

## FROM "ASCHENBRÖDEL" TO "GOLDMARTIN"

### An Olympic Champion from 1900

*Volker Kluge*



If you want a simple answer in the question of who was the first Olympic gold medal winner from Potsdam, prepare to be disappointed.

Everything that is known about Paul Wiesner – including even the name of the man – needs to be prefaced with a “but”.

That includes the competitions themselves. It is true that during the Olympic Games of 1900 in Paris there were sailing events; but nowhere in the invitations nor in the results one can find the term “Olympic”.

The winner of the second race (Class 1-2 Tons) was the German yacht „Aschenbrödel“, whose owner was Paul Wiesner. Wiesner was a member of the Potsdamer Yacht Club, but also of the Berliner Yacht Club. His Christian name is mentioned in this article as “Paul”, but in all books – including my own – he is mentioned as “Martin”.

What we know now as the Games of the II<sup>nd</sup> Olympiad, which were organised during the World Exposition of 1900 in Paris, were known at the time as “national and international games of physical exercises and sport” – in French called: „Concours nationaux et internationaux d'exercices physiques et de sports“. They were organised by the general director of the World Exposition and the French sports associations, while the IOC played no role whatsoever. The International Yachting Federation did not yet exist.

The smaller classes up to ten tons competed in the second half of May on the river Seine – and specifically on a course of eleven kilometres near Meulan; while the competitions for the bigger yachts took place in August near Le Havre. The programme mentioned two races for each class which were classified separately.

Paul Wiesner, who was director of the commercial school in Berlin, had joined the “Unterhavel Yachting Club” in 1896 when he was past his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday and had no nautical background. He was instructed in yachting by a well-known nautical officer of the time, Franz Zenker.

Zenker was a miller, who through his profession had acquired an extraordinary good knowledge of meteorology.

After Wiesner's first experiences in the dinghy „Lucie“, with which he participated in 1897 in the Wannsee-regatta, he ordered a yacht with side-boards, which was designed by the famous yacht-constructor Linton Hope and built by Sibbick & Co. on the Isle of Wight. From this it was clear that Wiesner was a wealthy man.

He had had the one-ton yacht named “Aschenbrödel” delivered in Paris, where he wanted to participate in the sailing events at the World Exposition.

It was the first time German sailors had taken part in an event in France since the Franco Prussian war some thirty years before.

To begin with there was a regatta, considered to be a “Course d'honneur“ in which all yachts had to participate. After Wiesner had come in behind the British “Scotia” in second place in this open



Paul Wiesner, born 10.9.1850, died 1.10.1930. The portrait shows the director of the commercial school in Berlin as an Honorary Member of the Berlin Yacht Club, at the age of 75 years. *Archive Kluge*

class, he also won the first race in the one-ton class.

However, after a post race examination it was ruled that his boat was 0.041kg too heavy, he was disqualified and entered in the next higher weight class.

Wiesner won the second race in this class with a big lead. For that result he was awarded the “Grand Prize of the World Exposition in Paris”, which meant in fact a monetary prize of 1500 Francs.

Without doubt Wiesner was entered for this regatta by the Yacht Club Potsdam, which had been born out of the Unterhavel Yacht Club on May 3, 1900. Wiesner was Vice-President of the Yacht Club Potsdam from 1900 to 1902; and organised club races in the four year period from 1900 to 1904.

It is also certain that Wiesner had been a member of the Berliner Yacht Club since 1898, where he acted as secretary a few years before the First World War. In 1923 he was made an Honorary Member of the Berliner Yacht Club.

There are in fact two Yacht Clubs which can lay claim to his many successes. Apart from his Olympic victory, he also won the “Emperor-prize” at Kiel week or Kieler Woche (1905) with the “Sperata”; the “Douglas-Cup” (1909) with the “Mignonne” and de “Coupe de Belgique” (1911) with the “Undine”. He took part in his last race as a 61 year old in 1921 aboard a 40 metre<sup>2</sup> yacht.

Right up to his death in 1930, Wiesner remained a respected member of the Potsdamer as well as the Berliner Yacht Club.

One-hundred years ago, it was customary for reports on sailing to refer to the owner of the yacht rather than

the crew. Therefore the results of the “Aschenbrödel“ are inseparable from Paul Wiesner, who also carried the title “Director” before his name.

However ownership of a yacht does not necessarily imply an active yachting career.

This notion is brought into sharp focus by an examination of the 1941 memorial book published by the Potsdamer Yacht Club. Here it mentions that the „Aschenbrödel“ was sailed in Paris in 1900 and also during the following “Kieler Woche” by the trusted and experienced Franz Zenker. However, Zenker’s name cannot be found in any Olympic record books because listed alongside Wiesner are crew members Ottokar Weise, Heinrich Peters and Dr. Georg Naue. So far it has not been possible to find a record of these names in the membership lists of either Yacht Club.

There still remains the question why Wiesner’s Christian name is to this day listed as “Martin”. In first place this can be explained by suggesting that the records of the Potsdamer and Berliner Yacht Clubs are inaccurate. Another possibility might be that in the contemporary French publications the name M. Wiesner can be found; which could simply be meant to be read as “Monsieur Wiesner”. In those days the records were kept in a very formal way with the use of titles and in any case, reporters did not consider such refinements as a Christian name very important.

Finally a word about the yacht herself “Aschenbrödel” really was a ‘golden yacht’. It was ‘ground-breaking’ in design with side-boards. A testimony to its originality is that the design has been used on the “Yacht Trophy” introduced in 1977 to honour the most successful German sailor of the year.

In 1996 the trophy was presented to Jochen Schüman (from Berlin, like Paul Wiesner), who as a three-times Olympic gold medal winner and six times participant in the Olympic Games may be regarded as one of the best yachtsmen of all time. ■

**Sources:**

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The “Aschenbrödel“, with which Wiesner won the Olympic “gold” medal in 1900 in Paris in the two-ton class. With this yacht he also won the “Emperor-Cup” at the “Berliner Woche” in 1902. *Archive Kluge*



Wiesner commemorative stamp *Archive Kluge*