

OLYMPICS BEFORE PIERRE DE COUBERTIN

BY ALEXANDER WM. DRIEGA

Some years ago I came in possession of a photocopy manuscript that was sent to the late Ambassador Roger Rousseau, Chairman (COJO) of the '76 Montreal Olympic Games, probably in 1974, entitled *Revival Of The Olympics Before Pierre De Coubertin*. It is a university paper (P.E.100F) written by William Koestner which leads me to believe the essay was marked and probably filed away in some dark archival storage facility at the University - screaming to see the light of day. This paper was probably never published. It is not dated and the name of the University or the whereabouts of the author is not known.

The writer gives an interesting perspective on the Olympic idea and efforts to revive the Games after the Ancient Games and before Coubertin's activity. He put together as much information as he was able and alludes that there is much more research to be done covering this time frame.

There appears to have been very little written about previous attempts to revive the Games and it is my opinion that the following essay be exposed so others may benefit from the efforts and findings of Mr. Koestner. Unfortunately the Tables have faded so badly they could not be included.

Revival of the Olympics Before Pierre de Coubertin
By William K. Koestner

In 394 A.D. the Olympic Games were abolished in accordance with a decree issued by the Emperor Theodosius the Great. I'm not the only person to believe that Theodosius was not the one to really murder the Games.

The Games, following the humiliations and the violations of the institutions they had suffered from, had died long ago and Theodosius simply signed their death certificate.

But also I believe that the Games were not the only ones to die. The depressive climate of the period and its agony had indicated that the time had come. An entire world was dying, a new world was being born. A contemporary Greek pedagogue and writer says the following: "As for the nature of things, the same is true for the world of ideas. Nothing is

lost, everything changes. The historic, political or cultural events as memories or consequences or as traditions and ideas, as well as the ideas, themselves are alive and continue to lead their peculiar lives. They are born, they flourish and then decline, but they never really dies. They most certainly survive, and sometimes this survival is such that we talk of a renovation or a regeneration. (1)

The Olympic Games were abolished since this was necessitated by the political and military interest of the vast state of Theodosius. Olympia, which once was the heart of Greece, and of the then known world, is now lying in ruins. It was destroyed by the new civilization which succeeded to the one that worshiped it. But its great idea did not die, it has not been lost.

Mr. C. Palaeologos, deputy curator of the International Olympic Academy said in his lecture at the 11th Session of the Academy: "Olympia, an endless source of water, will never stop inundating the modern world with its holy ideology. As we, faithful and devoted to its philosophical legacy, we work here in the International Olympic Academy for the realization of its ideas: the co-operation of nations, the understanding, the love and the peace of the world. We are working in order to make Olympia again the heart of the world." (2)

Before I mentioned the death of the Olympic Games, and I meant the Ancient Games. Who revived them? Who brought back the Olympic idea into the common knowledge? If you asked 100 people these questions, probably 60-70 would not have any idea and the rest would say, that "...one French guy named Coubertin, I guess". And though this is a fact that the Modern Olympic Movement was initiated by Baron Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937) as he revived the conception of Ancient Olympics. But this statement is partly correct only and contradicts to the scientific evaluation of the prominent figures' historical role. When we honour Coubertin's diplomatic, sport-political, sport-pedagogical and administrative events, we shall not forget those social-historical conditions which actually enabled, and founded the regeneration of the Olympic idea. Why do I emphasize this? Because there were numerous attempts made long before Coubertin was even born to revive the

Olympic Games, but in the light of the contemporary social, political and cultural events, those attempts remained isolated and short-lived events. These events are not very well known, and in this essay I try to pay my honor to those who contributed more or less to this holy ideology-without curtailing Coubertin's merits.

According to our present knowledge, the idea of Olympic Games was brought back onto the common knowledge by a prominent Italian statesman of the Renaissance, Metteo Palmieri, around 1450, in one of his polemical essays. In their disputes with the clerical and feudal establishment, the politicians from the Italian City-states cited the ideas of the Antic World quite often.

From the point of view of medical science and education Hieronymus Mercurialis dealt with the Olympics in more details. In his work, *De Arte Gymnastica*, edited in 1569 he stated the example of the ancient physical culture as something to follow. In 1590 Petrus Faber publishes his work, *Agonisticon*, in Paris and in this he mentioned the Ancient Olympics, too. It should be noted, that both - following the pattern of Middle Ages - are against competition and they intended to use the Antic exercises only for the aesthetic education of the upper class.

Without doubt one of the first pioneers was Johannes Aquilla, a lawyer, who organized an "Olympic exhibition" in Baden, in 1516. In 1545 Hans Sachs wrote a poem in ancient-German and the basic idea for that was taken from the Ancient Olympics. In addition to that, he stated that the fencing had its roots in the ancient games, too. I would like to note, that a well-known author in this field doubts that.(3) But Sachs must have had an advanced knowledge of the ancient Games, because he wrote that the competitors were nude and they put some oil over their body. He emphasized that the prize was not money but wreath. It is interesting that he said that the Greek competitors were more aesthetic than the Roman ones.

Thomes Kyd, English playwright (1558-1594), used the Olympic idea in his play. Outstanding sport-events were transferred to theatrical use to protest against social problems and to scourge the flabby notability.

More credit should be given to lawyer Robert Dover who instituted the competition-series called "Olympic Games" in the reign of James I in 1604, at Barton in The Heath. The place where they were held still bears the name Dover Hill.

Most likely, the games were connected to, the struggle against Puritanism and showed the demand for man-sport in the light of the development of bourgeois mentality in England. The games were held annually on Whitonntide and therefore they were connected to English physical-cultural traditions. What I would note as one of the most important features of the event is the fact that there was no sex or social discrimination, everybody was eligible to compete. The series lasted for a few days and the sports were football, skittles, quoits, shovel board, cudgel, and single stick, bull-baiting, cockfighting, bowling, wrestling, leaping, dancing, pitching the bar, horse racing, ringing of bells, jumping in sacks, etc. The competitors came from various parts of the country, lived in tents and besides the physical

events, there were intellectual competitions as well, (chess, music, etc.). The closing celebration was a big outdoor party with ox-grilling. The games were carried on with great spirit in the reign of Charles I, Charles II, William and Mary, even after the death of Robert Dover. In the reign of George III, the fields were enclosed-mainly as a reason of puritan influence.

The two great Prussian writers and philosophers, Schiller and Goethe, got in touch with the thought of Olympia, but in a different way from each other as well as from those I mentioned above. Schiller mentioned the Olympic conception in his letters dealing with aesthetical education. In Goethe's works the Olympics are not mentioned directly, but he

showed interest in the search for the exact location of Olympia, which had just gotten under way, I'll come back to that later.

The French genius Rousseau makes Emil run and jump, so he would have an idea of Olympics.(4) Rousseau's philosophy is well known as "back to nature" - the Olympics served as a symbol for the importance of multilateral education. Almost in the same time, in 1776 the English Gilbert West wrote a doctoral thesis about the Olympic Games. In the epilogue of that thesis he dreamt about the restoration of the Games and expressed his sorrow for the fading away Dover Games.

In the second half of the XVIIth century we can observe the beginning of the struggle against social privileges within the physical culture, too. But in the same time, the prejudice against competition still held on strongly, though the physical educational attempts of the philanthropiums were

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based on traditional fold-games and pentathlon which, as we know, was one of the main events of the Ancient Games. In these events there were local competitions - in the spirit of Olympics. This is not just a coincidence, since there are indications that the philanthropists were dreaming of the restoration of Games.

The Olympic idea gained more respect, when Prince Leopold Frederick built a track on his estate near Dessau, where the program of Ancient Games was performed-as part of the birthday celebration of the Prince's wife. These events were held annually between 1772 and 1779. Just to note: the Prince was Basedow's benefactor....Basedow was the founder of philanthropism.

At the beginning of the XIXth century the Olympics suffered a temporary setback, but just on the field of physical culture. On the field of archaeology and history it gained more interest. But through the centuries the location had changed so much physically, that the search for it was fruitless, until in 1766 the archaeologist Richard Chandler from Oxford discovered it, using the accidentally gained information from a Turkish officer, who mentioned about "...a big church and statue of wrestlers around it near the village of Miraka".(5) The actual digging started in 1829 by a French military expedition and the reconstruction of the Ancient Olympic Games started soon by linguists, archaeologists and art-historians. The final dig-up took place between 1875 and 1881 headed by the German Ernst Curtius and the most important inheritance of the Ancient Olympic Games were opened up.

The reports and essays about the findings from Olympia gave a new boost to the thought of practical restoration of the Games. Outstanding example for this is the Halsingborg Olympic Games in Sweden in the 1830s'. Luck helped me to find out more about it, and by luck again, I was able to obtain a correct translation, so I'd like to present the first pages of John Pape's essay.

"At the time of the Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1936, there was a short article in a German newspaper with the heading: Olympische Spiele in Schweden schön for 100 Jahren (Olympic Games in Sweden already 100 years ago). The name of the paper does not appear on the cutting, which in fact inspired the present study, but in translation the article gives the following information:

"It is generally thought that Baron de Coubertin was the first to have seriously considered reviving the Olympic Games. But in fact another county had worked much earlier for "en Olympiad." This is evident from a short news item in the Magazine fur die Litteratur des Auslandes in the year 1836. One sees there that if was really the Swedes who first revived and modernized the Olympic idea and even translated it into action. At the end of 1833 an "Olympic Union" was formed in Southern Sweden, with the idea of reviving interest in the Olympic Games competitions in Sweden and Norway. This Olympic Union organized its first Olympiad in July 1834 near Ramlösa and the experiment was repeated two years later, in August 1836, at the same place. Ramlösa is a little spa in Malmö county, which is still today renowned for the water of its springs, which is very rich in iron.

There were gymnastics exercises of all kinds at these "Olympic Games", with competitors from the whole of Scandinavia, and the winners were rewarded with silver cups, gold rings, oak and laurel wreathes and even cash prizes."

So much for the article! In all probability the original news item in the Magazine für die Litteratur des Auslandes gave no further information either, but it has been impossible to check this, since neither the University Library in Lund, nor the Royal Library in Copenhagen have copies of the periodical. Halsingborg literature makes no mention of these events either, so my main source of information has had to be newspapers of the period. Even here there are difficulties, since all issues have not been preserved

by the libraries, so there are unfortunately gaps in the reporting.

The Olympic Union of 1833, which is mentioned in the German article, seems to have been formed on the initiative of Gustav Johan Schartau, who was at that time a teacher in gymnastics at Kungl. Akademien (the Royal Academy) in Lund. It appears from available information concerning the union that Schartau was the driving force and the real organizer of both the Olympic Games in Ramlösa and the other activities of the union.

In June 1834, Schartau was in Halsingborg (as he probably was the two previous summers) as leader of a two-month course in physical training and physiotherapy. On June 28, he inserted in "Nya Halsingborgposter" the following notice concerning the Olympic Union, which clearly indicates that its main ambition was to revive the classical Olympic Games:

MORE CREDIT SHOULD
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LAWYER ROBERT DOVER
WHO INSTITUTED THE
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CALLED "OLYMPIC GAMES"
IN THE REIGN OF JAMES I,
AT BARTON IN THE HEATH.
THE PLACE WHERE THEY
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NAME DOVER HILL.

“The Olympic Union

It should be the duty of mankind, not only to strive for perfection concerning his soul, but also to train his body, so that these two friends shall reach mutual unity and equality, supporting one another in striving towards their distant goal. Such was the aim of the philosophers of Greece and Rome, and such is the conviction of the Olympic Union. Just as we love the classical literature which forms the basis of all higher education, so should we follow the example of those great nations who have passed if down to us. Our generation is confused by Egotism and dissatisfaction. Our duty should therefore be to bring about a better national spirit with people’s festivals and competitions, where general glad rivalry in admirable sporting activities will follow the example of the heroes of antiquity. The Olympic Games have lain forgotten through the centuries; but we hope one day to see them revived in modern form among the strong sons of Scandinavia. Moderation, virtue and strength are the pillars of all states, and they have always been the foundation of the independence and honor of the Swedish Nation. The Union shall therefore seek to support and maintain them and its motto shall be: “Long live the King and the Fatherland!”

Since the undersigned would honor his obligation to draw attention to this Union, which, though small in its beginnings, should in its ideal include all highly-placed and noble Citizens, I wish to invite all residents in this our province to take part in the activities of the Union. The provisional charter prepared by the Union will be discussed at a meeting of Sponsors and Friends of the Union in Halsingborg on Sunday, 13 July.

On the next day (14 July) the Union will be organizing the following competitions:

- 1. Wrestling, exercises in agility and balance;*
- 2. High jump, with and without pole and over a living horse;*
- 3. Climbing in poles and ropes;*
- 4. Running over shorter and longer distances.*

Those who wish to take part in one or more of these events are requested to register with the undersigned before 22 July, preferably in person. He will be in Ramlösa from the 2nd of the same month and will be happy to provide further information. It will be decided at the meeting of the Union in Halsingborg what prizes will be awarded to the winners of the competitions.

Lund, 21 June, 1834.

G.J.Schartau

*Teacher in Gymnastic and Fencing,
at the Royal Carolinska Academy, Lund.”*

The idealistic ambitions, which led to the formation of the Union are even more apparent in the corresponding announcement of the second Olympiad in 1836. It was once again written by Schartau and appeared in the New Halsingborg Post (Nyare Halsingborgposter) on August 2, 1836. It reads as follows:

“Since so many Societies and Unions are striving with the diligence and patriotism to promote the good of the people, the Olympic Union hopes that it too can make its contribution, since its aim is to awaken a more widespread respect and love for the classical sports and competitions of antiquity, which have always developed the physical and moral strength of Nations. - we in the Union feel that intellectual development today is being driven forward with a haste and stress which

could easily lead to its collapse, since the physical development of our people is in general overlooked. The body is left in its untrained state, although it needs, as the mind does, to be developed to higher levels of achievement, if it is not to fall behind the mind as it were, and fall into disharmony with it. We feel that in its strife between mind and body, this disturbed equilibrium, which brings about so often these wild flames of passion, sickness, crimes and delusions of our times. Citizens of the lower classes, who live out their days in poverty or in unemployment, are sometimes gifted with good bodily and spiritual potentialities, which need suitable direction and training if they are not to lead the normal ruin of the individual. How great would be the benefit therefore, if the common people could devote their

spare time to training in those free arts of whose flowering field they would certainly gain a kind of useful education and enjoy a rich compensation for their lack of the material advantages of their fellow citizens! Yes, we are convinced that, if these fine arts, which spring from the foundation of religion and truth, were to be more widely practiced in our nation’s centers of education (as yet so inadequate in this respect) so that they became part of everyday life, and, as in ancient Greece, at times culminated in an Olympic competition, then would the lower material interest - mistress of the world and mother of vices - at last be conquered by virtue, the walls of prisons would no longer echo with cries of pain, since mankind, thus brought to consciousness and awareness of his own worth, would emerge into the light, virtue would once again flourish in freedom and an Olympian health would color the pale cheeks of the unfortunate.

Although the undersigned has tried to present here briefly the aims of the Union, it should also be stated that he feels the great

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goal is still far off. It can only be reached in time, through the gracious encouragement of the leaders of government and cooperation of the nobler and more educated of our nation.

The Union follows the example of the Greeks in taking Gymnastics as the foundation of the main edifice, hoping in time to add the fine arts and complete the whole plan.

Those Patriotic Men, who would favor this good cause with their support, are requested to send their contributions either to Mr. Torrell, Printer and Bookseller in Halsingborg, or to the undersigned, who from August 6 will be in Lund.

Ramlösa, July 28, 1836

G.J. Schartau

Academic Fencing-Master." (6)

Here we have a program of the Olympic Union. With all its pathetic pomp and exaggerated patriotism, it is nevertheless a document of its time, which gives an impression of true idealism and enthusiasm in the writer. Sad to say it looks as if those "patriotic men" to whom the appeal was directed, failed to respond to the demands made on their social conscience as citizens.

Schartau's invitation to the 1836 Olympic Games shows minor changes from that of 1834 concerning the sporting events included in the competitions, as we will see, but the most important difference is that the program includes a new item, which was not included in the 1834 competitions, namely the literary event. This event in the program of the second Olympiad is, however, unparalleled in either the classical or the popular tradition, namely the essay competition. Of course, it was customary during the Ancient Olympic Games for poets to sing the praises of the victors, but there was no poetic competition as such. In this respect Schartau was certainly the first to hit on the idea and put it into practice, even if he was not the first to try to revive the Olympic Games. As far as I know, it was not until the Stockholm Olympiad in 1912 that any other such literature competition occurred. This idea of including physical and intellectual contests side by side in the Games is in fact the most striking aspect Schartau's conscious attempts to contribute to "the development of the physical and moral strength of the Nation", to use his own words.

The program was announced as follows:

1. Wrestling: the prize, a small silver cup.
2. General Gymnastic exercises: the prize, a gold ring.

3. Pole-climbing: prize of same value as above.

4. Running races: prize, as above.

5. To the one who composes and reads aloud at the event the best essay on the Olympic Games of antiquity compared with the chivalric games and tournaments of the Middle Ages, and the benefit of the renewal of such games in our own time, a crown of oak and laurel will be awarded. (The essay should be handed in the day before the competition and should be no longer than 1-½ written pages. (7)

It is a rather meager program for an Olympiad in comparison with the modern one, or even with the classical Olympiad, but the events included can in fact be found in both the ancient and modern Olympic Games, if one is

allowed to include pole-climbing in gymnastics. Naturally the program was limited both by time-only one afternoon for all events-and by the ability of the contestants. One misses however, the pentathlon, which was characteristic of the Ancient competitions and has indeed in our time taken an important place.

I shall return now to the reporting of the events, fortunately enough, there were a number of commentaries which show that the formation of the Olympic Union and its initiative in organizing the Olympic Games had met with an enthusiastic reception. However, the day (July 14) had been set as the day for the competitions, was later changed to July 17; due to "unforeseen circumstances". These were certainly the horse-races, scheduled for July 13 to

16, which were so popular, that it would have been unwise to hold the Games on one of the race-days. By arranging instead its Olympic Games as a continuation of the race-days, the Olympic Union would profit from the arrangements made for the races and the big crowd which they attracted. The Games were combined with the horse-races in the same way, both in 1834 and 1836.

From reports we know, that "The first Olympic Games ...went according to plan. Although there had been little time for preparation or any more widespread propaganda, a number of contestants had come forward, 7 in gymnastics, 20 in the racing, 7 in wrestling and 9 in climbing on a greased pole." (8) The results of the contest were published in the "sports report" of the New Halsingborg Post on July 22. This report is one of the first, if not the very first, to be printed in not only a Swedish, but in any other newspaper, concerning a public sporting event. The report describes the

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events, gives the names of the winners and states the prizes. But it notes, that the order and discipline of the Games left much to be desired.

In comparison with the rather detailed report of the 1834 Olympiad, the sport page of the above mentioned paper was much briefer in its comment concerning the second Olympiad in August 1836. Neither the number of contestants in the different events, nor the names of the winners were mentioned. It merely noted that there was a large crowd of spectators and that in those sections of the Games presented that year "there was appreciation of the competitions and prizes were presented."

The rest of the article consisted of complaints over the once again inadequate arrangements for maintaining order on the competition site. The other Halsingborg newspaper, the Telegraph, also had a very short report and concentrated on the question of order. It says: "There is little to say concerning the Olympic Games, presented yesterday at Ramlösa. We are, of course, indebted to Mr. Schartau for having launched an enterprise with such fine aim as this one; but in order to awaken interest for his cause, which is the aim as well as the condition for the development and survival of the enterprise, it is necessary that the Games should be treated not as games only, though they are called so, and that one should seek to prevent the disturbing disorder, which was evident both this and last time."(9)

The German newspaper (*Magazin für die Litteratur des Auslandes*) said that though the cradle of the Modern Olympic Games was in Halsingborg, it certainly was not due to the efforts of the town's inhabitants. The honor should go exclusively to Johan Gustaf Schartau. More could be said concerning this pioneer of sport, how his ideas coincided in part with Ling's and in other ways diverged from the latter's attitude to competitions. More could be said too, about the difficulty of starting a popular sporting movement in the 1830's.

As I proceed by time, the next I should mention about is the event which shall be in our special interest since Canada will host the up-coming event. In fact, that in this country, as it was then called Lower Canada, a so called Olympic Club existed, is unknown to almost everybody and it has not been publicized at all that Montreal had already the spirit of Olympic Games. First I learned about it from Dr. Laszlo Kun, who writes in his book, "On the wings of Pan-

Hellenism the Olympic thought gets over the New-World, too. In 1844 the Montreal Olympic Games take place."(10) The following appeared in the "Rendezvous 76 Montreal" in August 1973

A great and long tradition

The sound of heralding trumpets, and sight of the flag of peace being raised to the Olympic sky, will mean that Montreal is finally part of a great and long tradition.

In fact, long before the Games of the XXI Olympiad had been awarded to Montreal by the International Olympic Committee, long before Montreal had requested the privilege of acting as host, even before Pierre de Coubertin had rekindled the Olympic flame in 1896, Montreal had already the spirit of Olympic Games.

Montreal presented its version of the Olympics in the 1840's, some fifty years before the first Olympics of modern times. Though modest in size, for their day the games were carefully planned, and were presided over by the governor-general of the country, then known as Lower-Canada.

In spite of their simplicity, these games included many events which will attract, in 1976, the greatest athletes of the world, such as the high jump, the long jump, the triple jump, the hammer and discus throw, sprints of 100 and 400 yards, a mile race and many other contests originally held at the first Olympic Games...." (11)

The Bulletin shows the photo copies of contemporary newspapers which carried the announcements. I was able to track down the same papers and from the copies of

French and English texts one can see that the events were really carefully planned - for their day. The French language La Minerve carried the original, official announcement on the front page, on August 1, 1844. It says, that the Montreal Olympic Club will stage Gymnastic Exercises on August 28 and 29, with the governor-general's patronage. (I should note, that I haven't been able to gather more information on the Olympic Club.) The second page carried the detailed information of the event which this time was called Montreal Olympic Games. The article lists the names of Directors and the detailed program of the first and second day. The same announcement was carried in the paper's August 5, 8, 12, 15, 19, 22, 26 editions.

The English language *Montreal Gazette* carried the announcement in its August 21 edition and calls it Montreal Athletic Games. However, it seems to be more of an information than an official announcement. It says that (the

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Games) “will be open to all competitors.” Though in the title there is no mention of any kind of Olympics, in the article one finds that “the candidates...will contend to gain the Olympic prize.” And that the practical management of the Games will be in the hands of the gentlemen of the Olympic Club.”

The article appeared only once, and in the August 29 and 30 editions the paper carried detailed reports on the events - contrary to the *La Minerve*, which did not carry any report on the Games. The report from the first day is very detailed, states the numbers of competitors, comments on the competitions and in most cases states the names of the winners and their scores. The report on the second day must have come from the same reporter, as it was in the same language and tone, I would like to call your attention to one event particularly: the game of *La Crosse*. On the first day it must have been played by whites, but on the second day, Indians played it, too; and the games played by “Indians against whites” was another event. Here is how the reporter saw this game:

“This game was decided in favor of the “red men”, who showed a far greater proficiency than their white brethren in the game of *La Crosse*, although certainly outmatched in agility and swiftness by the losers.”

This game should have special interest for another reason, too: According to my knowledge, this was the first time, that an organized team ball-game was played in such occasion. (For this reason, I think the Organizing Committee for the upcoming Montreal Olympic Games should stage an exhibition game of Lacrosse among many other cultural events. The fact, that this game is not known widely outside of North America, shall support my idea.)

Another interesting event to mention about was the “Walking Match - 1 mile” on the first day. Those, who are involved in this event currently, will note with some degree of satisfaction, that their problem for judging this event is not new....it goes back as far as 1844! As the reporter says: “...walking match of one mile ...was not decided, on account of alleged irregularity on the part of the two foremost competitors. The match will come off again today.” Though there is no indication what kind of irregularity took place, the event was not repeated after all!

As I made a comment on the report from the Halsingborg Games, I said that report could be the very first printed in a

newspaper regarding a public sport event. Looking at the reports from the Montreal Games, now I should say that these reports are the very first really sport-reports, they would even stand comparison to any current sport-report, appearing in our everyday papers except of those on baseball, football, hockey and horse-racing. (I hope, with this comment, I won’t offend any sport reporter, but I would like to honor that unknown first Canadian sport reporter.)

I have said before that the Olympic thought was carried on the wings of Pan-Hellenism to Montreal... But one of the most recognized lecturers on this field, Dr. Ferenc Mezö, stated in his Olympic Gold medal winning work (*The Modern Olympic Games*) that the first “Pan-Hellenic” Games were organized in Athens in 1859.(12) So, there

seems to be a contradiction, regarding the matter. However one should not forget, that Pan-Hellenism was rather a nationalist political-social trend and its root goes back to the Greek Independence Movement. Considering this, one can see, that there is no contradiction regarding the trend and games of 1859. As a matter of fact, there is a little known data, which shows that well before the games of 1859, there was an attempt to revive the ancient games. The inhabitants of the village of Letrinal agreed that to the memory of the liberation of the country from Turkish despotism, the antic Olympic Games should be revived in every fourth year. The first of the planned series was staged in 1838 with a big popular feast. But there is no indication that more were held.

This should not surprise anyone, this failure was bound to happen. But this village-initiative was followed by a larger-scale attempt.

On the 10th of January, 1852, Ernst Curtius gave a lecture on the ancient Olympics in Berlin. The zeal of Curtius awoke a great response in Greece and the consideration began how the Olympics could be revived. Using the fund from major Evangelis Zappas construction began on the ruins of the antic stadium and in this facility athletic competitions were held from 1859, combined with intellectual, artistic and handicraft exhibitions. It became obvious, that the attempt to revive the spirit of Ancient Olympics was successful. There were Greek competitors from Asia-Minor, Alexandria and Cyprus. The program included almost all of the antic events and in some cases, the competitions were very close. To satisfy the contemporary demand, the program included circus acrobatics, too. The prizes - according

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to Olympic traditions - were wreaths with some money, and the King, Otto I presented them.

The second Games were planned for 1863, but were not held for political reasons. But Olympics were held later, in 1870, 1875, 1888 and 1889. Despite close competition in some events, the Games had not much of sport-value. Nevertheless, these Games served the cause of the Olympics as interest was aroused outside Greece, too, and the foreign press gave ample reports on their programs.

But since the mentioned attempts didn't really exceed the base of a popular feast - they could not get into the international stream of social movement. The help of French diplomatic channels was needed to that.

The time just came around the 1880's, in an age in which modern sport was in its infantile stage and its development was threatened by two dangers. The dispute between the fanatic supporters of the few then known sports and the defamation of a wholly noble idea through the free action of professional sportsmen.

Pierre de Coubertin lived in this age and realized the educational and biological values of competitive sports and accordingly tried to make them important in order to use them to achieve his final aim; that is, to raise young people in such a way that the infallible and splendid Ancient Greek education which developed the spirit by physical exercise would be brought back. For this, Coubertin thought of transplanting the basic ideas of Ancient Greece and using them for contemporary young people, thus giving them a high spiritual nobility. Coubertin realized that the participation of all peoples and the performance of games in all the then known sports was the basis, as he had observed that peoples communicate with each other much more cordially and friendly through sports than through international fairs, music, theater, etc.

I'm sure, that almost the same idea was realized by those who had tried to revive the Games for similar reasons, as Coubertin did. Just remember Schartau's articles published in the New Halsingborg Post on June 28 in 1834 and August 23 in 1836. The others might have had the same thoughts, but they did not spell them out. But the social-political-economical situation wasn't the same - and therefore the earlier attempts were bound to fail. But despite the failure, though I wonder if we really should count them as failures, those attempts brought back and kept alive the "whole idea"

for centuries in the common knowledge. As I already stated I don't want to curtail Coubertin's merit but I would like to pay my honor to the early organizers with this essay, knowing that their names and activity is almost unknown. I'm not saying, that this is a complete story of the Olympic idea after the Ancient Games and before Coubertin's activity - but I tried to put together and present as much as I was able to gather, though this kind of work would need a lot more time for more detailed research to put the pieces together.

It was not easy - and neither was it cheap! Maybe, some day I will get back to this very interesting and exciting topic.

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Note: The mentioning of the tables in the text were deleted because they served no purpose. They were not available, according to Mr. Driega. Also, I direct the attention of our readers to the review of Karl Lennartz's book on the 1896 Olympic Games. His second volume gives an extensive description of the Greek efforts to revive the Games in the period between 1859 and 1890.

NEVERTHELESS,
THESE GAMES
SERVED THE CAUSE
OF THE OLYMPICS
AS INTEREST WAS
AROUSSED OUTSIDE
GREECE, TOO,
AND THE FOREIGN PRESS
CAVE AMPLE REPORTS
ON THEIR PROGRAMS.
