

Belgium and the Olympic Games in Athens 1896

By Willy Schoevaerts

In 2012, one hundred and twenty Belgian athletes took part in the Olympic Games in London. In addition many Belgian officials, supervisors, attendants, journalists and regular spectators travelled to London to witness these great Games. It had been very different in the early days. When the first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896, not a single Belgian athlete took part. Even so, there were a few Belgians present in Athens that year. Jules Hansez and Michel Borissowsky from the Brussels cycling magazine *Le Véloce* set off to the Greek capital to experience these historic Games. It was the beginning of a great adventure.

King Leopold II responded positively

1894 is regarded as a special year in the history of the modern Olympic Games. The Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin, who had been contemplating the revival of the Olympic Games for a while, was the driving force behind the Congress organised in Paris in 1894 by the Union des Sociétés française des Sports athlétiques (USFSA). There were two main topics on the meeting's agenda: the first was Amateurism and Professionalism and the second the Olympic Games. Pierre de Coubertin had spared no expense or effort in making the Congress a success. He wrote to several heads of state and other dignitaries to obtain their patronage for the Congress.

The two heads of state he approached were King George I of Greece and King Leopold II of Belgium. The Belgian monarch responded positively to Coubertin's request; at the Congress two Belgian sports federations and a sport association represented their nation. Albert Carroen¹ and Jules Hansez² represented the Belgian Cycling Union. Maurice Ketels³ and Charles De Reine were present on behalf of the Fédération Belge des Sociétés de Courses à Pied (Belgian Federation of Running Clubs). The Brussels Athletic and Running Club was represented by the president Adolphe Ziane⁴ was also in Paris. The Ligue Pédestre Belge (Belgian Pedestrian League) counterpart



Jules Hansez studied law in Liège, when he took part in 1894 in the Olympic Founding Congress in Paris, where together with Albert Carroen (far left) represented the Belgian Cycling Union. Two years later Hansez travelled to Athens to report on the Olympic Games.

Photos: Lauters, F., Les débuts du cyclisme en Belgique: souvenirs d'un vétéran, Bruxelles: Office de Publicité, 1936.

of the Fédération des Sociétés de Courses à Pied, responded positively to the initiative but did not send a representative to Paris.

The Belgian representatives were not mere observers but actively worked to make the Congress a success. In particular, Jules Hansez from the Belgian Cycling Union made an impression with his views during discussions about the amateur versus professional sporting theme.

The most important decision that was taken at the Congress was the revival of the Olympic Games. Baron de Coubertin proposed that the first modern Olympic Games be organised in Paris in 1900 but participants at the Congress thought that this was too far away. The leader of the Greek delegation, Demetrios Vikelas, proposed that the Games be held in Athens four years earlier. On 23 June 1894, the Congress resolved to organise the Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens and four years later, in 1900, to hold them in Paris on the occasion of the World's Fair.

"Le Véloce" in Athens

The Olympic Games were held in Athens from 6 April to 15 April 1896. Count Maxime de Bousies, the Belgian Member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did not succeed in persuading the Belgian sports associations to the idea of sending athletes to the Greek capital. Perhaps they were deterred by the cost of the long journey and unfamiliarity with this new event. Nevertheless there were Belgian athletes that wanted to go to Athens. Fencer Delhassé requested information from various government agencies with a view to



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participating but did not receive a positive response to his requests.⁵ At the time it was already difficult to obtain a grant for individual participation in sport in Belgium. Another Belgian had indeed put his name down to participate. Cyrille Verbrugge, a fencer linked to the Royal Military School in Sofia, registered but did not go to Athens.⁶

Belgium certainly had enough talented athletes to have played a meaningful role in Athens. In cycling they would certainly have made a genuine contribution. In track and field athletics too they had demonstrated that they were able to compete with the best at the international level. In 1893, Etienne de Ré from the Brussels Athletic and Running Club had beaten the 100-metre world record with a time of 10 ⁴/₅ seconds, a record that would be equalled by several athletes over the next few years but would only be broken in 1911.⁷

For the rest there was little interest in the revived Games in Belgium. They barely received a mention in the press.



Belgium's Tandem cyclists at the end of the 19th century. Second from left: the Russian-born Michel Borissowsky experienced the 1896 competitions as a reporter and pacemaker.

The only Belgian sports publication with a definite interest in the Games was the cycling magazine *Le Véloce*. Based in Brussels, this newspaper was founded in December 1893 by Charles Caudron and several disgruntled employees from the Union's publication *Revue Vélocipédique Belge*. They had ceased their cooperation with the Cycling Union's publication due to their displeasure at the permanent criticism expressed by its members about the Union's administration and editorial.⁸

Jules Hansez, who had already written several French and Belgian cycling publications, became editor-in-chief in March 1896.⁹ Hansez set off to the Greek capital as representative of the Belgian Cycling Union and as on the spot reporter for *Le Véloce* and for the liberal newspapers *L'Indépendance Belge* and *Le Petit Bleu du matin*¹⁰. Michel Borissowsky, a cycle racer himself, was the largest shareholder in *Le Véloce*.¹¹ Borissowsky viewed the trip

as an adventure. He left Brussels for Paris by train on 19 March. From there, he went by cycle to Lyon. He made the journey together with a fellow traveller (Sachar). From Lyon he took another train to Marseille. Borissowsky, better known by his nickname 'Bori', had arranged to meet Hansez in Marseille. The 'Sénégal' a passenger liner was anchored in the southern French port. The ship would take them to the Greek port of Piraeus. Its departure was planned for 29 March but bad weather caused a delay and it left a day later. At five o'clock on the morning of the 30 March 1896, at 5 a. m. it sailed for Greece with 204 passengers on board.

The cruise had been organised by the French magazine *Le Tour du Monde*. The passengers included various French scholars. Amongst them were archaeologist Salomon Reinach, Gustave Larroumet, Professor of literature at the Sorbonne, the mathematician Henri Poincaré, psychologist-philosopher Gustave Le Bon and antiquity expert Emile Cartailhac.¹² The Belgian politician and lawyer Paul Janson was also on the trip with his daughter Lucie. The ship also carried many athletes that were taking part in the Games in Athens. It sailed along the island of Corsica and the Strait of Messina in the direction of Itea, the first stop. Most of the athletes left the tourists behind at this point. Some of them took a boat directly to Athens. Other athletes decided to continue on foot to the Greek capital in training for the Games. The remaining passengers including Hansez, Borissowsky and Janson first visited the ancient sites of Delphi, Argos and Mycenae and then travelled on the 'Sénégal' to Piraeus the port city of Athens.

They finally arrived in Athens on 3 April. They spent the afternoon of their arrival and the next few days visiting the Parthenon, the Acropolis, the Propylene, Erechtheion and various museums. Borissowsky and Hansez had had their fill of the numerous visits to sites and museums and were relieved when the Games started.

The Greeks had done all they could to ensure that the foreign visitors had an agreeable stay. Customs formalities were kept to a minimum and interpreters were available. Adequate accommodation and catering facilities were organised. The roads and avenues leading to the Stadium had been repaired. The areas surrounding the ancient monuments had been cleaned up. Numerous institutions (Academies, Universities, the Palace of Industry) opened their doors to host celebrations for the revival of the Olympic Games. Wealthy Greeks invited VIPs while local sports clubs and provided services to their rival competitors, who had come from far and wide. They also organised excursions to ancient sites such as Olympia, Corinth and Delphi. However the Greeks did not have everything under control. Weather conditions during the Games were anything but favourable. Cold, rain and wind tended to curb the enthusiasm on several occasions. The rowing competition was cancelled

completely because the wind in the bay of Piraeus was too strong.

The Games were held at several locations. The athletics competitions, gymnastics and weightlifting took place in the stunning Athens stadium that had been rebuilt with the financial support of the Greek businessman Georgios Averoff. The stadium was 260 meters long and 140 metres wide. The shooting competition was held in Kallithea, located between Phaleron and Athens. A velodrome had been constructed for the cycling competition at New Phaleron in a record time. The cement track measured 333.33 metres with long curves with a slight slope and short straight sections. Two tennis courts had been built in the centre of the velodrome for holding the Olympic competitions.

Hansez and Borissowsky tried to attend as many competitions as possible. They watched the track and field competitions in the stadium. They were laymen in this field. In fact Hansez saw the triple jump for the very first time. Although he was familiar with the discus throw, he had never actually seen this event performed either. He wrote:

Only wrestling and the discus throw recall the Ancient Games. This last exercise, which I have witnessed here for the very first time, actually has an aesthetic character. The movement of the discus thrower is captivatingly graceful and reminiscent of the masterpiece by Myron.

On 8 April, the programme featured the first cycling race at the velodrome in New Phaleron. At approximately 1 p.m. Jules Hansez hurried to the velodrome where the 100 km race was to start at 1.25 p.m. As a representative of the Belgian Cycling Union and reporter of *Le Véloce* and other publications he was very interested in the cycling race. There was another reason too. In this competition participating racers could use pacers. One of the pacers was ... Michel Borissowsky. This is what 'Bori' revealed about his participation:

Nine competitors took part in the race. Only one of the racers, the French amateur Flameng, could be taken seriously. All the others were just extras. From the start Flameng took the lead and soon lapped his opponents. After several kilometres only Flameng and a Greek cycle racer remained on the track. There was a strong wind and not enough pacers. These two elements prevented Flameng setting a good time. His pacers were Masson, Gravelotte³, Grivel⁴ and myself. To keep him in tow we had a tandem built for the road with double steering, a brake and a 4m60 gear. Well, everything you need not to succeed. In spite of all this Flameng managed to finish the 100 kms in 3 hours 18 minutes and 23 seconds.¹⁵ The cyclist in second place was fourteen laps behind. It is the second French victory and we hope that it will not be the last.



Hansez was of the same opinion and wrote:

Borissowsky gave it his all: on a tandem built for the road, which only needed a light and a bell to complete it, he battled on determinedly with three other team mates, who regularly took over from each other. The weather is atrocious. People are freezing. The cyclists gradually give up the fight .../... Flameng continues his brief tour. He affords himself the luxury of waiting for his only remaining opponent when the latter gets into difficulty or his bike breaks down.

The King, Queen and the Princes have brought the King of Serbia who arrived this morning as their guest. How they must have been bored by having to endure such a spectacle, in such ghastly weather.

Over the next few days, the French cycle racer Paul Masson, one of Léon Flameng's four pacers in the 100 km, won the race over a single lap (333.33 m), the 2,000 m sprint and the 10 km. Hansez found the lack of Belgian competitors a shame and stated:

After seeing the results of these races, we regret the absence of our compatriots even more. They would certainly have triumphed here and Pisart¹⁶ would have won the lap race and the 2,000 m with relative ease.

Only the victories in the 24-hour track race (won by the Austrian Adolf Schmal) and the road race Athens-Marathon-Athens (won by the Greek Aristides Konstantinides) escaped the French.

Hansez and Borissowsky were in agreement when they wrote about the swimming competitions. These were held under the most dreadful conditions. Borissowsky exclaimed:

The swimming competitions were organised on an extremely cold day. The north wind even made

The Velodrome of 1896 in Neo Phaleron. After Pierre de Coubertin had tried in vain in Paris to get a plan for the arena, Greece's Crown Prince Constantine had the necessary documents sent from Copenhagen. There at the same time a 333.33 m long cement track was being built for the 4th Cycling World Championships, which took place in August 1896. The installation was completed by the Greek architect K. Vellinis within three months. The arena, 4 hectares in extent, was provided by the railway company Athens-Piraeus.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive/ Albert Meyer

Start of the Arnhem Cup on 15 August 1893. Second from left: Michel Borissowsky.

Photos: Lauters, F., *Les débuts du cyclisme en Belgique: souvenirs d'un vétéran*, Bruxelles: Office de Publicité, 1936.



those dressed in the warmest outfits shiver. I will let you judge for yourselves what the swimmers had to endure. This time it was Austria-Hungary that triumphed.

Hansez wrote:

What courage all the swimmers demonstrated jumping into the water while we shivered in our garments. I forgot to mention that the wind seriously hindered the tennis players. Few spectators stayed around to appreciate their efforts. Each time the wind swept the balls away in unexpected directions.

One of the highlights of the Games was undoubtedly the marathon race. It was the Frenchman Michel Bréal (1832–1915) who had suggested including this 'anachronistic novelty' on the programme for the Games. Three months after the Congress of Paris had taken place he wrote a letter from Glion (Switzerland) to de Coubertin in which he worded his proposal. He added that he would provide a cup for the race winner. Eighteen of the twenty-one registered participants stood in Marathon on the historical 10 April 1896. Four foreigners participated in the race in addition to the fourteen Greeks: the Hungarian Gyula Kellner, the Australian Edwin Flack, Albin Lermusiaux of France and the American Arthur Blake. Three days earlier, Blake and Lermusiaux had been respectively second and third in the 1500 m.

A fifth foreigner, the Italian Carlo Airoldi also went to Athens, or one should say, ran. He left Milan on 2 February 1896 and reached Trieste on 6 March. Then he continued on foot to Sarajevo, Split and Dubrovnik where he took a boat. He disembarked in Patras and arrived in Athens on 31 March where he was received by Crown Prince Constantine. Airoldi however was not allowed to take part because the year before he had accepted 2000 pesetas as a prize for his victory in the Turin–Marseille–Barcelona foot race. He was therefore considered as

a professional athlete. The Italian wanted to use this initiative to prove that he embodied the spirit of an amateur. He did not succeed in convincing the organisation's committee.¹⁷

The race, dominated by the Greeks, was won by Spiridon Louis, who completed the race in 2 hours, 58 minutes and 50 seconds.¹⁸ His compatriot Vasilakos came second, over seven minutes behind. Borissowsky was not impressed:

The first three to finish were Greeks. Is that surprising? Only the Greeks can negotiate their roads without breaking their necks. It is an extremely mountainous road, very badly maintained and above all terribly damaged by the heavy rainfall in recent days.

The grand ceremony to crown the victors was held on 15 April. The King entered the stadium at 10.30 a.m., accompanied by the Duke of Sparta, Crown Prince Constantine and members of the Royal Family except for the Queen. Prince George handed the list of winners to the King. The King placed a crown of laurel leaves on the head of each winner and handed them an olive branch, cut from the woods of Ancient Olympia. They were handed a certificate and a medal and the King offered them his congratulations. The winners made a victory lap of the stadium that was filled to capacity for the occasion.

The adventure was also at an end for Hansez and Borissowsky. Their assessed of the first modern Olympic Games and did not have a very positive conclusion. Borissowsky was particularly severe in his judgement:

... /... though the Olympic Games have no other goal than to re-establish the ancient Games ... and to attract as many gullible foreigners as possible that imagine they will witness some captivating competitions if they attend.

Hansez was more restrained but his words proved prophetic:

The organisation of these Games was certainly admirable. All these gentlemen from the many committees have worked extremely hard and achieved considerable success among the public, which attended the celebrations in droves. .../... With regard to the cycling, it was absolutely deplorable. Our villages and suburbs constantly organise far more interesting races in which the battle is more exciting and intense. .../... People would find it very hard to understand if the Olympic Games to be organised in Paris in 1900 would not be open to all cycle racers.

It would not happen that quickly. Only a hundred years after Athens 1896 would the Games in Atlanta finally allow professional racers to participate in the Olympics.

Four years after those first Athens Games, it was the turn of Paris. Their Games were not a huge success either. They were too overshadowed by the World's Fair that was organised in the French capital the same year. This time Belgians did take part and enjoyed success, winning the country's first medals. ■

1 Albert Carroen was vice-president of the Rapid Club Bruxellois in 1892. When the Belgian Cycling Union created its sports committee on 20 November 1892, Albert Carroen was one of the five members. The other appointed members were Emile De Beukelaer, Fernand de Villegas de Saint-Pierre, Jules Hansez and L. Sauveur. Albert Carroen was involved in organising the first edition of the Paris-Brussels cycling race (1893) in which he acted as a time recorder.

2 Jules Hansez (*22 June 1870 Bastogne; †24 June 1949 Brussels) was still a law student at the University of Liège when he participated in the Congress in Paris in June 1894. As a student he cooperated with various French and Belgian cycling publications. He left the Congress in Paris early, most probably to prepare for his exams as *Le Véloce* announced on 19 July 1894: "M. Hansez, the agreeable member of the sports committee recently passed his exam as a Doctor of Laws with flying colours. Our sincere congratulations." When he completed his studies he expanded his activities in sports journalism and became Belgium's general correspondent for the French sports publication *Le Vélo*; then *Paris-Vélo* and of the daily newspaper *Le Journal*. In 1894, he settled in Paris where he stayed for over a year and worked on a daily basis for *Paris-Vélo* and on a weekly basis for *Le Véloce* (Belgium). From 1895, he also worked on the *L'Indépendance Belge*. In March 1896, following his return to Belgium, he became editor-in-chief of *Le Véloce*. In 1896, he also became responsible for the cycling column in the newspaper *Le Petit Bleu* by Gérard Harry. In April 1896, he went to Greece to experience the Olympic Games in Athens. Jules Hansez closely followed developments in the automotive as well as the cycling world. In November 1899, his newspaper changed name and became *Automobile-Véloce* and in 1910, *Automobile-Aviation*. After the First World War, Jules Hansez wrote for various newspapers and titles including *L'Indépendance Belge*, *Royal Auto*, *La Revue Sportive illustrée* and *Le Bulletin de la Presse Périodique*. He acted as president of the Belgian Cycling Union management committee until 1929. When a sports committee was established by the Union in November 1892, he was appointed as one of the five members. In 1899, Jules Hansez published a book about cycling 'La Belgique cycliste, champions belges' (Cycling Belgium, Belgian champions) in which he portrayed the greatest champions of the era. He was president and founder of the 'Moto Club Belge' and joint founder and long-standing treasurer of the 'Automobile Club Belge'. In 1912, he became president of the Association of periodical Belgian and foreign journalists. For a while, Jules Hansez was a provincial councillor for the liberal party and member of the permanent deputation of the Province of Brabant. At the beginning of the

Second World War and after the liberation he acted as ad interim governor of the Province of Brabant for a while. Sources: Rodolphe Van Loo, *Vingt ans de Présidence de Jules Hansez* (The twenty year presidency of Jules Hansez), in: *Revue de la presse périodique* (Magazine of the periodical press), No. 2. 1932. p. 11-22. M. Jules Hansez est mort (Jules Hansez is dead), in: *La Dernière Heure*, 27 September 1949. p. 3. R.A.C.B. Jules Hansez n'est plus (Jules Hansez is no more), in: *Royal Auto*, No. 11. November 1949, p. 7.

Comment: The City of Brussels' population register and the obituary published in *Le Soir* specify 28 June 1870 as being Jules Hansez's date of birth. His correct date of birth is 22 June 1870 (birth certificate No. 43 dated 22 June 1870, Bastogne).

3 Maurice Hippolyte Polydore Ketels (*5 January 1863 Sint Joost-ten-Node; †29 September 1905 Brussels) became president of the Fédération Belge des Sociétés de Courses à Pied in 1891. Because there were tensions at the time in the Federation he was asked to take on the presidency. In July 1892, he tendered his resignation in a letter to the Federation's Committee as he felt he did not have the time to fulfil his tasks. The committee was able to persuade him to withdraw his resignation. Together with Auguste Dupont, Maurice Ketels, member of the Athletic and Running Club, was one of the pioneers of Belgian athletics. He was also member of the rowing club Réunion Nautique de Vilvorde. He acted as secretary to the administration for the Civil List (Royal Palace) until his death. In: *La Revue Athlétique Belge* No. 10, 4 April 1891; No. 61, 23 July 1892 and No. 62, 30 July 1892. Mort de Maurice Ketels (The death of Maurice Ketels), in: *Le Petit Bleu*, 1 October 1905, p. 2. Obituary. Maurice Ketels, in: *La Vie Sportive*, 6 October 1905. p. 3.

4 Adolphe Eugène Ziane (*23.01.1864 Dampremy; †10 March 1934 Brussels) was a lawyer and president of the Athletic and Running Club of Brussels. Later he also held mandates as president of the Board of Directors of Forges de la Providence steel company (Marchienne au Pont) and the Charbonnage de Bonne Espérance coal mining company (Lambussart) and he was director of several companies including A.R.B.E.D, Metallurgique de Terre Rouge, Metallurgique de Sambre et Moselle and the Banque Centrale de Sambre.

5 *La Chronique*, 13 April 1896.

6 Perhaps a missed opportunity. Nonetheless ten years later, fencing master Cyrille Verbrugge won the title during the intermediate Games in Athens in 1906. Lennartz, *Erläuterungen*, p. 137.

7 Etienne De Re (1870-1942), One of the best Belgian sprinters in the pioneering years of Belgian athletics. He won ten Belgian Championship titles for the 100 m, 400 m and 110 m hurdles (1890-1894). During the early years of his athletics career he regularly ran under the pseudonym Lise Fleuron. He was a member of the Athletic and Running Club of Brussels. He was also a Professor at the Université libre de Bruxelles. *Le petit dictionnaire des Belges* (The small dictionary of Belgians), *Le Cri*, RTBF 1993, p. 224.

8 Un ancien. La fondation du Véloce. (The former. The creation of *Le Véloce*), in: *La Revue Cycliste*, No. 12, 15 December 1903, p. 2.

9 In the early days *Le Véloce* was printed on light blue paper. It was more common in those days for national and international sports newspapers to be printed on coloured paper. In its early years *Le Vélo* (Paris) was printed on green paper and the *Paris-Vélo* on pink paper.

10 Jules Hansez was in Athens reporting for *Le Véloce*, *L'Indépendance Belge* and *Le Petit Bleu du matin*. The reports written by Hansez that appeared in *Le Véloce* were entitled *Le Véloce à Athènes* (*Le Véloce in Athens*). Because the first letter sent by Hansez arrived in the wrong place the articles were only published in *Le Véloce* once Hansez arrived back in Brussels. His other reports (apart from those in *Le Véloce*) appeared in *L'Indépendance belge* and *Le Petit Bleu*. His articles about the Games that appeared in these two papers were identical. The editorial and administration of these two newspapers were coincidentally located at the same address. In *Le Petit Bleu* the articles appeared under the name 'Jules de Valois', a pseudonym of Jules Hansez. As representative of the Belgian Cycling Union he also wrote a separate report about the games for the *Revue Vélocipédique Belge*, the Union's publication. Michel Borissowsky wrote a series of articles that appeared in ten editions of *Le Véloce* under the heading "Souvenirs et impressions d'un voyage en Grèce" (Memories and impressions of a voyage to Greece). In the newspaper *Le XXIème Siècle* two articles appeared about the Games by a reporter on location. He used the initials A.B. This reporter's identity remains a mystery.

- 11 Michel Borissowsky (*6 December 1871 Moscow) was an engineer who studied at the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL). (Ecole spéciale des arts et manufactures du génie civil et des mines) (Special School of Arts and of civil engineering manufacturing and mining). He passed the entrance exams in 1886 at a very young age (15 years) but only obtained his degree in 1900. The same year he published a textbook on the Russian language (a Russian language course). Remarkably, this work in manuscript form was printed by the 'Imprimerie des Trois Rois' printers in Leuven. Michel Borissowsky was an amateur cycle racer and entered tandem races for example in the Netherlands and Italy. He won second place in the Liège-Bastogne-Liège road race for amateurs in 1893 behind the winner Léon Houa. In 1898, he was already a member of the Automobile Club de Belgique. He lived for a time in Wilsele (Bleydenberg Castle) and in Leuven and he moved to Schaerbeek in 1906. Source: Leuven City Archives, Catholic University of Leuven (Archives) and F. Lauters.
- 12 Source: Léon Delange-Janson.
- 13 It was probably the French fencer Eugène Gravelotte who became the Olympic fencing champion in Athens.
- 14 It was probably the athlete Alphonse Grisel who participated in different athletics competitions in Athens (100 m and 400 m, long jump and discus throw). He was also registered for other sports in which he did not participate. Lennartz, *Erläuterungen*, p. 138.
- 15 The official time of the winner was 3 hours 08 minutes and 19.2 seconds.
- 16 Jules Hansez meant the Liège cycle racer Fernand Pisart, member of the Liège Cyclist's Union.
- 17 Die Geschichte von Carlo Airoldi aus Italien by Giuseppe Odello. Lennartz, *Erläuterungen*, p. 87.
- 18 In his report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium the Belgian special envoy mentioned a time of 2 hours and 55 minutes. He reported incorrectly that all the foreigners had given up.

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- Report No. 115/79 of 26 April 1895 and report No. 93/62 of 15 April 1896 of M. Guillaume, Belgian special envoy in Athens, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium. Subject: The Olympic Games.
- Source: Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade & Development Cooperation. Archives Service (unpublished documents).

Belgian Olympic Team of 1906 in Athen

Thanks to the work of our archivist Nele Cleymans, we are able to present this picture from the Sportimonium Archives. It shows the Belgian participants in Olympic Games, namely in Athens 1906. We would like to dedicate the discovery of this document to the memory of Karl Lennartz, who published 'Die Olympischen Spiele 1906 in Athen' in 1992 with Walter Teutenberg.

Les Athlètes belges aux Jeux Olympiques 1906. 1. Fernand de Montigny (Antwerp, fencing bronze) 2. Eugène de Bougnie (Tourcoing, cycling bronze), 3. Philippe Le Hardy De Beaulieu (Brussels, fencing bronze), 4. Rémy Orban (Liège, rowing silver), 5. Cyrille Verbrugge (Brussels, fencing two gold), 6. Commandant Clément Lefébure (Brussels, official), 7. Léon Dupont (Brussels, athletics silver), 8. Troffaes (Brussels, shooting), 9. Prospère 'Romeo' Verschelden (Brussels, cycling), 10. Sauveur (Liège, wrestling), 11. Marcel Dubois (Gand, weightlifting and wrestling) 12. Max Orban (Liège, rowing silver) 13. Jules Lesage (Brussels, athletics)



14. Constant Cloquet (Brussels, fencing bronze), 15. Edmond Crahay (Anvers, fencing bronze). Missing from the photograph are François Verstraeten (Brussels, cycling) and René Dobrinovitz (Constantinople, wrestling). Size: 16,5 x 22 cm

Roland Renson