LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The editor received a letter from Ossi Virtanen:

WHEN DOING SOMETHING ALSO ERRORS ARE POSSIBLE

I have recently read the book "Athens to Athens" of David Miller and would like to make a couple of small corrections and one addition to the text on page 130.

"Now the 55-year-old Nurmi was given his final fling. Having lit the stadium flame, he then passed the torch to Hannes Kolehmainen, his famous forerunner - the two having seventeen Olympic medals between them - who ascended the stadium tower by lift to ignite a second flame. The specially erected tower was 72.71 metres high to commemorate the Olympic javelin record of Matti Jarvinen in 1932."

The exact truth is however that the stadium tower is 72 metres high but the height has nothing to do with the javelin results of Matti Jarvinen (gold medal in Los Angeles 72.71 or world record 74.02 also 1932).

The matter was asked the stadium architects Yrjo Lindegren and Toivo Jantti in early thirties and their reply was: "the height of tower is in correct relation to the rest of stadium mass and has no relation to any sport or athlete".

After lighting the flame Paavo Nurmi continued running to the foot of stadium tower and then reached the torch to a group of three young athletes who continued by running up to the top of the tower and then reached the torch to Hannes Kolehmainen who lit the flame on the top of tower.

One unhappy occurrence happened in the lighting ceremony: there was no photographer at the top of tower when Hannes Kolehmainen lit the Olympic flame. - So we still are missing a photo of a very historical moment of Olympic history.

Ossi Virtanen, Turku/Finland

The Editor received a letter from Don Anthony, visiting Professor East Mediterranean University and Life Member Wenlock Olympion Society, dated February 13, 2005:

You were kind enough to publish my article „The honour is mainly in winning medals...“ in the current edition of the Journal. Recently I have made some discoveries which are important and can enhance the thrust of my arguments. I said "I asked that the Oath should appear at the front of the book. It is difficult to find, tucked away under ceremonies or some such".

The book I referred to was the Olympic Charter 2000 edition. In Chapter 5 'The Olympic Games", Bye Law to Rule 69 1.12 - Opening and Closing Ceremonies - it states that a competitor from the host country should "proclaim the following solemn oath":

"In the name of all the competitors I promise we will take part in these Olympic Games respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, committing ourselves to a sport without doping and without drugs, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport, and the honour of our teams".

This was to be followed by a similar statement from a judge from the host country. This oath was a much improved version of the original about which Coubertin said: "I am the proud author".

Some three weeks ago the new version of the IOC Charter (September 2004).

The relevant section of the previous edition took up four pages. In the new edition there is only one page (107) with the directive that "all Opening and Closing Ceremonies shall be held in strict compliance with the IOC Protocol Guide". This Guide however does not appear in the Charter I find. For the new student of Olympism then, there is no mention of the Oath - a powerful and symbolic statement which should be known and understood by all competitors.

I have a proposal. On pages 18 and 19 on the new edition there is a list of 'copyrights' of the IOC as follows:

- The Olympic Symbol
- The Olympic Flag
- The Olympic Motto
- The Olympic Emblems
- The Olympic Anthem
- The Olympic Flame and Torches.

What not add The Oath (printed in full) to this list? Indeed why not start the list with it? Seeing afar, speaking clearly, and acting firmly!

Yours sincerely

Don Anthony, Gazi Margusa/Turkey

The Editor received a letter from Dr. Francis Burns, Honorary Secretary of the Robert Dover’s Games Society, dated March 2, 2005:

The article by Karl Lennartz on 'The Munich October Festival - an origin of the Olympic Games' includes a paragraph on Robert Dover's Cotswold Olimpick Games (p. 37). In the interests
of historical accuracy, it may be helpful to clarify the details for your readers.

The Cotswold Games, which date from 1612 and were known as Olimpick by 1631, had their link to the original Greek Olympic Games made clear in Annalia Dubrensia (1636), a collection of thirty-four poems, many by recognized poets. The original Games lasted until 1644, were revived in 1660, and continued until 1852. They were held again in 1951, and since 1965 have been a yearly feature of the Cotswolds. This year's Olimpick Games are planned for Friday, 3rd June, on Dover's Hill above Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire.

The use of the term 'Olimpick' has featured throughout their long history (cf Olympic Review (1985), 210.230-6). The discussion about how far they are idealistic, responding to the Book of Sports, or political - Royalists vs Puritans - continues to this day. The most recent publication - Celia Haddon's The First Ever English Olimpick Games (July 2004) (Hodder & Stoughton ISBN 0 340 8627 2) - does not see the name 'as means to the end'.


Yours sincerely,

Francis Burns, Kingswinford/
United Kingdom

The Editor received a letter from James Worrall, Honorary IOC Member, dated March 21, 2005:

Dear Mr. Wassong,

I was pleased recently to receive the January issue of the Journal of Olympic History, together with the ISOH calendar for 2005. Thank you.

However, on the calendar page for May 2005, I was surprised that the medal-winning sculptor Robert Tait McKenzie has been attributed to the USA.

Here in Canada, we have always considered Tait McKenzie, who was born in Canada, to have been Canadian. I am anclosing three references to confirm this, including excerpts from the 1932 Official Report of the Canadian Olympic Committee.

I am curious what information has caused you to attribute D. Tait McKenzie to the USA team of 1932.

Best regards

James Worrall, Toronto Ontario/Canada

Dear Mr Worrall,

Thank you very much for your letter dated March 21, 2005, which we should like to publish in order to clarify the facts you stated. Of course as you rightly say Robert Tait McKenzie was a Canadian and therefore represented them in the Olympic competitions. Accordingly we would like to adjust the May page of our 2005 calendar. The caption should read:

"The Games of the Xth Olympiad Los Angeles 1932: Robert Tait McKenzie (CAN) is awarded a bronze medal for his Shield of Athletes".

During the Art Competitions of the Games of the Xth Olympiad Los Angeles 1932 the sculpture section was covered by two disciplines. In the category "medals, plaquettes and relief sculptures" the catalogue contains 15 artists from six different nations. Among the entries there are exhibits by the Canadian artist Robert TAIT MCKENZIE (* May 26,1867, † April 28,1938). Other contributors were the Austrian Edwin GRIENAUER with six medals and the Swiss artist Milo MARTIN with three medals and a diploma. The Olympic medallists from 1928 could not repeat their success. The official commemorative medal by Gyula (Julio) KILÉNYI was exhibited but did not take part in the competition.

The gold medal was awarded to the Polish sculptor Józef KLUKOWSKI for his Sportrelief II, second was the U.S. American Frederick MACMONNIES with his Lindbergh-Medal and the third prize went to Robert TAIT MCKENZIE for his Shield of Athletes. TAIT MCKENZIE had already participated in the Fine Arts Competitions in Stockholm 1912 with his masterpiece Joy of Effort which has been reviewed so favourably that it was presented to Sweden and placed in the wall of the Stockholm stadium, although it did not receive any Olympic prize. Nevertheless, two years later TAIT MCKENZIE received the King's medal from GUSTAV V of Sweden for this very work.

Robert TAIT MCKENZIE was present at all Olympic Games during his lifetime starting with the 1904 St. Louis Olympics. He was unable to attend the 1936 Olympics in Berlin because of illness.


On behalf of the ISOH calendar 2005 production team

Thomas Zawadzki, Bonn/Germany