BOOK REVIEWS


Once again, Lennartz has made a most valuable contribution to the Olympic documentation. With this work he completes his series on the Olympic Games prior to World War One. This series, begun in 1996 features books on each Games including Athens 1906. The 1900 and 1906 books were compiled in co-operation with Walter Teutenberg; for 1908, Ian Buchanan, Volker Kluge, Bill Mallon and Teutenberg were main contributors; while for the 1912 book, Lennartz was initially assisted by some 25 students of a seminar (led by Lennartz) at the Deutsche Sporthochschule in Cologne.


In different chapters are articles on the Olympic Movement from in international perspective, developments in Germany and in Sweden during the fourth Olympiad (and calendars (time-lines) for the international Olympic Movement for both the 4th and 5th Olympiads. The time-lines makes it easy to follow the development. Strangely, however, the time-line for the 5th Olympiad (1912–16) ends with 1912. What happened in 1913 and 1914, before the war, within the IOC and in preparations for the 1916 Olympics in Berlin?

One political issue for the IOC was the role played by states which wanted their own Olympic teams. After the London Games, where Bohemia and Finland competed as separate entities, Austria and Russia respectively wanted to maintain the political status quo and lobby for them to compete as part of their own teams. Lennartz deals with this problem in an article of particular interest, Coubertins sportliche Geographie.

Iceland might not have demanded separate Olympic representation. Until 1918, Iceland was part of Denmark and as such were included in the Danish Olympic teams in London and Stockholm. However, both the 1908 and the 1912 Official Reports have Iceland and Island respectively in results for Icelandic Olympians; Lennartz even lists ISL among the participating teams in 1912 (p. 74), but the reviewer has found no note in the book concerning Iceland’s link to Denmark.

In a German book, the emphasis is, of course, on Germany with an article and statistics about Germany’s participation and biographies of the 197 German competitors in Stockholm.

One of the longest biographies deals with Karl Halt, a 21-year-old who was the German flagbearer at the Opening Ceremony and participant in five track and field events (incl. 4x100) with 9th in decathlon as his best placing. Later, as Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt, he became prominent in German sports administration and in the international Olympic Movement (IOC member 1929–64; apart from Willi Daume the longest serving IOC member in Germany). Head of the German track and field team in Stockholm was Carl Diem, in his capacity as chairman of the Deutsche Sport-Behörde für Athletik. Diem was also a sports journalist and wrote a report on Die Olympischen Spiele 1912 which set the standard for such publications.

This, the first Olympic book in German and printed in three editions, is much sought-after by collectors and highly appreciated not least by Swedish sports historians searching non-Swedish views of the Stockholm Games. In a similar way, Lennartz’s book – packed with facts and figures – will certainly be useful in view of the 100th anniversary of the Games of the 5th Olympiad. Nothing of this kind has been published in Sweden since the Official Report which came out in 1913!

In the foreword, Thomas Bach, IOC Vice-President and President of Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund, points out that the Stockholm Games were "a great success for the Olympic Movement"; adding that Sweden’s Royal Family and entire population were behind the Olympics. This is reflected from the start with sections on the election of the host city, organisation, discussion on the programme, financing, arenas, marketing and medals, the Swedish team, ceremonies and statistics.

In the main chapter, The competitions (including artistic and demonstration events) are covered with a statistical overview, detailed description and results divided into three parts – the top 8 with indications of medals/diplomas, German participants (often annotated) and full results for all participants. Every Olympic champion, every member of large teams (such as gymnastics), is given a short, factual biography.

The art competitions were a first in the modern Olympics, included after pressure from Coubertin, against the wishes of the organising committee and Swedish art institutions concerned. As a result, there was only a short article on the subject in the Official Report, which appears hidden away after articles on the social programme around the Games and the prizes for alpinism and hunting (these were not awarded). Lennartz, on the
other hand, gives a comprehensive account of the five art events, this appears directly after the information on the traditional, official sports.

The background information on the pseudonyms used by Coubertin when he entered the literature event may not be familiar to many, they were certainly not known to the reviewer. In writing his prize winning *Ode to Sport*, Coubertin had used *Georges Hohrod*. This was a name he had employed in an autobiographical short story in 1899, while his wife Marie was behind *M. Eschbach*. Fluent in German, she was most probably the translator of the German version. The Official Report has only this, *Ode an den Sport*, and Germany as country for the winner. According to Lennartz, Coubertin, who himself dealt with the administration of the 1912 art competitions, admitted only in 1919 he was behind *Ode to Sport*.

The closing article in this chapter covers the extensive social programme around the sports competitions, banquets, garden parties, receptions etc.

Finally, compilations are mainly statistics with number of competitors sport-by-sport/team-by-team. With no register of all competitors, their personal data and results (as in some previous editions), Lennartz generously refers to Bill Mallon and his (and Ture Widlund’s) 1912 book.

Throughout, photos and a wealth of notes adds to the high quality of what will surely become a standard text on the 1912 Olympics. Despite a few misgivings, my general impression is one of a very impressive publication. ■