

OLYMPIANS OF YORE DIDN'T MATCH MODERNS

Prep Youths Today Outdo Early Marks

Equipment Is Better Now, Scribe Points Out; Fleas in Athens.

By JOE WILLIAMS

NEW YORK, July 18.—The Olympic industry certainly has grown. I don't know exactly how extensive it was in the "good old days" when Athens ruled the roost, and the original Olympics were held in the shade wof the parthenon. They tell me that the ancient games were not so much athletic competitions as gymnastic and aesthetic demonstrations, and oratorical carnivals something like our national political conventions.

In 1896, in Athens, the modern Olympics got their start. In comparison with the games about to get under way in Berlin, the 1896

meet was about as extensive as one of our public schools' athletic league affairs in New York. And let me tell you another thing, sacreligious as it may seem. Some of those 1896 winning performances wouldn't land a P. S. A. L. title today.

The 1896 meet was held in a tight little stadium in Athens. Accommodations for our athletes were terrible. The fleas gave our nobles of track and field plenty of trouble.

The team which we sent over to Greece just 40 years ago was no more numerous than the baseball squad which will give that exhibition in conjunction with a military concert in Berlin next month. And the financial difficulties in those days were just as tremendous as they are in 1936. The Amateur Athletic Union had to sell the then brand new Olympic idea to the public, and thousands of our citizens wondered why we had to go all the way to Greece to pick up a few medals and trophies. The citizens were afraid, ultimately, would join other medals and trophies then being displayed in Bowery show shops.

BACK in 1896, Germany had no athletic organization. The idea that Berlin some day would house an Olympic carnival in which 51 nations would be represented by 5300 competitors would have been laughed at even more vigorously than the suggestion that some Sunday afternoon a Lindbergh would take it into his head to fly across the Atlantic.

In 1896, the Prussian junkers held a tight rein over Germany, and their athletic ideals were confined to pure team festivals. The German of the time was regarded too fat and lethargic even to amount to anything in sport. Now Germany is a power in world athletics. The World War apparently melted a lot of lard of the nation, especially above the Prussian Adam's apple.

It is almost impossible to visualize the preparations which the Germans have made for the Olympic games. The Olympic Stadium will seat 100,000. The swimming stadium will hold 17,000 onlookers. The field hockey arena seats 20,000. The tennis stadium holds 3,000. There are seats for 3000 at the Equestrian Field, but most of the more important horse events, especially the polo, will be staged at the May Field, with accommodations for 70,000 onlookers and room for 250,000 participants. After the Olympics, this field will become the rallying ground for Nazi demonstrations. There the loudest hells will be tolerated to Herr Hitler. Much of the Olympic equipment has been built with an eye to future utility in the vast popular propaganda of the third Reich.

I HAVE said that the winning performances in Athens in 1896 do not look so impressive today. For one thing, the program at the Olympics of forty years ago was compact. It was a track and field meet, pure and simple.

As near as I can make out, there were only a dozen events, and American athletes won nine of them.

We would have had a complete runaway but for an Englishman by the name of Fredrick, who sprang a little surprise on our lands by taking the 800 and 1500 meters.

The next other win was the win of the marathon, which went to a Greek.

The descendants of the Phoenicians staggered home in 2 hours 55 minutes and 20 seconds. We wouldn't give anything like that even attic room now.

Flack did the 800 in 2 minutes 11

seconds and the 1500 in 4 minutes 33-1 seconds. Any self-respecting high school athlete who could not beat either of those performances today would not be considered even by a recruiting agent for Old Sis-

wash.

OUR own Tommy Burke, a great sprinter, did the 100 meters in 12 seconds, and the 400 in 54-11 seconds. Elery Clark won the high jump with 5 feet 11 1/4 inches, and the broad jump with 20 feet 9 1/4 inches. Neither of these stunts of 1896 would get a schoolboy into a track meet of today without his paying at the gate.

I certainly would like to pile it on our winners of 40 years ago, but here goes some more dope. R. S. Garrett of the good old U. S. A. won the shot with 36 feet 2 inches, and the discus with 65 feet 7 1/4 inches. W. W. Hoyt grabbed the pole vault with the astonishing height of 10 feet 9 1/4 inches. Any kid who can't reach 12 feet isn't trusted with a pole these days.

OF course, times and measurements really are not the true index to athletic ability. I think that if Tommy Burke were around today and had the benefit of the type of competition, tracks, and general equipment which favor the athlete of 1936, he would make things pretty hot for the Owens, Wyckoffs and the rest.

Major League and A. A. Averages

National League

JOE MEDWICK has retained the batting lead in the National League with a 16-hit week that sent him whizzing by Paul Waner at the Pirates to a .368 figure, an increase of .001.

Waner also had a fine increase

during the week—18 points—and was

the leader for a few days, but when

the week ended July 15, Waner's .358

was second to Medwick.

Medwick's 16 hits put him in first place in this department with 121 for the season, and broke his tie with Dolph Camilli in total bases. Medwick has 196, Camilli only 180 now, while the former continues to lead in runs driven in, 84, with Ott, Giants, second with 71, but when the week ended July 15, Waner's .358 was second to Medwick.

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