederle swept the 100 meter freestyle. Martha Norelius, Helen Wainwright and Ederle swept the 400 meter free style. Ederle, Lackie, Wehslau, and Euphrasia Donnelly set a world record in winning the 4x100 meter freestyle relay. Agnes Geraghty won a silver in the 200 meter breaststroke. Sybil Bauer won the 100 meter backstroke in Olympic record time.; Aileen Riggin finished third. There was no 400 meter backstroke race--the event in which Bauer held the world’s record for either gender--at the Paris Games. Helen Wainwright and Aileen Riggin were the first people to medal in both Olympic swimming and diving. Riggin won a gold in “fancy diving” at Antwerp in 1920 and a silver at Paris to go with her bronze medal in the backstroke. Wainwright won a silver in “fancy diving” at Antwerp in 1920 and silver in the 400 meter freestyle in Paris.⁸⁶

Counting Medals and Confirming American Superiority

The Games of the Eighth Olympiad formally concluded on July 27. The I.O.C. presented the medals to the representatives of each nation’s Olympic squad. A.O.C. president Robert Thompson strode to the center of Colombes Stadium to receive the United States’ trophies. He needed help carrying off America’s Olympic booty. The I.O.C. had laden him down with nearly one-third of the prizes awarded. The United States had garnered forty-five gold medals, twenty-six silver medals and twenty-seven bronze medals. Next closest in the medal hunt were Finland (14 gold, 13 silver and 10 bronze), France (13 gold, 15 silver, 10 bronze) and Great Britain (9 gold, 13 silver and 12 bronze).⁸⁷

The front page of the July 13, Sunday New York *Times* blared “U.S. Wins Olympics,” signaling the start of a flood of journalistic paeans to America’s champions. All around the world, imagined one newspaper bard, people were tabulating the results of the Paris festival. “But regardless of where the figuring is being done, regardless of whether a point system is being used or whether the final determination is being made on performances alone, only one fact is derived--that the United States, battling through six months of competition of sports on ice, on snow, on land and on water, has clinched beyond a shadow of doubt the all-around Olympic championship which counts for the amateur championship of the world.”⁸⁸

President Calvin Coolidge radioed congratulations to the victors in France. “Our pride was stirred as reports reached us of your successive victories over what was described as the most impressive international group of athletes ever assembled for the revival of the ancient Greek games,” the president began. In typically reserved tones Coolidge commended the athletes on the victories and the “sportsmanly conduct” which marked their performances. “America is proud of the triumph of her Olympic team of 1924, and will extend to you all the warmest of welcomes,” concluded Coolidge in form letter prose.⁸⁹

The triumph at Paris engendered a nation-wide epidemic of patriotic back-slapping and self-congratulation. "Americans everywhere are naturally proud and gratified at the splendid showing made by America--and particularly at the courtesy and good sportsmanship manifested by American representatives," announced *Playground* magazine.⁹⁰ "The Americans proved themselves to be the best all-around athletes," trumpeted the *New York Times*.⁹¹ While a few voices urged modesty, others, like Thomas Nammack of Ellenville, New York, threw humility to the wind. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* Nammack wrote: "To me there are two screamingly funny things in this morning's *Times*. One of these is the findings of a Constantinople Judge that poker is not a game of chance, and the other comes in the form of a letter in which we are abjured to be more modest in gloating over our Olympic victories." Nammack felt that "there is not a soul on earth who can take away one iota of the credit that is due our athletes for their splendid work."⁹²

Olympic victory provided a tonic for many of the afflictions which popular opinion maintained were grave threats to the American republic. The Pittsburgh *Sun* considered Olympic dominance the most important news of the day. The *Sun* cheered that "it indicates that American youth, despite much head-shaking and lamentation, is able to hold its own with the youth and stamina of the rest of the world, and incidentally to break a collection of records set by past generations." The "Jazz Age" had not yet destroyed American vigor. The *Sun* believed that Olympic triumph "indicates that an age that is commonly said to be going soft is not entirely flabby."⁹³ Former A.O.C. president Gustavus Kirby concurred. Kirby crowed that "the Games can prove to the American boy that true riches are not measured by the yardstick of wordly [sic] wealth, but by the happiness of attainment."⁹⁴

A cartoon in the *New York World* pictured Uncle Sam, dressed for a track meet, hurdling in front of a cheering throng. The caption read "Over The Top Again."⁹⁵ A Columbia *Dispatch* cartoon drew Uncle Sam clutching the trophy of "Olympic Supremacy" in his left hand, while under his right arm he held a basket containing cups labeled "British Open Golf Trophy," "Tennis Championship" and "Yachting Honors." Across a symbolic Atlantic lurked Europe's bedraggled sportsmen, to whom Uncle Sam chuckled "what other games do you play?"⁹⁶

Theories abounded to explain the American success. The Cincinnati *Enquirer* declared that Olympic victory demonstrated "the soundness of American physical stamina, the high quality of American courage, the wisdom of an educational system which combines physical with intellectual culture." The *Enquirer* proclaimed that "to excel in sports compels clean living, requires right conceptions of honor, and strengthens the virtue of patriotism." Add to clean living the highly organized coaching and training system in the United States, piped the Cleveland *Plain-Dealer*, and one could understand why "the few who are chosen subsequently to represent the nation in international competition have not only exceptional natural ability, but they know how to make the most of it."⁹⁷

The United States won, "not because it has 110,000,000 people, or more gold than any other nation, but because it has made a specialty of athletics," revealed the Louisville *Post*. "We always win Olympics because we can not [sic] lose them," maintained the Boston *Herald*. The Boston daily resurrected the melting pot as a factor in American success, a common idea before the First World War in

explanations of American Olympic success. The *Herald* reminded the nation that the United States' large population had in it "a liberal sprinkling of every race which excels in sports, the tightly nerved Latins, the running English and Scotch, the jumping Irish, the swimming Hawaiians, the Germans, Swedes and Norwegians, all with their own strong characteristics, and the surprisingly good Finns." Given mixed races, physical education of youngsters, scientific training methods, climate, the tradition of victory, and the seriousness with which Americans took their sports, "it would be amazing if we should lose, with everything in our favor," thought the Boston newspaper.⁹⁸

While one non-European ethnic group, Hawaiians, figured prominently in stories about American dominance in swimming, African-Americans were "invisible" in mainstream white press accounts of the Paris Games. They remained out of view in spite of the fact that University of Michigan star De Hart Hubbard and former Harvard stand-out Edward Gourdin finished first and second in the long jump. Unlike Jesse Owens and other African-American heroes of later Olympics in the 1930s, Hubbard did not become a media sensation. Indeed, he garnered only a small space next to pictures of some other Olympians of African descent from Portugal and Uruguay in *The Crisis*, the pioneering civil rights journal of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.⁹⁹ African-American distance runner Earl Johnson led all American finishers in the endurance races at Paris--crossing finish lines behind a horde of "Flying Finns."¹⁰⁰ His efforts failed to earn him a solitary mention in any of the Olympic stories told in nationally circulated magazines.

The American media portrayed the 1924 Olympians in the same colors as they perceived the audience--white and patriotic. Harry Cross, sports reporter for the *New York Evening Post*, credited the American victory to patriotic impulses generated by the media focus on foreign challengers. "A few months ago, the athletic youth of the country was informed that the United States was in danger of being defeated by Finland," wrote Cross. "That was enough. In every corner of the nation young America got out his spiked shoes and began to dust over the cinder-paths." The chosen people heeded the call, and their proselytizing in Paris left no doubt about the strength of America's national fiber.¹⁰¹ American Olympians remained, as they had been since 1896, powerful symbols of patriotism--"America's athletic missionaries."¹⁰²

A few critical notices appeared regarding the American Olympic victory. The lack of gold medal performances on the track, traditionally considered by Americans as the most important events at the Olympics, upset a few correspondents. Some experts found the United States triumph unsporting, given the more than one hundred million people living in the nation. *Current Opinion* rearranged the team standings to reflect the population from which each national team was drawn. Norway led in per-capita medal-production with 84.5 points, followed Finland's 76.5, Sweden's 50.5 and Switzerland's 49. The United States finished fourteenth with 6.1 points. *Current Opinion* opined that the Scandinavian countries owed their success to the fact that "their sports are democratic, everyone participating in them." On the other hand, American athletes "are specialists intensively and scientifically trained, instead of supreme products of universal athletic activity."¹⁰³

Some analysts agreed with *Current Opinion*. "The only small fly in the ointment [of American victory at Paris] is the question as to *how* representative the American contestants were," exclaimed *Playground* magazine. "The Olympic laurel wearers are examples of the possible, rather than the typical," admitted *Playground*. The leading journal of American recreation remained committed to the belief that democratic sport could build a democratic nation. "For the future of our country, the aim is many, many playing the game, deriving their satisfaction from the activity rather than the winning."¹⁰⁴ The Chicago *Evening Post* concurred. "We are more concerned to see the spirit of play encouraged generally among the American people for the sake of its recreational value, both bodily and spiritual, than to see a class of athletic champions developed whose satisfaction is derived from the winning of prizes rather than the fun of the game."¹⁰⁵

Glorifying Finland

But ballyhoo about athletic conquest sold more newspapers than admonitions to aspire to physical fitness. Responding to market pressures, the American press cheered the remarkable showing of Finland almost as loudly as United States victories. The New York *Daily News* remarked, "we take off our hats to Finland--at present one of the great Powers of the world."¹⁰⁶ Philip Coan, an analyst for *The Outlook*, marveled that "Finland, which contains about two and a half million less inhabitants than the city of New York, has won more points in the Paris Olympic track and field athletic contests than any other nation than the United States."¹⁰⁷ The *Literary Digest* put it in Kiplingesque terms. "Man for man, Finland, with a population that could be settled in half of New York City, 'beat us holler."¹⁰⁸

The press anointed Paavo Nurmi, "the flying Finn," as the Games' outstanding performer. "The superman has arrived at last" cabled Rice after watching the incomparable distance runner win the 1500 meter, 5000 meter, 10,000 meter cross country runs, and lead the Finnish team to victory in the 3000 meter team race. The New York *Herald Tribune* saluted Nurmi on its editorial page. "There may have been one in the long list of Olympic victors whose names were first recorded in 776 B.C., but since the modern revival of the games no other athlete has approached the performance of Nurmi," read the *Herald Tribune's* accolade. "By some miracle of physique, aided by intelligent use of power, he has been able to extend the common limit of endurance of the human racing mechanism." The Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* sporting guru George Trevor reported that Finnish doctors had diagnosed Nurmi as a "physical freak." Running against him wrote Trevor, was "like running against some grim, inscrutable Robot--some mechanical Frankenstein created to annihilate time."¹⁰⁹

Many hypotheses circulated regarding Nurmi's and Finland's Olympic showing. Finland's harsh climate, small size, and industrial underdevelopment seemed to American analysts nearly insurmountable barriers to the development of thriving sporting culture. A New York *Times* editorial asked, "what is the solution of the riddle unless it be found in the tenacity, phlegm, fortitude, 'perseverance allied to a certain obstinacy' and indomitable spirit of the Finn?"¹¹⁰

Grantland Rice reported that “Finland is not an industrial country. It is still close to the soil and the sea.” Rice invoked the old American athletic nostrum that rugged contact with savage nature produced nations of champions—an archetypal example of the omnipresence of Frederick Jackson Turner’s frontier thesis in American popular culture. Rice commended Finnish “sturdiness”—a quality “which the overcivilized may well envy.”¹¹¹

Philip Coan added another dimension to the athletic version of the frontier thesis. In Coan’s estimation the Finns were superior moral athletes. They were “notably free from the vice that we call cup-hunting,” he reported. Coan admired Finns as amateur athletes “in the best sense, striving against the odds of small means and a tiring labourious life that tell heavily against athletic activity in all countries where livings are hard to gain.” Finland’s showing seemed all the more remarkable since the “Age of Play” had apparently not yet dawned near the Arctic Circle.¹¹²

Other factors than the frontier battles against the elements tempered Finnish character. The long fight for liberty against imperial Russia and then the Soviet Union encouraged the growth of an unconquerable spirit, thought some commentators. An editorial in the *Outlook* suggested a different political dimension. “Perhaps the Finns’ long struggle for bare existence between the upper and nether millstones of Prussia and Sweden has made for survival of the very fit,” the editor speculated.¹¹³ Coan imagined the Finns concocting a scheme to impress the world athletically, in the hopes of reminding the great powers of Finland’s plight. “That idea was preached by the partisans of Finnish liberties,” crowed Coan. “The thousands of hard-working, poor men who set to work in the seemingly forlorn hope of outdoing the world’s best runners, discus throwers, and jumpers worked for their country.” Finland’s victories had been attributed to diet and secret training processes. Coan dismissed those claims. He insisted that Finland’s “earnest . . . resolution to be great” explained the rise of Finnish athletic power. Finland succeeded through a national commitment to sporting greatness sealed with a “bulldog grip.”¹¹⁴

Finnish language newspapers in the United States agreed with Coan. George Sjoblom, editor of the New York *Uutiset*, explained that “we believe that through the long battle with adverse conditions the Finns have acquired these qualities, particularly their remarkable tenacity, pluck and endurance, which have stood them in good stead in their exceptionally hard struggle against forces of nature.” Carl H. Salminen, Vice-Consul of Finland in the United States and publisher of Duluth’s *Paivalehti and Siirtolainen*, also credited the crusades against nature and for national liberty as the crucibles of Olympic victory. Those struggles were “bound to develop a nation strong both in spirit and body,” proclaimed Sahminen. “Work, love of work, love of fighting against odds and obstacles, has taught these men true prerequisites of athletic competition.” The editor of the Duluth *Industrialisti* revealed that Finland had required compulsory physical education in the schools for the past twenty-five years. The sports craze infected Finland as virulently as America. Every village in Finland encouraged athletic activity and built administrative systems to manage the national venture. Efficient organization combined with clean living, explained Finland’s rapid rise to world athletic power.¹¹⁵

Why did Americans celebrate Finland’s Olympic successes? Part of the reason was the fact that Finland was the only nation in Europe which attempted to pay back

the debts it owed the United States from World War One. Part of the reason was the popularity of scientific racism which fed popular Nordic chauvinism. Given the anti-Bolshevist climate of the 1920s many thought that the Finnish civil war had ended in defeat for the Soviet-supported Reds. But the overriding reason was the ease with which Finland fit the ideological symbols which Americans had always associated with Olympic success. The press made Finland into a copy of popular images of the United States. Since the revival of the Olympics in a modern form in 1896, American chroniclers had assured the public that democratic institutions, rugged individualism, frontier vigor, revolutionary struggles for freedom, and the ability to conquer the forces of history and nature produced Olympic champions. Americans projected their symbolism onto an idealized Finland--purer, simpler, further from the complexities of mass society and industrial production than the United States. From American perspectives the Finnish case proved that the old equations still worked. Sport still shored up the foundations of the republican experiment--in the United States and in Finland.

Few Americans took a dour view of Finnish victories. "Right Wing," the pen name of the New York *Evening World's* Charles E. Parker, pointed out that the Finns scored heavily in events which would not be contested at the Olympics after 1924. Parker blamed "European Olympic politicians" for including such events as a double-scoring cross-country run and the 3000-meter team race in a calculated effort "to beat America by messing up the Olympic program."¹¹⁶ Olympic team coach Lawson Robertson, the track and field guru from the University of Pennsylvania, maintained that Finland's team strength had been "greatly exaggerated."¹¹⁷ But the attacks on Finnish accomplishments were few and far between. Finland provided loyal sidekicks, a required ingredient in any Hollywood Western, for American heroes and heroines.

Foreign Enemies

The press manufactured villains as well as sidekicks. The American media found enemies of the Olympic spirit among fans from the host nation and in the British press. French spectators booed American swimmers, divers, runners and rugby players. The stands at Colombes stadium were the scene of several bouts of patriotic fisticuffs. Those incidents, and a host of others, created a furor in Europe over the merits of Olympic idealism. The ensuing firestorm crackled with voices which claimed that international sport hardly promoted mutual understanding and rational discourse, but had quite the opposite effect.¹¹⁸

The English press was among the most vocal critics of Olympism. "No more Olympic Games," cried the London *Times*. A *Times* editorial characterized the Eighth Olympiad Games as a riot of patriotic disorder. "Miscellaneous turbulence, shameful disorder, storms of abuse, free fights, and the drowning of the National Anthems of friendly nations by shouting and booing are not conducive to an atmosphere of Olympic calm," remarked the *Times*. "Disturbances of this kind, culminating in open expressions of national hostility, might conceivably end in worse trouble than the duel which, it is feared, may take place as result of the personal quarrel in which a Hungarian and Italian fencer have allowed themselves to become involved," warned

the respected London daily. "The peace of the world is too precious to justify any risk--however wild the idea may seem--if its being sacrificed on the altar of international sport," concluded the *Times*.¹¹⁹

Most of the American media refused to join the *Times's* tirade against the Olympic movement. A New York *Times* thoughtpiece admitted the animosity which nationalism produced in Paris but labeled the British position ungracious. "The revival of the Olympic Games was so nobly inspired that it would be truly lamentable if they had to be given up. No necessity for doing so is to be found in a few squabbles," reasoned the editor.¹²⁰ "Never has there been a finer or more splendidly contested athletic carnival; never an international gathering which roused more real interest and contributed more to international understanding," argued the Baltimore *Sun*. New York *World* sportswriter George Daly characterized Olympic critics as "weak-kneed and thin-blooded." The Charleston *Gazette* added, "if the nations of the earth can not compete in athletics without ill-feeling, we may as well give up all hope of accord in other matters."¹²¹ William Bolitho, in the New York *World*, called the Olympics "the only collective celebration of civilization."¹²²

A.O.C. president Colonel Robert M. Thompson labeled the attacks on Olympism "propaganda." Commenting on the nastiness of French crowds he expressed sentiments similar to those of a monarchist during the French Revolution. "I cannot emphasize too strongly that this mob spirit is not a reflection of national spirit."¹²³ Given the "patriotic determination" with which competitors strove for Olympic victory, a few incidents were inevitable, argued Thompson. "But with each recurring Olympiad there comes a better understanding among the nations and it is beyond doubt that the games performed a very useful function in the development of a common esteem, sympathy and even affection among the nations represented," asserted the A.O.C. leader.¹²⁴

Former A.O.C. president Gustavus T. Kirby announced that "I believe that the Olympic Games are one of the greatest forces for peace, goodwill, and brotherly love that exists today." Kirby declared that "the League of Nations might promulgate a hundred programs, the diplomats of the world might agree upon hundreds of humanitarian principles, but all these would not be so apt to get into the understanding of the masses of the people as do the sportsmanlike conduct, the friendliness and the fair play of the competitors in world contests like the Olympic Games." Kirby restated the old argument about sport as a "moral equivalent for war," best-articulated in 1910 by the American philosopher William James.¹²⁵ Kirby believed sport gave a "harmless and character building outlet" for the natural instinct for combat. Such an instinct had been necessary in more primitive times, but it posed a grave threat to modern civilization. "Still we want to retain that combative element which makes the difference between a namby-pamby person and a virile one," felt Kirby. "Sport is the answer," he proclaimed. "When, as in the Olympic Games, we bring together representatives of the nations of the world for sports, we are placing the leaven of character in the hearts of the nations themselves."¹²⁶ U.S. Olympians still served as "athletic missionaries" seeking to Americanize a recalcitrant world.

An Arena for Americanizing the World

A New York *Times* editorial, "More Olympiads," agreed with Kirby's and Colonel Thompson's sentiments. The editor dismissed British pessimism and insisted "that friendly athletic feeling among the nations has been cemented by the Olympiad held in Paris this year." The editor proclaimed Europe uneducated in the spirit of fair play and anointed American athletes as teachers of exemplary sportsmanship.¹²⁷

Another editorial in the New York *Times*, "Nearly Everyone Happy," concluded that each nation, even "little Esthonia," could find something positive in the Olympic results. The editor thought it would be wise if the I.O.C. broadened the program "to give every participant a chance for its place in the sun." Why, with both catch-as-catch-can and Greco-Roman wrestling on the program, should not jiu-jitsu, at which the Chinese were so proficient [actually jiu-jitsu was developed by the Japanese], be included as well? "Civilization might even go so far as to take account of its extremely backward children and let the Eskimo show what he can do in fish-spearing through the ice and the Australian bushman in manipulating the boomerang."¹²⁸ Certainly such a "savage Olympics" would be entertaining. In fact, American entrepreneurs had staged just such an event at the 1904 Olympics in St. Louis. Now Americans sought to institutionalize the circus-like spectacle of "backward" sport in the Olympic movement.¹²⁹

Not everyone in the British Isles believed the Olympics should be scrapped. In two articles for the American magazine *The Independent*, Philip J. Baker, captain of the 1924 British Olympic team, elevated Olympic idealism to Olympian heights. He identified Olympism as "one of the most constructive and civilizing ideas of our generation." In the post-war world, in which "invention has annihilated time and space and has made of all quarters of the globe one close community do we not need some bond that will be a spiritual and physical unity of mankind?"¹³⁰ Baker felt the Olympics provided that symbol. Baron Pierre de Coubertin's creation meant "that people of every race and climate are now being swept into the great democracy of sport, and that a new bond, and a very powerful one, is being forged between the sport-loving peoples of the world."¹³¹

Americans applauded Baker's sermons. The press explained away the unruly French crowds as symptomatic of the novelty of the sporting ideals in France. "There are many nations like France that are now at the beginning of their experience in sports," noted an editor in the *Outlook*. The sporting decorum and grace under pressure displayed by American Olympians stood as a shining example for France and other uninitiated nations of the great cause of Olympism. That cause would ultimately insure "good will among men."¹³² The *Review of Reviews* placed French sportsmanship in historic perspective. The magazine concluded that the Olympics were having a positive effect. "There are many indications that the French nation may come to be as sturdy and chivalric an opponent of the Anglo-Saxon on these bloodless fields as in the long-forgotten days of Agincourt or Fontenoy."¹³³

The press portrayed the Olympic Games as an arena in which the United States could teach American ideals to a world eager for enlightenment. The dream of

Olympic peace was simplistic and unrealistic, and enormously attractive to the citizens of consumer culture. Advertisers told the public that one small item, the correct toothpaste or the right breakfast cereal, could remake their worlds. Why then should they not believe that an international athletic meet held every four years could remake the world?

The *Christian Science Monitor* best expressed the hope Americans invested in the Olympic ideal. "Most people would now agree that these international gatherings do a great deal of good," admitted the editor. "On the one hand, they tend to break down that national exclusiveness and ignorance which is one of the great causes of war." The Olympics provided a crucial mechanism for trans-national communication. "Peoples come to learn that other nations are not barbarians, or uncivilized, or inferiors, but very normal human beings, quite as likely to excel in sport as themselves." The *Monitor* endorsed the hoary American platitude of good sportsmanship. "When that sense prevails, sport, in its proper place in life, can do nothing but good. International sport has a great future before it," cheered the editor. "It will promote the unity and brotherhood of man just in proportion as those who enter its competitions are inflexibly faithful to the best traditions of good sportsmanship."¹³⁴

A Triumphant Return from Paris

The American Olympians returned to New York on August 6. The *America* disembarked her passengers onto the city vessel *Macom* which sailed up the harbor to Hoboken, greeted by the shrieking horns of harbor craft, and accompanied by the music of the Fire Department Band. The Olympians arrived after business hours, marching past the office buildings of lower Manhattan around dusk. The American team found that office workers had remained along the route after quitting time. New York City's business community showered the Olympic champions with "snow squalls of ticker tape."

Clad in their official uniforms, accompanied by A.O.C. officials, city potentates and national guard units, the Olympians marched up Broadway to City Hall. Behind a flag-bedecked table at City Hall stood Mayor John F. Hylan, ceremony organizer Rodman Wanamaker and A.O.C. leader Colonel Robert M. Thompson. The Fire Department band struck up the national anthem and the crowd, which overflowed into an adjacent park, came to attention. Mayor Hylan presented each athlete with a gold medallion, emblazoned with a bas-relief figure of a Greek athlete bearing a palm frond. The figure was flanked by the shields of the United States and the Republic of France, and at the bottom rested New York City's coat of arms.¹³⁵

After the medal presentation ceremony, Mayor Hylan spoke to the assembly. The Democratic chief of New York City used his address to the Olympians to deliver a scathing attack on the federal government. According to the mayor, applauding the "conquering heroes" was not a difficult thing. They deserved the acclaim "and the American heart is not slow to voice appreciation." What bothered Hylan was that the team, as he put it, "practically had to go begging to get the financial wherewithal to cross the Atlantic and to remain there for the Eighth Olympiad, but the Federal Government did not hesitate to ask for its share of the receipts of entertainments and

other plans arranged to provide the funds for the Olympic team.” Hylan blustered that if the Olympics cemented international friendship, and “our Federal Government so believes, then it is time that generous and adequate appropriations were made by the Government to defray the expense.” Hylan concluded by praising the Olympians for their impeccable sportsmanship and thanked them on behalf of the city for their efforts.

American Olympic Committee leaders might have agreed to federal financial support but they certainly wanted to keep the government from controlling the Olympic movement. Colonel Thompson took the podium and thanked the mayor for the welcome. Then he belittled the critics of Olympism, denying America would ever pull out of future contests.¹³⁶

After leaving City Hall, the Olympians spoke to New York over WNYC, the city’s municipal broadcasting station. Later that evening the team enjoyed a steak dinner in their honor at the Hotel Astor. After the feast Colonel Thompson rose to speak. “The time for parting has come. When you leave this room the American team for the eighth Olympic Games will be dissolved,” announced the teary-eyed A.O.C. president. “Some of you will go back again to compete for America in the Olympic Games at Amsterdam. Some of us will not,” he continued. “But if the team that goes to Amsterdam is as good as the team which has just returned from Paris, America will win again, for there is not a more formidable athletic team anywhere in the world.”¹³⁷

Thompson’s toast moved the crowd to look forward to the next Olympics, scheduled for 1928 in Amsterdam, Holland. American mythology traced an unbroken string of Olympic victories back to the beginnings of the modern revival in 1896. As New Year’s Day 1925 approached, the *New York Times* remembered the “brilliant” American victory at Paris. It had been, “after six months of the keenest sort of competition,” the “crown jewel” of the “greatest, year in the annals of sport.” Who could doubt that 1928 would bring anything less?¹³⁸

Fact and Fiction in American Olympic Scripts

The nation read of their muscular missionaries’ exploits, and was pleased. The pundits reporting on the spectacle revealed that traditional values, hard work, perseverance and dedication, paid off in gold medals. The grit which tamed the frontier now propelled American athletes around the track, over the pole vault or high jump bar, through the water, everywhere Olympic laurels could be won. However, in spite of historian Roderick Nash’s effort to sum up the sporting craze of the 1920s with the wonderful metaphor describing clearing the base paths as analogous to clearing the forest, sport did not simply symbolize the frontier. Athletes needed more than trail-blazing grit to conquer Olympic foes. The experts gave as much credit to scientific training and a well-organized national coaching system as they did to American individualism.¹³⁹

Triumph in Paris promised that traditional and modern society might be successfully merged. For the consumer with a dollar to spend, or even more importantly, faith to invest, the Olympic Games seemed a bargain. They were marketed as a world free from the pessimistic visions of artists and intellectuals, free from the scandalous abuses of national leaders. They proved that struggles against the

elements and for freedom--witness the rhetoric about Finland and the United States--produced athletes of championship quality. They eased fears about the decadence of Jazz Age youth. They confirmed that the United States remained stronger and swifter than all challengers. They held out the hope that world peace might grow on the fields of friendly conflict.

An apocryphal article in the *New York Times*, "An Ethiopian Takes Notes," captured the essence of American Olympic scripts. "A single afternoon spent in the amphitheatre at Colombes is enough to furnish the intelligent observer with a complete picture of the habits and psychology of the American people," reported the reputed special correspondent of the Addis Ababa *Evening News*. The correspondent ruminated that "as I watched those clean-cut American youths acknowledging victory or defeat with the same modest smile, I knew that they came from a quiet, sportsmanlike people." The fictional Ethiopian marveled that "when I saw the silent and magnificent efforts of their runners and their jumpers, I knew that they came from a people that loved action and abhorred palaver." He told his make-believe audience in Addis Abba that "when I saw the young Americans soar like birds over the bars and the hurdles, I said to myself that this is the way every American surmounts the obstacles in his path."

The correspondent gave special praise to the American fiction of racial and ethnic equality. "When I saw on the list of contenders names like SCHOLZ and LE GENDRE, I understood that I was dealing with a people utterly ignorant of the debasing sentiment of racialism and sectionalism." The fictional Ethiopian embraced American nationalism. "When I saw the swiftness and certainty with which the young Americans met every emergency as it arose, I said to myself that this is a people of magnificent individual initiative, a people who would take orders from no one." The Addis Ababa correspondent concluded with a salute to America's national fiber. "When I saw the splendid devotion of each athlete to the single cause of his country's victory, I knew that this was a people which sacrificed self to common good."

The editorial followed the pseudo-Ethiopian's ode to American sporting ideology with the comment: "That same evening the National Democratic Convention cast its eighty-seventh ballot and adjourned till 10:30 Tuesday morning."¹⁴⁰ The message was clear. Politics was a futile exercise in nationalism. Olympic sport was an invigorating exercise in nationalism. Sport seemed more real than politics.

The blurring of fact and fiction in "An Ethiopian Takes Notes" represented a typical reconfiguration of reality by the architects of consumer culture. The *New York Times* was marketing a reality to an audience that expected to hear certain things in the story. In such endeavors sticking to the facts might get in the way of a good story--as it sometimes did for Madison Avenue advertisers and Hollywood film makers. "An Ethiopian Takes Notes" contained all the ingredients of a great American Olympic story. It took for granted that sporting performance revealed national fiber. It made American athletes into modest, action-loving, everymen and everywomen who could triumph under any circumstances. It celebrated an America in which opportunity was open to all regardless of caste, class or skin color. It portrayed Americans as a freedom-loving people committed to the gospel of individualism. It also confirmed that every American was devoted to the nation's commonweal.

Was it fictitious fiction? Other stories about the 1920s could certainly be created from other social realities. A legion of sport commentators in the 1920s insisted that Americans manifested little concern for sportsmanship. Winning at any cost seemed to be the national motto. Social critics worried that the United States was no longer a nation of doers, but rather a nation of watchers. The rise of “big society” meant that citizens had become spectators rather than participants. Both the intellectual classes and the masses feared that perhaps the United States could not surmount the obstacles posed by modernity. During “tribal Twenties” culture wars between city and country and intense ethnic animosity--“racialism and sectionalism”--wracked the United States.¹⁴¹ Many feared that individualism would disappear under modern conditions. Totalitarianism seemed a more likely future than participatory democracy. Numerous analysts were convinced that neither government nor big business nor the public was interested in sacrificing for the common good.

The story told by “An Ethiopian Takes Notes” and many other Olympic tales from Paris revealed not so much the way things were, as the way that Americans wanted them to be. That did not preclude exposes of American defects from the mass media. Calls to make American sporting institutions focus on the mass public rather than on the development of world-beating elites made it into print. It did mean that in 1924 scripts, which celebrated the way that Americans dreamed the nation might become, sold better than scripts which depicted harsh social realities. That pattern would generally hold throughout the rest of the twentieth century.

Yet disentangling media productions from so-called facts could not be done quite so easily. The Paris Olympics produced one Tarzan for Hollywood--Johnny Weissmuller. They also produced one character actor--American swimmer Duke Kahanamoku. A future media star, the guru of baby-boom child-rearing doctrines, Benjamin Spock, won a gold medal as a member of the American eight-oared shell with coxswain. The Paris Olympics eventually spawned a major motion picture--*Chariots of Fire*.

Charley Paddock finished fifth in the one-hundred meter dash. Still, his media career took off. Worried that he was past his prime and nervous about the two-hundred meter race, Paddock spent an evening dining and talking with friends. His companions included Hollywood movie stars Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, and French cinema actor Maurice Chevalier. Pickford gave Paddock a stirring pep talk. The next day Paddock took a silver in the two-hundred meters. Perhaps, had Hollywood scripted the ending, Paddock would have instead won the gold he actually lost by twelve inches to American rival Jackson Scholz. When Hollywood did reproduce the Paris Games in *Chariots of Fire* they made the not particularly religious Scholz into an icon of faith.¹⁴² The line between fact and fiction blurs in media-generated civilizations.

Notes

1. John W. Ward, “The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight,” *American Quarterly*, 10 (1958) 3-16. Insightful works on the 1920s which deal with a myriad of manifestations of the traditional-modern conflict include Paul A. Carter’s *The Twenties in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968) and *Another Part of the*

Twenties (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); and Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970). See also, Henry R. May, "Shifting Perspectives on the 1920s," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (December, 1956): 405-427; and Don S. Kirschner, "Conflicts and Politics in the 1920s: Historiography and Prospects," *Mid-America* 48 (October, 1966): 219-233. On the rise of mass culture and its connection with the "second industrial revolution" see William Luetchenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-1932* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); George Soule, *Prosperity Decade: From War to Depression, 1917-1929* (New York: Rinehart, 1947); Adolf Berle and Gardiner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968); James W. Prothro, *The Dollar Decade: Business Ideas in the 1920s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954); George E. Mowry, *The Urban Nation, 1920-1960* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965); Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

2. For interpretations of the role of sport in American civilization during the 1920s see Warren I. Susman, "Culture and Civilization: The Nineteen-Twenties" and "Culture Heroes: Ford, Barton, Ruth," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 105-124 and 122-149; and Mark Dyreson, "The Emergence of Consumer Culture and the Transformation of Physical Culture: American Sport in the 1920s," *Journal of Sport History* 16 (Winter 1989), 261-281.

3. According to one contemporary study, sports stories had accounted for about 1.7% of newspaper space in 1875, 5.1% in 1900, and 25.4% by 1925. News accounted for only 26.7% of newspaper space in 1925. Advertising filled 60.5%. Peter Odegard, *The American Public Mind* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1930), 124. Allen Guttman's *Sports Spectators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), offers a fine analysis of a sorely neglected topic.

4. Paul Gallico, *Farewell to Sport* (New York: Knopf, 1938), 3.

5. Allen Guttman speculated that "McCormack is probably right." Guttman is usually right--except on this issue. Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 170-171.

6. J.R. Hildebrand, "The Geography of Games: How the Sports of Nations Form a Gazetter of the Habits and Histories of Their Peoples," *National Geographic Magazine* 36 (August 1919), 89.

7. "How the Ballyhoo Makes the Athletes," *Literary Digest* 95 (November 19, 1927), 62-65.

8. Charles DeBenedetti, *Origins of the Modern American Peace Movement, 1915-1929* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). Studies of the modern Olympics which treat it as an important modern cultural form include Guttman's *The Olympics and Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). See also, John Lucas, *The Modern Olympic Games* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1980). The most provocative work on the Olympics as a nexus of modern cultural symbolism is John J. MacAloon, "Olympic Games and the Theory of Spectacle in Modern Societies," in *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance*, edited by John MacAloon (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984), 241-280. MacAloon's *This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), explores the role of Olympism during Coubertin's lifetime.

9. Elwood S. Brown, "Teaching the World to Play," *Outlook* 1229 (December 28, 1921) 689-693. For an interesting note on Brown's contributions to war-bedraggled Europe, see Jim Thorpe's and Thomas F. Collison's chapter on "The Inter-Allied Festival," in *Jim Thorpe's History of the Olympics* (Los Angeles: Wetzel, 1932), 228-246.
10. Katherine Mayo, "Fair Play for the World," *Outlook* 129 (December 21, 1921), 653.
11. "The Olympic Games of 1924," *The Living Age* 311 (December 1921), 682.
12. Louis C. Schroeder, "Notes on the VIII Olympiad," *American Physical Education Review*, 30 (February 1925), 101.
13. "The Olympic Games of 1924," 682.
14. "France Prepares for the Olympic Games," *Literary Digest* 79 (October 13, 1923) 67-68.
15. *Ibid.*
16. "How Will America Rank in the Next Olympic Games?" *Literary Digest* 79 (December 1, 1923), 59.
17. N.C.A.A., *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the National Collegiate Athletic Association*, held at Atlanta, Georgia, December 28, 1923, 56-58 and 69-72.
18. For representative pieces see Charles W. Paddock, "Sprinting Around the World," *The Saturday Evening Post* 198, (December 5, 1925) 27 and 62-68; Charles Paddock, "One Out of Ten," *Saturday Evening Post* 201 (June 29, 1929) 39; Charles Paddock, "Sportsmanship: The Diplomat," *American Magazine* 108 (December 1929) 109; Charles Paddock, "Booze Beats Our Athletes," *Collier's* 85 (June 14, 1930), 7-8; Charles Paddock, "If You Think You Can," *Collier's* 88 (November 28, 1931), 24; Charles Paddock, "No Son of Mine," *Collier's* 84 (August 17, 1929) 13; Charles W. Paddock, "Science of Athletics," *Scientific American* 125 (October 8, 1921) 256.
19. N.C.A.A., *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the National Collegiate Athletic Association*, held at New York, New York, December 28, 1922, 54-58 and 74-74; N.C.A.A., *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention*, 56-58.
20. American Olympic Committee, *Report on VIII Olympiad: Paris, France, 1924* (New York: American Olympic Committee, 1924).
21. "Strength on Skis Wins for Norway," *New York Times*, February 7, 1924, 12.
22. William Oscar Johnson, "As It Was in the Beginning," *Sports Illustrated*, December 26, 1983 - January 2, 1984, 105.
23. "Norway Wins Title in Olympic Games," *New York Times*, February 5, 1924, 18.
24. *Ibid.* In 1974 Norwegian skiing historian Toralf Stromstad, who won a silver medal in the 1924 nordic combined, found an arithmetical error in the scoring of the 90 meter ski jump. Norwegian-born Anders Haugen had actually placed third,

making him the only American to ever achieve a medal winning performance in Olympic ski jumping. Haugen, at age 83, received his long overdue bronze medal in 1974, in a ceremony at Oslo, Norway.

25. "City to Welcome Skaters," *New York Times*, February 8, 1924, 15.
26. "U.S. Olympic Stars Back from France," *New York Times*, February 14, 1924, 12.
27. "Comment on Current Events in Sports: Olympic Games," *New York Times*, February 4, 1924, 25.
28. For an overview of the Harding administration's scandals see "The Rhetoric of Corruption," 102-129, in Robert K. Murray's *The Politics of Normalcy: Governmental Theory and Practice in the Harding-Collidge Era* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973).
29. "Sport is Elected," *The Nation* 119 (September 17, 1924) 278.
30. "Kirby and Hulbert Make Olympic Plea," *New York Times*, May 20, 1924, 18.
31. "Ambassadors of Sport," *New York Times*, March 23, 1924, sec. 2, 6.
32. Frederick W. Rubien, "Report of Secretary," 14.
33. "Both Should Get What They Want," *New York Times*, March 24, 1924, 14.
34. Rubien, "Report of Secretary," in *Report*, 14.
35. "Sport World Set for Greatest Olympics," *New York Times*, April 20, 1924, sec. 9, 5.
36. "America, With 35 Out of 90 World Marks, Well Prepared for Olympic Games Test," *New York Times*, February 21, 1924, 16.
37. "'Conquering North' Threatens to Conquer Olympics," *Literary Digest* 81 (April 19, 1924) 66-70; T. Von Ziekursch, "'Will the 'Conquering North' Win the Olympics?," *Strength* 9 (1924) 54-57.
38. "Competition in the Olympics," *New York Times*, February 21, 1924, p. 16.
39. "A.A.U. Head Assails Olympic Scoring," *New York Times*, June 11, 1924, 18.
40. "The Sport World Gathers for the Olympic Games," *Literary Digest* 81 (June 21, 1924), 52.
41. "Some American Olympic Possibilities," *Outlook* 137 (June 25, 1924) 298.
42. "U.S. Olympic Team a Formidable One," *New York Times*, June 22, 1924, 31.
43. Paddock finished fifth in the 100 meter final and second in the 200 meters. See, Spalding Athletic Library, *Spalding's Athletic Almanac, 1925* (New York: American Sports Publishing, 1925) for a complete list of the results and the American team members.
44. "U.S. Sprinters Who Will Surely Bring Home the Bacon," *Literary Digest* 82 (July 12, 1924) 69.

45. "Will American Girls Decide the 1924 Olympics?," *Literary Digest* 81 (April 19, 1924), 60.
46. "Women Athletes Barred," *New York Times*, July 4, 1924, 17.
47. Gallico, *A Farewell to Sport*, 245-247.
48. *Ibid.*, 233-244.
49. "The Olympic Games Too Hard for the Weaker Sex?," *Literary Digest* 77 (June 16, 1923), 50-54; Sarah Addington, "Athletic Limitations of Women," *Ladies Home Journal* 40 (June 1923) 38.
50. "Man's Athletic Crown in Danger," *Literary Digest* 78 (July 28, 1923) 56-57.
51. "Greeks, Girls, and 1924," *The Nation* 118 (February 27, 1924), 222. Ironically, Bauer took the world record away from her Illinois Athletic Club teammate, Harold Krueger. "Man's Athletic Crown in Danger," 56.
52. "Sport World Set for Greatest Olympics," 5.
53. Praised for Olympic Aid," *New York Times*, April 25, 1924, 15.
54. "France Denounces Olympic Outbreak," *New York Times*, May 20, 1924, 18.
55. Ida Treat, "Another War Victim," *The Nation* 118 (June 25, 1924) 739.
56. "France Denounces Olympic Outbreak," 18.
57. C.A. Austin, "Report of Rugby Team Coach," in *Report*, 103-104.
58. "France Denounces Olympic Outbreak," 18.
59. "A Tempest in a Stadium," *New York Times*, May 20, 1924, 20.
60. Treat, "Another War Victim," 738; Dr. R. Tait McKenzie, "Impressions of the Olympic Games of 1924," in *Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Convention of the National Collegiate Athletic Association*, held at New York, New York, December 30, 1924, 103.
61. Treat, "Another War Victim," 738,
62. "Sport World Set for Greatest Olympics," 5. "A Renaissance of Sport," *New York Times*, July 6, 1924, 2.
63. "Comment on Current Events in Sports: Olympic Games," *New York Times*, July 7, 1924, 13.
64. Mark Dyreson, *Inventing the Sporting Republic: American Sport, Political Culture, and the Olympic Experience, 1876-1919* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming).
65. "U.S. Olympic Team to Set Sail Today," *New York Times*, July 16, 1924, 11.
66. Rubien, "Report of Secretary," in *Report*, 8-10.

67. "Sport World Gathers for Olympic Games," 53. "U.S. Olympic Athletes May Be Barred From Writing Articles on 1924 Games," *New York Times*, January 16, 1924, sec. 1, part 2, 1.
68. "Sport World Gathers for Olympic Games," 55.
69. "Wants Dry Village for Olympic Teams," *New York Times*, June 28, 1924, 17.
70. "Pershing Is Guest of U.S. Athletes," *New York Times*, July 5, 1924, 10.
71. "2000 Star Athletes in Olympic Parade," July 6, 1924, 23 and 25.
72. Elon Jessup, "The Greatest Olympiad," *Outlook* 137 (August 13, 1924) 571-572.
73. Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 52.
74. "2000 Star Athletes in Olympic Parade," 25.
75. William Oscar Johnson, "The Taking Part," *Sports Illustrated*, July 10, 1924, 40. On page 128 of *All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Olympic Games* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1972) Johnson identified Martin Sheridan, an Irish-American New York City policeman and discus thrower, as the flag bearer and grumbler. But Johnson's *Sports Illustrated* article and all the other sources agree that Rose bore the flag and uttered the famous line. Both Rose and Sheridan were proud sons of Ireland, irked by the English refusal to allow Irish athletes to compete as a separate team.
76. "2000 Star Athletes in Olympic Parade," 25
77. Jessup, "The Greatest Olympiad," 572.
78. The world's records set at Paris were: 10,000 meter run: W. Ritola of Finland. 400 meter hurdles: F.M. Taylor of Grinnell College, Iowa. Running board jump: R. Legendre of Newark Athletic Club. 3000 meter steeplechase: W. Ritola of Finland. 400 meter run: E.H. Liddell of Great Britain. Hop-step-and-jump: A. W. Winter of Australia. 400 meter relay: U.S. Team. 1600 meter relay: U.S. Team. 800 meter relay swim: U.S. Team. 1500 meter freestyle: Andrew Charlton of Australia. 100 meter back-stroke, women: Sybil Bauer of the U.S. 400 meter relay swim, women: U.S. Team. Compiled from a chart in "Who Really Won the Olympic Games," *Current Opinion*, 77 (September 1924) 340.
79. "Why America Wins Olympics," *Literary Digest* 77 (July 26, 1924), 10.
80. "U.S. Olympic Teams Proved Supremacy," *New York Times*, July 28, 1924, 7.
81. "The American Olympic Victories," *Outlook* 137 (July 30, 1924) 494. The quotation alludes to the U.S. dominance in the America's Cup yachting series: "In tennis of the Olympic brand one may almost say, as was said of our famous yachting triumph, 'America first, the rest nowhere,'"
82. Colonel Robert M. Thompson, *Report*, 5-7
83. Jessup, "Greatest Olympiad," 573.
84. "U.S. Swim Team Clinches Olympic Title," *New York Times*, July 19, 1924, 5.

85. "American Youth Vindicated at Colombes," *Literary Digest* 82 (August 9, 1924), 8; "The American Olympic Victories," "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," *Report on VIII Olympiad*.
86. David Wallechinsky, *The Complete Book of the Olympic* (New York: Penguin, 1984), 429-453.
87. "U.S. Wins Olympics; 24 Collapse in Race; 2 World Marks Set," *New York Times*, July 13, 1924, 1.
88. "U.S. Olympic Teams Proved Supremacy," 7.
89. "Greets U.S. Stars by Radio," *New York Times*, August 1, 1924, 7.
90. "Olympic Results," *Playground* 18 (September 1924) 369.
91. "The Yankee and the Finn," *New York Times*, July 15, 1924, 8.
92. "Olympic Victors," *New York Times*, July 23, 1924, 14.
93. "American Youth Vindicated at Colombes," 8-9.
94. Gustavus T. Kirby, "The Olympic Games and the American Playground," *Playground*, 18 (December 1924) 537-538.
95. "Why America Wins Olympics," 11
96. "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," *Literary Digest* 82 (August 2, 1924), 41.
97. "American Youth Vindicated at Colombes," 8-9.
98. "Why America Wins Olympics," 11-12.
99. "Colored Athletes at the Olympics," *The Crisis* 28 (September 1924), 217.
100. Charles H. Williams, "Negro Athletes in the Tenth Olympiad," *Southern Workman* 61 (1932), 451.
101. *Ibid.*, 11.
102. Baynard Moss, "America's Athletic Missionaries," *Harper's Weekly* 56 (July 27, 1912) 8-9.
103. "Who Really Won the Olympic Games?," 340-341.
104. "Olympic Results," 369.
105. "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," 46.
106. "Why America Wins Olympics," 11
107. Philip Coan, "Finnish Athletic Success," *Outlook* 137 (July 23, 1924) 461.
108. "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," 39.
109. "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," 44-46.
110. "The Yankee and the Finn," 8.

111. "Why America Wins Olympics," 11
112. Coan, "Finnish Athletic Success," 461.
113. "The Giant and the Pygmy," *Outlook* 137 (July 16, 1924), 417.
114. Coan, "Finnish Athletic Success," 461-464.
115. "Why the Finns are Champion Athletes," 40-41.
116. "Changing the Olympic Games," *World's Work* 48 (September, 1924), 476-478.
117. "Robertson Favors Shorter Program," *New York Times*, August 7, 1924, 10.
118. "Are the Olympic Games Worth While?," *Literary Digest* 82 (August 2, 1924), 48.
119. "Olympic Discords," *The Living Age* 322 (August 23, 1924), 343
120. "Give Them a Few More Trials," *New York Times*, July 23; 1924, 14.
121. "American Youth Vindicated at Colombes," 9.
122. "War Without Tears," *Playground*, 19 (June 1925), 168.
123. "Olympic Attacks Called Propaganda," *New York Times*, July 24, 1924, 9.
124. Thompson, *Report*, 5.
125. William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," *McClure's* 35 (August 1910), 463-468; and *Popular Science Monthly* 77 (October 1910), 400-410.
126. Kirby, "The Olympic Games and the American Playground," 537-553.
127. "More Olympiads," *New York Times*, July 25, 1924, 7.
128. "Topic of the Times: Nearly Everyone Happy," *New York Times*, July 29, 1924, 14.
129. Mark Dyreson, "The Playing Fields of Progress: American Athletic Nationalism and the St. Louis Olympics of 1904," *Gateway Heritage* 14 (Fall, 1993), 4-23.
130. Philip J. Baker, "The Olympic Games," *The Independent* 113 (August 16, 1924), 96-98.
131. Philip J. Baker, "The Olympic Games, - A Retrospect," *The Independent* 113 (August 30, 1924), 128-130.
132. "Good Sport Between Nations," *Outlook* 137 (August, 13, 1924), 563.
133. "'Sport' in France," *The American Review of Reviews* 70 (November, 1924), 549.
134. "Are the Olympic Games Worth While?" 51
135. "City Hails Return of Olympic Victors," *New York Times*, August 7, 1924, 3.
136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

138. "1924 Greatest Year in Annals of Sport," *New York Times*, December 28, 1924, sec. 9, 1-2.

139. Nash, *The Nervous Generation*, 126-127.

140. "An Ethiopian Takes Notes," *New York Times*, July 9, 1924, 18.

141. The term "tribal Twenties" originates in John Higham's *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*, 2nd ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

142. Wallechinsky, *The Complete Book on the Olympics*, 12-13.