

IAN BUCHANAN

*1932 †6 April 2008

Ian Buchanan was one of the foremost historians of Olympic sports and athletics in particular. A co-founder of the International Society of Olympic Historians (ISOH) and its President from its founding in 1991 to 2000, his proudest moment came with the presentation to him of the Olympic Order in Silver by IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch in 1997.

Ian was born in Yorkshire in 1932 and from his earliest days was a sports fan. He twice ran at half mile in the English Schools for Sussex while at Hastings Grammar School and also played rugby, which was his favourite spectator sport. He attended the 1948 Olympics in London where his love of athletics and the Olympics blossomed. He became a member of London Athletics Club and became close friends with Ross and Norris McWhirter, the twin brothers who founded the *Guinness Book of Records*. Ian helped the McWhirters with athletics statistics and became a member of the worldwide body, the Association of Track and Field Statisticians (ATFS), and of the NUTS – Britain's National Union of Track Statisticians. He worked with the McWhirters on the 1957 *British Athletics Record Book* and its subsequent update in 1958, a booklet which provided the first ever in depth all-time rankings for British athletes. In 1961 Stanley Paul published his *Encyclopædia of British Athletics Records*, which provided complete results of all Britain's international matches to that date.

In the 1970s he began helping Erich Kamper with data on British Olympians and produced in 1973 *A*

Handbook of Far Eastern & Asian Games Track & Field Athletics. He worked with Bill Mallon (USA) to collect data on American as well as British Olympians and their work appeared in several books. Their first together was in 1983, *Quest for Gold: The Encyclopedia of American Olympians*, which was followed in 1986 by *The United States' National Championships in Track and Field Athletics: 1876-1985* and they also produced the *Historical Dictionary of the Olympic Movement* (Scarecrow, 2001). Ian and Bill co-authored with Peter Matthews *The Guinness International Who's Who of Sport* (1993) and Ian and Peter also wrote the seminal work on British sportsmen and women, *All-Time Greats of British and Irish Sport* (Guinness, 1995). Ian's best contribution to the history of Britain at the Olympics is the definitive work, *British Olympians*, published by Guinness in 1991. Subsequently a lifetime's research into athletics, a sport that had been poorly documented, resulted in a book of which he was especially proud, *Who's Who of UK & GB International Athletes 1896-1939*, as well as *The AAA Championships 1880-1939* and his co-authorship of *UK Men's Ranking Lists 1930-1939*, published by the NUTS in their historical series. He also contributed to the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

In 1991, Ian sponsored a group of Olympic historians to meet at The Duke of Clarence, a pub in Hammersmith, London, and there the ISOH was formed. As the group broke up that afternoon, it was decided that it was necessary to elect a President – and there was only one choice,



From the right: Ian Buchanan, Bill Mallon, Wolf Lyberg

so Ian Buchanan became the first President of ISOH. He guided ISOH through its formative years and helped the group become internationally known and achieve official recognition by the International Olympic Committee. He served two terms as President of ISOH, stepping aside at the quadrennial meeting in Sydney.

Buchanan's business career was with Mercantile and General Reinsurance Company, first in London. He was posted to South Africa for two years, then Manila, and eventually lived in Hong Kong for twenty years as manager for the Far East for that company. In retirement from 1989 he returned to England and to a charming cottage, The Old Fighting Cocks, in Burgh-next-Aylsham, in Norfolk. He loved going to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta as a 'special correspondent' for the *Eastern Daily Press*, and was very pleased to be invited as a guest of the Olympic Committee at the 2000 Games in Sydney. He was also soon involved with the local community in Norfolk and became a vice president of North Walsham Rugby Club.

For his work in Olympic history, he was made an Honorary Member of ISOH after he stepped down as

President in 2000, and was awarded the Olympic Order in Silver in 1997 by the IOC. Sadly he had to part with his magnificent collection of sports and reference books, including many School Rolls so useful for his biographical researches, when his eyesight began to go.

A most generous man, he will be missed by all of us who will always remember his big smile and his hearty laugh. He battled most courageously for many years through serious health problems and was lovingly supported by his wife Jeanne, who survives him along with their two children, James and Joanna.

Ian Buchanan was born on January 28, 1932 in Sheffield. He died in North Walsham, Norfolk on April 6, 2008 aged 76.

Bill Mallon MD, David Thurlow and Peter Matthews

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Ian Buchanan receives the Olympic Order from the hands of Juan Antonio Samaranch