

Fifty Years in the Service of the Olympic Idea

By Conrado Durántez, President of the Royal Spanish Olympic Academy

Commemorative stamp for the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Royal Olympic Academy. HM King Juan Carlos, accompanied by IOC President Jacques Rogge, unveils a bronze bust of Pierre de Coubertin, made by sculptor Federico Lozoya at the request of the Spanish Olympic Academy.

Photos: Royal Spanish Olympic Academy



The National Olympic Academies (NOAs) are the official schools of the Olympic Movement, in accordance with the postulates contained in the Olympic Charter. The International Olympic Academy (IOA) was founded in Olympia on 16th June 1961 and since then the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) has collaborated actively with the IOA, sending students every year to its courses where Spanish teachers offer conferences.

On 25th November 1968, the Spanish Olympic Academy (AOE) was founded in Madrid by an official act presided over by Juan Antonio Samaranch, the COE President, and with the attendance of José María Cagigal, Director of the National Institute for Physical Education, as well as other personalities.

On this occasion the memorandum presented by Conrado Durántez, regular attendant to the Olympia Sessions since the beginning, was accepted. The AOE was the first NOA to be created as an IOA subsidiary and collaborator. During those 50 years, the AOE has officially held its annual course on disseminating the Olympic Movement, which also selects from among the most qualified attendees those who will attend the IOA's annual course.

A programme and poster officially announce each course and its work is published in the minutes. It celebrated its 20th, 30th and the 40th anniversary with protocol events which were attended by the IOC President and academic and national authorities, and chaired by HRH, the Prince of Asturias, the AOE's Honorary President. On occasion of those events, the Choir of the Madrid Physical Education Faculty sang the Olympic Hymn in

Spanish for the first time and recited Pierre de Coubertin's *Ode to Sport* also in Spanish for the first time.

More than 50 publications on the Olympic Movement have been published by the AOE, having received diplomas accrediting the participation of more than 5,000 students, and nine medals commemorating different anniversaries have also been minted. The AOE has helped to foster the creation of Olympic academies in Africa, with courses in Benin (1997) and Togo (2001), resulting in six Olympic academies in the French speaking area.

As a result of the need to foster the Olympic Movement through a common language and culture, the AOE fostered the creation of the Ibero American Association of Olympic Academies, with the first session being held in Madrid on 26th June 1988. Two years later, on 14th June 1990, the Association's Statutes were drafted and a Governing Board was elected. The Association schedules congresses every two years to discuss action plans and agreements in relation to the dissemination of the Olympic Movement, while the work performed by each NOA during the two years is presented and subject to criticism. The results have been highly positive, increasing from the first five Olympic academies to the current 26 (Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Equatorial Guinea, Honduras, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, São Tomé, Uruguay and Venezuela).

The IOC recognised the AIAO (Ibero American Association of Olympic Academies) officially in 1996 and, during the 9th Congress in León in 2002, the Association had to change its name to the current name of the Pan-Iberian Association of Olympic Academies (APAO) since the African academies of Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé and Equatorial Guinea became members of the group.

The Association prints the Congresses' contents in Minutes which are distributed to the various members, thanks to support from the International Cooperation Agency of Spain's Foreign Affairs Ministry. It has produced 12 publications on the Olympic Movement, which is worth highlighting *Orígenes del Olimpismo en Iberoamérica* (Origins of the Olympic Movement in Ibero-America) about how the Olympic Idea was introduced in each country by each member until the NOC was founded. The publication is prefaced by IOC Honorary President Jacques Rogge. The Association has prepared commemorative medals and posters for the various Congresses.

Based on the APAO, similar associations are being founded in Asia and Africa; Mario Francisco, President of the Benin NOC and OA, who has recently taken over the task from Tunisia's Rida Layouni, is very excited about the latter project.

Also fostered by the Spanish Olympic Academy, the UEFO (Spanish Union of Olympic Philately) was founded in Madrid on 1st September 1996 in order to foster this cultural and artistic part of the Olympic phenomenon. The UEFO holds annual assemblies and publishes two editions every year of the magazine *Filatelia Olímpica* (Olympic Philately). The book *El Fuego de Olimpia* (The Fire of Olympia) obtained the Silver Diploma and Special Diploma at the recent event in Beijing as a result of the in-depth study made in the magazine about the fire symbol in the history of the Olympics. In 2007, the Spanish Olympic Committee acquired Sebastián Sabaté's Olympic Stamp Collection, the best thematic collection in Spain, for the AOE. It was inaugurated at an Exhibition on 18th December 2007 with the presence of the IOC Members HRH Pilar de Borbón and Mohamed Mzali. Through the AOE, 26 stamps commemorating the various congresses and



Prizes awarded to the Spanish Olympic Academy

International Olympic Academy 10th Anniversary Prize (1971)

Silver medal for IOA publications (1981)

Special International Prize for the 35th anniversary of the IOA based on "the dissemination of the Olympic ideology developed in Ibero-American countries", presented at the Athens' Acropolis by Greek IOC Member Lambis Nikolaou.

IOC Sport and Education Prize (Madrid, 10th February 2001), in recognition of the Olympic Education Programmes implemented in Spain, presented by COE President Alfredo Goyeneche.

Vergina prize from the IOA for "the Spanish Olympic Academy's fifty years of support and collaboration with the International Academy", presented on 11th June 2009 on the stage of the Athens Acropolis by the President of Greece, Karolos Papoulias.

Pierre de Coubertin Prize from the IOC for the "dissemination of the person and works of Pierre de Coubertin in Spain" (Madrid, June 2013), presented by COE President Alejandro Blanco.

Atenea prize from the IOA in recognition of the Spanish Olympic Academy as the oldest and most active, presented on the stage of the Athens Acropolis on 24th May 2015 by the President of Greece, Prokopios Pavlopoulos.

Title of 'Royal' bestowed by HM King Felipe VI as Honorary President of the AOE, and according to credential 315/2017 announced on 30th November of the same year.

activities organised by it were obtained from the postal service.

Likewise, fostered by the NOA, the Spanish Pierre de Coubertin Committee was created in Madrid on 6th October 1998 in order to disseminate the life, work and image of the person who restored the Olympic Movement. Through a roaming iconographic exhibition on the famous French humanist, the Committee has disseminated his image and rich ideology with five publications on his life and work. There are also 20 streets with his name. Two busts have been cast, one in 2000, by Galician artist Álvaro de la Vega, and the other on 23rd March 2006, by Madrid sculptor Federico Lozoya, unveiled by HRH King Juan Carlos, and accompanied by Jacques Rogge who, after admiring the work, received a copy for the Lausanne Museum on 31st January 2007. The copy reproduces, with great accuracy, the image of Pierre de Coubertin obtained in Nyon, Switzerland in 1926, probably the most expressive and accurate image of the famous humanist.

Lastly, in the phase that began in 1990 and, which is still under way, Olympic Studies Centres (OSC) have been created at various universities or city councils. The OSC was created through an agreement signed by the COE President, the Vice Chancellor of the respective university or mayor, and the AOE President. The COE-AOE loans a list of Olympic titles to the OSC and both contracting parties undertake

Representatives from 24 NOC attended the first International Olympic Academy course in 1961. Conrado Durántez was one of the participants.

Photo: International Olympic Academy

Opening session of the 16th Congress of the Pan-Iberian Association of Olympic Academies in the San Millán de la Cogolla Monastery in 2008.

Photo: Royal Spanish Olympic Academy



to organise conferences, seminars and courses on the Olympic Movement, proportionally collaborating with the cost. So far, 36 OSCs have been created at the following universities: Autónoma de Barcelona, La Coruña, Granada, Cáceres, León, Almería, País Vasco, Murcia, Santiago de Compostela, Sevilla, Córdoba, Alicante, Rey Juan Carlos de Madrid, Valladolid en Segovia, Autónoma de Madrid, Valencia, Europea Miguel de Cervantes de Valladolid, Cádiz, Alfonso X El Sabio, La Rioja, Jaén. Vigo and Santander, as well as at the City Council of Noja, La Nucía, Ayamonte and Chinchilla.

Also, a nationwide agreement is currently being planned for an OSC at each university in Spain. On 22nd and 23rd March 2007, the 1st Congress of OSCs was held at Granada University in order to combine ideas and establish a common strategy, with the aim of holding this

type of meeting biannually; the COE President recently obtained sponsorship support for the OSC functioning. After the first congress of 2007, others have been held in Cádiz (2009), Barcelona (2011), Noja (2013), Granada (2016) and La Nucía (2018).

Regarding the dissemination of the Olympic Movement at schools, the Spanish Olympic Academy has eight publications on the Olympic history and philosophy, the latest one being *Olimpismoy Deporte. Valores y Símbolos* (The Olympic Movement and Sports. Values and Symbols), presented by the COE President, Alejandro Blanco, and accepted at the ANOC meetings in April 2008 in Beijing, which is going to be distributed to all the NOCs.

Lastly, on 4th and 5th October 2008, the 1st Congress of Olympic Graduates, with Graduates from the AOE and the IOA, was held in Madrid. Its aim is to create an association for those graduates and propose a strategy to advance sports and the Olympic principles at a national level.

To celebrate the COE centenary in 2012, the academy worked with the Spanish postal service to issue four new stamps, the first depicting Juan Antonio Samaranch. A second is dedicated to Gonzalo de Figueroa y Torres, the Marquis of Villamejor, and founder of the COE, and the third features Lucius Minicius Natalus, a Barcelona general and winner of the chariot race at the Games held in ancient Olympia for the 227th Olympiad (129 AD). Inexplicably, the fourth stamp requested, honouring Pierre de Coubertin, was not approved.

However, the following year, 2013, for the 150th anniversary of the birth of the famous humanist, the academy tried again, and the long-awaited stamp was finally obtained. The first rejection was hard to understand, particularly in light of the celebration of important international sporting events in Spain, including for the Barcelona Olympics in 1992.

The stamp in question, unique on an international level among his iconography (86 stamps have been issued with Coubertin in 76 countries, the first was printed by Haiti in 1939), reproduces the revealing and expressive image of Coubertin when he visited the Ovomaltine factory in Nyon in 1926. On his left, and under the COE emblem, Jesse Owens's historical performance at the 1936 Berlin Games is depicted.

The new stamp, which is valid for the Postal Union of the Americas, Spain and Portugal (UPAEP), was rated by Javier Cuesta, President of the Spanish postal service, as the "most important issued by Correos on Olympism in 120 years".

On another matter, and as a consequence of the ruling decreed on 11th January 2007 on personalised stamps, other new stamps issued in this category included those on Carl Diem and Ioannis Ketseas, pioneers of the IOA, and another devoted to José María Cagigal, the Spanish sport philosopher. In June 2018, Correos issued a special stamp to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Spanish Royal Olympic Academy. ■



Conrado Duránte
with four-time
Olympic champion
Jesse Owens at the
IOA Session in 1969.

Photo: Royal Spanish Olympic
Academy