

*Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement* John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle, eds. (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996). Reviewed by Garth Paton, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada.

More than one hundred years of modern Olympism, twenty-eight summer Olympic Games, twenty Winter Games, an Introduction, a Prologue on The Ancient Games, plus three appendices (one that presents the biographies of the I.O.C. presidents), all this and more, comprises the *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, edited by John Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle. The sweep of Olympism, the politics, the problems, and to some degree the personalities, plus the details of the games, combine to make this book a challenging, if not an overwhelming editorial task. One can hardly imagine the difficulties Findling and Pelle faced in managing the manuscripts of over fifty different contributors, including contributions translated from languages other than English.

The book, as the editors point out in the Preface, was intended as a companion volume to their earlier publication, *Historical Dictionary of World's Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988* (Greenwood Press, 1990). The editors recognized that many reference books have been published on the history of the modern games, however, in their words, "...virtually all of them emphasize the athletic achievements of top performers at the Games: the medal winners; the world record times, distances, and weights and the nations whose athletes have performed the best." The intended purpose of this volume was to be different. The authors were asked, "to emphasize such matters as site selection and development, political questions or controversies, collateral events, programmatic changes, and political and economic consequences, while keeping their discussion of winners and losers to a minimum." Some authors were much more successful at achieving this goal than others.

The book is introduced by John Daley. His introductory section sets the context of the Olympic movement during the 20th century, including brief comments on both the ideals and the critics. Daley concludes by stating that the century-long life of the Olympics "...bears eloquent testimony to their resilience and ability to counter contemporary criticism. They are valued for their idealism and for the moral code they demonstrate in heroic sporting contests." The critics, of course, would disagree with Daley's conclusion, and suggest that the I.O.C. has simply chosen to ignore the criticism. Indeed, many of the authors draw the reader's attention to numerous issues that were conveniently sidestepped by the I.O.C. over the past century. Regardless of one's point of view, Olympic Idealist or Olympic Critic, Daley's introduction does set the stage for the chapters that follow.

The lead-in material to the book includes an important prologue written by R.K. Barney entitled, "Prologue: The Ancient Games." Barney, a well recognized Olympic historian, in fact, does more than discuss the nature of the Ancient Games; he reviews the antecedents of them and discusses the oral traditions of Homer's tales. Barney gives cultural context to sport in ancient Greece, and includes an

interpretation of several Greek concepts and the relationship that each had to sport, most particularly, his interpretation of *arete* (equating with “excellence”). Barney discusses the evolution of the events included in the Ancient Games with a minimal focus on performances. He comments on related athletic festivals/games in the ancient world, the Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian Games, among others. A short discussion of some exceptional athletic performers in antiquity serves to add colour. Notwithstanding the fact that this section is longer than most of the chapters that follow, it serves the purpose of explaining the foundation on which the “Founding Fathers” based the Modern Olympic Movement.

The main body of the *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement* is composed of short chapters (on average 5-8 pages), organized chronologically within two major parts, **Part I - The Summer Games** and **Part II - The Winter Games**. The authors typically discuss the awarding of the Games to the particular site, including special circumstances that might have impacted on the decision. Generally, the discussion shifts to problems that emerged during the lead-up period to the games, some of the important actors involved, and, in some cases, the action of the I.O.C. (or lack of action). On balance, the earlier section chapters tended to be most interesting, especially if the author showed a grasp of some of the personalities involved and a feel for the *zeitgeist* of the times. Sadly, this is not always the case. Some authors paid undue attention to the events of the games themselves, frequently from a nationalistic point of view.

Offering general criticism that applies to over fifty different authors is more than risky at best, but offering specific comments on each is beyond the bounds of any reviewer. “The Games of the VIth Olympiad (Never Held),” by William Durick, deserves some comment. As Durick pointed out, these games have often been neglected. Durick discusses the early German involvement in Greek excavations and links these nicely to the 1904 and 1908 attempts by Germany to stage the Olympic Games. He relies heavily on the work of Diem (as do most of the chapters relating to German Olympic involvement), but manages to weave a fascinating story of the preparatory events leading up to one set of games that were never held. Durick details the construction process, comments on Diem and others in recruiting the American athlete Alvin C. Kraenzlein as a coach following the German disappointment in their 1912 Olympic performances. Further, he details events at the I.O.C. meetings in Lausanne in 1913 and in Paris in 1914 as the Olympic flag was introduced. Despite the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, June 28, 1914, which triggered World War I, interestingly, plans for Olympic Games for 1916 died slowly. Germany continued preparation for the Games well into 1915. Ironically, a similar scenario was played out over two decades later when hopes for staging the Games of the XIIth Olympiad continued into the early months of 1940.

Jerry A. Pattengale detailed the convoluted events of the late 1930s as Olympic ideals were again rebuffed by the military events of the world. Space did not permit Pattengale the opportunity to discuss, in his words, “...the IOC’s oblivious posture on international politics” as late as 1938, as they naively supported Japan as the site for both the 1940 Summer and Winter Games. In June of 1939, just weeks before the declaration of World War II, and with Japan already at war in Asia, the IOC

reinforced this “obliviousness” by selecting Garmisch-Partenkirchen as the site of the Winter Games for 1940.

Canada, in the late 1960s and early 1970s the years leading up to the Games of XXIth Olympiad held in 1976, faced a torment of its own. Bruce Kidd provided a good portrait of the difficult French-English relationships that persisted at that time (indeed, continue even now), as Canada prepared to host the 1976 Games. Kidd’s discussion of the thirty-four months of wasted time in planning and building was revealing. His insight into the role and autocratic decision-making of Montreal’s mayor Jean Drapeau made interesting reading. Kidd’s insight into the concerns of Black Africa, the persistent problems of two Chinas, and the early intervention of environmentalists into the Olympic movement chronicle the roots of issues that continue to persist.

**Part II - The Winter Games** lacked the historical prologue given to the earlier section dealing with the Summer Games. Paula Welch, in her treatment of the 1st Olympic Winter Games, Chamonix 1924, provided brief commentary on the early interest of the IOC in winter sports, including figure skating (London 1908) and figure skating and ice hockey in Antwerp, 1920. The historical foundations of the Winter Games, unlike the Summer Games, are rooted in the twentieth century. The Winter Games have not usually been the arena for the great political issues confronting the IOC, and the length of the chapters in Part II tend to reflect this. Douglas Brown and Gordon MacDonald comment quite correctly, “Regrettably, few scholarly books examine the Olympic Winter Games from a true social or cultural perspective. Although some excellent academic books study the modern Olympic Games and the associated Olympic movement, the Winter Games phenomenon is usually eclipsed in the overall analysis.” Nevertheless, some authors dealing with the Winter Games section did a creditable job of addressing persistent issues, one of which was the question of “amateurism,” which rose early and persisted over time.

The overall concept of the book might be seriously questioned. The editors faced an enormous task of managing fifty contributions, as indicated in the opening paragraph of this review. Herein lays one of the basic problems. One presumes that each author worked independently, thus, each author believed it necessary to review events covered in previous chapters. The result was almost endless reference to the same problems, such as the background to the 1936 Games, the Japanese situation in the late 1930s the debate over two Chinas, two Germanies, and many references to Super Power confrontations both on and off the playing venues, to give a few examples. This repetition is virtually an insurmountable problem without very extensive editing; and very extensive editing becomes almost impossible given the number of contributors.

Another basic concept to be questioned relates to the possibility of dealing with the Games of each Olympiad within the span of just a few pages and producing something significant. Clearly a request to an author such as Roland Renson, who has recently released a book of almost twenty mini-chapters (*La VIIIème Olympiade Anvers 1920: Les Jeux Ressuscités*), to dramatically compress material does an injustice to both the topic and the author. The result tends to be a short discussion of “highlights” and little depth.

A further example of the editing difficulties faced by Findling and Pelle is illustrated by the date of abolishment of the Ancient Games. In Jody Davenport's opening chapter on the Sumer Games - Athens 1896 - reference is made to the Ancient Games being "...abolished in A.D. 329" (p. 3). A later chapter refers to the same edict, "The games were an integral part of the Roman sporting and religious scene until A.D. 3, when Theodosius I of Rome declared the end of the ancient Olympics." An often acknowledged Theodosius date is A.D. 393.

Each chapter includes a "Bibliography Essay" as the concluding section. This provides the reader with useful information for follow-up work. As useful as this material may be, even the casual reader cannot help but be struck by the very extensive reliance upon material from *The New York Times*. It is equally obvious that the Brundage Collection (original at the University of Illinois) represents one of the most important resources for Olympic history.

In addition to the major material detailing the Summer and Winter Games, the book includes three excellent appendices. The first appendix provides a biography of seven presidents of the IOC, preceded by a fine introduction by Dwight Zakus. Appendix B presents information on the U.S. Olympic Committee. Appendix C includes a section by Scott Crawford, "Olympic Feature Films."

The real strength of *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement* is in its breadth, rather than the depth of Olympic history that is covered. A useful overview of each of the Olympiads provides the reader with many topical highlights but it is impossible for the individual authors to seriously come to grips with the important social, cultural and political issues surrounding the Olympic movement. As a reference book that should trigger research ideas, and as a source for students to get a sense of many persistent Olympic issues, the book should be very useful. The problems identified by the authors, many of whom, in general, affirm the idealism of the Olympic Movement, will no doubt fuel the critics of Olympism for some time to come.