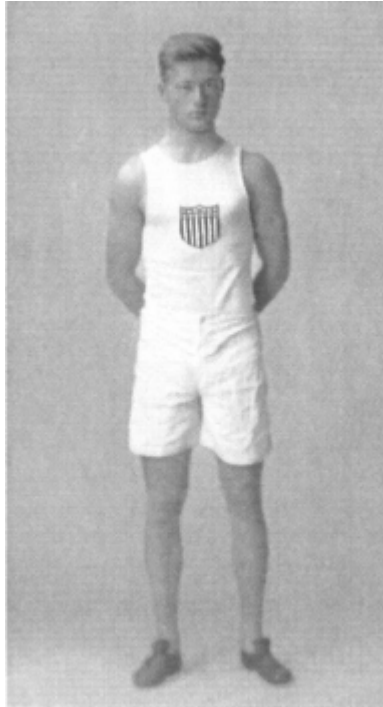


Avery Brundage, The All-American Boy: Die amerikanische Antwort auf die olympische Frage? [Avery Brundage, The All-American Boy: The American Answer to the Olympic Question?], by Astrid Englebrecht (Göttingen: Cuvillier, 1997). Reviewed by Arnd Krüger, Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany.



Avery Brundage - The All-American Boy

Fritz Ruegsegger, who worked for Brundage from 1960 to 1976, ran the Brundage business, and was his closest advisor, said this about the three existing Brundage biographies: “Heinz Schöbel, in his uncritical biography, thanked Brundage for the provisional inclusion of the GDR in the IOC - although Brundage wanted to acknowledge only one Germany, Daume’s Germany, and never really wanted to accept the sovereign status of the GDR. Hans Klein was somewhat more poetic, sometimes he used Brundage’s own texts. I [Ruegsegger] wrote 500 pages myself, but I threw them away. Guttmann was not bad; he was very careful; he travelled the whole world to learn more about Brundage. But I think that none of the biographies have really characterized the man. Brundage was a man of action, not necessarily a man of the word. It is important to understand Brundage on the basis of what he experienced, and from the point of view of what other people experienced with him. With pure science you do not really grasp the person. Brundage had a fetish concerning the written word:

Don't write anything down, he said" (p. 274).

When a young scholar publishes her doctoral dissertation on a theme that somebody so established as Allen Guttman has written on, the question is: "what new has she to say?" Englebrecht examined the Ruegsegger papers and interviewed him personally. What emerges in her study is a somewhat more personal Brundage than in other biographies, particularly in the Guttman book. While Guttman looked at the Olympic Brundage, thus omitting, for instance, the period of his life after retirement from the IOC, Englebrecht followed Ruegsegger's advice and looked at Brundage's activities outside the IOC, such as his late marriage which cost him \$100,000 per month. For Englebrecht, Brundage becomes the classic John Wayne of American movies of the old West (p. 255).

It is obvious that the non-athlete Guttman dwells on the sporting side of Brundage, while the non-American Englebrecht is more concerned with Brundage's Americanism. I side with Ruegsegger, that none of the biographies has really done justice to the Olympic giant yet, but that with every additional study more facets of his personality become visible.