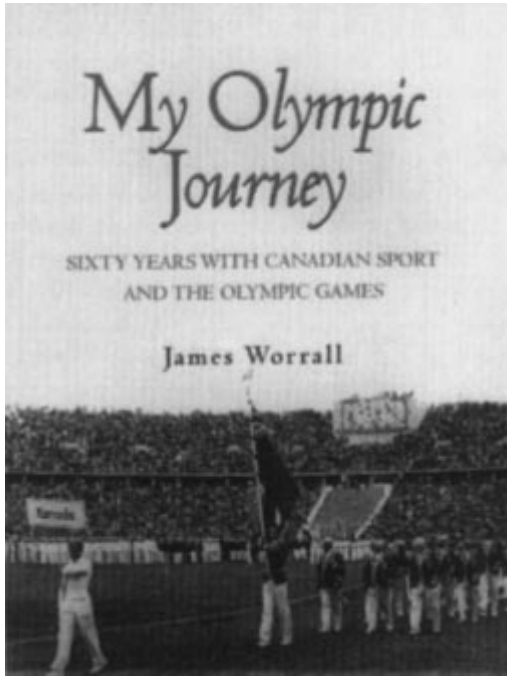


***My Olympic Journey: Sixty Years With Canadian Sport And The Olympic Games*** by James Worrall (Canadian Olympic Association, 2000) 305 pp. Reviewed by Robert K. Barney, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, Canada.



Few Canadians interested in the country's Olympic matters over the past five decades would be oblivious to the roles played in them by James Worrall, former COA president and 22-year member of the IOC. From a first hand perspective, then, Worrall's *My Olympic Journey* is really a personal memoir of an Olympic athlete (1936 Games) and almost life-long sports administrator and functionary. Readers of Worrall's book will be struck by the impression that he is there in front of you, sitting across the table verbalizing his tale. The story-telling quality of the book is indelible; and though the tale is pregnant with concern, anger, and frustration over certain events, those negative feelings are surmounted by two more pronounced qualities -- humor and pride of accomplishment. Readers will like this book, too, for other qualities. Its structure is organized in chronological, easy to follow sequence, from Worrall's youth and first experience with the Olympic Games as a 400 meters hurdler on the Canadian team at the 1936 Berlin Games, through the succession of Olympic quadrennials between 1948 and 1992. The book has a comprehensive index; a picture section of great interest to Canadian sport historians; a durable soft cover binding; and, its 305 pages are set in large, easily readable type.

Worrall's book will quickly bring to mind the career-describing work (*My Olym-*

*pic Years*) of the IOC President under whom Worrall served the longest, Ireland's Lord Killanin. Similar to Killanin's book, Worrall's opus reports history through the lens of the beholder. Neither volume could be called scholarly works; but, then, neither was meant to be that. Nevertheless, Worrall's book does portray a scholarly view based on more than a decade of research and writing, benefiting (as he acclaims in the Preface) from the able assistance of his wife, Birgitte. Worrall's chief sources, aside from his personal recollections, for the most part were the voluminous written records associated with the affairs of the IOC, COA, and COJO (Montreal 1976 Olympic Games Organizing Committee). In what might easily have been a tedious read of incessant names, dates, places, and events, Worrall labored to make his tale readily understood. Plain narrative language makes his book enjoyable and interesting reading.

Most of what Worrall writes about concerning IOC matters provides little new material for Olympic buffs and historians to ponder, even though it is written from his 'inside' perspective. However, Worrall's investigation and reporting on COA matters makes an indelible contribution to written history. No other work details more about the history of the COA than this book, a history with which Worrall has been associated for some seven decades. Significant subject areas include: the COA's role in Canadian amateur sport development, the Pan-American Games, Olympic boycotts, international political crises, bidding for and hosting summer and winter Games (including losing bids), along with the inevitable, but needed five Ws -- what, when, who, where, and, at times, 'why.'

There are some major themes that permeate the book, ones that are both of concern to Worrall and happy rapture. Though Worrall meets both provincial and federal government intrusion into the affairs of Canadian Olympic sport consistently with severe criticism, his most vigorous censure described in the book is reserved for the liberal government of Pierre Trudeau and its meddling in the affairs of the 1976 Montreal Games. Olympic enthusiasts will recall Trudeau's barring of Taiwan (or, the Republic of China, as the IOC knew it) from entering the country to take part in the Montreal Games, an action designed to appease and gain favor with the People's Republic of China (Mainland China). The business market offered by the People's Republic and its almost two billion people, of course, greatly outweighed the same type of opportunities presented by the island of Taiwan. The fact that Taiwan's NOC was recognized by the IOC at the time, and the People's Republic had not yet been admitted to the Modern Olympic Movement made little difference. Indeed, Worrall devotes an entire appendix to an analysis of these events, one that lends much credence to the notion that the interface between sport and politics is at times inevitable. Olympic idealists won't like that, but it's a fact of life in the world of international elite sport.

A consistent theme, too, one that captures Worrall's exuberant nature, focuses on the notorious state of affairs to which IOC members are generally party. This is the constant wining, dining, glorious party celebrations, fascinating and luxurious junkets, and generally ingratiating treatment that are part and parcel of an IOC member's life. To his credit, intentionally or unintentionally, Worrall does not avoid describing in some detail the almost countless number of occasions that these types of exercises were engaged in by him.

Though the book is generally well written and offers keen insight, there are some

errors of fact, and, in my opinion at least, one error of omission. An error of fact, for example, concerns the Denver, Colorado award of the 1976 Winter Games. As Worrall tells us, environmental groups raised a howl of protest, prompting a public referendum in Denver that ultimately turned the Games back to the IOC. In its wisdom, the IOC chose Innsbruck to host, thus making the Austrian resort city “the first to host them twice.” Not true! Of the first five Winter Olympic Games celebrated. St. Moritz, Switzerland hosted them twice (1928 and 1948). If that is a bit of a “nit pick,” an error of omission is not. Worrall explains in some detail his home city’s (Toronto) energetic bid for the IOC’s Centennial Olympic Games of 1996. As both a full status IOC member and subsequently a retired IOC honorary member, Worrall was in the middle of bid plans, strategy, aid, and influence. The bidding for the 1996 Summer Games was one of the first episodes exhibiting the exorbitant amenities given to visiting IOC members in an effort to cultivate their good will, support, and most importantly. their vote in the highly competitive process of securing hosting status. Between 1988 and 1990, in and out of the city IOC members trundled, on one occasion, as Worrall relates, some 40 of them all at once, to help him celebrate his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. The expense of travel, accommodation, lavish reception, and celebration for such visits, as a matter of course, was paid by Paul Henderson’s bid committee. At an IOC Session in Tokyo in the late summer of 1990, Toronto was eliminated in the semi-final round of voting for the Centennial Games -- Atlanta won over Athens. In Toronto’s post-bid report to the IOC (a prerequisite for cities under final host consideration), authors Paul Henderson, Arthur Eggleton, and Norman Seagram scored some 18 unnamed IOC members for blatant abuse of visiting privileges and misappropriation of travel expenses. Toronto’s report, delivered in January 1991 was the first ‘alarm bell’ in the scenario of events leading to the serious tarnish of the Modern Olympic Movement caused by the so-called Sydney and Salt Lake City bribery scandals of May and November 1998, respectively. From the scandals. of course, rose some 50 IOC reforms enacted in December 1999; measures that have somewhat restored the IOC’s image in international sport. In this regard, the Toronto report was critical, for it aroused at least one IOC Executive Committee member (Mark Hodler) to address the issue. Hodler subsequently produced rules of conduct and formulae governing IOC members’ visits to bid cities. Those so-called “Hodler’s Rules” were ignored by IOC Members, by bid cities, even by President Samaranch himself. Hodler’s outrage boiled over in early December 1998 and led to swift IOC investigation and redress of the situation. Thus, the ‘new’ IOC is partly a product of Toronto’s 1991-bid report. The scandal was the biggest Olympic news of the decade of the 1990s. Whereas Worrall was disposed towards discussing issues concerning Olympic matters occurring after his retirement as an active IOC member, he remained silent on the scandal saga. The Toronto failed bid for the 1996 Centennial Games and its final report should have been factored into Worrall’s saga.

There is no doubt about the fact that Jim Worrall has made some glorious contributions to both the COA and the IOC. Whether Chef de Mission, chair of committees and commissions, member of executive boards, or ‘in the trenches’ worker, Worrall labored mightily in matters relating to Canada’s participation in both the Olympic Games and Pan-American Games, as well as with the development of amateur sport in general. He chaired the IOC Commission assigned the task of producing a complete revamping of the *Olympic Charter* (1989). He was a member of the IOC Com-

mission that investigated the state of sport in apartheid South Africa, leading in time to the exclusion of that country from participating in the Olympic Games. Though in general the IOC's role in bringing about the new state of affairs in South Africa has been much overstated by the IOC, Worrall's work was noble; in fact, much of his life's efforts in the cause of amateur sport have been the same -- noble indeed.