

THE FIRST TRUE SPANISH OLYMPIC MEDALISTS

by Juan Fauria Garcia

Many controversies still exist about the identity of the first Spanish athletes to win medals in the Olympic Games. Many sources list Spain as winning medals in 1900 in polo and in shooting. Neither is correct.

One of the many historical difficulties concerning the 1900 Olympic Games, also combining an interest in Spanish Olympic medalists, is the 1900 polo tournament. The principal difficulty is the controversy over the nationality of the brothers Escandón, who, with Guillermo Hayden Wright, formed a team often termed North America/Mexico and which finished equal 3rd with a France/Great Britain team.

The Escandón family has definite Spanish origins. Although they lived in Spain it is difficult to obtain documents or definitive information about them. It seems clear, however, that they were Mexican, but their father and/or grandfather was born in Spain. About 1891, the Escandóns returned to Europe, initially residing in Paris. There, two of them, Pablo and Manuel, had a polo field at Courber. The three brothers that played in 1900 were:

- Manuel de Escandón y Barrón, the Marquis of Villavieja
- Pablo de Escandón y Barrón
- Eustaquio de Escandón y Barrón (later Marquis of Barr&r)

Another brother, who did not compete in the 1900 Olympics, was Antonio de Escandón y Barrón.

From a historical point of view it is interesting to note that during the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris, eight (8) separate polo events were conducted. The IOC recognizes only the "Grand Prix International de l'Exposition" as the Olympic event. The official book of "Exposition Universalle Internationale de 1900" concerning the *Contours d'exercices physiques et de sports* mentions only "Cing (5) coupes internationales," but a rare Spanish book, published about 1930, entitled *El Polo* exists. Written by Norman James Cinnamond James, a member of the Real Polo Club de Barcelona (founded 29 May 1896), the book explains the eight (8) events, with the winners as follows:

- Grand Prix de l'Ouverture
(HH Harjes-Eustaquio de Escandón- FA Gill-H Güell)
- Grand Prix de Suresnes
(Bradley Martin-HH Harjes-J Wright-M Raoul Duval)
- Grand Prix International de l'Exposition
(Foxhunters:Rawlinson-MacKey-Keene-Daly-Beresford)
- Cup Match
(J Wright-Eustaquio de Escandón-Pable de Escandón-Manuel de Escandón)
- Grand Prix International de Paris
(Eustaquio de Escandón-Pable de Escandón-Manuel de Escandón-M Raoul Duval)

- Coupe Bagatelle
(L Bischoffheim-Barón de Foy-M Raoul Duval-L de Errazu)
- Handicap International - Longchamp
(Duke de Bisaccia-F MacKey-Baron E de Rothschild-Luis de Errazu)
- Grand Prix des Dames
(Eustaquio de Escandón-Manuel de Escandón-Luis de Errazu-J Boussod)

There are some differences with the “Official Report” in which the “Prix de Longchamp, Handicap International” is mentioned. This is likely the “Handicap International - Longchamp” mentioned above and by Cinnamond James. The “Official Report” does give the nationality of the Marquis de Villavieja as Mexican. In 1975, in the *Olympic Review* (No. 95-96), the Mexican Olympic Committee neglects, or did not know of, the participation of the brothers Escandón.

The brothers Escandón were members of the Bagatelle Club (Société du Polo de Bagatelle), today Polo de Paris - Bagatelle. Another member of the club was Luis de Errazu, clearly mentioned in the “Official Report” as Spanish. He competed in the polo events and was a member of the jury. Errazu was a wealthy Spanish resident of Paris and was one of the founders in 1891 of the Bagatelle Club with another Spanish nobleman, Count de Urribarren, along with the Marquis de Villavieja, Viscount de La Rochefoucault, Baron de Rothschild, and Maurice Raoul Duval.

Norman James Cinnamond James in his book *El Polo* writes of the Escandón brothers as if they were Spanish. They were at the time (1900) still Mexican; only in later years would they return to Spain and retake Spanish nationality.

Ninety-two years after the 1900 Olympic Games, the majority of Spanish publications mention that Santiago Pidal, Marquis de Villaviciosa, won a silver medal in archery in 1900 in “Game Shooting,” and that this was the first medal won in the Olympics by a Spanish sportsman. This is wrong and it is a great and mysterious error.

Pedro Pidal y Bernaldo de Quirós, Mon y Cienfuegos, the first Marquis de Villaviciosa de Asturias, [né Somió (Asturias) on 2 November 1869, decessit Gijón (Asturias) 17 November 1941] was a well-known European shooter of that period. He won at least five Spanish championships. He was also a senator and an important personality in the history of the National Parks, and was also the first alpinist to climb the “Naranjo de Bulnes” in 1904 (with Gregorio Pérez), a very difficult and important mountain in Spain. Several months prior to the 1900 Olympics, using the pseudonym *O'Brien*, Pidal won the Grand Prix de Montecarlo against Donald MacKintosh (AUS) and Crittenden Robinson (USA), among others in the field of 98 shooters in a Living Pigeon Shooting event.

There were two Live Pigeon Shooting events during the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1900. These are described in the Official Report, published shortly after the sporting events of the Exposition. The first one was the “Grand Prix de Centenaire” held on 19 June (Tuesday) with the following prizes: 1st - 5,000 francs; 2nd - 2,500 francs; 3rd - 1,500 francs; and 4th - 1,000 francs. There were 166 shooters in this event, “ce qui ne s’était jamais vu dans aucun contours tir aux pigeons,” according to the Official Report. The results of this event were as follows:

1.	Donald MacKintosh	AUS	22
2.	Marquis de Villaviciosa	ESP	21
3.	Edgar Murphy	USA	19
=4.	Baron de Tavernost	FRA	14
	Henri Journu	FRA	14
	M. A. Ginot	FRA	14

The second Live Pigeon Shooting event in 1900 was the “Grand Prix de l’Exposition Universelle de 1900,” held on 25-27 June. The prizes were more considerable: 1st - 20,000 francs; [“le deuxième, le troisième, et la quatrième partageront dans la proportion suivante, les entrées du prix”]; 2nd - 50%; 3rd - 30%; 4th - 20%, . . . [“sans que l’allocation du deuxième puisse dépasser 15,000 francs, du troisième 8,000 francs, et du quatrième 6,000 francs.”] This appears to have been the more important event and was likely the one considered to be of “Olympic standards.” In addition, most of the “Olympic” events carried the title of an event “. . . de l’Exposition. ” There were 52 shooters who competed in this event, with the following results:

1.	Léon de Lunden	BEL	21
2.	Maurice Fauré	FRA	20
=3.	Crittenden Robinson	USA	18
	Donald MacKintosh	AUS	18
5.	J. Pederzoli	ITA	15
6.	C. Béthune	FRA	14
7.	J. Banwell	GBR	12
	Paul de Lunden	BEL	11
8. von Pape	GER	9
=10.	L. Drevon		8
	Scribot de Bons		8
	Hans Marsch		8
 Bucquet		8

The original mistake in which this was listed as an archery event is unknown. It is also not known who gave the event the name of “Game Shooting.” In his book *The Modern Olympic Games*, Ferenc Mezõ includes the “Grand Prix du Centenaire” event as Game Shooting in the archery section. In Bill Henry’s book, it is listed as a shooting event. In the 1956 U.S. Olympic Committee Quadrennial Report it is listed as a shooting event but the 1960 U.S. Olympic Committee Quadrennial Report lists Murphy as competing in Archery, and mentioning that the “Event was not officially recognized.” Erich Kamper, in *Encyclopaedia of the Olympic Games*, gives the results for the “Grand Prix de l’Exposition” under Shooting. Volker Kluge, in *Die Olympischen Spiele von 1896 bis 1980*, lists the results of the “Grand Prix de Centenaire” under Archery.

All 1900 sources list both events as shooting, not archery, events. This includes La Vie au Grand Air, and in Spain, La Vanguardia, and Los Deportes. It appears that the Olympic event should likely be considered the “Grand Prix de l’Exposition” and, thus, Santiago Pidal, Marquis de Villaviciosa, should not be considered Spain’s first medalist.

Spanish sportsmen did not compete in the Olympics of 1904, 1908, or 1912. Thus, the first official Spanish participation took place in 1920 at Antwerp, with Spain winning its first medals as well.

The first medal was in polo, an activity reserved for the wealthy and noble Spanish gentlemen. One of them, the Duke d’Alba (also known as the Duke de Berwick) had won approximately 39 titles, but is little remembered by Spanish Olympic writers. He was the oldest Spanish player in 1920. Born 17 October 1878, his full name was Jacobo Fitz-James Stuart Falcó Portocarrero y Osorio.

The other Spanish players who actually competed were as follows:

- Alvaro Figueroa y Alonso-Martinez, the Marquis de Villabragima. One of his daughters married the famous footballer, Guillermo Eizaguirre.
- Jose de Figueroa y Alonso-Martinez. He was a military man who died only a few months after the Olympics after a combat in Tafersat. He was the brother of the Marquis de Villabragima, and was occasionally confused with him. Both were sons of Count de Romanones, an important figure in Spanish political history.
- Hemando Fitz-James Stuart y Falcó, Duke de Peñaranda de Duero. Killed at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, he was the brother of the Duke d'Alba.
- Leopoldo Sainz de la Maza y Gutiérrez y Gómez de la Puente, Count de la Maza. He also competed at the 1924 Olympics.

These five were the only Spanish poloists who competed in 1920, although other names have been listed in various sources. The 1920 Polo tournament was played at Wellington Hippodrome in Ostende, Belgium. Spain defeated the United States, 13-3, but lost to England 13-11, to win the silver medal on 31 July 1920, Spain's first Olympic medal. Spain's second medal at the 1920 Olympics, in the football tournament, was also a silver medal but was not won until 5 September 1920.