

Three sailors and a sergeant-major: Dutch participation in Paris 1900

By Henk Mees and Wim Zonneveld

Silver Winner's Plaque from the Olympics in Paris 1900. These were also regarded as World Exhibition contests. On the reverse a naked athlete can be seen, in addition the description of the sport in which the plaque was won.

Photo: Volker Kluge Collection



Anthony Bijkerk's labour of love on the history of Dutch participation in the Olympic Games, both Summer and Winter, has resulted in two veritable treasure troves. His *Olympisch Oranje. Van Athene 1896 tot en met Londen 2012* (Olympic Orange. From Athens 1896 to London 2012) and an earlier special edition entitled *Nederlandse deelnemers aan de tweede Olympisch Spelen – tijdens de Wereldtentoonstelling Parijs 1900* (Dutch Participants in the Second Olympic Games at the World Exhibition Paris 1900).¹ Bijkerk's work is not just informative but invites elaboration and, respectfully but inevitably, fact checking.²

In this article we examine the personal histories and sporting backgrounds of four Dutch participants in the Paris 1900 Olympics. There had been no athletes from the Netherlands at the 1896 Games in Athens. Given the way the Paris events were programmed, these cases concern the first ever Dutch Olympic team comprising three sailors, Smulders, Hooijkaas and Van der Velden of Rotterdam, and the first Dutch individual participant,

fencer Van Nieuwenhuijzen of The Hague who took part in épée competition. Our aim is firstly to show how the members of the sailing team actually operated and allocated tasks in their races; and secondly to show how the efforts of the fencer have mistakenly been attributed to his younger brother. The upshot is that the 1900 Paris events continue to intrigue the Olympic history investigator.

The Paris 1900 Olympics

After the bold experiment of the 1896 Athens Games, the 1900 Paris Olympics might have been those of progress, in ideas and ideals, in interest, and in organisational skills. They were not. Instead, they were the most chaotic in the history of the Games. They took place in direct competition with the World Exhibition of the same year. This event also comprised sports events. In contradistinction to those of the Games, these were heavily subsidised, and promoted as World Championships, irrespective of the Games, for some sports as well.

The chairman of the committee, Charles de la Rouche-foucauld, withdrew in frustration during preparations in 1899, and Pierre de Coubertin, head of the Olympic Movement and IOC President, saw his role marginalised. "I surrendered – and was incorrect in doing so" he said later. The new chairman of the Organising Committee was Daniel Mérillon. He edited the elaborate post-Games *Official Report* and in doing so ensured his own place in Olympic history.³

Planning the programme for 1900 had originally begin in 1893. The programme was rearranged to the extent that it became virtually unrecognisable. This has subsequently meant a Herculean task of disentangling the jumble and reconstructing a semblance of 1900 Games. Bijkerk himself recalled that when he made



Henk Mees Sports journalist and former head of the 's-Hertogenbosch news desk of the *Brabants Dagblad*; co-author of *Olympische sporen in 's-Hertogenbosch*. ["Olympic traces in 's-Hertogenbosch"]. He writes regularly for the biannual magazine *Helden in de Wielersport in Brabant* ["Heroes of Brabant Speed Cycling"].

contact with the descendants of those who had taken part in Paris, many were astounded to hear that their ancestor had taken part, let alone that some might even be considered an Olympic champion. There have been similar episodes in many other countries.

Dutch participation in the Paris 1900 Olympics

Bijkerk's involvement with the history of the 1900 Paris Olympics started with a discovery in the 1960s. He realised that the Dutch Olympic Committee "was convinced that Dutch athletes only made an appearance for the first time in London 1908". He consulted foreign sources which revealed there had been participants as early as 1900⁴ and he carried out painstaking research in national and international publications and archives.

He presented his findings on Dutch participation in Paris exactly 100 years after the event. He had discovered Dutch participants in archery, fencing, football, road running, rowing, sailing, shooting and swimming, virtually all of them traced and described, as far as the available data allowed, in brief biographies, and captured against the background of the complicated history and structure of the Paris Olympics.

The Dutch Olympic Movement at the turn of the 20th century was small to the point of non-existence. 19th century sports pioneer and propagandist Willem "Pim" Mulier of Haarlem, for instance, wrote about Coubertin's Congrès des Jeux Olympiques at the Sorbonne in Paris in his 1894 *Athletiek en Voetbal* (Athletics and Football). Mulier's opinion was that he "could not muster very much enthusiasm for these Olympic Games and saw little of future value in them".⁵

In 1896, Dutch athletes were absent from the inaugural modern Olympics in Athens. F.W.C.H. 'Frits' Baron van Tuyll van Serooskerken, an aristocratic social networker and a prominent and active member of hunting association "Nimrod", became the Dutch IOC Member in 1898.

In addition, to meet growing confusion about enrolment for Paris, sports enthusiast and administrator C.A.A. 'Bram' Dudok de Wit was appointed chairman of a committee in March 1900, "entrusted with providing information to would-be participants of the sports events to be held at the exhibition."⁶ Van Tuyll's role, if any, remains unclear. It is also doubtful if Dudok's activities proved of much help. Even so, a sizeable number of Dutch athletes were present in Paris to compete.

In his 2000 Paris special, Bijkerk had 36 Dutch participants. Between then and 2012 he revised his opinion on the criteria for inclusion. He acknowledged the influence of work by noted Olympic historians and fellow ISOH members such as Karl Lennartz, Walter Teutenberg, Volker Kluge, Bill Mallon and André Drevon

who had all written extensively on early Games: 'The 1900 Paris Olympic Games took place in very special circumstances which cannot and should not be judged by the usual standards, and which above all cannot be compared with the current situation.' said Bijkerk.⁷ He defined as '1900 Olympic' events which took place in the context of the World Exhibition, with an international character, and whose results were entered in Méillon's report.

This implies greater numbers of competitors in two particular areas. These were in sports based on mechanical propulsion, such as automobile and motorcycle contest, and those in which true professionals competed, such as speed cycling. There were also events in which prize money was awarded in contests to any deserving competitor, irrespective of amateur or professional status. Such awards were made in sailing and shooting.

The category of mechanical propulsion is irrelevant to Dutch participation in Paris. Of the other two, it is impossible to separate the Olympic 'wheat from the chaff' in combined events a century after the fact. Bijkerk's proposal not to bother seems perfectly reasonable.

Accepting as Olympians true professionals, however even when contesting in separate events, is much more controversial. For Dutch participation, this would mean bestowing Olympic status on speed cyclists such as professional world champions Jaap Eden and Mathieu Cordang, who happened to be in Paris to compete at the Vincennes racing track in races organised under the auspices of the Exhibition Committee. They did not realise, care, or possibly even want to have their efforts labelled as Olympic.

And finally, there is the intermediate status of the "masters" in fencing. These were professional or semi-professional teachers in the sport who were used to competing against amateurs without any distinction being made. They competed separately in Paris, even though at the time fencing teachers were recognised by the IOC as non-professionals.⁸ Using Bijkerk's more liberal criteria from his 2012 publication, Dutch participation increases to 42.

Against this backdrop, our two cases studies address significant Paris athletes from the point of view of Dutch Olympic history. Three Rotterdam sailors formed the first Dutch team which competed on the River Seine at



Wim Zonneveld Emeritus professor of English Language and Culture at Utrecht University. His main field of interest is the introduction of sports in the Netherlands in the second half of the 19th c. Co-editor of *de Sportwereld*, magazine on the history of Dutch sports. He is the recent author of *Klaas Pander; het bewogen leven van een vergeten sportheld* ["Klaas Pander; 'the eventful life of a forgotten sports hero'"].

Meulan in May 1900. And in early June, a fencer named Van Nieuwenhuizen became the first Dutch individual when he competed in épée in the gardens of the Tuileries Palace.

As there were no participants in Athens 1896, they were therefore the first Dutch Olympians. This makes it especially important to make sure their personal details and accomplishments are correctly recorded.

Dutch participants in sailing: the Smulders team

Three adventurous inhabitants of the thriving seaport and water sports centre of Rotterdam took part in the sailing events on the River Seine near Meulan as part of the sports programme of the Paris World Exhibition.⁹ The trip with their flat-bottomed, Dutch-built sharpie sailboat "Mascotte" was both sports and business motivated. The owner was 37 year old Henri Smulders (1863–1933)¹⁰. He hoped to perform well in the races but had another goal. He also wanted to represent and develop foreign contacts for his father's successful and rapidly-growing engineering works. At the exhibition, the company presented "state of the art" versions of a dredging machine and a steam boiler.

"My father once told me that to promote the expansion of his Gusto engineering firm his father bought two large halls at the 1900 Paris exhibition. After, he had them shipped home. Olympic Games, or sailing events in Paris? I never heard anything about those." This is how his grandson Folke Smulders reacted when told about the Olympic exploits of his grandfather by the *Brabants Dagblad* newspaper in 2004. Whether the firm's presence at the exhibition brought tangible benefits remains equally unclear.

Henri's companions were Chris Hooijkaas (1861–1926) and Arie van der Velden (1881–1967). Their interest would have been tickled by early 1900 media reports. On 27th January, for instance, an announcement appeared in the *Nederlandsche Sport* magazine: "Sailing event in Meulan, at the occasion of the Paris Exhibition. Purse 50,000 French francs."

The prize money was emphasized in further reports which appeared later in the *Nederlandsche Sport* of 10th March and the *Nieuws van den Dag* newspaper of 13th March, apparently in the hope of promoting Dutch participation: "Should the owners of yachts such as 'Mascotte', 'Zwaluw', 'Go-ahead', etc., decide to participate, there is no doubt in our minds that they would perform well and take home a sizeable sum of the far from meagre prize money. We hope the owners will take this into serious consideration, strike us as it does, when viewed from all angles, as a good opportunity of profit."

In the years from 1897 to 1899, "Mascotte" proved to be one of the best, if not the best in its class in Dutch

competitive sailing. It was in competition with such rivals as "Yum Yum", a boat belonging to Rowing and Sailing Association chairman Willem Six. It raced on the popular waters of the River Y near Amsterdam and on the Meuse near Rotterdam. On 19th May 1900, *Nederlandsche Sport* expressed its delight at the selection of Smulders. "Bravo Mr. Smulders. We have high hopes of success but even if this should not happen, the aim of showing our Dutch flag abroad deserves our appreciation."

Efforts of the Smulders team

The World Exhibition sailing events formed part of Section VII of the programme and were classified as "Sport nautique". They were contested in two parts with seven disciplines. The lighter boat classes competed from 20th to 27th May on an 11-kilometre course on the River Seine between the bridges of Meulan and Triel, some 30 kilometres southwest of Paris. "Mascotte" participated in the 3–10 tons class, out of five categories, ranging from 0.5 to 10 tons. The heavier boat classes of 10–20 tons met from 1st to 5th August, in the mouth of the River Seine at the Channel port of Le Havre.

The events started on 20th May with an open class race. Most of the entries were French but "Mascotte" was one of seven foreign boats. Many Parisians took the opportunity for a Sunday by the river with an impressive naval pageant as an added attraction. The boats paraded in their categories and the races were time trials with handicaps. Real competition was scarce because the winds were so light.

In addition a strong tidal pull caused real problems in making progress upstream. Four hours passed with not a single boat across the finish line. Organisers considered abandoning the race but did not do so and eventually seven boats did complete the course. "Mascotte" was not among them. Nor did "Sans Gere" finish. This was Prince Henrik's boat sailing under the American flag with French owner Georges Maillard.

The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* newspaper of 23rd May dedicated only a brief note to the event: "On Sunday at Meulan the international sailing races started, which are part of the sports festivities organised on the occasion of the exhibition. 64 yachts participated in the race of honour and the result was 1st 'Scotia' (An English Yacht), 2nd 'Aschenbrödel' (A German yacht)."

On 24th May the first race in the 3–10 tons category took place. "Correspondent X" was the first to report in the *Nederlandsche Sport*, adding a brief note to a notice on the 20th May opening race:

It will probably interest your readers to be informed of the participation of the "Mascotte" in the sailing events at Meulan near Paris, at which I was a spectator. 64 yachts participated, 12 of these in "Mascotte's" class. At the start of the race there was some wind and



Henricus "Henrie" Smulders. His sailing boat "Mascotte" was second in the first contest of the 3–10 ton class and finished fourth in the second regatta. There was no overall ranking.

Photo: Smulder's family collection

The Prize money. No small sum.

As the owner of the "Mascotte", Smulders's second and fourth place finishes brought him prize money of, respectively, 800 and 600 francs. None of the three had any notion that one day their presence in the sailing events at Meulan would be interpreted as Olympic participation. Similarly there was no thought that the acceptance of prize money might jeopardise their status as Olympic.¹²

Nederlandsche Sport "Correspondent X" emphasised that Hooijkaas and Van der Velden should be considered "amateurs". This seems to imply that during the trip the two were simply Smulders' employees, whereas the owner received the prize money in his bank account. 1400 French Francs in 1900 is approximately € 8400 or \$US 9000 in 2017.

More tellingly, they represent a contemporary industry hand's two years' wages.¹³ These sums were no doubt payed out to Smulders, but payed out for what?

It is almost certain that Smulders did not personally participate in the sailing at Meulan. 'Correspondent X' wrote that *Mascotte* was sailed by Hooykaas, with Van der Velden as a hand – Henri Smulders was not mentioned; on 27th May *Algemeen Handelsblad* reported "the *Mascotte* of Mr. H. Smulders steered by Mr. C. Hooijkaas".

The *Algemeen Handelsblad* edition for 26th May is clearest on this issue. For the race in which "Mascotte" finished second, this newspaper mentioned "numerous spectators", with an impressive range of dignitaries, among them H. Smulders. Their list read "[...] messieurs: Comte de la Jaille, de Merillon, Jean d'Estournelle de Constant, Marquess de Rochechovart, Count de Biré, H. Smulders, d'Andigré, Count de Pourtales etc., and also the representative of Dutch sailing, W. Six, esq".

Charles Édouard Comte de la Jaille was a French admiral and a veteran of sea warfare in French exploits in China and the Franco-German war. Estournelle was a high-ranking cultural administrator.¹⁴ Daniel Mérimon was the President of the Organising Committee. Hermann Alexander de Pourtales from Switzerland, together with his American wife Héléne (née Barbey) and his cousin Bernard participated in the 1–2 tons class, finishing first and second in their two races. Héléne can be considered the first ladies Olympic champion.¹⁵ Willem Six had been the Chairman of the Royal Dutch Sailing and Rowing Association since 1897, and was a well-known competitive sailor.

The report mentioned similar attendance on a "grandstand of honour" at the 27th May race, again with Six and Smulders among the dignitaries. "Non-sailing captain" would seem to be an appropriate description of Henri Smulders's role in these events.

1900 sailing regatta in Meulan, about 30 km west of Paris. There were monetary prizes. The winner of the first race in the 3–10 ton class won 1500 francs. The prize for the second race was 2000 francs. The owner of the "Mascotte" received 800 and 600 francs. Known since 2010 as Meulan-en-Yveline, it was had been a river port on the Seine. In the 1924 Olympics it was where the 12 foot Jollen competition was held.

Source: Wikipedia, "1900 Summer Olympics"



at 1 hr. 17 mins. "Mascotte" rounded the first buoy, increasing its lead on its competitors. After some time, however, wind unfortunately fell and the rest of the race was a matter of simply floating along, so that this day did not give any results. Yesterday, on the second day, "Mascotte" took the second prize.

P.S. "Mascotte" was sailed by amateur Mr. C. Hooykaas, and also amateur Van der Velden of Rotterdam was on board.

The *Algemeen Handelsblad* of 26th May hailed the Dutch team's second place as "a big success". It reported that *Sailing. In spite of the disadvantageous weather, the third 'exhibition race' for sailing yachts at Meulan, in which the "Mascotte" of Mr. Smulders of Rotterdam, so well-known from our waters, participated, was a big succes. [...] Yachts, 3–10 tons class. 1. "Fémur" (French) of Girardoni in 1 hr. 57 mins. 54 secs. 2. "Mascotte" of H. Smulders, time 2 hrs. 15 mins. 34 secs.*

The finishing times mentioned were completely different from those in the official reports. In these, "Mascotte" was recorded as finishing second after 3 hrs., 9 mins. and 45 secs., more than four minutes after Frenchman Henri Gilardoni's 5 tons yacht "Fémur". After handicap correction for tons of water displacement, a 1 min. 50 secs. difference between these two yachts remained.

On Sunday 27th May, the final race took place and on 30th May the *Algemeen Handelsblad* reported again:

Sailing. Numerous protests were lodged on Sunday by various participants in the Paris exhibition races at Meulan. There were many spectators and the weather was beautiful, although not for sailing because it was only in the course of the afternoon that a light breeze arose that enabled the vessels to complete the course. The result was [...] 3–10 ton, 1. "Bona Fide" of Howard Taylor (Engl.), 2. "Turquoise" of Michelet (French).

"Mascotte" finishes fourth, behind "Bona Fide", "Gitana" (France) and "Frimouse" (USA) and after disqualification of "Turquoise".¹¹



The poster of the fencing competitions of 1900 depicts a woman, although women were not permitted to take part in this sport. The designer was Romanian Jean Fal (1869–1942) who lived in Paris. The original size of the posters is 160 x 114 centimetres.

Photo: Olympic Museum Lausanne

Fencing instructors at the Royal Military Academy (K.M.A.) in Breda. Right: Eugenius Antonius van Nieuwenhuizen

Photo: Romski Jee Nederlandse Algemene Scheidsbank; www.knas.nl/index2248

Christoffel “Chris” Hooijkaas was 39 years at the time of Paris 1900. He was a well-known figure in his hometown of Rotterdam. Bijkerk describes him as a “businessman”.¹⁶ According to family data in the municipal archives, however, he was a carpenter and the *Rotterdamsch Adresboek* of 1925 listed him with his own contractor’s firm. His obituary in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of 15th October 1926 recorded his service as a member of the local voluntary firefighters, over a period of forty years. “As a structural engineer he expertly advised his colleagues in many

instances.” In a notice in the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* a “Yacht-skipper and personnel” paid tribute to him as their “esteemed employer”, without mentioning the name of the company.¹⁷

Hooijkaas was an active sailor himself. In 1899 he participated in a race on the Zuiderzee,¹⁸ the large inland sea between Amsterdam and Frisia, with his yacht “Elizabeth”. After 1900 he sailed, Henri Smulders’s new yacht “Elly”. Smulders had sold “Mascotte” in Germany.¹⁹ Hooijkaas also sailed his own yacht “Sperwer” until at least 1907.

According to data in the Rotterdam municipal archives, Arie van der Velden, 18 years in 1900, was a “sailorman” (“varensgezel”) and a boilerman. He frequently changed his address and lived in England for four years. Seemingly a freelance sailor, no further information can be found about him, other than that he died in 1967.

On its website the IOC²⁰ describes Paris 1900 as Olympic Games. Each individual sport has a survey of all events considered “Olympic”. For all sailing categories, both races are listed as separate events, resulting in six medal winners for each category. This rule has one exception. The 3–10 tons class lists only the last race in which “Mascotte” finished fourth. The race in which the Rotterdam trio finished second is missing. “We are still in the process of completing our database” said an IOC Olympic Studies Centre staff member.²¹ More than a century after the event, the 1900 Olympic Games are far from a closed book.

The mysterious fencer: Van Nieuwenhuizen

Reconstructing Dutch participation in Paris 1900 provides more intrigue in fencing. The *Official Report* lists just two amateur and two professional sabreurs, none of them surviving the qualifying round.²²

Bijkerk, however, notes research by ISOH member Bill Mallon who has uncovered greater detail. “Dr. Bill Mallon, the author of the elaborate and statistically most complete [1998] publication on these Games: *The 1900 Olympic Games – Results for All Competitors in All Events, with Commentary*, provides [...] one name of a Dutch fencer, that of van Nieuwenhuizen. [He] participated in the épée event, in the ‘masters’ class. He finished last in his 1A poule and then could go home.”

And: “Dutch sports magazines of a little later provided enough clues to enable tracing this mysterious fencer. He turned out to originate from The Hague. His name was Eugenius Antonius van Nieuwenhuizen. Nowhere in the Dutch sports literature of 1900 can anything be found about this sportsman, nor about his participation in Paris.”²³

E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen was born on 3rd September 1879 in The Hague. Bijkerk’s research revealed he was a “professional soldier” who died on 16th January 1957, in The Hague.

According to the *Official Report*, the épée tournament took place as “Section III” of the fencing events. These lasted from 1st to 5th June; and ‘Le concours d’épée était confié à la Société d’escrime à l’épée, et ce concours étant plus intéressant en plein air, une terrasse des Tuileries était désignée par le Comité comme l’emplacement le plus favorable.’

The English term “masters” in the above quotation from Mallon is a rendering of French “professeurs”, that is to say, fencing teachers who were assigned to their own category, separate from the “amateurs”. This was an initiative of the Paris organisers, although the Olympic Committee was prepared to ignore the distinction. Van Nieuwenhuizen, apparently by then a Dutch fencing teacher, was 20 years of age at the time.

When considering the case of Paris participant Eugenius Antonius van Nieuwenhuizen, Bijkerk refers to Dutch “sports magazines of a little later”. It is in these that Van Nieuwenhuizen makes his first appearance.



In fact²⁴, the first source mentioning him is the *Nieuws van den Dag* national newspaper of 22nd January 1906, which reports on "The fifth Arms Festival of the Royal Non-commissioned Officers Fencing Association" [Koninklijke Onder-officiers Schermvereniging, K.O.O.S. for short]. This was held on 19th January in The Hague, with Queen Wilhelmina and husband Prince Hendrik in attendance. The festivities ended with 'an épée fencing bout between Sergeant C.O. de Vaal of the 1st artillery regiment and Sergeant E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen of the regiment of grenadiers and riflemen". A winner was not mentioned, so this will have been an exhibition meeting for the esteemed party.

From 1906 to 1913 Van Nieuwenhuizen fenced in épée, sabre and foil, in 'column rifle', in 'corps events' as a member of The Hague Brigade of Grenadiers and Riflemen, and as the 'director' or 'commander' of The Hague Fencing Club 'Recreation by Exertion' ('Uitspanning door Inspanning'). Among the top Dutch fencers of this period were A.J. Labouchere, M.J. van Löben Sels, W.P. Hubert van Blijenburgh, G. van Rossem and J. Doorman, who took part in events such as the 1906 Athens intercalated Olympic Games and the 1908 London Olympics. Doorman was the winner of the prestigious 1907 Paris fencing tournament in sabre, earning him the title of unofficial world champion.²⁵

But Van Nieuwenhuizen was no stranger to winning prizes either. In August 1906, he won the column rifle category in Antwerp, and in June 1908 in The Hague he was first in the Dutch sabre championship, "French method".²⁶ His military rank at this time was always recorded as sergeant, although there are indications that later he was promoted first to sergeant first class, and then to sergeant-major. He held the latter rank by the time a reference appeared in a 1915 newspaper. It was headed "Military sports exhibition", in which "serg.-maj. Van Nieuwenhuizen" was said to have participated in "events for sabre and rifle, and sabre against rifle"²⁷.

After this, Van Nieuwenhuizen's career proceeds at a different level. He appeared frequently as a juror and "competition leader" for The Hague fencing association and national K.O.O.S., in which he took a variety of administrative positions. Once or twice he was referred to as a fencing teacher, most specifically in the 5th February 1923, *Haagsche Courant*: "We are being notified that starting 5th February fencing club 'Wilhelminagarde' will have training sessions between 8 and 10 p.m. in the Municipal gymnastics hall at 55a, Van Dijck straat, under the supervision of the club's fencing teacher, Mr. E.A. v. Nieuwenhuizen."

No references to E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen, in newspapers or elsewhere, occur after 1923, other than his date of death in 1957.

MILITAIRE BERICHTEN.

De serg.maj. Van Nieuwenhuizen, onderwijzer in het schermen en de gymnastiek aan de Normaal Schietschool te 's-Gravenhage zal aan de schermwedstrijden tijdens de tentoonstelling te Parijs deelnemen, waartoe hem buitenlandsch verlof zal worden verleend.

A Dutch source mentioning Paris

On 26th May 1900, the *Haagsche Courant*, and its subsidiary *Delftsche Courant*, published the following brief notice: "Military notices. Sergeant-major Van Nieuwenhuizen, teacher in fencing and gymnastics at the 'Normaal Schietschool' in The Hague, will take part in the fencing events during the exhibition in Paris, for which he will be granted furlough abroad." So, after all, there was a Dutch source mentioning the intended participation of a fencing athlete in Paris. This small piece of Dutch sports heritage, however brief, clearly invites further scrutiny.

The big six-year gap between fencer E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen's presumed participation in Paris and his earliest recorded Dutch sports activities already requires an explanation, but this note raises further difficulties. A sergeant is not (yet) a sergeant-major. E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen only achieved this rank after promotion in the years following 1910. Yet this note in 1900 recorded sergeant-major as his rank.²⁸ There is another factor which suggests this is problematic.

The Hague Normaal Schietschool established in 1855 under the joint jurisdiction of the Ministries of War and Colonial Affairs, served as a physical training centre for the Dutch military, soldiers being temporarily assigned to it from all over the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies, for courses in gymnastics, fencing, shooting, and weaponry.²⁹ It seems highly unlikely that a 20-year old sergeant would hold such an elevated position as teacher at this institute. In 1900, legal adulthood was reached at the age of 23.³⁰ But if this Paris fencer is not E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen, then who is he?

A Dutch military competition fencer

On 23rd January 1886, the *Haagsche Courant* published the following announcement: "In the upcoming events at The Hague in fencing and gymnastics, the non-commissioned officers association of the regiment of grenadiers and riflemen will be represented by: for gymnastic sergeants Menger and Piepers, and for fencing sergeants Korn, Petri, de Chavannes Vrugt, Van Nieuwenhuizen, Classen and Van Rantwijk."

This is the first time the name of a Van Nieuwenhuizen appears in the context of military fencing, but when the

Brief newspaper notice announcing the participation of the fencer E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen in the Olympic Games in Paris

Photo: *Haagsche Courant* and *Delftsche Courant*, 26th May 1900

Fencing practice at the
Normaal Schietschool
in The Hague.

Photo: *De Revue der Sporten*
1:21, 5th March 5, 1908



results of this meeting were published three days later, this name, however, is not listed. This happens only in 1893, in the same newspaper, on 10th January: "In the fencing tournament organised by The Hague club 'Excelsior', and held on the 7th and 8th of this month, the following prizes were awarded: Carré rifle, 1st pr., 'Recreation by exertion' (non-comm. officers of the reg. of gren. and riflemen); 2nd pr. Fencing club 'Oranje Nassau'; 3rd pr., Club 'Oranje', all of them locally based. Masters épée, 1st pr., G.C.E. Nieuwenhuizen of 'Uitspanning door inspanning'. [] Rifle 1st pr., M.F. Graafland; 2nd pr., G. Graafland; 3rd pr., G.C.E. Nieuwenhuizen." From these two newspaper notices it can be inferred that there was indeed a Dutch military competition fencer called G.C.E. (van) Nieuwenhuizen, fully a decade before Paris 1900.

From 1895 onwards this soldier-athlete can be found associated with the Normaal Schietschool in The Hague. In an important Dutch Fencing Association tournament in The Hague the épée event was won by "G.C.E. van Nieuwenhuizen, sergeant-instructor at the Normaal-schietschool" (*Haagsche Courant*, 24th December 1895). The issue of the same newspaper for 31st August 1896 reports that a "sergeant of the grenadiers Nieuwenhuizen, affiliated to the Normaal Schietschool" is a first class military speed cyclist in 1895-1896, winning the 22 kms. Maliebaan-Wassenaar race near The Hague.

On 13th October 1896 it reported on a one mile track race in The Hague Sports Grounds. In 1897 there was another account of a competition at "an international Arms Festival and Fencing Tournament, on 8th August Sunday and 9th Monday" in Dordrecht first prize winner is "G. van Nieuwenhuizen of the Normaal Schietschool in The Hague" for the school team in the Corps event in épée as well as in rifle (*Haagsche Courant*, 11th August 1897).

The conclusion follows that G.C.E. van Nieuwenhuizen was assigned to the position of teacher at the Normaal Schietschool at some point in the course of 1895. It is exactly the position mentioned in the brief newspaper announcement of May 1900, and would correspond perfectly with participation in the "masters" category in the Paris exhibition fencing tournament mentioned in Mallon's *The Paris 1900 Olympic Games*, quoted by Bijkerk. It seems reasonable also that at some point

between 1896 and 1900, Van Nieuwenhuizen was promoted to sergeant-major as a consequence of satisfactory performance in this position.

In December 1898, the regional Brabantic newspaper *Provinciale Noordbrabantsche en 's-Hertogenbosse Courant* hosted an increasingly agitated discussion on the merits of fencing training within that of overall physical exercise, at schools. Messrs. Scholten and Vorstenbosch, both presumably physical exercise teachers, displayed a strong difference of opinion which was played out over the course of a two-week debate. As an expert, Vorstenbosch attracted the attention of G. van Nieuwenhuizen, someone of authority, being "responsible for fencing education at the State Normaal-schietschool in The Hague".

When even more contributors joined in, the discussion went off the rails. "Mr. van Nieuwenhuizen from The Hague has dirtily called me names: Brr!", is the opening line of one of the contributions. This is all very entertaining. What is much more interesting to current scholars is the contribution of Van Nieuwenhuizen himself. He pointed out that "after some 20 years of being active mostly in fencing he is entitled to a say" and that he can assure his opponent "to have taken a look [...] in Paris and London, but not only that, but also to have taken part in fencing events there". The former assertion explains his name being mentioned already in a newspaper note from 1886, the latter shows he was an international fencing competitor who knew Paris from personal experience.

The next newspaper notice of note was the May 1900 announcement of his intended participation in the Paris fencing events. For him, it was familiar territory. Everything points to the conclusion that "G.C.E." was the sergeant-major and Normaal Schietschool teacher mentioned in it.

In January 1903, the K.O.O.S. staged an Arms festival in Amersfoort. Its finale was an "exhibition bout in épée by sergeant-major G. van Nieuwenhuizen, of the regiment of grenadiers and riflemen, a sportsman also famous abroad and a formidable opponent in fencing events, and sergeant-major De Jong, of the 5th regiment infantry." The following year he stood down from the association's board "because of retirement". Hence in February 1905 it is civilian sportsman "Mr. G. van Nieuwenhuizen (reunionist)" winning a prize of honour at shooting "on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Normaal Schietschool" in The Hague.

In autumn 1907 the sports magazine *De Revue der Sporten* published a series of articles entitled "Fencing and our fencing instructors". This contained a list of teachers old and new. Among them appeared the name "Nieuwenhuizen Sr.", which would indicate that by this time, there was a need to avoid confusion with his younger namesake.³¹

G.C.E. and E.A. Van Nieuwenhuizen: (half)-brothers

The genealogical section of the The Hague Municipal Archive holds records which help to clarify the relation between the two van Nieuwenhuizen, E.A. and G.C.E.³²

On 22nd June 1864, in The Hague, 33 year old sergeant Geurt van Nieuwenhuizen, sergeant, married a 26 year old seamstress called Helena Marianne Daan. At the occasion they legally acknowledged three children, a girl and two boys, one of whom was Gerardus Christiaan Eugenius van Nieuwenhuizen, born 13th April 1863.³³ By 29th June 1887, he was 24, and had become a sergeant in the regiment of grenadiers and riflemen. He married Elizabeth Knight, a seamstress who was 22. He died on 31st July 1926, in The Hague.

Geurt and Helena's marriage produced (at least) two further sons, one of them was Eugenius Antonius van Nieuwenhuizen, born 3rd September 1879. On 26th June 1901, he was a witness at the wedding of a cousin. By this time he was a sergeant and claimed to be 24 years old.³⁴ He was still listed as a sergeant in 1908 when on 29th April, he married Adriana Gerardina Rühl. He died on 16th January 1957 in The Hague.

So G.C.E. and E.A. van Nieuwenhuizen are brothers, or half-brothers, and both were military fencing athletes. Gerardus Christiaan Eugenius van Nieuwenhuizen was 37 years old when he participated in June 1900 in the épée event of the World Exhibition in Paris.

Conclusion

The aim of this article is to contribute to Olympic sports history writing, addressing Dutch participation at the somewhat confused 1900 Paris Olympics. Using Bijkerk's seminal work as a point of departure, we believe we have further clarified participation of the first ever Dutch team and individual Olympians.

In the division of tasks among the members of the Rotterdam sailing crew of Smulders, Hooijkaas and Van der Velden participating in the 3–10 tons category at Meulan, Smulders was 'non-sailing' captain and the other two the actual competitors.

The first Dutch individual Olympian can be re-identified as épée fencer Gerardus Christiaan Eugenius van Nieuwenhuizen, sergeant-major and instructor at the Normaal Schiet school military training centre in The Hague. ■

- 2 The continuation of Bijkerk's work is currently in danger, due to his own ill health, publishers' reluctance, and uncertain funding.
- 3 *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Concours internationaux d'exercices physiques et de sports*. Rapports publiés sous la direction de M.D. Mérimon, délégué général. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1901.
- 4 Bijkerk. *Paris 1900*, 8. Translations from Dutch into English in this article by the authors.
- 5 Mulier, W.J.H., *Athletiek en Voetbal*. Haarlem: Loosjes, 1894, p. 74.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 7 Bijkerk, *Olympisch Oranje*, p. 16.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 9 We are grateful to Willem F. Cupedo for his contribution to the contents of this section.
- 10 Henricus Petrus Augustinus Johannes Smulders (20th August 1863, 's-Hertogenbosch–8th November 1933, Paris).
- 11 Bijkerk, *Paris 1900*, 62. And: *Rapports*, Tome 1, p. 165.
- 12 Bijkerk, *Nederlandse deelnemers*, p. 64.
- 13 Cf. International conversion rates and comparisons at <http://www.nederlandsepoezie.org/jl1900/geldwaarde.html>
- 14 Cf. https://www.senat.fr/senateur-3eme-republique/de_la_jaille_charles1272r3.html and http://data.bnf.fr/12539207/jean_d_estournelles_de_constant/.
- 15 British tennis player Charlotte Cooper was the first individual women's champion, with victory in the ladies singles. Later she also won in mixed doubles.
- 16 Bijkerk, *Olympisch Oranje*, p. 33.
- 17 *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 16th October 1926: p. 16; *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 16th October 1926: p. 1.
- 18 *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 8th September 1899: p. 6.
- 19 *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 19th October 1901: p. 6.
- 20 www.olympic.org/olympic-results
- 21 In the autumn of 2016, the OSC database contained 29 Dutch participants at Paris 1900. Bijkerk's 2012 work *Olympisch Oranje*, listed 42. The Dutch Olympic Committee NOC*NSF have followed his lead. This figure includes Dutch-born footballer Henk van Heuckelum, who played for Belgium.
- 22 *Exposition 1900 à Paris*, 165; online at: <http://library.la84.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1900/1900part1.pdf>.
- 23 Bijkerk, *Nederlandse Deelnemers*, p. 48.
- 24 The contents of this paragraph is, unless indicated otherwise, based on Bijkerk, *Olympisch Oranje*, and on newspaper notes and articles from the *Hcagsche Courant* and *Algemeen Handelsblad* newspapers, as available on the www.delpher.nl website.
- 25 Or European champion, depending on the source; the *Fédération Internationale d'Escrime* only organised official World Championships from 1921 onwards..
- 26 The first few decades of Dutch fencing, both in teaching and in competition, were hampered by a controversy between adherents of the indigenous "Dutch" method, and the "French" method employed in France and Belgium. The result was prolonged lost ground internationally, which was just being made up for around this time. Cf. Kok, Ch.F., "Schermen" [Fencing], in Jan Feith (ed.), *Het Boek der Sporten*, Amsterdam: Van Holkema and Warendorf Publ., 1900, pp. 160–168.
- 27 *Haagsche Courant*, 29th July 1915: p. 6.
- 28 Cf. Dutch military ranks "Lijst van militaire rangen van de Nederlandse Krijgsmacht."
- 29 Kamphuis, P.H., "De Normaal Schiet-School te Den Haag, 1855–1933", in: *Armamentaria* 15, 1980; online at: collectie.legermuseum.nl.
- 30 A lower age of 21 was laid down in the "Children's Act" of 1901, promulgated by Royal Decree of 1st December 1905; cf. *Nieuws van den Dag*, 17th November and 2nd December 1905. The move was not without controversy.
- 31 Who at that time therefore is not a teacher, or, in any case, not a prominent one.
- 32 The Hague Municipal Archive, online at denhaag.digitalestamboom.nl.
- 33 Making him just four months and a bit older than Henri Smulders, sailing captain in Paris 1900.
- 34 He seems to have been liberal with the truth, witnesses at marriages needed to be legal adults (so over the age of 23, or of married status themselves).

1 Bijkerk, Anthony. *Olympisch Oranje. Van Athene 1896 tot en met Londen 2012*. Haarlem: Spaar en Hout Publ., 2012. (First edition: Bijkerk, Ton, en Ruud Paauw, *Gouden Boek van de Nederlandse Olympiërs*. Haarlem: De Vrieseborch Publ., 1996). Bijkerk, Ton. *Nederlandse deelnemers aan de tweede Olympisch Spelen. Tijdens de Wereldtentoonstelling Parijs 1900*. Haarlem: De Vrieseborch, Publ., 2000.