

“La Blanquirroja” – Perú’s forgotten heroes of Olympic Football

By Volker Kluge

The Peruvian football team before their match against Austria in the Hertha BSC Stadium in Berlin-Gesundbrunnen on 8th August 1936.

Standing (from left): Carlos Tovar, Víctor Lavalle, Juan Valdivieso, Arturo Fernández, Segundo Castillo, Orestes Jordán, Juan Delgado (Masseur); kneeling: Adelfo Magallanes, Jorge Alcalde, Teodoro “Lolo” Fernández, José Morales and Alejandro Villanueva. In the first match against Finland Teodoro Alcalde had played instead of his brother Jorge.



Photos: Volker Kluge Archive

The Peruvian capital Lima will host the 131th IOC Session this September. The gathering will put the focus on a country with an Olympic tradition which stretches all the way back to 1900, when the Olympic Games were held in Paris. Among the participants that year was a Peruvian who took part in fencing and tennis. His name was Carlos González de Candamo y Rivero and he came from one of the richest families in the country.¹ His father was the Ambassador in France. (An uncle, Manuel Candamo Iriarte, was Mayor of Lima who became State President in 1903 but was struck down by cancer and spent only eight months in office.)

Carlos de Candamo was born in London, but studied in Paris, where he joined the elite Racing Club de France (RCF). In 1891 he reached the quarter finals in the first French tennis championships (now known as the French Open). The following year, he captained his team in the final of the first French Rugby Union Championship. Amongst his team mates was the famous French all-rounder Frantz-Reichel.² The referee

of the match was no less well known: Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

In May 1901 de Candamo was nominated as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Perú in Great Britain. This was probably the reason Coubertin invited him to join the IOC in November 1903. He lived in the Atlantic resort of Biarritz, and was an envoy to Paris. In Olympic circles, de Candamo proved an elusive figure, a veritable “phantom”. Of the 15 IOC Sessions which were held during his tenure, he was present at only three. These were all after the First World War. Perú had entered on the side of the allies in 1917 and on the formal document of setting out the Treaty of Versailles his signature can be found: “F.G. Candamo”.³

Perú had not yet sent a team to the Olympics, but in 1923 Alfredo Benavides succeeded de Candamo as an IOC Member. He also came from a very rich family. His mother was the niece of Pedro Diez Canseco and Francisco Diez Canseco. Between them, they had led their nation five times in the second half of the 19th century.

Football – the Peruvian national sport

British sailors had brought football into the country. While their ships were being unloaded in Callao, an important Pacific port, they amused themselves with the round leather ball. Soon they had also invited locals to play against them.

In 1893, a group of young Peruvians founded the Unión Cricket club in Lima. This had sections for cricket, tennis and also to football. Among the members was Benavides, who used his contacts to secure the finance for the construction of a football stadium, the Estadio Guadalupe.⁴

From 1914 to 1920, he was manager of the foreign ministry diplomatic office and also an important promoter of sport. In 1918 he founded a tennis club, a jockey club and the Peruvian athletics association. Perhaps his most important sporting endeavour was the foundation of the Comité Olímpico Peruano (COP), which came into being on 9th October 1924.

The early years of football in the country had been somewhat “wild”, overshadowed by conflicts between the clubs. In 1912 an agreement had been reached in on the foundation of a football league, and an unofficial national championship title. A national association, the Federación Peruana de Fútbol (FPF) only came into being in 1922. It received formal recognition at the 13th Congress of the International Football Federation (FIFA) in 1924 in Paris. The next year it also joined the South American continental association (CONMEBOL).

The setting up of the national team initially faltered for economic reasons. In 1927, the matter became rather more pressing because Perú had been asked to host the South American championship (Now known as the Copa América). The hosts managed to beat Bolivia 3-2. It was no surprise when they lost 4-0 to Uruguay and were beaten 5-1 by Argentina.

In the run-up there had again been problems between the rival clubs Alianza Lima and Universitario de Deportes. These had arisen because Alianza players had been excluded. They did not return to the fold until 1930 when they took part in the inaugural World Cup tournament. The Peruvians were drawn in Group 3, but lost 3-1 to Romania and by a single goal to Uruguay.

Hymns of Praise for the “All Pacific Team”

By this time professional football was beginning to grow. First in Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, then in Italy, France, Uruguay and Argentina. At their 1925 Olympic Congress in Prague, the IOC had decided that eligibility would be down to the amateur definitions enforced by the individual international federations. They discussed the question for hours. The issue was whether payment for lost earnings and paid holidays,

known as “broken time” should be admissible. Although they discussed the matter at great length, no satisfactory solution was found.⁵

FIFA reacted in its own way. It removed the paragraph from its rule book. This triggered the resignation of the British associations, who insisted on the amateur rules.

On the evening of 18th May 1929 in Barcelona FIFA decided that a World Championship, styled the “World Cup” would be held in Montevideo the following year. The tournament would be a knockout competition.

Uruguay was celebrating the 100th anniversary of its independence in 1930, so the government allocated 300,000 gold pesos to the event. They also set aside 200,000 gold pesos for the construction of the stadium. For FIFA the offer was tempting, as they received ten per cent of the gross income.

As FIFA was not prepared to return to the amateur regulations decided upon in Prague, it became clear after the 1930 Olympic Congress that the 1932 Games in Los Angeles would take place without football.⁶ Despite that dealings went on behind the scenes, as the Americans too were interested in “soccer”. After all, the football tournament had accounted for 40 per cent of all ticket sales in Amsterdam.⁷

When the member associations of FIFA gathered in Berlin at Whitsun 1931 for their 31st Congress none of them really believed that football would be excluded from Los Angeles. For that reason they empowered the Executive Committee, led by the Frenchman Jules Rimet, to renewed negotiations with the IOC, which however came to nothing. In 1932 football was left out of the programme.



NOC President Eduardo Dibós Dammert. He joined the IOC in 1958, and remained a member until he was succeeded in 1982 by his son Iván Dibós Mier. In 1931 Dibós Sr. became Vice-President of Goodyear in Perú. He was Mayor of Lima from 1938 to 1940 and again from 1950 to 1952. From 1958 to 1959 he served as Minister for Development and Public Works.



The “All Pacific Team” made headlines on its six month European tour although they lost 4-1 to Barcelona on 8th December 1933.

FIFA did not wish football to be permanently excluded from the Olympics. Two years later they agreed to the IOC demand and would only permit amateur teams for the 1936 Games in Berlin. Because of the large number of entries, some kind of qualification system was included for the first time. For South America, the continental championship of 1935 was used to determine who would go to Berlin. Uruguay won the tournament from Argentina and Perú.

But as Uruguay and Argentina were concerned that their amateur teams might not perform well enough, they decided not to take part. It was left to Perú to represent South America alone in Berlin. They appointed Alberto Luis Denegri, a veteran of the 1930 World Cup squad as coach. He named a party of 22 – the majority from Alianza, Universitario and Sport Boys Lima. Only three had World Cup experience. These were goalkeeper Juan Valdivieso and forwards Arturo Fernández and Alejandro Villanueva.

The Peruvians were not an unknown quantity in Europe. From September 1933 to February 1934 they had toured seven countries. Their side was bolstered by three Chileans from the Colo-Colo Club. They were known as the “Combinado de Pacifico” (All Pacific team) and played 39 games. Ten were won, 13 lost, 16 drawn.⁸

Even after the first match in Belfast against Glentoran, which they drew 1–1, there were hymns of praise. In the Austrian *Sport-Tagblatt* paper, the “All Pacific Team” was even compared with the Uruguayans and their players described as “fast and hard-working ball technicians”.⁹ Teodoro Fernández, known as “Lolo”, was considered a great discovery. He was seven years younger than his brother Arturo but he was the leading scorer on the tour with 48 goals. This meant he was tempted with the most amazing offers. An “open” cheque from Chile for example. Despite this he kept faith with his club Universitario and remained with them for 22 years.

A 7-3 victory – “90 enjoyable minutes of play”

Since the early 1930s Perú had been considered an interesting trading partner by Germany. Even the National Socialists showed respect for the great history of the Incas, also because in the “ruling class personalities with really recognisable Indio traits” had been recognised, whose “future possibilities” were predicted.¹⁰

As a by product of the Olympic Games it was hoped to attract rich people from non-European states. They were offered the incentive of freedom from taxes for one year and in the event they took up residence in Germany, for ten years.¹¹ The Peruvian NOC President, Eduardo Dibós Dammert, who was of German origin was also considered “very useful”. As President of the Touring Club he was seen as the “driving force” behind road building in Perú, so he was invited to Germany in September 1934 to view the Alpine autobahns.¹²

State President Óscar R. Benavides was also in favour of promoting good relations with Germany, nothing more stood in the way of the first participation of a Peruvian team in the Games. The government agreed to pay for a party of 74 on 13th June sailed on the passenger steamer “Orazio”. The voyage would take 44 days. Apart from the footballers there were nine athletes, eight swimmers, six boxers, four cyclists, two fencers and a twelve-strong basketball team. Claudio Martínez Bodero led the delegation. From 1922 to 1926 he had served as the first president of the FPF.

The withdrawal of some nations meant that the Olympic football tournament had been reduced to 16 entries. The draw was seeded. The eight teams seen as stronger were placed in pot A and the eight ‘weaker’ sides drawn against them. Perú, thought to be strong were drawn against Finland

The preliminary round game was played on 6th August in the Hertha BSC Stadium in the Berlin quarter of Gesundbrunnen. The reporter of *Fußball* magazine described “90 enjoyable minutes of play”. He watched “two fabulous wingers (who can bring every defender to despair), two skilled, silky negroes [sic] working together and a quickly reacting centre-forward”, “who does not miss even a small and tiny-looking chance to shoot”.¹³ The result spoke for itself. Perú won 7–3. Five goals went on “Lolo’s” account.

“Fascinating” or “Scandal for the Olympic Idea”?

Perú’s match in the next round would also be played in the Hertha Stadium. The opponent was now Austria who had been drawn in the “weaker” pot. In the first round they had defeated “strong” Egypt 3–1. Until then the Viennese press, spoiled by the “miracle eleven” or “Wunderteam”, knew little of the amateurs who

The Peruvian team celebrated their national holiday on 28th July 1936 at the Olympic Village of Döberitz. 115 years before Argentinian General José de San Martín had proclaimed independence after victory over the Spaniards.

Photos: Volker Kluge Archive





The Peruvian team took part in the Games for the first time in 1936 in Berlin. At the Opening Ceremony they used the Olympic salute. It is distinct from the Nazi greeting by the arm turned far to the right. In 1947 to avoid any further misinterpretation the IOC decided that teams should acknowledge the royal or presidential box with a simple turn of the head.

Below: In 1986, the Peruvian post office issued a special stamp to mark the 50th anniversary of Perú's first Olympic team.

mostly came from Linz, Salzburg or Klagenfurt. They were considered the "team of the nameless". Their coach was far better known. He was Jimmy Hogan, a master tactician from Scotland who had been in Austria since before the First World War and prepared Austria's Olympic teams for 1912 and the ill-fated 1916 Games.¹⁴

The temperamental South Americans had already made a great impact and attracted thousands of spectators on the 8th August 1936. The crowd figures given in the press varied between 12,000 and 20,000, while the German "Reichsfachamtsleiter" Felix Linnemann¹⁵, who was responsible for the overall management of the tournament, spoke of an attendance of "about 6000" in a later report.¹⁶

Whatever the correct figure, those present saw a "football drama in the most colourful illumination"¹⁷. Unfortunately no film of the game exists so that we have to rely on written match reports. These vary greatly in the detail. The German *Olympia-Zeitung* carried the following report:

*Even the first attacks by the Peruvians were impressive and promised much more from this favoured South American team. But soon the Austrians had found their form and with the high technical skill of both teams there were wonderful passages of play.*¹⁸

The account given in the Austrian *Sport-Tagblatt* was very different:

*After their 7-3 victory over Finland, the South Americans were considered as great favourites, but even after a short period of play it was clear that the Perú team apart from superfluous toughness and an inconsiderate attack on their opponents were unable to should anything important.*¹⁹

It was agreed that in the first half the Austrians "left an essentially more balanced impression", as indicated by goals in the 23rd minute from Werginz and Steinmetz after 39. Yet a 'different' Peruvian team emerged from the changing room after the interval.

The *Olympia-Zeitung* wrote:

*After the change the South Americans attacked even more passionately, but the Austrians held on. But they were unequal to the wonderful wing play of the Peruvians, and when in the 63rd minute Austria's left half Ladon [sic!] went off, the South Americans got a clear advantage. They forced the Austrian team back. In a jostle in front of the Austrian goal in the 78th minute there was an Austrian own goal. Thus the game changed. In the 81st minute the Peruvians scored a lucky equaliser, and they would almost have won the last seconds, but the unmarked outside left missed.*²⁰

For the reporters, Laudon's departure was seen as the turning point. "With one blow the South Americans got the upper hand. They raced forward, only now did they display their artistic dribbling with the ball and the Austrians were now clearly on the defensive."²¹ With the loss of the lead the tone in the Austrian accounts also changed. The talk was now of the "heroic struggle of our amateur footballers", of the "savage action of the



Perú's footballers justified their reputation as one of the strongest teams in the tournament. In the photo: goalkeeper Juan Valdivieso foiled an attack by two Austrian forwards.

Photo: Kurt Grimm



Peruvians" and of "exotics" who performed "a series of nasty tricks". The words had racist undertones which were unmistakable. The report in the *Tiroler Anzeiger* exemplified this:

*The movement of the Peruvians becomes ever sharper, especially the negroes in their ranks commit some unqualified nasty tricks. Stormy shouts of protest from the public like "Get out of Europe" accompany the actions on the playing field.*²²

The match finished 2-2 after 90 minutes, but this was a straight knockout, so extra time was played. Laudon returned to the field for the Austrians. The Peruvians, believed that this was not permitted under the rules. They protested violently, but gradually calmed down.

"Only now did the tension rise to a scarcely surpassable climax" and *Fußball* described the dramatic conclusion: *The players started the last general attack, the masses were put in a genuine confusion through the constantly changing scene, the choruses of the Peruvian colony who had assembled in remarkable numbers, but who had for a long time been more silent tried with redoubled volume, but the clock advanced inexorably. People thought there would be a new game. But four minutes before the end a shot from Villanueva went into the Austrian goal, and in the very last minute Perú's centre Castillo put the ball a further time into the net. Poland versus Perú was now the pairing in the second semi-final. It should not*

*surprise us if Perú wins here as well, so as to produce a unique battle with southern temperament in the final against the winner of the Italy-Norway encounter.*²³

The press in Austria offered some very excitable coverage. They carried a picture of "fanatics from South America" intended to portray the Peruvians in a bad light. There were negative words even from fans who had had chanted "Perú! Perú!" before the game and sung national songs. The press also said that the Peruvian supporters had swarmed onto the pitch before the end of the match:

*Again fanatics forced their way onto the field and kissed the players. But it was really bad at the end. We civilised central Europeans felt sorry for the players! The exertions of the two hours on the pitch were in our view not so great as the "kissing" ceremonies after the win. Every player was kissed by each of the Peruvians present...*²⁴

Immediately after the match the Austrian football president Dr. Richard Eberstaller spoke to the press:

*Scandalous scenes as happened today are incomprehensible to me. Still less do I understand that in view of the bad experiences we had of the Peruvians in the Finland game, no better measures were taken against repetitions. What the South Americans showed was not culture, but represented a great scandal for the Olympic Idea!*²⁵



Goalkeeper Alejandro Valdivieso (left), dubbed El "Mago" ("the magician"), during a walk round Berlin.

Far left: In their first game the Peruvians convincingly beat Finland 7-3.

Photos: Volker Kluge Archive, Juan Valdivieso Archive

Eberstaller lodged a protest with FIFA. He wanted the result annulled. This was dealt with the following day. As a reason he had given "the unexampled rough excesses of the Peruvians as well as the repeated disturbance of the run of play by invasion of the pitch by the public". Eberstaller addressed the jury and there were statements from Norwegian referee Thoralf Kristiansen and the linesmen. A Peruvian representative was invited but did not appear. As the court of appeal²⁶ did not believe that the invitation had not reached him, it was concluded that this had been a deliberate action on the part of the Peruvians. The session was adjourned at 1.00 in the night and continued later in the day.

The road cyclists who "prevented" a hearing for the Peruvians

According to researches by Luis Carlos Arias Schreiber, it was not until the Monday morning, 10th August, around 8 a.m., that the Peruvian team management learnt of the deliberations of the FIFA session.²⁷ A messenger was sent to summon their delegates to the "Russischer Hof" hotel. A four man delegation led by Claudio Martínez left the Olympic Village about 9 a.m. It happened that on this day the link road between Döberitz and Berlin was closed because of the cycling road race. The departure of the bus carrying the Peruvians was delayed by almost an hour, and even then, the route to the city centre was slowed by diversions.²⁸

By the time the Peruvians finally entered the hotel, the session was practically finished. The FIFA officials were unsympathetic. They did not consider the delays experienced on the road to be a valid excuse for lateness. Officials read them the text of Austrian protest and the referee's report. After that the Peruvians were asked to leave the room and wait for the jury's decision in the hotel lobby. It was communicated to them at about 11.30 a.m.

That afternoon, FIFA published a communiqué. "Circumstances exist which prevented the normal course of the game" it read. It had been impossible to keep spectators off the pitch and to prevent one of them from kicking a player. In other words it was a failure by the security services and by the match officials. As those responsible had not yet been established, it was said that they had had to make a "sporting decision" and resolved to repeat the game the very same day behind closed doors.²⁹

This announcement been made in the late afternoon, with the intention of discouraging fans from making their way to the Post Stadium, where the game was to be replayed. The *Daily Herald* was able to report that "hundreds of armed SA men" had been posted there, "in order to prevent possible attacks by South Americans".³⁰ But the fears were in vain. The Austrians ran onto the pitch at 5 p.m. but there was no sign of the so-called "frightful Peruvians"³¹. A telephone call was made to the Olympic Village. The message came

“How the Peruvians behaved” ran the headline above this photo in the *Sport-Tagblatt* of the 11th August 1936. It is captioned “scenes of joy of the South Americans after the decisive goal” in the 4-2 victory. Despite reports in the Austrian papers, no rioting spectators can be seen. A policeman can be made out in the background. He obviously see no reason to get involved in events on the pitch.

Photo: KeystoneView



that Perú were unwilling to play again, whereupon the Austria were awarded the match by default.

Anyone who received their information from the Austrian newspapers, must have believed it a “pyrrhic” victory. Six players were thought to be injured and would therefore have missed the remainder of the tournament. But the next day that would be forgotten. The team showed only two changes when they beat Poland 3-1 to reach the final. There, they lost 2-1 to Italy after extra time.

Willy Schmieger, Austria’s most popular sports reporter, now wrote with some venom: “The Peruvians with their negro dances, with their savagery and their battle songs got on our nerves enough, but that is now over. We are no longer angry with them, that is just the way they are, nothing but children.”³²

A presidential order for Perú to return home and accusations against Germany by Rimet

On the evening of the 8th August, it seems indisputable that many Peruvians did indeed behave like children. After the result had been announced on the radio, some players were heard from speaking from Berlin. Then, thousands of people gathered at the Plaza San Martín in Lima, where they danced for joy. Congratulations came from everywhere, even from the archbishop.

The crowd moved to outside the presidential palace, where they gave ovations to their President General Benavides, who was surprised by this spontaneous show of affection. In a message to Berlin the German

Embassy cabled their interpretation from on the ground: “They strengthened him in the intention not to leave the stage with his cabinet at the presidential elections in October.”³³

After the FIFA decision, the four Peruvian officials had hurried to their embassy. From there Claudio Martínez sent a telegram to NOC President Eduardo Dibós Dammert, who had remained in Lima. The message told him of the latest turn of events and made a proposal that the team should leave Berlin as a protest. In the afternoon IOC Member Benavides was also drawn in and promised his support, after he had received the agreement of the State President who considered such a gesture was the “only solution to preserve the dignity of the country”.³⁴

Celebrations in Lima had gone on for two days and two nights, so it came as a body blow when the Peruvians finally learnt of FIFA’s decision to declare the result invalid on 10th August. A crowd of twenty thousand, mainly young people and students, demonstrated through the city centre. Again they gathered at the palace where President Benavides made a speech from the balcony. To great applause he announced that, in order to defend the honour of Perú, he had ordered the team to depart. Although he tried a little to calm the excited crowd, he still described Germany as “co-responsible”. In the heated atmosphere his words were lost. In fact the President fully understood “how to exploit the injury to national pride to establish his position for the upcoming change of President”.³⁵

In the meantime Jules Rimet had criticized the Berlin Organising Committee as “the main guilty party”, because of the failure to cordon off the pitch.³⁶ The impression of a German–Austrian plot strengthened correspondents’ reports, which in the annulment of the 4–2 victory saw a reward for the “July agreement”, by which Austria hoped to improve its relations with Hitler’s government. These had been strained since 1934.³⁷ For that reason the anger of the Peruvian demonstrators was also directed against the German Embassy, where windows were broken by stones. The Olympic flag was pulled down and ripped apart.³⁸ Similar scenes were played out at the Austrian general consulate, whose chief, Dr. Franz Ostern, was also representative of the German “Olympic Service”.³⁹

Things did not calm down over the next few days. There were more demonstrations. Universities and schools remained closed. Unrest spilled over into the provinces, where consulates and branches of German banks and companies were attacked. In Callao, dockers refused to load up German ships.

Word had reached Reich propaganda minister Goebbels that the teams from Uruguay, Chile and Mexico were beginning to express solidarity with Perú. He became concerned about the image of Germany which he had tried to portray as an “Island of Peace”.⁴⁰ He pointed out that there had been disputes at earlier Games and tried to play down the importance of this affair with a statement to the press:

*Germany regrets that it has come to this small incident, which of course is too insignificant to adversely affect the harmony between the peoples which has been shown in such a wonderful way during the Berlin Games.*⁴¹

With the Austria game the retention of power was ensured

Before IOC President Henry de Baillet–Latour travelled to Kiel for the sailing competitions, he had declared FIFA’s decision to be a “purely sports–technical matter”⁴², in which neither the IOC nor the Organising Committee had been involved. As no solution could be expected from him, the Peruvians followed orders from Lima and took their leave from Berlin on 12th August. The basketball team, which had won their first two matches against Egypt and China, did not appear in the fourth round against Poland. None of the boxers took part in the Games, nor did most of the swimmers. The IOC President wrote a critical letter to the Peruvian NOC in which he described the action as “anti–sporting”.⁴³

The Peruvians travelled to Paris, where the footballers wished to play a friendly game against France. It was thought that they intended to return after the Olympic Games to play against a German team.

Initially the Peruvians only got as far as Cologne, where they stayed for two days. They awaited news from the 23rd FIFA Congress which began the next day in the Berlin Kroll opera house. They did not send a representative to the congress but at the request of Uruguay, the replaying of the match was put on the agenda, prompting endless debate.

There were well–intentioned proposals such as that from Norway to find solution through “friendly negotiations”. Austria offered as a “substitute” a Vienna team as opponents – Rapid or Admira – while Germany hoped to an international match in Stuttgart. The Lebanese had just been accepted into FIFA and he suggested that the Peruvians play a match against whoever became Olympic champion. This idea was rejected.

The Peruvians had hoped FIFA would change their decision but this was not on the table. Instead FIFA Vice–President Rodolphe William Seeldrayers declared the resolution to be “unassailable”. A reaction came by return of post. The German Embassy cabled to Berlin from Lima that the friendly matches in Stuttgart and Vienna would not take place. “Neither the State President nor the local NOC is prepared to agree to it.”⁴⁴

Hitler had also been “most coarsely attacked”, in the Peruvian press. The chief of protocol of the Foreign Office, Vicco von Bülow–Schwante, summoned the Peruvian Ambassador Enrique E. Gildemeister to demand an official declaration “that Germany bears no responsibility for the incident”.⁴⁵

IOC Member Alfredo Benavides, who had returned to London during the Olympic Games, but was given the task of handing over a conciliatory note. The Peruvians were in no mood to jeopardize their relations with the Nazi regime. As requested, he dictated a statement to a German correspondent to the effect that “that no single German position had anything to do with the matter”.⁴⁶



IOC Member Alfredo Benavides even annoyed his own State President with his declaration that the protests of the Peruvian population had been the work of foreign Communists. This was not true. He did not express an opinion about the FIFA decision. On the contrary, he sent a letter to Berlin Organising Committee President Theodor Lewald praising the “wonderful work of the organisation” and the “perfect order”.

Photo: Official Report Berlin 1936



Four of the Peruvian participants in the Olympic Village. There was not a single woman in the party of 74.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive

An emotional greeting for the Peruvians regarded as the "real" Olympic football champions. Team members were honoured by the Mayor of Lima with specially produced gold medals.

Photos: magazin Don Balón



His statement also described the demonstrations as the work of "foreign elements", but this did not go down well with his own government. In fact it read as if it had been personally formulated by Goebbels:

I can assure you most definitely that these demonstrations, which we much regret, were conducted by Communists. We have unfortunately had several times had to experience that foreign Communist elements attempt to bring Perú into conflict with the neighbouring states and with the great European states ... In this very situation in which we are again brought through Communist agitation, we see in today's Germany the decisive power against Communism.⁴⁷

The consequence was an "heated exchange of telegrams", in which the President demanded a correction from his namesake. In addition he imposed censorship and forbade publications of foreign transoceanic reports. The German Embassy staff formed their own impressions. They reported to Berlin in the following terms:



These mass assemblies and demonstrations do not at all allow the influence of apristic-communist agitators – in contrast to the manifestations that took place in the provinces.⁴⁸

President Benavides was prepared to exploit the damaged national pride of his compatriots to strengthen his own position at the risk of a permanent fall out with the Nazi regime. "The State President will leave no stone unturned to maintain this mood until the day laid down for the presidential election", the diplomats supposed.⁴⁹

The next opportunity was offered by a reception for the Olympic team, who returned on 17th September 1936. President Benavides declared the morning a public holiday. The schoolchildren too were free. Offices and shops were shut.

On arrival in Callao the sportmen were welcomed by a cheering crowd at the town hall in Lima. The press celebrated them as the "real Olympic champions". The Mayor distributed specially minted gold medals. Although the government had instructed the press to desist from new attacks on Germany, they did not manage to avoid nastiness. In a special edition of *Prensa* a headline compared Germany to Pontius Pilate, who had sentenced Jesus to be crucified and "washed his hands" in innocence.

The plans of President Benavides did not quite work out. He had come into office after the murder of President Luis Miguel Sánchez Cerro by supporters of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA). Elections were then held on 11th October 1936. The winner was Social Democratic Party founder, Luis Antonio Eguiguren. Under pressure from the representatives of the oligarchy and of the military, Benavides had the result annulled because Eguiguren had also received votes from the APRA which was a banned organisation.⁵⁰ With this move, the General was able to extend his time in office to 1939.

Meanwhile, back in Berlin at the FIFA Congress, the South Americans had demanded a representative on the Executive Committee and threatened to leave the world association if they were not successful. Their request was refused. The South Americans were mollified by the promise that they would be brought into discussions if matters pertaining to them were on the agenda.

The Venezuelan newspaper *El Herald* was one of many in South America which was highly critical. It was they said "proof of the contempt with which Europe regards us and the slight respect shown to the South American nations".⁵¹

By the time the CONMEBOL members met in November 1936 in Santiago, the Peruvians had withdrawn from FIFA. They asked other South American countries to follow their example. Only Chile supported them. But

all agreed not to take part in FIFA events until their continent was represented on the executive.

In the years that followed, Brazil went their own way. They did take part in the World Cup in 1938. They were the only South Americans to do so. The tournament was held in France where their black player Leônidas was the leading scorer. He achieved this feat despite an injury in the quarter final replay against Czechoslovakia which ruled him out of the 2–1 semi final defeat at the hands of Italy. Leônidas did not recover in time for the third place play-off where the Brazilians beat Sweden 4–2.

The other CONMEBOL countries including Argentina, whom FIFA President Rimet had long wooed, continued to display solidarity. In future countries were permitted to belong to their continental confederation even if they were not members of FIFA.

In 1938 Perú won the football tournament at the inaugural Bolivarian Games in Bogotá, and were awarded the South American championship of 1939. The team known as “la Blanquirroja”⁵² (because of their red and white jerseys) were trained by the British coach Jack Greenwell. They performed above themselves. In the final they defeated Uruguay 2–1 to achieve their first international title. As a result the team qualified for the 1940 Olympic tournament in Helsinki, one of 19 teams to enter. That these Games never took place is all too well known.

A petty epilogue and the glorious memory

Internationally Perú’s Olympic footballers of 1936 are more or less forgotten. But in Perú they are considered heroes who had been unjustly denied their rightful plaudits. Their exploits have been the subject of a number of books and *Goleadores* (Scorers), a television documentary by the French director Michel Gómez.

Of course legends are needed. It is said that Hitler was sitting in the tribune of honour on that 8th August in order to watch his country of birth Austria win. Nothing of that is true. In fact he was at the athletics in the Olympic Stadium. If the “Führer” wanted to manipulate the results, then one can ask oneself why he did not try to do that the previous day when the German team lost 2–0 to Norway in the Post Stadium and were knocked out.

The popular Uruguayan writer Eduardo Hughes Galeano, himself a big football fan helped contribute to the confusion, by stating on television that Hitler humiliated the Peruvians because they had black players, whereas he wanted to prove the superiority of “Aryans”.⁵³

There also is no proof that the result was annulled because of a German–Austrian conspiracy. There would certainly have been discussions among the leading FIFA officials, who regarded the temperamental ways



of the South American players and their fans as a thorn in the flesh. The Austrian football president Dr. Richard Eberstaller⁵⁴ possessed great influence, and as a member of the banned Nazi Party since 1931, he was also a spiritual “brother” to his German counterpart Felix Linnemann⁵⁵.

The treatment of the South Americans was also demonstrated in a petty “revenge” campaign which followed the Olympic Games. When the Berlin Organising Committee published their *Official Report* in 1937 they included a photographic register of Presidents and General Secretaries of the participating NOCs. Only one country was missing: Perú.

In the meantime, Hitler had created an Olympic award of his own. These orders of the 2nd Class were to have been presented to Eduardo Dibós and Cáceres Álvarez, a representative of the Peruvian Education Ministry. A ceremony to make the presentation had already been announced.⁵⁶ But once Dibós had reported to his NOC on the events in Berlin and not spared FIFA from criticism, the awards were withdrawn.

This particular episode had one final twist. Shortly afterwards Dibós became Mayor of Lima and Álvarez was appointed Education Minister. The German Embassy resurrected their proposals and now offered the first class order to the two men, with the expectation that the German community in Perú would enjoy certain privileges in return.⁵⁷ Only when Dibós repeated his criticism, was Berlin informed that it would be best to forget the matter.⁵⁸

There was to be no shortage of honours and distinctions for the Olympic footballers. The most unusual memorial was dedicated in the Cordilleras. An expedition of young Peruvians ostensibly sent to establish a possible route for a road through the

The Austrian football president Dr. Richard Eberstaller had been a member of the Nazi party since 1931. The photo shows his membership card.

Photo: Bundesarchiv Berlin, NSDAP-Zentralkartei

Shooting the ten part TV series *Goleadores* (Scorers) – in the foreground the French director Michel Gómez. The series is based on the true story of the Peruvian footballers, but it is a work of fiction. Hitler is portrayed as the instigator of the episode.

Photo: base image



mountains, climbed a local peak. They reached the summit some 5015 metres high on the 9th August and named the site "Punta Olympic" in honour of the footballers. In the early 1980s the construction of a tunnel began there. Since 2013 this has linked the Huaylas and Conchucos valleys. The tunnel was named "Túnel Punta Olímpica". At 4735 metres it is the highest in the world. There will surely never be a tunnel at a greater altitude! ■

- 1 *Journal of Olympic History*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2009, Ian Buchanan/Wolf Lyberg, The Biographies of all IOC Members, part III, p. 47. Here the dates of Candamo are given as ca.1840–1922–1930. In fact he was born on 15th February 1871 in London; he died on 16th February 1946 in Paris. According to Lyberg he was coopted to the IOC in November 1903. However IOC publications give the date as 1905. De Candamo took part in the foil and sabre fencing, in addition in the tennis tournament, single and double handicap. See: Bill Mallon, *The 1900 Olympic Games*, McFarland, 1998, pp. 213–214.
- 2 The RCF beat Stade français 4–3.
- 3 *Traité de Paix*; signé à Versailles, 28th June 1919, *Deutsches Reichs-Gesetzblatt 1919*, No. 140, p. 329
- 4 An interesting and extensive presentation of the history of Peruvian football is to be found in: Aldo Panfichi (Ed.), *Ese gol existe. Una mirada al Perú a través del fútbol*, Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima 2008/2016.
- 5 Minutes, IOC Session, 9th April 1929 Lausanne, p. 5. The rule decided on by the Olympic Congress of 1925 read: "An Athlete taking part in the Olympic Games must satisfy the following conditions. 1. Must not be, or knowingly have become, a professional in the Sport for which he is entered or in any other sport. 2. Must not have received reimbursement or compensation for loss of salary. A holiday given under the normal conditions of a business or profession or a holiday accorded under the same conditions on the occasion of the Olympic Games, and provided that it does not lead to a reimbursement for lost salary, direct or indirect, does not come within the provision of §2."
- 6 Minutes of the Olympic Congress of Berlin 1930, pp. 11–15. IOC President Baillet-Latour devoted his opening speech almost entirely to the controversy with FIFA. After that the Congress confirmed the Prague resolution by 90 votes to 20. The question of holidays compensated by the employer or "broken time" was the only area in which there was not total agreement.

- 7 Wolf Lyberg, *Fabulous 100 Years of the IOC. Facts-figures-and much, much more*, IOC, Lausanne 1994, p. 247.665,699 tickets were sold. Of those 251,747 were for the football tournament.
- 8 There were also games against Newcastle United (1–6), West Ham United (2–2), Sparta Rotterdam (3–0), AC Sparta Prague (1–2), SK Slavia Prague (2–2), FC Bayern München (1–2), Berlin select (1–3), FC Barcelona (1–4) and Madrid select (1–10).
- 9 *Österreichisches Sport-Tagblatt*, 4th October 1933
- 10 Political Archive of the German Foreign Office (PADAA), RAV Lima 16/1, Consulate Report, 30th June 1936, Participation of Perú in the Olympic Games
- 11 *Ibid.*, 14th May 1935, Freedom from tax for those travelling to Germany in connection with the Olympic Games.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 24th August 1934. See also: *JOH*, The Biographies of all IOC Members, part XII, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2012, p. 70.
- 13 *Fußball, Illustrierte Sportzeitung*, No. 33, 11th August 1936
- 14 James "Jimmy" Hogan (1882–1974) was a Scot who played for Fulham and Bolton Wanderers. He was employed by club captain Hugo Meisl to prepare the Austrian team for the 1912 and 1916 Olympics. During his trainer career he also coached MTK Budapest, FC Lausanne-Sport, Young Boys Bern, Dresdner SC und Racing Club de France. In 1938 he helped Aston Villa win promotion to the First Division.
- 15 Felix Linnemann (1882–1948) became President of the German Football Federation (DFB) in 1925, from 1934 designated as "Reichsfachamtsleiter". See also footnote 55.
- 16 PADAA, R 98765, Report to the Foreign Office, 5th October 1936
- 17 *Fußball*, 11th August 1936
- 18 *Olympia-Zeitung*, No. 21, 10th August 1936
- 19 *Sport-Tagblatt*, 10th August 1936
- 20 *Olympia-Zeitung*, No. 21, 10th August 1936
- 21 *Fußball*, 11th August 1936
- 22 *Tiroler Anzeiger*, 10th August 1936
- 23 *Fußball*, 11th August 1936. The report in the *Olympia-Zeitung* ran similarly. In it there was talk of "clever attacking moves by the Peruvians", which the Austrians were not up to countering. However the scorer of the last goal must be corrected, scored in fact by "Lolo" Fernández.
- 24 *Sport-Tagblatt*, 20th August 1936
- 25 *Tiroler Anzeiger*, 10th August 1936
- 26 The members were Jules Rimet (FRA), Giovanni Mauro (ITA), Rodolphe W. Seeldrayers (BEL), Professor Rudolf Pelikán (TCH) and Anton Johanson (SWE).
- 27 Luis Carlos Arias Schreiber, „BERLÍN 1936: LA VERDADERA HISTORIA DE LOS OLÍMPICOS PERUANOS", in: *Ese gol existe*, pp. 143–187
- 28 *XI. Olympiade Berlin 1936, Amtlicher Bericht*, Vol. 2, Wilhelm-Limpert-Verlag Berlin 1937, p. 932.

- 29 Ibid., pp. 1048–1049.
- 30 PAdAA, R 98765, Deutsches Nachrichten-Büro (DNB) London, 8th August 1936. The internal information was obviously wrongly dated.
- 31 *Sport-Tagblatt*, 11th August 1936
- 32 The former Austrian football international Wilhelm “Willy” Schmieger (1887–1950) wrote the article quoted before the FIFA verdict, but published it only afterwards in the *Illustrierte Kronen-Zeitung* of 11th August 1936. In fact a secondary schoolteacher, he worked most of the time as a journalist and radio reporter.
- 33 PAdAA, R 98765, Report of the German consulate in Lima, 21st August 1936
- 34 Arias Schreiber, p. 161
- 35 Ibid., Telegram from Dr. Willy Unverfehrt, employee of the Außenpolitisches Amt of the NSDAP to the Foreign Office, Lima, 11th August 1936
- 36 PAdAA, R 98765, Report Embassy Montevideo. The information related to an interview conducted by the Paris correspondent Javier Esteban Yndart with Rimet in the Uruguayan newspaper *La Mañana*.
- 37 After the failed putsch by Austrian Nazis of the 25th July 1934 (“Juli-Putsch”), in which 270 people lost their lives (among them Federal Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuß), the participation of Austria in the 1936 Games was considered uncertain. From the agreement of 11th July 1936, in which Hitler recognised the “full sovereignty” of Austria, the government of the Alpine Republic promised a normalisation of relationships. In fact however the consequence was an ideological undermining, ending in the “Anschluss” of 1938.
- 38 Ibid., Telegram to the Foreign Office, 10th August 1936
- 39 *El Comercio*, 10th August 1936. The German Dr. Franz Ostern emigrated 1908 to Perú, where in 1919 he founded the firm Ostern & Co., which specialised in the export of sugar and wood as well as ship journeys to Europe. From 1927 he was also Austrian honorary consul.
- 40 Ibid., Information Alfred–Ingemar Berndt to Goebbels, 11th August 1936. Elke Fröhlich (Ed.), *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels. Sämtliche Fragmente*, Vol. 2, K.G. Saur, München 1987, p. 660, 12th August 1936: “Embarrassing gameplay with Perú. But Germany was quite innocent.”
- 41 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 12th August 1936
- 42 *DNB*, 11th August 1936
- 43 PAdAA, R 98765, report Otto von Erdmannsdorff to Vicco von Bülow–Schwante, 18th August 1936
- 44 Ibid., Telegram Embassy Lima, 15th August 1936
- 45 Ibid., Report, 17th August 1936. Before the Olympic Games Bülow–Schwante (1891–1970) had invented the concept of “species–similar blood” to prevent a boycott of Egypt.
- 46 *DNB* London, No. 223, p. 43, 12th August 1936
- 47 *Völkischer Beobachter*, 14th August 1936
- 48 PAdAA, R 98765, Report to Foreign Office, 21st August 1936. “Apristic” referred to the adherents of the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA). This was a mass movement founded in 1924 by the social underclasses. It had been banned by President Benavides.
- 49 Ibid., Report Embassy Lima, 5th September 1936
- 50 El Presidente de la República, ley No. 8459, declaranda ilegales los votos emitidos en las elecciones generales realizadas el 11 de octubre de 1936
- 51 PAdAA, R 98765, Report from the Embassy in Venezuela to the Foreign Office, 13th August 1936
- 52 “La Blanquiroja” – “the white–and–red” – is the nickname of the Peruvian national team. It literally translates as a wine which is produced from white grapes – mixed with small quantities of red – and whose characteristics are fruit aromas and a golden colour.
- 53 Eduardo Hughes Galeano, *Cuando Perú humilló a Hitler*, 20th April 2012, www.youtube.com
- 54 German Federal Archive (Barch), R 9361–IX, NSDAP–Gaukartei. Dr. Richard Eberstaller (1887–1945) was President of the Austrian Football Federation (ÖFB) from 1926. In the Austrian Sport and Gymnastic Front, led in 1936 by Vice–Chancellor Ernst Rüdiger Fürst Starhemberg he became leader of the 5th group (football). After the “Anschluss” with Germany he liquidated the ÖFB with over hasty obedience. Eberstaller had been a member of the Austrian Nazi party (NSDAP) since 31st January 1931 (member No. 440,371) until it was banned in 1933. Until 1938 he had been an Oberlandesgerichtsrat and his career blossomed quickly under the Nazi regime. As Senate President and later Vice–President of the Vienna regional court he was involved in several death sentences. Shortly before the end of the war he took poison along with his wife Maria, a half–sister of the widow of the Jewish composer Gustav Mahler and of the Jewish writer Franz Werfel.
- 55 Linnemann was promoted to Oberregierungs– and Kriminalrat in 1936. He joined the Nazi party in 1937, after the limit on new memberships which had been imposed in 1933 was removed after four years. In 1940 he was accepted into the SS and at the start of 1945 promoted to Standartenführer in the Reichssicherheits–hauptamt (RSHA).
- 56 *Reichsanzeiger*, No. 37, 15th February 1937
- 57 PAdAA, RAV Lima 16/1, Ambassador Ernst Schmitt (1879–1946) to the Foreign Office, 23rd June 1937.
- 58 Ibid., 14th September 1937. *La Cronica*, 1st October 1937



The Olympic tunnel in the Cordilleras, which was inaugurated in 2013. At 4735 metres above sea level it is the highest tunnel in the world. The first tunnel was opened in 1984, but soon had to be closed again because of the danger of avalanches and falling rocks.

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