
Commentary

Setting the Record Straight - Again: Dorando Pietri it is!



In the last issue of *OLYMPIKA* (Volume IX - 2000) I reviewed Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan's book, *The 1908 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events with Commentary* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2000). Guided by the primary record of the 1908 Games (the official report and its entry lists, newspaper commentary, and asides from fellow marathon competitors), I castigated the authors for perpetuating what I and some others thought to be a long held error in the expression of the name of the celebrated Italian marathoner, Dorando Pietri, who was carried across the line by British officials to seemingly win the event before protests lodged by the Americans resulted in a victory for Johnny Hayes who made it to the finish line without assistance. After some argumentative thoughts, I called for a correction of Dorando Pietri's name in the record book, that is, to P. Dorando. The chastised authors (Mallon and Buchanan) immediately contacted Olympic historians in Italy to be judge and jury in the debate—P. Dorando, as the British primary source record lists him, or Dorando Pietri, as countless Olympic record books enter his name? Although several responses were received from Italy, none were more definitive and authoritative than that of Guisepppe "Beppe" Odello. Italian Olympic historian from Ceva. The literary evidence and accompanying commentary presented by Odello is overpowering--the man's name was Dorando Pietri. Though Pietri is not a common Italian surname, it never appears as a given name. One will be hard put to find the name Pietri in Italian telephone books. Dorando Pietri was from the Emilia-Romagna area of north central Italy, well known for its cuisine. Reports Odello, in every published Italian Olympic source that lists or recounts the deeds of its 1908 Olympic star, Dorando appears as the given name, Pietri as the surname. To support this, Odello referred me to two well known sources: *La Sfida Di Maratono: Storia e leggenda di Dorando Pietri* (Insport Editrice srl. 1985), and "Dorando Pietri: Un' immortal squalifica," in *Nuova Enciclopedia Universale* (Garzanti Editori spa. 1998). I extend an apology to Messers Mallon and Buchanan for ever doubting their "word" on the subject. But, though eating crow is

an ugly experience, my repugnance of it is softened by a new Olympian friendship.
Thank you Beppe!

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