

FINLAND

by Ingmar Björkman

The Grand Duchy of Finland was part of the Russian empire. According to COUBERTIN'S point of view from 1894 not only recognized countries but nations could take part at the Olympic Games. He formed the term "*Olympic Geography*". Until the Olympic Games 1906 neither politics nor diplomacy had any objections concerning participation. This started in 1908, increased to conflicts in 1912 and ended at the congress 1914 with the exclusion of Finland respectively Bohemia. After World War I, Finland and Czechoslovakia are newly recognized countries. In Athens Russian athletes are announced, but they did not come to Greece. No Olympic committee existed in Finland in 1906. This wasn't founded until December 2, 1907.

Reason for the Finnish participation was the young student, Johan Verner WECKMAN (*26 July 1882 in Lovisa, †22 February 1968 in Helsinki). After only two years of training he won the Finnish heavyweight wrestling championship in 1904. One year later he went to Germany and began his degree in mechanical engineering at the Technical University Karlsruhe and graduated in 1907. As a member of the athletes' organization *Germania* he won the heavyweight world championships in 1905. In December of the same year the German Imperial committee for Olympic Games (*Deutscher Reichsausschuß für Olympische Spiele*; DRAfOS) asked him, if he wanted to participate at the Olympic Games in Athens 1906 as member of the German team. WECKMAN declined and enquired at his home club *Helsingfors Atletklubb*, what was known about the Athens' Games in Finland. At first he did not receive an answer.

In February 1906 the DRAfOS asked him again whether he wanted to become a German citizen and travel to Athens. WECKMAN wrote another letter home and this time received a positive answer: He could compete in Athens for Finland. He returned to his home country and trained at a circus in Helsinki. The director offered him 100 Finnish marks per evening, if he performed as an artist, as a strong man. WECKMAN turned the offer down, he wanted to continue as an amateur and compete in Athens.

WECKMAN travelled to Athens with three teammates and the chairman of *Helsingfors Atletklubb*, Axel LILJEFORS. The three athletes were very successful.



Venne Järvinen

Venne Järvinen

The discus thrower Venne (Verner) JÄRVINEN (*4 March 1870 Juupajoki (Orivesi), †31 January 1941 Tampere) won the discus event in the Greek style with 35,17 m and came third in the freestyle competition (36,82 m), also fifth in the Javelin (44,25 m). In the shot put competition he was disqualified. He participated in the stone put competition without gaining a memorable place.

Four years later in London 1908 he came third in the Greek style (36,48 m) and fourth in the freestyle competition (39,43 m). He was also an excellent wrestler. Because three of his four sons took part in Olympic Games, he was later called „*Father Järvinen*”.

Kaarlo (*27 March 1903 Jyväskylä, †25 August 1941 Karjala, during World War II) was ninth 1932 in Los Angeles in the shot put (14,63m) and improved the Finnish record with 15,92 m in 1932. His brother Akilles (*19 September 1905 Jyväskylä, †7 March 1943 Tampere in a plane crash) won the silver medal in the decathlon (7931,500 P.) in Amsterdam 1928 and repeated his success four years later in Los Angeles. In 1936 he had to drop out due to an injury. Matti (*18 February 1909 Tampere, †22 July

1985 Helsinki) had his debut as a javelin thrower with 54,26 m in 1926. He threw a world record of 72,38 m in Stockholm 1930, which, however, was not accepted by the IAAF. In Los Angeles 1932 he won with 72,71 m. In Berlin 1936 he was only fifth, because he was injured. He improved the world record eleven times (from 71,57 m to 77,23 m in 1936). Besides that he was European Champion in 1934 and 1938. The fourth brother Yrjö (*19 April 1900 Jyväskylä, †7 July 1968 Tampere) was third in the javelin throw at the Finnish Championships in 1924.

Henrik Ahlman

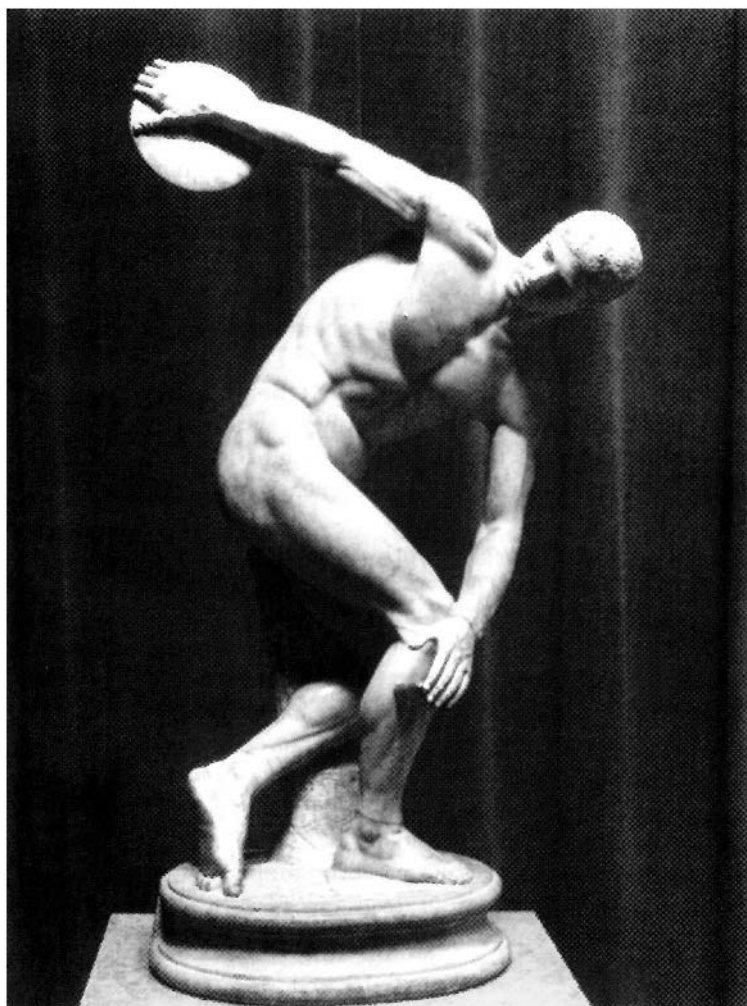
The second participant was Henrik AHLMAN (from 1907 onwards as Heikki PENNOLA *11 September 1879 Hämeenkylä [Kanneljärvi], †26 March 1960 Kuopio). He was multi-discipline eventer, and was fifth in the pole vault (3,00 m), fourth in the javelin throw (44,00 m), 17th in the pentathlon and participated in shot put and discus without having qualified.

Uno Haggman

Uno HÄGGMAN (from 1906 onwards Uuno TUOMELA *23 May 1882 St. Petersburg, †5 May 1936 Viipuri), also a multi-discipline eventer, was fourth in the pentathlon, seventh in the javelin throw, 28th in the long jump without a run up and took part in the discus event.

Johan Weckmann

WECKMAN won the middleweight wrestling without difficulties and repeated his success four years later, this time as a light-heavyweight. He won both finals by fall. He was the first gold medallist of Finland at Olympic Games. In 1921 he became Technical Director of the Kaapelitehdas Company (cable factory) and promoted to Executive Director of the company in 1937, which he stayed until 1955. The company deals with electronics since 1962 and is called *NOKIA* today. With two first places, one silver and one bronze medal, Finland was extremely successful with the participation of only four athletes.



The discobol of Myron was again used as a model for Greek discus throwing. Another discus event was discus free style