

# Baron Güell, an IOC Member from Barcelona's High Society\*

By Alberto Aragón-Pérez

Santiago Güell i López was a polo player whose ability merited some coverage in the specialist press.

Photo: Stadium, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1915

"I hope that we will continue this meaningful collaboration that you have given to us since you joined the Committee (...) The reward is that you will be the head of the Olympic Games (...) in Barcelona". This was how IOC President Count de Baillet-Latour responded in May 1931 to Baron de Güell. The latter had tendered his resignation after Barcelona was unsuccessful in their bid for the 1936 Olympics.

Much later IOC President Marquis of Samaranch explained the success of Barcelona '92 was due in no small part to the Olympic seed was sown by individuals such as Santiago Güell. How important was his Olympic work? We will examine his career chronologically, beginning with his career as a polo player, through to his status as an IOC Member, and thereafter, as President of the Spanish NOC.

A new bourgeois upper class had grown up in Catalonia from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the development of industry and the economy. This social group adopted some of the fashionable cultural activities from the rest of Europe. These included playing sport. Apart from football and basque-pelota, most sports were practiced in Catalonia earlier than they were in the rest of Spain during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this social and cultural context lived Santiago Güell i López, who was created a Baron by King Alfonso XIII.

Güell had been born in 1883 into one of the richest industrial families in Barcelona. He was an important businessman. The family, which created a business empire based on the textile industry, was a referent of the Catalan new bourgeois class. The famous Park Güell, one of the most visited tourist destinations in Barcelona,



was designed by the architect Antoni Gaudí and funded by Santiago's father Count de Güell. Because of his position, he was selected as IOC Member and was a major figure in the Olympic life of Spain for three decades.

In 1918 the Baron de Güell was one of the founding members, of the political party Federació Monàrquica Autonomista (FMA), membership of this offered a window into his political ideology.

He defended a differentiated position for Catalonia but into a Spanish state united under the monarchy of the Bourbons and maintenance of social order. He belonged to the liberal positions of the dynastic conservative ideologies. In two years Santiago took on greater responsibilities within the FMA while the Employers Federation trusted him as a guarantor of certain socio-economic interests against social conflict in Catalonia (there were many riots by workers who wanted better working conditions)<sup>2</sup>. In the general election of December 1920, he was made deputy, the only seat obtained by the FMA. He was chosen as a deputy again at the elections in April 1923. This proved to be a particularly short parliamentary term for Primo de Rivera led a coup d'état in September of 1923. Güell and the FMA, like most of the Catalan conservative sector, supported the coup<sup>3</sup>.

## A Catalan sportsman and sports manager

Santiago Güell i López was a polo player. This was one the most popular sports in Spanish high society. On Olympic programme from 1900 to 1936, it was closely linked to the aristocracy and upper class<sup>4</sup>. Polo is played by only four per team when the ball is in play. The origin and wealth of the players, men like Güell with free time for this kind of leisure, ensured that it remained a purely amateur sport. The Baron played many games at the Real Polo Jockey Club of Barcelona and also on other pitches in Catalonia and throughout Spain, such as the Magdalena Palace in Santander with the Kings of Spain as spectators<sup>5</sup>. Sporting and society press reported polo matches in which he played<sup>6</sup>.



Alberto Aragón-Pérez | \*1988. After he studied a bachelor of History and a Master Degree in Ancient History at the University of Madrid, he represented the Spanish Olympic Academy during the 19<sup>th</sup> Postgraduates Session of the IOA at Olympia. He started to work within the Fundació Barcelona Olímpica in 2013, where he currently manages the Olympic Studies Centre Samaranch. He came back to Olympia last year to take part at the IOA's Master Degree in Olympic Studies.

This sport gave him an entree for the creation of an official sports body. This path started with those bodies related to horses. In 1917, when horse racing increased in Barcelona, a corporation to organise and promote the sport was created. Santiago Güell was one of those who formed this new Committee, where he came into renewed contact with some of those with whom he had played polo<sup>7</sup>. The Federation of Sports Societies of Barcelona and the Union of Sports Journalists decided to join forces in early 1921 in order to institutionalise the growth of sport in Catalonia and prepare Barcelona for a 1924 Olympic bid. Both united bodies chose Güell for the position of vice-president<sup>8</sup>.

The institutionalisation of Catalan sport progressed and Güell worked in favour of it. In the summer of 1921 Güell had become the first Catalan IOC Member and this helped him in his work. One year later, the Baron also encouraged the birth of Sports Confederation of Catalonia (CEC), a top body of Catalan sport that unified all the Catalan sports federations. The entire membership chose him as one of the vice-presidents for managing this institution, and also selected him as president of the executive committee<sup>9</sup>. Just as Juan Antonio Samaranch would later combine Olympic responsibilities with the promotion of Catalan sport from managing federations and other bodies, so Güell i López was increased his experience in the management of several sports, beyond the equestrian world within which he started. In October 1922 the Catalan Hockey Federation was founded to manage a sport which had become increasingly popular. The first directive under the Baron de Güell's presidency was to prepare technical regulations<sup>10</sup>. By then, aside from the World Indoor Tennis Championship that would be held in Barcelona in 1923, Güell was present at the meeting which organised it, representing the CEC<sup>11</sup>.

The CEC took hold as an active body that drove Catalan sport. Press reports often noted the Baron's expertise in his efforts managing the organisation. By the time he turned 40 he had become president of the Hockey Federation and other organisations and was therefore becoming one of the most influential personalities in Catalan sport. He sponsored the 10 km Jean Bouin run<sup>12</sup> in Barcelona, one of the oldest races in Spain. His support for the World Tennis Championship intensified as he became a member of the executive. He attended sporting events (such as a football game honouring Joan Gamper, FC Barcelona's founder) as an authority that conjoined the representation of the CEC and the IOC<sup>13</sup>.

### Entry into the Olympic Movement

Güell's IOC membership made him the highest Olympic authority in Barcelona and Spain. The International Olympic Committee had been founded in Paris in 1894 and was established as an independent institution

whose members were to be representatives of Olympism in their countries. Baron de Coubertin was personally in charge of choosing the thirteen founding members of the IOC, selecting aristocrats, military officials and scholars. The future election of members remained a personal decision of Coubertin, but always with the premise of being highly educated individuals, leading an exemplary life (having a distinguished social status), with a sporting background and holding political authority in their countries.

It was required because "it is responsibility of the Committee's Members a considerable task" so "they are representatives of this institution [IOC] together with federations of their country, their ambassadors somehow"<sup>14</sup>. Coubertin was very keen that a big country such as Spain would belong to this body and in 1902 convinced Marquis of Villamejor to become the first and single Spanish IOC Member. He remained so until 1921, a few months before his death, according to Coubertin's wish that "the International Olympic Committee is permanent and is recruited itself with one Member at least, not more than three per each represented country"<sup>15</sup>.

The first Spanish IOC Members were well adjusted to the requirements needed to join the institution: The Marquis de Villamejor came from the nobility of Madrid related to the Royal House and Horacio Echevarrieta was a successful Basque businessman. As previously described, Santiago Güell i López was a highly educated man thanks to the instruction his father Count de Güell sought for all his children. Santiago also carried one of the most illustrious family names of Catalonia; was a clever businessman; had experience in sport (as an athlete and manager) and Barcelona's voters had elected him to the Spanish parliament in 1920. Therefore, he satisfied all conditions set down by IOC President Coubertin. Fulfilling these criteria meant that the Frenchman would trust Güell as an IOC Member, Coubertin conceived the body as "an aristocracy, an elite"<sup>16</sup>. Catalonia, so praised by Coubertin himself for its promotion of sport, did not yet have any IOC Member. This was a shortcoming that would be solved in July 1921, the month when Coubertin sent a letter to Baron Godefroy de Blonay (the IOC Vice-President) reporting the election of the Spanish representation at the IOC to fill the void created by the death of Villamejor: "the seat of Baron de Guëll [sic] and Don Horace Echevarrieta as members for Spain"<sup>17</sup>.

Echevarrieta became the 104<sup>th</sup> member of the Committee. Güell, officially the 105<sup>th</sup>, would remain in this position for more than three decades, until his death in 1954. Since the election took place, he became in fact the highest sports authority in Catalonia, which was logical. He had built a considerable reputation via institutions such as the CEC. If Echevarrieta's attitude was heavily criticized, his colleague Güell was highly thought of<sup>18</sup>.



A gentleman:  
Santiago Güell,  
in the early 1920s.

Photo: Olympic Studies Center  
Samaranch



In November 1926 Honorary IOC President Pierre de Coubertin visited Barcelona for the first time, where he was photographed with officials of the Club Gimnàstic de Tarragona, the oldest gymnastic club in Catalonia.

Photo: Official Report Barcelona 1992, Vol. 1, p. 208

The Catalan press emphasized his attendance at sporting events as “delegate in Spain of the International Olympic Committee”, a title that he would carry and honour for the rest of his life. Sometimes he was named as “delegate in Catalonia of the IOC”, which is understandable given that he was a Catalan and perceived as a representative of the region as opposed to the rest-of-Spain<sup>19</sup>.

Regardless as to whether Catalan sport was at its full maturity or that there was still a great distance between it and British sport, the consensus was that Güell deserved the acclaim of all athletes for working in favour of the growth of Catalan sport by giving it international prestige with efforts such as the award of the Olympic Cup to the CEC<sup>20</sup>.

### Reconstitution of the Spanish NCC

Preparation for the 1924 Olympic Games was the main objective that occupied the efforts of Güell (combining it with the control of his business). He attended meetings such as those that took place in Paris between the IOC and the Organising Committee. Asked about the reconstitution of the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE), he said “the Olympics should be attended by nations to defend their sporting honour”, because of this it was essential that “Spain should go to the Olympics properly prepared, or not go<sup>21</sup>”. But there was only one year to Paris 1924 and the required Spanish Olympic body had not yet been constituted. The voices that postulated the difficulty in repeating the success of Antwerp 1920 without the financial or logistical support of a COE began to grow<sup>22</sup>.

Sports federations such as track and field became impatient because of the lack of support from the national authorities and the poor collaboration between

them and the Olympic representative Güell. However, his valued reputation as a highly competent manager of sport was about to come into play. Complaints from the Track and Field Federation, the major sport at any Olympic Games, reflected their inability to respond to the Baron's requirement. In other words, sending a competitive team to Paris. Public funds were non-existent and facilities were poor even in developed regions like Catalonia, the Basque Country and Madrid. The pressure eventually mobilized Santiago Güell, who “shows that the Olympic Committee delegation takes care of the matter; we regret it happens a bit late<sup>23</sup>”. Finally, he moved to reorganise the COE.

The inactivity of the COE in fulfilling even basic tasks such as preparing the competitors set a negative tone. The political authorities demonstrated a lack of interest in sport and physical activity from political authorities. The sports federations had inadequate budgets and planning. The weight of responsibilities began to overtake the person in charge of this mission, who was acting as Spanish member of the IOC (only Santiago, because Echevarrieta never cared for this task). After some months Baron de Güell had failed to move beyond his initial rebuilding of the COE. When the Opening Ceremony of the Summer Olympics was closer (and the deadline to register competitors at the Chamonix Winter event already passed) some press displayed their annoyance with him. Complaints took the form of, for example: The journal *Sport* got worse because “everything has remained unresolved, postponed on (...) without any Olympic Committee, without any legal representation which all nations have<sup>24</sup>”.

Actually, the COE had already been created by Marquis of Villamejor. After years of insistence by Coubertin and driven by the position of Prime Minister of his brother Count of Romanones, he had been confident enough to undertake the foundation of a National Committee without legal status in November 1912 at his home in Madrid. Villamejor ruled the COE until his death in 1921. Although his final years in office were limited by his illness, one of his last acts was to obtain (together with his brother, Prime Minister again) a grant to cover Spanish participation at the 1920 Olympics. But once the Marquis died, the Madrid-based COE suffered a period of complete inactivity<sup>25</sup>.

Coubertin had said that all states should have a permanent NOC, to be active beyond years in which the Olympic Games were held. In the interview that was granted to *La Jornada Deportiva*, Güell projected a COE's model that would be implemented a year later. According to him, there was an embryonic nucleus, “the Spanish delegation within the IOC, but the rest of the Committee is still to be designated”. The remainder would be structured according to the two extensive sports areas in Spain: Catalonia and Castile (he still

considered the immobile Echevarrieta). He structured the COE by grouping sports federations into pairs (one person per Catalonia and Castile) thereby "controlling correctly the whole Olympic preparation (...) made by the federations"<sup>26</sup>. The COE should remain as economic and logistic support of the federations and finance travel to hosting Olympic cities.

On 11<sup>st</sup> January 1924 the COE was finally reconstituted at the headquarters of the Society of Horse Races and the CEC in Barcelona. Baron de Güell, the new COE President, was absent from the meeting because he had travelled to America. Two weeks before, however, he had left "written designations" for members. Most were already on the board of the CEC because they represented the sports federations established in Catalonia (hockey by Santiago, football, swimming, tennis, rowing and equestrian).

In his absence, Mariano Rivera, who had links with the military dictatorship, took Güell's place<sup>27</sup>. On 30<sup>th</sup> January, the COE's members met again, this time at the Council of Ministers in Madrid without their president Güell. A COE delegation was established in Barcelona and the headquarters were finally shared space with the Society of Horse Races and CEC. Rivera reported the development of both meetings to the IOC President, who expressed his inclination to disagree with Rivera's notion to replace Güell proclaiming him: "substitute IOC delegate in Spain". The Frenchman also expressed concern regarding the move of the COE's main office from Madrid to the Catalan city<sup>28</sup>.

A new COE that for the first time enjoyed legal recognition (a statutory regulation was drafted shortly after 30<sup>th</sup> January 1924) was therefore established, under the initiative and presidency of Santiago Güell who took advantage of his good relationship with Primo de Rivera's regime. As a result of this personal accomplishment he was becoming a real frontrunner in the world of sports. He had built his profile with three significant appointments: he achieved IOC membership, the CEC's vice-presidency and the COE's presidency.

Indeed, there was a symbiosis between the latest two institutions because they shared headquarters, the leadership of Santiago and most of the members. Güell confirmed Catalonia, and especially Barcelona, as the great sports centre of Spain<sup>29</sup>. Although he essentially reorganised and reconstituted the COE, the truth is that for many years 1924 (and not 1912) was considered the date of its foundation, and its founder to be Baron de Güell rather than Villamejor.

The first task new COE faced was to ensure proper preparation in order to participate in Paris 1924. In March, the body published a notice in the press promoting the benefits of sport and patriotism to raise funds that ensured the participation of Spanish athletes at the Games through "your mite at the national subscription

in order to save with appropriate dignity the huge cost of this organisation". After publishing the manifesto, *El Mundo Deportivo* stated that "with the safe arrival of the Baron, COE is complete and performs with the highest activity allowed by the current circumstances".

Those circumstances referred to his absences due to business and personal affairs, when Mariano Rivera always stepped in instead. In the same month, the Baron provided a press conference surrounded by other COE members. He answered questions about why the reconstitution of the Committee was delayed, who initiated its work, the relationship with sport federations, the contacts with the Spanish regime and mainly about the Spanish participation at the 1924 Olympics. He considered the prospects for Spanish competitors in each sport and informed those present about funding secured for the Spanish delegation<sup>30</sup>.

Güell informed Coubertin that the Duke d'Alba (who was a close friend of the King and the Queen) would be chosen as a replacement for Echevarrieta as IOC Member. Meanwhile, he was a very successful businessman in Catalonia, thanks in part to the preferential treatment he received from the dictatorial authorities. He managed some strong companies and operated as a Catalan business representative with the Spanish Government. The free time he could reserve for his sport charges was clearly valued by his colleagues, as evidenced by the CEC's creation of the Güell Cup: an annual award for the demonstration of biggest personal sporting effort<sup>31</sup>.

Relations between the Spanish Track and Field Federation and Santiago improved whilst driving forward their desire for Olympic participation. The body chose him to organise the Spanish Cross-Country Championship. He regularly assisted with track and field competitions in Catalonia and with many other sports too. Football, for instance, secured his attention after he became the Director of FC Güell, a team founded in 1909 for the workers of Colonia Güell (a textile factory owned by his family)<sup>32</sup>.

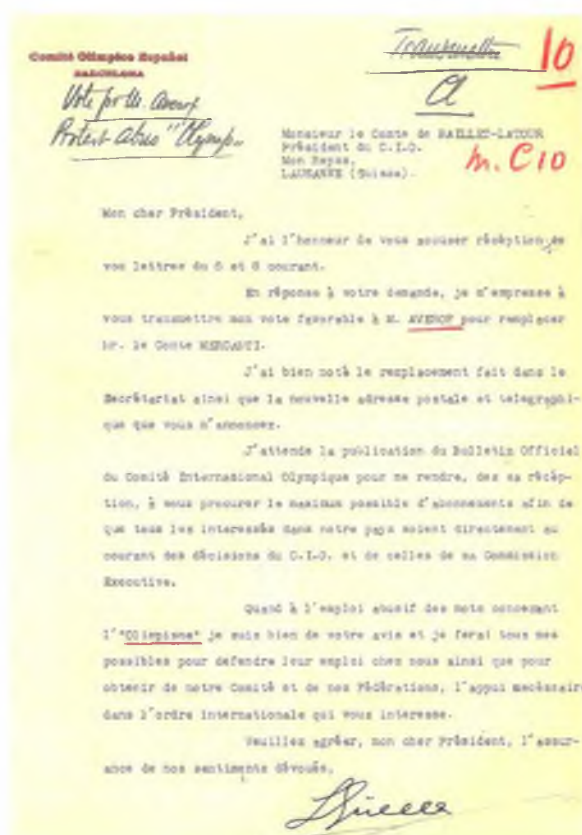
After he returned from South America, the COE worked completely normally (which never happened under the presidency of Villamejor) and its members met regularly and worked on many issues. Tasks such as dealing with existing sport federations and the creation of new federations such as the body for basque-pelota. Güell personally maintained a meaningful dialogue with the IOC and its President Coubertin. The friendship between both aristocrats made possible the visit of the Frenchman to Barcelona late in 1926 (he was also welcomed by his friend the Catalan journalist Elias i Juncosa)<sup>33</sup>. The founder of modern Olympism's successor, Count de Baillet-Latour, also established an affable connection with the first Catalan IOC Member. Correspondence between the two Olympic authorities soon became regular<sup>34</sup>.

## Strengthening Olympism, Barcelona 1936 and the Second Spanish Republic

Two years after the rebirth of the Spanish Committee, this body started a new administration process in April 1926 driven by Güell and Duke d'Alba with three main objectives: the drafting of new statutes and legal recognition as an association; the bid to host the Olympic Games in Spain (eventually in Barcelona, where this COE was settled a very developed place concerning sport) after ten years; and the appointment of new executive positions. The 1928 Olympics would be the next important milestone, and the practice of only sending athletes who would be competitive was maintained. At the 24<sup>th</sup> IOC Session a few weeks later in Lisbon, Güell represented Spain. He took the first step in promoting Barcelona's candidature to host the Games.

In 1925 Güell recommended to the new IOC President, Count Henry de Baillet-Latour, that he should choose the Greek Georgios Averoff to replace Count Alexander Mercati, who had resigned. In the event Averoff was elected to the IOC at the next Session in Lisbon. His uncle, who had the same name had given his financial support to make possible the reconstruction of the Olympic Stadium used for the 1896 Games.

Illustration: IOC Archives



That Committee's renovation finished in September when the new statutes were approved, Baron de Güell was succeeded by Marquis de Lamadrid as President and this body and the CEC established different headquarters<sup>35</sup>. Although he left the presidency, he still attended COE meetings, held the vice-presidency at the CEC whilst the newspapers continued to report on his constant work for the growth of sport<sup>36</sup>. He was a respected person (as seen in the press of the time) in part due to the maturing of Catalan and Spanish sport that occurred under his leadership during the 1920s. For many years Baron de Güell still played polo (a sport that was

played during the visits to Barcelona of Count de Baillet-Latour or the King) but was more focused on horse racing, owning a highly successful racehorse called Apa-Noi, which became a legend at the hippodromes<sup>37</sup>.

The cordiality among the leading Spanish Olympic authority and the two IOC Presidents explains the prominent role of Güell when they were in Barcelona. Santiago and Elias Juncosa were next to Coubertin during ten days full of activities. The Frenchman seemed to be impressed, saying that the Spanish city was "une cité sportive"<sup>38</sup>. Baillet-Latour's stay was hosted by Santiago again, this time offering his house in Pedralbes and acting as a guide through a rich agenda<sup>39</sup>.

Santiago Güell was present at the 25<sup>th</sup> IOC Session held in Monaco in 1927 and officially presented the candidature. He made use of his powerful links into the Olympic Movement<sup>40</sup> and coordinated a joint commission of COE and CEC that managed all the works: from planning the venues and preparing the city to the political contacts. The mission carried out by Güell was essential because he had to continue to foster and strengthen already good relationships between the IOC and leaders of CEC and COE<sup>41</sup>. The other mission he faced was easy after his brother Count de Güell was named Mayor of Barcelona.

When Alfonso XIII ceased to give his backing to Primo de Rivera as Prime Minister, the dictatorship had failed to achieve the objectives that had been the reasons for the coup d'état. The reputation of the monarchy was seriously affected and the desire for a Republic was becoming very popular and politically well-organised in Spain. In this rapid political process, Baron de Güell decided to engage actively in favor of the monarchy (he hosted a visit of the kings and was in touch with the new Prime Minister) and was almost named by the King as Mayor of Barcelona. He supported a weak political party created against republicanism<sup>42</sup>. When his brother led the Barcelona City Council, he was in the best position for getting the municipal support in favour of Olympic candidature. The confidence of the Olympic body with its 105<sup>th</sup> Member became bigger.

The 1929 International Exposition was held in Barcelona and there was a strong sports programme organised by CEC at the suggestion of Güell. The objective was to show that the city had experience and solvency: it was a good international promotion for bidding for the Games. He went to Lausanne before the Expo was held and presented to his IOC colleagues maps and photographs about Barcelona and the planned facilities, to show how Barcelona 1936 would be designed and carried out<sup>43</sup>. The sports programme at the Expo was successful and achieved its goals, new facilities were opened in the Montjuïc area (the Stadium, an Olympic pool, etc.) and the IOC President could see for himself the organisation of the events was of a high standard. Baillet-Latour even told the journalists that Montjuïc Stadium was ready



Inauguration of the Montjuïc Stadium on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1929 in the presence of King Alfonso XIII (far left). Adjacent: the Count de Güell, the brother of Santiago, in his office as Mayor of Barcelona a few weeks before the 29<sup>th</sup> IOC Session at which Barcelona hoped to become host city of the 1936 Games. But because of the outbreak of the Spanish revolution and the flight of the King on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1931, the Session was reduced to two days. As only a few IOC Members had come, the vote was extended by a postal ballot, from which Berlin emerged the winner by 43 votes to 16.

to host the Olympics<sup>44</sup>. The Belgian Count went back to Barcelona some months later, and other IOC Members were accommodated at Güell's house again.

The ultimate date for hosting the Olympics would be decided at the 29<sup>th</sup> IOC Session that was to be held in Barcelona in April 1931. The meeting was toughly supervised by Baron of Güell in close cooperation with his brother Joan Antoni. They prepared with meticulous attention to detail to increase the chances of securing a successful outcome. That is, the election of Barcelona as the host city at the same IOC Session. Güell and other members of the COE worked to develop an attractive programme of activities and sport events, in collaboration with the City Council, to please the men who would decide the Olympic future of the city. However, a very transcendental political change occurred in Spain<sup>45</sup>.

King Alfonso XIII abdicated after adverse elections and the Second Republic was proclaimed on 14<sup>th</sup> April, ten days before the Session started. Most IOC Members, a conservative club that was formed by men from the upper class, refused to attend fearing the political circumstances. Although Count de Güell was no longer Mayor of Barcelona, the new political authorities encouraged the 29<sup>th</sup> Session and IOC Members who did attend, such as de Baillet-Latour, were pleasantly satisfied. The election for hosting the 1936 Olympics, however, was postponed to allow all the Members could vote by mail (eventually Berlin was selected)<sup>46</sup>.

Santiago Güell felt frustrated because he thought the Republic provoked the loss of the candidature. He was disappointed at what he considered a personal failure. The Spanish Committee called for a meeting in which many changes were implemented (Doctor Pi i Sunyer became the COE President) and Güell announced that he had tried to resign from his IOC membership but that the Belgian Count rejected it. The correspondence among them started when the Catalan presented his resignation: "I think it is my duty to present to you my resignation as Delegate for Spain". The IOC President replied showing "the hope that we will continue with this meaningful collaboration that you gave us since you joined the Committee" and predicting "[to] be the head

of the Olympic Games (...) in Barcelona". Finally, glad by the trust of the Olympic President, he said "I remove my resignation"<sup>47</sup>. He therefore maintained his position in Spanish Olympic circles, although was not comfortable with the Republic due to his own conservative ideology. His appearance in economic, social and sporting public life decreased. He maintained some activities and correspondence with the IOC authorities, mainly with de Blonay. His work at the COE decreased although never disappeared.

### 1955 Mediterranean Games: the will that Güell left for 1992 Olympics

The Spanish Civil War started on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1936 and lasted until the spring of 1939. Catalonia maintained his loyalty to the constitutional Republic until Barcelona was conquered towards the end of the war. But many members of the Catalan high society were no longer safe in the left-wing Republican arena and in some cases they escaped to the fascist side. Santiago Güell and his family arrived at the Basque city of San Sebastián. He met Count de Vallellano there, the other Spanish IOC Member, and Mesalles Estivill, the COE Secretary since 1924. They reconstituted the Spanish Olympic Committee in 1938 that became the only "organisation into the orbit of the IOC" in that divided country<sup>48</sup>.

The new president was José Moscardó, a rebel general without any kind of sporting experience who was merely a symbolic figure of the new COE. Baron of Güell, together with Mesalles Estivill, was who actually ruled this organism that, against the Olympic Charter and because the fascist structure of Francoist Spain made rendered the Olympic Committee a simple branch of the state Sports National Delegation, which was strongly linked to the ruling single party Falange. IOC President de Baillet-Latour had encouraged Güell to lead the reconstitution of the COE in the rebel Spain and immediately recognised it<sup>49</sup>.

Although Santiago remained as an important businessman and he kept the strength of his companies, the Civil War affected properties owned by the Güell i López family. This prompted his sister Mercedes to sell off the



Poster of the International Sports Festival in connection with the Barcelona Universal Exposition of 1929.

Photos: Olympic Studies Center Samaranch; Volker Kluge Archive

palace designed by Gaudí<sup>50</sup>. But the Baron remained as a personality of Barcelona's highest class. Actually, he became president of two institutions very connected with this wealthy social group. He was the president of *Círculo Ecuestre*, an equestrian club (the oldest sport club in Spain), and he presided the *Theatre Liceu* too, a major opera house<sup>51</sup>. His last great service to sport occurred when he was represented Spain as IOC Member during the first Mediterranean Games, held in Alexandria in 1951. He knew that Barcelona should keep the Olympic dream alive. Organising this multi-sports event would much experience to the city. He persuaded the City Council of the benefits of the application, because the facilities already existed in Montjuïc area. After Barcelona was chosen to host the 1955 Mediterranean Games, Baron de Güell, the father of the project, was appointed President of the Organising Committee<sup>52</sup>.

Güell worked within the IOC with projects such as promoting Spanish into a body that worked in English and French. During the 48<sup>th</sup> IOC Session held in Mexico in 1953, "the Baron defended under the support of other Hispanic colleagues that this language is equated with: Baron de Güell warmly defended the cause of the recognition of Spanish as an official language of the IOC. 21 countries speak Spanish<sup>53</sup>". Güell remained the COE's vice-presidency until his death and was very active into the Olympic Movement attending most

the Organising Committee prepared all aspects and levels of the upcoming event, not just its sporting face<sup>56</sup>. But Santiago Güell i López became ill and died in August 1954, one year before the Games took place. He never saw the competition he made possible, but he left a very deep legacy in a city and a country that would be chosen to host the Olympics themselves three decades later. IOC President Samaranch recognised and honoured his memory when he wrote, a few months after Barcelona 1992, an article titled 'The Olympic dynasty of the Güell family' in which he argues why the Games were successful thanks to his legacy<sup>57</sup>. ■

Exhibition of posters in 1953 inaugurated by Baron de Güell to promote the 1955 Mediterranean Games in Barcelona.

Photo: Olympic Studies Center Samaranch



IOC meetings and travelling to Lausanne. His efforts as a nexus of the Olympic Movement prevented the isolation of a COE which had been threatened with becoming a department of the ruling single party. The correspondence with Otto Mayer was very cordial.

Aware of being close to his final years, he arranged his succession as IOC Member with President Edström, offering his son-in-law Marquis de Mac-Mahon to the IOC President. Güell presented the husband of his only daughter as a very competent person, with a deep culture, very interested in some sports and fluent speaker of the most-common European languages<sup>54</sup>. Edström trusted Santiago and the Marquis became IOC Member in 1952<sup>55</sup>.

The Mayor of Barcelona envisaged "the Mediterranean Games should be Olympics on a small scale" so Güell and

- 1 Letter of Count de Baillet-Latour to Baron Güell, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1931, IOC Archives.
- 2 *Abc*, February 15<sup>th</sup> 1920.
- 3 J. Grau Maseu: *La Lliga Regionalista i la llengua catalana*. Barcelona, 2004, p. 439.
- 4 David Wallechinsky, Jaime Loucky: *The complete book of the Olympics*. London, 2008, p. 1174. The Spanish national team, runner-up at the 1920 Olympics, was composed by the Duke of Alba (IOC Member from 1924 to 1927) and his brother, the Duke of Peñaranda de Duero, two Marquis of Villamejor's nephews (the founder of the COE) and the Count of Maza.
- 5 *Abc*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1919.
- 6 *Stadium*, 15<sup>th</sup> January 1916 and 29<sup>th</sup> December 1917; *La Vanguardia*, 7<sup>th</sup> January 1915, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1921, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1922 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 1923. The teams were a constant (red against white) but the members were not fixed: Güell played in either of the teams. He, like the other players, played matches at the Real Polo Jockey Club as a member of it.
- 7 *La Vanguardia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1917.
- 8 *El Mundo Deportivo*, 27<sup>th</sup> January 1921; *Abc*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1921.
- 9 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1922 and 17<sup>th</sup> July 1922; *La Vanguardia*, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1922.
- 10 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1922; *El Mundo Deportivo*, 9<sup>th</sup> November 1923. He became the president because of the hockey section at the Real Polo Jockey Club.
- 11 *La Vanguardia*, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1922.
- 12 See "The short life of the long-distance runner Jean Bouin", in: *JOH*, Vol. 22, No. 2/2014, pp. 18-19.
- 13 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1922, 8<sup>th</sup> January 1923 and 10<sup>th</sup> January 1923; *La Vanguardia*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1922 and 27<sup>th</sup> February 1923.
- 14 Pierre de Coubertin: 'L'organisation olympique', in: *Revue Olympique*, No. 11, 1903, pp. 35-38.
- 15 Statuts du Conseil International Olympique, in: IOC, *Session de 1923*, Rome, p. 4. "The first Olympic Charter was adopted in 1923 in Rome. Previously there were only rules of the Olympic Games.
- 16 Pierre de Coubertin: *Les assises philosophiques de l'olympisme moderne*. Genève, 1935.
- 17 Letter of Baron Coubertin to Baron de Blonay, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1921, IOC Archives.
- 18 *Sports*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1923; *Aire Libre*, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 1924. Explanations were requested to Güell precisely because, recognising his diligent work, he didn't use the IOC delegation for preparing the 1924 Olympics.
- 19 *La Vanguardia*, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1921; *El Mundo Deportivo*, 5<sup>th</sup> January 1922.
- 20 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 30<sup>th</sup> June 1922. The Olympic Cup, given every year to institutions by IOC since 1906, is the highest award into the Olympic Movement.
- 21 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 10<sup>th</sup> June 1922 and 17<sup>th</sup> January 1923.
- 22 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 30<sup>th</sup> March 1923. In Antwerp 1920 the Spanish athletes achieved silver medals in football and polo, plus four diplomas in water polo, shooting and tennis.
- 23 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1923, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1923, 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1923 and 27<sup>th</sup> August 1923.

- 24 *Sports*, 11<sup>th</sup> December 1923 and 18<sup>th</sup> December 1923.
- 25 Conrado Durántez Corral: *El centenario del Comité Olímpico Español*. Madrid, 2013, pp. 91–92 and 133; José Miguel García i García: *Acta de constitución oficial y miembros del COE de 1912*. Sevilla, 2013, pp. 41–43; Letter of Marquis Villamejor to Baron de Coubertin attaching the COE's constitutional act, 25<sup>th</sup> November 1912, IOC Archives.
- 26 *La Jornada Deportiva*, 17<sup>th</sup> January 1923.
- 27 Conrado Durántez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133–134; The act of the meeting of the COE's constitution was signed on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1924.
- 28 Letter of Baron de Coubertin to Mariano de Rivera, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1924, IOC Archives.
- 29 Conrado Durántez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 136–139.
- 30 *El Mundo Deportivo*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1924 and 26<sup>th</sup> March 1924.
- 31 *El Mundo Deportivo*, 26<sup>th</sup> November 1924. He first awarded athlete was the cyclist Jaume Janer, the first Catalan who finished the Tour of France. Copa Barón de Güell is currently awarded by the Consejo Superior de Deportes.
- 32 *L'Esport Català*, 19<sup>th</sup> January 1926. Today, this team settled in Santa Coloma de Cervelló is a multi-sports club called Centre d'Esports Eusebi Güell.
- 33 *La Vanguardia*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1926 and 28<sup>th</sup> March 1926; Letter of Baron Coubertin to Josep Elias i Juncosa, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1926, IOC Archives. A miscellaneous programme of activities, mostly sport events, was planned by the hosts. Coubertin had to cancel his arrival twice because of his health. He dealt with the CEC an annual award of a medal.
- 34 Letter of Baron Güell to Count Baillet-Latour, unknown date in 1925, IOC Archives. The first letter was written by the Belgian asking for a new Greek IOC Member and for regulating the abuse of word 'Olympic' at Spanish clubs and gymnasiums.
- 35 *Abc*, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1926 and 9<sup>th</sup> May 1926. Güell slept in the residence of the Portuguese Prime Minister Padilla; Conrado Durántez, *Op. cit.*, pp. 139–140.
- 36 *L'Esport Català*, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1926; *La Vanguardia*, 26<sup>th</sup> January 1927.
- 37 *Blanco y Negro*, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1926; *L'Esport Català*, 6<sup>th</sup> June 1927; *Abc*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1927; *La Vanguardia*, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1928.
- 38 Conrado Durántez, *Op. cit.*, p. 148; *La Vanguardia*, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1926; Letter of Baron de Coubertin to Josep Elias i Juncosa, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1926, IOC Archives.
- 39 *La Vanguardia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1927, 5<sup>th</sup> April 1927 and 9<sup>th</sup> April 1927. Events organised as the placement of the first stone of the Stadium of Montjuïc.
- 40 Bulletin Officiel du CIO, 7, 1927, pp. 12–13.
- 41 Conrado Durántez, *Op. cit.*, p. 154; Letter of Baroness Güell to Baron de Blonay, 7<sup>th</sup> October 1929; Letter of Baron Güell to Baron de Blonay, 11<sup>th</sup> October 1929; Letter of Count de Baillet-Latour to Baron Güell, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1930, IOC Archives. The correspondence files kept in Lausanne shows the letters with Baillet-Latour and Blonay. The relation with the Swiss IOC Vice-President was really strong, because the two wives were friendly involved. Family Güell welcomed the Blonay marriage in Barcelona more than once. And Blonay trusted Santiago for some important decisions at the Olympic body, such as the election of another IOC Member for Spain.
- 42 *Abc*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1930, 25<sup>th</sup> March 1930, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1930, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1930, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1930 and 16<sup>th</sup> July 1930.
- 43 *La Vanguardia*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1929. The candidatures' presentations have progressed considerably from those times.
- 44 J. M. Surroca i Carmona: *L'esport a l'Exposició Internacional de Barcelona 1929*. Barcelona, 2012, pp. 5–6; *La Vanguardia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1928 and 12<sup>th</sup> February 1930; *El Mundo Deportivo*, 6<sup>th</sup> December 1930; *Xut*, 21<sup>st</sup> May 1929
- 45 *Abc*, 14<sup>th</sup> March 1931.
- 46 *El Mundo Deportivo*, 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1931; *La Vanguardia*, 24<sup>th</sup> April 1931; Bulletin Officiel du CIO, 18, 1931, pp. 11–15.
- 47 Letters of Baron Güell to Count de Baillet-Latour, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1931 and 12<sup>th</sup> June 1931; Letter of Count de Baillet-Latour to Baron Güell, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1931, IOC Archives.
- 48 *Abc*, 26<sup>th</sup> December 1937.
- 49 *Abc*, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1941; Letter of Baron Güell to Count de Baillet-Latour, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1941, IOC Archives.
- 50 *Destino*, 17<sup>th</sup> June 1944; *Abc*, 12<sup>th</sup> February 1950; *La Vanguardia*, 29<sup>th</sup> November 1950. Santiago grew up in this house that is currently a museum about the architect Antoni Gaudí. The family also had to sell the company Colonia Güell, a textile factory seen as symbol of such wealthy family.



A mermaid as symbol – poster of the II<sup>nd</sup> Mediterranean Games, which took place from 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July 1955 in Barcelona.

Illustration: Volker Kluge Archive

- 51 *La Vanguardia*, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1947; *Destino*, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1951.
- 52 J. Pernas i Lòpez: *Barcelona 1955: els Jocs Mediterranis*. Barcelona, 2012, pp. 46–50; *El Mundo Deportivo*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1951. IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer encouraged the Barcelona's candidature arguing it was led by Güell, a man with "a big influence" and a dean into the IOC".
- 53 Bulletin Officiel du CIO, 33, 1955, pp. 33–34. Spanish wasn't voted as the third IOC official language.
- 54 Letter of Baron Güell to Sigfrid Edström, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1952, IOC Archives. Adela Güell i Ricart, the Santiago's daughter, was always very close to the Olympic Movement. She couldn't become IOC Member, but her husband, because the IOC membership was only open to women from the Samaranch's presidency.
- 55 Letter of Otto Mayer to Baron de Güell and Marquis Mac-Mahon, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1953, IOC Archives. Mac-Mahon was officially known into the Olympism as Baron de Güell, also the two years before Santiago died, because of the prestige of his father-in-law.
- 56 Juli Pernas, *Op. cit.*, p. 58. Organiser; and Santiago carried out sporting events for testing the facilities, cultural activities and international contacts.
- 57 *La Vanguardia*, 24<sup>th</sup> December 1932.

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