
Journal Article Reviews

Timothy Jon Curry and Matthew A. Salerno, "A Comment on the Use of Anabolic Steroids in Women's Olympic Swimming: A Chronicle of the 100-Metres Freestyle," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 34, No. 2, 1999, pp. 173-180. Reviewed by Robert Kosuth.

In this short commentary, Curry and Salerno propose to examine the relative impact of anabolic steroid use on the improved performance of female swimmers in Olympic 100-metres freestyle swimming between 1912 and 1996. To accomplish this, a historical examination of a variety of factors related to improving performance was conducted in order to gauge the relative influence of each on the decreasing times of female swimming gold medalists. Thus, to answer their question "How great an effect have anabolic steroids had in increasing performance?" innovations are linked in a clear time line to the improvement in winning Olympic times.

The authors point to several key innovations which led to lower times in the 100-metres Olympic freestyle for women. The first were two related events, the improvement in the swimsuit through reducing the amount and type of material, an innovation that was possible primarily because of the increased acceptance of female involvement in athletes generally in America, Australia, and Europe by the 1920s. A second area of improvement was the design of the swimming facilities beginning in 1924 in Paris and continuing to the most recent in Sydney. The final two innovations that occurred during the 20th century were the increased organization of training groups in both private clubs and state run programs. This was coupled with improvements in training methods such as the introduction of improved stroke styles, interval and tapering programs, and the recognition of the importance of diet and strength/weight training. All these, according to Curry and Salerno were critical in the improvements made by female swimmers as measured by the winning time in the 100-metres freestyle at the Olympic Games.

The authors were able to argue, through the evidence provided in their investigation that, in relative terms of decreased times, the influence of anabolic steroids has not been as exceptional as many commentators might believe. Yet, they did not examine the issue of whether anabolic steroid use, which remains contrary to the rules of the IOC and other international sport governing bodies, is comparable morally and ethically to the innovations discussed including, for example, improved facilities and training methods, and the social acceptance of female athletes. Thus, although Curry and Salerno do provide a clear argument in terms of the discrete measure of improvement in winning times, they have chosen not to expand their examination by engaging the issue of why anabolic steroid use, despite being proven not be an exceptional innovation historically in terms of performance gains, has not been normalized and accepted in a manner similar to earlier time-reducing innovations.

Sotiris G. Giantsis, "Chariot Racing in Byzantine Constantinople," *International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2000, pp. 36-68. Reviewed by Greg Gillespie.

This article discusses the organization and architecture of the Great Hippodrome in Byzantine Constantinople. At great length, Giantsis compares the architecture of the Great Hippodrome to the Circus Maximus in Rome. He then provides information on the surviving ruins of the structure, such as the obelisks of Theodosius I and Constantine VII, and discusses prominent primary source material. Throughout the article, he canvasses a number of related topics such as the charioteers, the organizers of the games, the program of events, the political character of the spectacles, spectator riots, and the decline of the games in the early thirteenth century. Giantsis provides several specific conclusions with regard to architecture but ultimately concludes that the wide-ranging topics covered in his article deserve further treatment and analysis.

Essentially, Giantsis provides a descriptive account of the Great Hippodrome itself. Along with sketches and diagrams, Giantsis goes to great length to tease out the architectural differences of the Great Hippodrome in relation to the Circus Maximus. However, in attempting to relate these differences he labours over the narrative and bogs the reader down with minute details. Moreover, his section on "Authorities and Source Material" seems out of place. Although Giantsis offers some interesting insights in this section, it does not reinforce his primary argument of examining "the basic aspects of administration and organization of chariot-racing in the Great Hippodrome of Byzantine Constantinople." (p.36) My point here is that rather than burdening the article with this information, Giantsis should have appended it or condensed the information into an endnote.

Although the emphasis on description takes away from overall narrative flow, Giantsis puts forth some fascinating insights on the political character of chariot-racing. He suggests that the Great Hippodrome was the third most prominent centre of Constantinople, behind the Great Palace and the Cathedral of Aghia Sophia. He discusses the role of the Hippodrome in the induction of new emperors, for important state events, and its utilization during the presence of foreign dignitaries. The Emperor also used his status and speeches while at the Hippodrome to express political aspirations, both personally and via heralds, from his imperial box. In some cases, the various factions participating in and observing the games responded to the aspirations of the Emperor through their own heralds. The games often began with "acclamations" which carried both explicit and implicit political messages.

In sum, the article by Giantsis provides brief, yet fascinating information on the political climate and character of the chariot-races in the Great Hippodrome. From the standpoint of historical analysis, the strength of the article lies in this section. Although the other areas, such as the one dealing with architecture, reveal important information, Giantsis over-emphasizes description at the expense of analysis. On the whole, I found this a detailed and painstakingly researched article.

Arnd Krüger, “‘Once the Olympics are through, we’ll beat up the Jew’: German Jewish Sport 1898-1938 and the anti-Semitic Discourse,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 26, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 353-375. Reviewed by Robert Kossuth.

The impetus for this examination of Jewish sport in pre-Nazi and Nazi Germany is drawn from the author’s concern over the reliability of drawing conclusions solely from anti-Semitic discourse that surrounded German sport at the time. Specifically, Krüger argues that Jewish exclusion from German sport was not a simple and seamless progression from inclusion to exclusion and finally elimination. In order to provide evidence to support his position, Krüger examines several critical events leading up to the Berlin Olympics in 1936 including the problem of defining who was and was not considered a Jew, a question that was not answered until 1935 with the passing of the Nuremberg Laws. To further develop this argument, Krüger also points to the events surrounding the scrutiny by the international sporting community of German sport prior to the Berlin Olympics. To this end, several individual case studies are presented along with an examination of pre-Nazi sporting movements in Germany to support his position that exclusion of Jewish athletes from mainstream German sport was not the well defined and orchestrated process many believe it to have been.

Three case examples are presented by the author to support his argument that Jewish exclusion prior to the Olympics was not as clearly defined as international observers and more recent examiners have suggested. The first event was the Kaiserhof meeting in July 1934 between Avery Brundage, German, and German-Jewish sport leaders. At this meeting Brundage, the Germans, and members of the German-Jewish sport leadership agreed that there were two separate but equal sports systems operating in Germany. Krüger points out that, as late as this meeting, some Jewish sport organizers in Germany were still holding out, believing that a possibility still existed for reintegration of Jewish athletes into German sport. Two additional cases that exhibited the lack of a clear Nazi policy for sport in Germany involved the athletes Helen Mayer and Gretel Bergmann. These examples highlighted the problem of determining what constituted a Jewish athlete. Mayer, being half Jewish, was initially excluded from competing for her German team but after 1935, and the passing of the Nuremberg Laws under which she was not considered a Jew, was allowed to compete for Germany in the Berlin Olympics. Bergmann, on the other hand, despite her previous international success as a German athlete in 1928 and 1932 was excluded from the 1936 team. This uncertainty over who could and could not compete for Germany provides Krüger with evidence of the complexity of the question of Jewish inclusion and exclusion from German sport even after 1933.

In order to provide further support for his position, Krüger examines the place of Jewish athletes in German sport prior to 1933. He draws evidence from several examples of sport organizations such as the Turner movement in order to exhibit that in various situations Jewish athletes were both actively sought for inclusion while in others they were excluded. Krüger clearly suggests that there was no universal call for the complete exclusion of Jewish athletes prior to the rise of the Nazi Party.

Krüger concludes by suggesting that any exclusionist sentiment in Germany prior to 1933 was no different from that which existed in other European countries. One

clear example of this was the anti-Semitic position advanced by Austrian Turners prior to 1933. Finally, Krüger concludes that athletic organizations in Germany were not as politically active as other groups, and the rise of Nazism had the same impact on sports clubs and organizations as it had on other social institutions in Germany.

Andrew Morris, “‘I Can Compete!’: China in the Olympic Games, 1932 and 1936,” *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1999, pp. 545-566. Reviewed by Greg Gillespie.

This article presents an interesting analysis of initial Chinese participation in the Olympic Games. Specifically, Morris examines Chinese participation in the Los Angeles (1932) and Berlin (1936) Games and discusses the meaning of this participation in relation to emerging Chinese nationalism. He looks at the role of early Chinese athletes, administrators, and government officials in both festivals. Morris, for example, reveals the fascinating historical circumstances and barriers that surrounded Liu Changchun, the only athlete to represent China at the 1932 Games, and sprinter Cheng Jinguang, part of the contingent of Chinese athletes at the 1936 Games in Berlin.

Morris' narrative finds the important balance necessary between analysis and description. He provides interesting descriptive detail on the individual actors that populate his history and then moves easily between these figures and the broader social and cultural context of 1930s China. Although he provides no easily recognizable thesis statement, Morris remains focused on the issue of Chinese participation throughout the manuscript.

The central thrust of Morris' article deals with the connection of successful international sport to notions of burgeoning nationalism in China. Despite unforgiving circumstances for the athletes enroute to Berlin, the Chinese at home called the 1936 Games a complete failure and lamented the inability of their athletes to secure even one medal. However, as Morris shows, others saw a new beginning. They lauded the nationalistic scene of the Chinese flag flying beside the other nations and extolled the applause that the Chinese delegation received. Morris effectively reveals the roots of Chinese participation and burgeoning sense of nationalism at the Olympic Games.

This manuscript contains few weaknesses. However, at least one constructive criticism should be made. In order to fill out his argument, and summarily strengthen his conclusions, he should have noted German or perhaps American perception of Chinese participation at the 1936 Games. How did the other countries present at the Games perceive initial Chinese participation? Considered as a whole, this is a well-written, well-conceived article. Morris demonstrates excellent writing ability, narrative focus, and balancing of sources.

Douglas A. Brown, "The Sensual and Intellectual Pleasures of Rowing: Pierre de Coubertin's Ideal for Modern Sport," *Sport History Review*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1999, pp. 95-118. Reviewed by Greg Gillespie.

Brown's paper reveals Pierre de Coubertin's cultural assumptions about rowing through an analysis of his published books and essays. Brown shows how Coubertin used multiple discourses, or fields of knowledge, to construct rowing as a class-based, ideal modern sport. These specialized fields of knowledge included educational reform, physical education, sport psychology, sport physiology, and sporting aesthetics.

The strength of this article rests in the level of analysis. Brown reveals an intimate understanding of Coubertin's views on rowing and demonstrates a thorough interrogation of primary sources. Brown also shows that Coubertin used the various fields of knowledge listed above to collectively reinforce and disseminate his class and gender-based perspective on the sport.

Early in the article, Brown claims that many historians do not give due consideration to the issue of individual agency. Brown's call for historians to recommit themselves intellectually when dealing with this issue is to be applauded. He rightly acknowledges that some historians who focus exclusively on class and gender histories tend to portray the men and women that populate their history not as reasoning thinking actors but as mere extensions of social processes. Instead of a past populated by individuals who are both constrained and enabled by their social and cultural context, these historians, overanxious to uncover inequalities in power relations, do not portray individuals as reasoning people but as mindless individuals who merely serve as extensions of the historian's own theory-based agenda. He writes "Compelling as these analyses are, the athletes who rowed during this era seem to be represented as passive objects of class, gender, and ethnic discourses." (p. 95) Brown's call for heightened sensitivity to the issue of individual agency is compelling and should be heeded by the sport history community.

In sum, Brown's article on Pierre de Coubertin's assumptions of rowing as the ideal of modern sport reveals few weaknesses. Brown's informed approach, attention to detail, and rigorous critical examination of primary sources, results in an outstanding piece of sport history literature.
