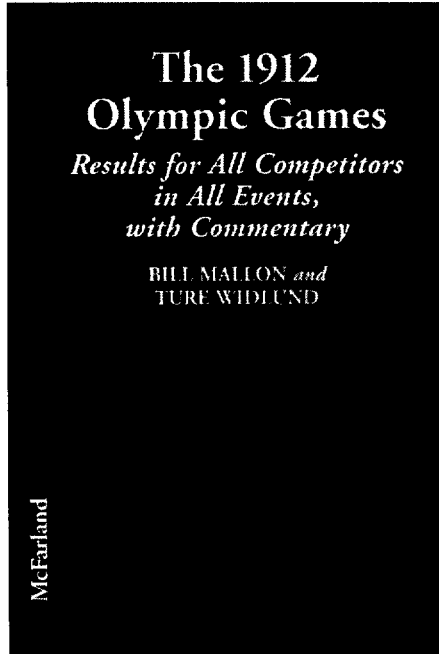


The 1912 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events, with Commentary by Bill Mallon and Ture Widlund (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, Inc. 2002), 568 pp. Reviewed by Robert K. Barney, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada.



The 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games are generally viewed by historians as the Olympic Games that signaled the bonafide “arrival” of the Modern Olympics, in other words, the Olympics that expanded significant global awareness, dispelled public ambivalence, and reduced rancor characteristic of modern history’s first four editions of the festival. Uniquely, the Stockholm Games were the first to produce a full length moving picture film of the proceedings. Though the original (which still exists) was a silent film version typical of the “pre-talkie” era, a voice dub-over in Swedish was made of the film in the late 1940s. And, aside from the galaxy of sports events on the program, art competitions were arranged, thus carrying out a dimension of Pierre de Coubertin’s original vision for the great international festival. In fact, it was he who organized most of the art competitions at Stockholm; indeed, he was awarded a gold medal for literature for his entry submitted under a pseudonym. There was still another important legacy left by the 1912 Swedish Olympics. Most of the voluminous written record of their organization and execution was carefully preserved for posterity. Today, that record can be found in the repositories of the Swedish National Olympic Committee and the Swedish National Archives and its

associated annexes. It is largely from this record that Bill Mallon's and Ture Widlund's book is produced.

Widlund's expertise in Swedish Olympic archival matter is evident throughout the book. His fluency in English (added, of course, to his native Swedish) was an important aspect in producing the book and underscores the critical importance of partnering with scholars whose native language is the same as that in which the basic corpus of primary material is expressed. Apart from his research interest in Olympic matters in general, particularly Swedish Olympic matters, Widlund is known for having been (along with Mallon) one of the small group of souls who founded the International Society of Olympic Historians in the early 1990s.

This is Bill Mallon's fifth volume of an originally planned six volume series to document each of the Olympic Games from Athens in 1896 to Antwerp in 1920. Yet to come is Mallon's final tome on the Games of the 7th Olympiad in post-World War I Belgium. In this latest volume, Mallon and Widlund have produced what must be assessed as the most complete treatment of the Stockholm Games yet presented in English, including the English-language edition of the Official Report produced by the organizers in 1912, from which, obviously, some of their material is drawn.

Mallon, a former professional golfer, presently an orthopaedic surgeon practicing in North Carolina, is well known for the exhaustive statistical reference works that he has published on the subject of the Olympic Games. This book, however, goes far beyond the realm of simple statistics. Following a prose introduction and some summary statistics on participants, winners, etc., the book is divided into chapters treating each sport presented on the program of events. An impressive number and quality of endnote citations embellishes the material presented. Aside from treatments of Athletics, Cycling, Diving, Equestrian, Fencing, Football (Soccer), Gymnastics, Modern Pentathlon, Rowing and Sculling, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, Tug-of-War, Water Polo, Wrestling, and Yachting, there are chapters offered on the Art Competitions, Unofficial sports and events, and finally, six appendices containing both statistics and discourse analysis of the 1912 Olympic Program, as well as matters concerning the famous case of James Franciscus Thorpe; the emergence of the Flying Finns in the person of "Smiling Hannes," biographical treatments of Phillip Noel-Baker, Avery Brundage, and George Patton; and an analysis of the 1912 Russian Olympic team's participation. A final appendix listing competitors (by country) and a thorough index concludes the work.

The entire series thus far reflects a Bill Mallon evolution; his work has broadened in two important dimensions. First, he has partnered with knowledgeable historians of specific Olympic Games who live and research in the host countries of those Games under review, as was the case with his book on the 1908 Games with Ian Buchanan of England, and, of course, this volume. One might ask the question: was there not a Greek or French sport historian on par with Buchanan and Widlund that might have collaborated with Mallon on the series' first two volumes (Athens-1896, and Paris-1900)? In my opinion, as good as those treatments were, each suffered from the lack of the type of combination that makes this book such a strong historical treatment. Secondly, chafing from some criticism by "Olympic academics" that he is but another member of that legion of Olympic "number cruncher" statisticians (and such barbs have been noted from time to time) who "count the beans, and that's all," Mallon has projected his work towards the realm of serious history. The book's

sources, most of them primary in nature, are important; indeed, together with the implementation of prose analysis and endnote annotation, the reader is left with a comfortable feeling that this is as close to the true history of those Games as can be reported. Of course, recreating history beyond all argument is simply not possible. The historical methodology that might achieve this has yet to be developed; most probably, such a methodology probably will never exist.

English-reading audiences will be interested and impressed by the discourse found in the Background and Analysis chapter that focuses on Viking sports, mid-to-late 19th century pseudo-Olympic Games in Sweden, the rise of organized Swedish sport, and finally, fascinating information on Swedish history's most famous Olympic Games figure, Victor Balck. Counter arguments may be made for Sigfrid Edström occupying that niche, but given Balck's evolutionary initiatives with regard to the rise of the winter sports idea, especially with respect to speed skating and the formation of history's first international sports federation (the International Skating Union) is enough to convince me to make the assertion I have.

Included in this Mallon/Widlund volume is grist for more than one Olympic history trivia item. For instance, Question: "What have been the only known cases of Olympic Games participants acting in an official capacity for organizing and supervising an event in which they won gold medals?" Answer: "Oscar and Alfred Swahn in the Deer Shooting events." Each of them, Oscar the father, and Alfred his son, is listed as a member of the Committee for Shooting. Father Oscar, at the time almost 65 years old, and his son were both members of the Clay Bird and Running Deer Shooting sub-committee, the elder Swahn listed as an "adjoint member," son Alfred, simply a "member" (p. 258). In the Running Deer Single Shot Individual Event, Alfred won gold, while his father tied for fourth place. The Running Deer Double Shot Individual Event resulted in a bronze medal for father Oscar; son Alfred finished fourth. Finally, in the Running Deer Single Shot Team Event, the ivory bearded Oscar shot the premier score of the entire competition, 43 out of a possible 50, to lead the Swedish team, which included son Oscar, to the gold medal. Oscar Swahn, of course, is well known to most Olympic historians as the oldest Olympic *gold* medalist of all time, as well as the oldest Olympic medallist in history. The senior Swahn earned the latter title by dint of winning a silver medal in the Team Running Deer Event at the Antwerp Games in 1920. By the time he appeared at Antwerp he had achieved the venerable age of almost seventy-three years. Be that as it may, much more than simply mundane knowledge and information will come the consumer's way when reading this interesting, well-written and handsomely-produced book.

There is, however, one serious drawback. The ransom that McFarland has placed on the book is \$59.50 U.S. Equated to most of the world's non U.S. currencies, the price approaches, if not exceeds, \$100. OK, so the book *is* ruggedly bound, well indexed, uniformly "clean" in its copy-text, its 568 pages presented in easy-to-read typeset; the fact is, its cost is intimidating. That indemnification aside, for those who can afford it, the book should be on the bookshelves of Olympic historians worldwide as a "must read," especially those whose bent is to steep themselves in knowledge about a single Olympic Games based on the best possible primary sources. Mallon's and Widlund's book on the grand Stockholm Olympic festival of 1912 is just that!

