

# NORWAY

by Arild Gjerde

Norway - at that time in union with Sweden - did not send a team to the first modern Olympic Games in Athens 1896, but four years later a team of 6 shooters and 2 track and field athletes represented the Norwegian colours in Paris, bringing home one silver medal and two 3rd places. However, the 1900 Games were paid little or any intention at all in the Norwegian newspapers.

In St. Louis 1904 Norway was, as many other of the smaller European nations, not officially represented, but 11 Norwegian immigrants representing the *Brooklyn Norwegier Turnverein* competed, and two of them, Charles ERICKSEN and Bernhoff HANSEN, won gold medals in wrestling. It is very probably that Hansen at the time of the St. Louis Games was still a Norwegian citizen. He came to USA in 1903, and later he returned to Norway and his birthplace Saltdal in the Northern part of the country, married, and after his wife had given birth to two children, they moved to USA just before the outbreak of World War I. HANSEN was definitively a US citizen when he died in New York in 1950, but it is very doubtful that he had been able to obtain US citizenship in 1904 after only one year's stay.

ERICKSEN and HANSEN'S Olympic success was not noticed in Norway in 1904, and even today par-

ticipation of the *Brooklyn Norwegier Turnverein* team is not commonly known. A monument to the honour of Bernhoff HANSEN was unveiled in his home community Saltdal in 2004, and the community are proud of being the birthplace of "Norway's first Olympic Champion".

## Participation in 1906 first declined

When the Greek consul in Oslo in May 1905 delivered the official invitation for the 1906 Games, it was just at the time when the Norwegians struggled for dissolution of the union with Sweden was accelerating. The Norwegian authorities had no time to think of sport competitions and the organising committee in Athens received a message that Norway would not participate. On June 7th the Norwegian parliament (*Storting*) made a decision that in fact was a declaration of total independence from Sweden, and the political situation was very tense. Norwegian soldiers were sent to the Norwegian/Swedish border to avoid a Swedish military invasion and protect the newly acquired independence. However, during the next months the situation calmed down, and in November a peace treaty with Sweden was signed, securing the Norwegian independence in a very peaceful way.

Norwegian Gymnasts at  
the Athens Olympics 1906





### Participation reconsidered

The newly founded *Norwegian Olympic Committee* decided to reconsider the question of participation in the 1906 Games, and it was soon decided that a team gymnasts, track and field athletes and shooters should be sent to Athens. One of the problems for the Norwegians was that the games was scheduled to take part from April 22 to May 2, a period when a country like Norway still had not started the summer sport season, a problem especially difficult for the track and field athletes. However, it was decided to organise selection competitions in Oslo one month before the departure for Athens. The *Norwegian Gymnastic Federation*, located in the second largest town Bergen, disagreed in this, and the result was that no athletes from Bergen participated in the selection competition. A team of 32 athletes was selected: 20 gymnasts, 7 shooters and 5 track and field athletes. This was the biggest ever sports team representing Norway abroad.

The necessary funding was raised in a short time, the young nation responded quickly to secure the budget for the team of NKR 18,000, a considerable amount in those days. The team started their journey to Athens with boat from Oslo on April 10, arriving Stettin two days later and then directly by train to Berlin where the team stayed for 3 days. On Saturday, April 14th, the Norwegian gymnasts together with the Swedish and Danish team held an exhibition in the Kroll Opera with Emperor WILHELM II present. The day after the team went by train via Vienna to Trieste, where they on April 17th left for Piraeus and Athens with the Greek steamer "Amphitrite". The team arrived in Athens on April 21, one day before the opening of the Games and 11 days after leaving Oslo.

**During a three-day stop in the German capital the Norwegians gave a gymnastic display at the Kroll Opera. The athletes visited the cities monuments: Brandenburg Gate and Victory Column**

### The first gold medal in Norwegian Olympic history

The Norwegian gymnastic team was considered to be our best hope for an Olympic victory, and the team did not disappoint their countrymen. After some discussions about the judgement principles to be used for the All-around Team Competition in gymnastics, which resulted in that the Swedish and Greek teams preferred to compete out of competition, the Norwegians made a good impression on the judges and won the country's first Olympic gold medal. The result was not known to the Norwegian team until a banquet dinner in the evening after the competition, and was of course met with great enthusiasm.

Also the shooters did well. In the Team Event in Free Rifle, Three Positions, the Norwegian team earned a silver medal behind the Swiss team. The best individual shooter in the team event was a Norwegian, 31-year old Gudbrand SKATTEBOE. He was also the best shooter in the standing and prone positions, and was in contemporary Norwegian sources considered to have won 3 gold medals in Athens. However, the individual results are in the Official Report not considered as Olympic event.

The track and field athletes could as expected not perform up to their normal standard, mainly due to the time of the year for the competitions. However, Oscar GUTTORMSEN obtained a decent 4th place in the triple jump, in a field of 21 competitors.



The first Olympic gold medallist ever for Norway:  
Gudbrand Gudbrandsen Skatteboe

### Welcomed home as national heroes

When the Norwegian Olympic team arrived home to Oslo on May 12th, they got a welcome that even outshone what had been given to national heroes like Fridtjof NANSEN and Roald AMUNDSEN, when they returned home from their Arctic expeditions. Thousands of Norwegians were gathered in the Oslo harbour when the ship with the Olympic team arrived, and the team members were brought through the streets and to a big party at the big place in front of the fortress of Akershus, where the royal family and the members of the Norwegian government and parliament were present together with a big crowd of excited Norwegians. Prime Minister Christian MICHELSEN made an enthusiastic welcoming speech, and the Olympic team was celebrated until late in the night.

The Athens 1906 Olympic Games has had a big impact regarding the position of sports in the Norwegian society. The young nation had a need for national identification and national heroes, and sport was one of the most important contributors to fill those needs. In addition, after the 1906 Olympics Norwegian newspapers began to take sport seriously, and within a few years all major papers had special sport pages and journalists specialising in sport. And finally, unofficially or not, it is no doubt that the 1906 Games represented the major breakthrough for the Olympic ideas in the Norwegian society.

### Norwegian Team in Athens

Athletics (5)

BJØLGERUD, Halfdan;

\*13 February 1884 in Hamar, †18 April 1970 in Oslo;

Club: *Idrettsforeningen Ørnulf*, Kristiania

GUTTORMSEN, Oscar;

\*27 March 1884 in Oslo; †15 January 1964 in Oslo;

Club: *Idrettsforeningen Ørnulf*, Kristiania

Also competed 1908

HALSE, Arne;

\*20 October 1887 in Kristiansund; †3 July 1975 in Trondheim;

Club: *Trondheim Idrettsforening*  
Also competed 1908 and 1912

HAUG, Otto;

\*24 July 1876 in Oslo; †3 March 1948 in Oslo;

Club: *Kristiania Idrettsforening*

SKULLERUD, Fritz Ludvig Fredrik;

\*25 February 1885 in Oslo; †24 May 1969 in Oslo;

Club: *Idrettsforeningen Ørnulf*, Kristiania

Gymnastics (20)

ANDERSEN, Carl Albert;

\*15 August 1876 in Østre Aker; †28 September 1951 in Oslo;

Club: *Kristiania Turnforening*  
Also competed 1900 (Athletics) and 1908 (Gymnastics)

BYE, Oskar Wilhelm;

\*3 June 1870 in Oslo; †30 April 1939;

Club: *Christiania Turnforening*  
Also competed 1908

CARLSRUD, Conrad Maurentius;

\*9 February 1884 in Kjøse i Vestfold; †21 October 1973 in New Haven Connecticut, USA;

Club: *Idrætsforeningen Uræd*, Porsgrunn. Competed also in

athletics 1906. Also competed in 1908 (Gymnastics and Athletics)

ERIKSEN, Harald Andreas;

\*3 July 1881 in Oslo; †1 June 1968 in Trondheim;

Club: *Christiania Turnforening*

FALCH, Oswald;

\*21 July 1884 in Steinkjær; †13 February 1977 in Steinkjær;

Club: *Stenkjær Turnforening*

FJERDINGEN, Kristian Adolf;

\*16 September 1884 in Steinkjær; †5 February 1975 in Steinkjær;

Club: *Stenkjær Turnforening*

FREDRIKSEN, Yngvar;

\*26 March 1887 in Arendal; †25 December 1958;

Club: *Arendal Turnforening*

HAAGENSEN, Karl Johan; \*26 March 1871 in Oslo, †25 August

1918 in Kristiania;

Club: *Christiania Turnforening*  
HAGELUND, Andreas;  
\*15 November 1881 in Halden; †19  
September 1967 in Fredrikstad;  
Club: *Fredrikshald Turnforening*

HALVORSEN, Harald;  
\*3 May 1887 in Oslo; †date  
unknown;  
Club: *Christiania Turnforening*  
Also competed in 1908

HOL, Peter;  
\*19 March 1883 in Skien; †22 June  
1981 in Canada;  
Club: *Odd*, Skien  
Also competed in 1908, 1912 and  
1920

INGEBRETSEN, Eugen;  
\*30 December 1884 in Oslo;  
†1949;  
Club: *Christiania Turnforening*  
Also competed in 1908 and 1912

JESPERSEN, Per Mathias;  
\*29 March 1888 in Skien; †13 July  
1964 in Oslo;  
Club: *Odd*, Skien  
Also competed in 1908

MÜNSTER, Finn R. Holmsen;  
\*20 January 1887 in Skien; †29  
April 1965 in Bærum;  
Club: *Odd*, Skien

OLSEN, Frithjof;  
\*30 November 1882 in Drammen;  
†22 February 1922;  
Club: *Drammens Turnforening*  
Also competed in 1908 and 1912

PEDERSEN, Carl Alfred;  
\*5 May 1882 in Oslo; †25 June  
1960 in Oslo;  
Club: *Idrettsforeningen Ørnulf*,  
Kristiania.  
Competed also in athletics 1906.  
Also competed in 1908 and 1912

PETERSEN, Rasmus Kristian;  
\*8 September 1877 in Trondheim;  
†24 May 1957;  
Club: *Trondhjems Turnforening*;  
brother of Thorleif PETERSEN

PETERSEN, Thorleif;  
\*6 July 1884 in Trondheim; †22  
February 1948;  
Club: *Trondhjems Turnforening*;  
brother of Rasmus PETERSEN

RØHN, Thorleiv Bugge;  
\*23 July 1881 in Oslo; †20  
September 1963 in Oslo;  
Club: *Christiania Turnforening*

STUMPF, Johan Leopold;  
\*19 May 1880 in Kristiansand,  
†24 August 1944 in Texas, USA;  
Club: *Kristiansand Turnforening*  
Shooting (7)

BRAATHE, Julyius;  
\*4 May 1876 in Trøgstad; †8 July  
1914 in Oppegård;  
Club: *Christiania Østre Skytterlag*  
Also competed in 1908 and 1912

ENGER, Asmund Johansen;  
\*30 September 1881 in Nordre  
Land; †11 April 1966 in Nordre  
Land;  
Club: *Gjøvik & Brusveen*  
*Skytterlag*  
Also competed in 1908

HELGERUD, Albert;  
\*16 September 1876 in Svelvik,  
†27 June 1954 in Svelvik;  
Club: *Christiania Skytterlag*  
Also competed in 1908, 1912 and  
1920

HOLM, Ole Marchtin;  
\*25 December 1870 in Stange; †24  
January 1956;  
Club: *Elverum Skytterlag*

MØLLER, John;  
\*9 January 1866 in Nes på  
Romerike; †23 January 1935;  
Club: *Christiania Skytterlag*

OLSEN, Ole Tobias;  
\*16 August 1878; †2 October  
1940;  
Club: *Mosjøen Skytterlag*

SKATTEBOE, Gudbrand  
Gudbrandsen;  
\*18 July 1875 in Øystre Slidre; †3  
April 1965 in Øystre Slidre;  
Club: *Christiania Østre Skytterlag*  
Also competed in 1908, 1912 and  
1920

#### Main sources

ANDERSEN, P. Chr., *De olympiske  
leker gjennom 50 år*, Oslo 1945

GUNDERSEN, Sverre/NILSEN,  
Edvard, *Norskfri-idretts historie  
fra 1896 til 1950*, Oslo 1952

DALBY, Åge/GREVE, January/  
JORSETT, Per, *Olympiske  
sommerleker 1896-2004*, Oslo  
2004

MALLON, Bill, *The 1906 Olympic  
Games*, Jefferson, NC &  
London 1999

Biographies of Norwegian  
Olympians: Research done by  
Arild GJERDE, Stein OPDAHL and  
Magne TEIGEN

Displays during the Olympic Games 1906 in the  
Panathenaic Stadium

