

Summaries 2004

Olympialapsia. The Yearbook of the Finnish Society for Sport History 2004

Erkki Vettenniemi

Miss Lassila Takes Up Cycling. Maiju Lassila's Rakkautta in the Mirror of Sports History

Rakkautta (Love), a novel by Maiju Lassila, came out in 1912, the year that marks the Olympic breakthrough of Finnish athletics. The novel can be seen as a parody of the love story genre, or, as my reading suggests, a seriously funny statement about the arrival of modern sport in Finland. The protagonist and narrator is called Maiju Lassila, and the deliberately flimsy plot revolves around her courtship with a student named Petteri Ikonen. A keen sportsman, Petteri introduces Maiju to cycling, and their love affair is duly consummated in the course of a cycling expedition.

The tone of the narrative is thoroughly ironic. Besides taking apart all kinds of literary conventions, the novel pokes fun at outdoor types like Petteri, mocks the slavish adoption of sports fads, and ridicules the obsession with numerical achievements that defines modern sport. Rakkautta is thus not merely a post modern love novel *avant la lettre*. As it represents sport in a highly idiosyncratic manner at an early stage, it occupies a unique slot in the history of Finnish literature.

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Antti O. Arponen

Kalle Jalkanen, The Persevering Skier

Altogether eighteen Finnish skiers won an Olympic medal in Winter Olympics or World Championships in 1930–1939. Seventeen of them represented bourgeois sport clubs and competed in competitions organized by voluntary association for defence of the country. The exception was Kalle Jalkanen who was the only great skier emerging from a working class club in the 1930s. He became a national hero as he in the last stretch of relay overtook the Norwegian Bjarne Iversen who had set off 82 seconds ahead and won the gold for Finland. Two years later, in 1938, Jalkanen won the world championship in 50 km in Lahti. Jalkanen was an Olympic winner and world champion but never a Finnish champion.

Jalkanen grew in Suonenjoki, in Savo district. During his career he lived for a couple of years in Helsinki, returned to Savo, but found a job in Lappeenranta in 1937. Jalkanen died in war against Russia on the 5th of September, 1941 in Kirjasalo, Ingria. The previous winter he had still taken part in World Championships in Cortina.

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Terho Paltamo

The Collapse of the Finnish Speed Skating as an Olympic Sport

In Winter Olympics of 1924–2002 Finland has won 24 medals in speed skating: seven gold medals, eight silver medals and nine bronze ones. The legend was Clas Thunberg, "the Nurmi of the Ice Fields". With Norway Finland was at the time the other most successful skating country in the world. The last medal for men dates from 1956, for women from 1968. Altogether 45 Finnish skaters have competed in Olympics, of whom Toivo Salonen (1952–1964) and Pertti Niittylä (1976–1988) in four games. In 1994 Finland did not send a single skater to the Olympics. In 1960–1980 Winter Games 10 women represented Finland, since then Finland has not participated. What was the cause for such a collapse?

Obviously Finland ossified with the Thunbergain tradition in the 1960s. In other leading skating countries they built artificial tracks already then, in Finland they were started only at the turn of the 1980s, when the top countries were building indoor tracks. Also technique, training methods, sports medicine and skating equipment developed. In Finland the development was slower – people stuck to the past. The media which idolized money and professionalism forgot speed skating. Also many young sportsmen and the audience got estranged from it. Degradation reached it peak in 1994 Lillehammer Winter Games. In the 2000s there have been only a handful of speed skaters in Finland, but as speed skating is a genuine winter sport its fine features shall be rediscovered.

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Erkki Vasara

Sporting Events at the Old Working Men's Club in Tikkurila

Sports were a part of the cultural activity of the Finnish labour movement right from the beginning, which was the turn of the 20th century. This was also the case in the Tikkurila social democratic working men's association located some 20 kilometres from the centre of Helsinki. A hundred years ago Tikkurila was still very much a countryside village, where agriculture was one of the main sources of income. However, there were also factories situated in the village, and the workers of those factories founded their association in 1907. In 1929, after many efforts, the association founded a sports club called Kajastus ('Dawn'), which immediately joined the Finnish Workers' Sports Federation (TUL). The financial situation of the club was tight in the first years, but still the activity got started. There where track and field, skiing and ball games in the program. Festivities were held at the impressive local Workers' House. In 1936 the club formally separated from the workers' association and after the war even communists, whose activities were again legal after 14 years, joined the club. After the wars Kajastus succeeded especially in track and fields and gained success in competitions organized by TUL. In 1958 the social democrats lost their rule in the sports club, which led to its

breakdown. This was the final ending of sports activity as a part of the Tikkurila workers' association's own cultural agenda.

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Esa Sironen:

When Säynätsalo Was 'Wrestled' on the Map of World

Säynätsalo, a small industrial village in the middle of the agrarian Finland, has thanks to its wrestlers gained a reputation larger than itself. Technical skills, impressive holds and swift way of life on the seas of the world have created a slightly literal but above all unique net of oral stories about the wrestlers of this small village.

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Kristina Exner-Carl

Finland, the Soviet Union and the Helsinki

Sports and politics have since the beginning been closely interwoven. This article analyses how the special relationship – also due to neighbourhood – between Finland and the Soviet Union was reflected in the sports politics of the countries and in the Olympics of the 1952, in which the Soviet Union took part as a newcomer in Olympic movement.

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Vesa Vares

New Viewpoints into the Sports Politics of the Third Reich

The Nazi connection arouses interest yet again. "The Nazi Olympics. Sport, Politics and Appeasement in the 1930's", edited by Prof. Arnd Krüger (the University of Göttingen) and Lecturer William Murray (the University of La Trobe), describes the political questions connected with the Berlin, and to a lesser degree, the Garmisch-Partenkirchen Olympics from the point of view of 11 countries: Germany itself, the USA, England,

France, Italy, Japan, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands. The question of participating in the Olympics was more political than ever: did the host country possess the moral qualities to arrange the games, or should they be boycotted?

The book is worth reading and has its undeniable merits, although the results may not be too surprising. Practically in every country the Left was against participation, the Right for it, and the Centre hesitated. The sportsmen and -women mainly wanted to stay out of politics and have their chance for glory. And as Leena Laine notes in her article on Finland, at least the non-socialist part of public opinion, echoed by the press, did not particularly want to emphasize the political nature of the games – it was the sports and the success of the own team that mattered. It can be added that this might have been true also on a larger scale: the view on what Germany was not yet overshadowed by Nazism.

Other interesting results are the surveys on the history of IOC, the sports organisations of workers, of Catholics and of Protestants, and on the German Turnen and the Slavic Sokol traditions as well as on personal views and politics of Avery Brundage and Pierre de Coubertin. It is also proved that the Nazis did not in fact try to impose their political propaganda too much; arranging the Olympic Games was itself such a propaganda victory, that it was not to be endangered by giving political excuse for boycotts. Even open anti-Semitism had to be set aside for a short while. One had to defend oneself against cultural isolation, and some original plans of purely 'Aryan' German games were soon rejected.

It would be interesting to see a same kind of analysis on the other 'politicized' Olympics in history, the Moscow Olympics in 1980 – or better still, a comparative analysis of viewpoints on Moscow 1980 and Los Angeles 1984.

Even though occasionally a bit repetitive in its realization, the book opens new fields and aspects for history. However, it is likely that many purists of history still will not accept sports history as sophisticated and scientific enough, not even coupled with aspects of political, social or mental history. It is indeed surprising that the history of every day life and the ordinary citizen, which are so unanimously praised as the 'new history', have not taken advantage of the possibilities offered by sports

history in researching social identification and mentality. However, the general interest will undoubtedly grow. One could almost claim that the recent growth in popularity of sports movies shows this as well – for example *Das Wundern von Bern* in Germany or the refilming of *Miracle on Ice* in the USA.

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Anders Vestergård

The Elusive Quest. Gaining and Maintaining a Place on the Olympic Programme

The Olympic Games, once created to gather 'all sports, all nations and all men' in the world, have experienced an enormous growth during the last two decades, with seven sports and almost 100 events added to the programme. Ahead of the return to Athens this summer, the IOC has however closed the gates to the world's most well-known and televised event, which also generates at least 3,6 million dollars to each of the 28 Olympic sports federations.

An equal number of federations, recognised by the IOC, are queuing outside, many of them since decades, puzzled by the more or less unknown requirements behind an inclusion in the Games. This article, summarising a Master's thesis, examines the development of the Olympic programme, the decision-making process and the criteria for gaining and maintaining a place in the Games.

Besides the Olympic Charter and its basic criteria, that a sport is practised in at least 75 countries, several unofficial requirements are noted, with regional, political and commercial interests also playing a part – as well as an effective lobby. A reformed IOC promises an increasingly democratic and transparent process, though with tough decisions remaining to be taken. The Games will not be allowed to grow behind the current 10,500 athletes. In order to add a new sport, the IOC must therefore do what it has not done for almost 70 years: drop another one.

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Minna Harjula

Finnish Health Policy 1900-2000: Milestones and Turning Points

This article analyses Finnish health policy in the 20th century by concentrating on the turning points during which the direction and form of health policy has been reformulated. The development of health policy is divided into six periods. Firstly, a new scholarship, hygiene, was established in medicine in the late 19th century and the ideas of preventive medicine, sanitary reforms, and personal hygiene were spread to everyday life by popular education and legislation. Eugenics – in Finnish *rotuhygienia* – was a part of hygiene, which focused on the threat posed by degenerated individuals in the 1920s and 1930s. In the postwar period, eugenics was replaced by population policy, which paid attention to children's and mothers' health.

As in the early 1960s the mortality rates started to rise and adult Finns were noticed to die prematurely of chronic diseases, all Finnish people became the target group of health policy. To guarantee a sufficient supply of health services and to remove the financial barriers to using services became the main goal. However, the results of the hospital-based health service policy were called into question in the late 1960s. The critics argued that health should be a part of social development policy and health should become a decisive argument in all sectors of society.

Finally, promoting healthy lifestyles and underlining the ideas of individual freedom and responsibility for one's health became dominant in the health policy of the 1980s and 1990s.

Throughout the century, Finnish health policy can be outlined as a chain of health projects, which have consisted of changing views on health. Additionally, the role of individuals versus society in Finnish health policy has been constantly changing.

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Ulla Salmela

The Spaces of Play and Sports as a Part of Urban Planning

Modern sports was one of the most important factors that made impact on the way urban space was utilized during the first decades of the 20th century. The place of unplanned leisure was taken by meticulously planned leisure activities which were situated in their own space. Spatial differentiation meant building different spaces dedicated for sports and play which were further differentiated according to users and sports.

Sports and playgrounds became an integrated part of Finnish urban planning during the interwar period.

The pioneer of Finnish town planning, Otto-Iivari Meurman (1890–1994) developed especially the play and sports grounds of Viborg as part of the green area net of the town. Models he took from German and Swedish town planning. Paragon for spatial differentiation of the spaces dedicated for physical exercise according to age and sex came from the USA partly via Germany. Also the models for playgrounds arrived from there.

At the beginning of the 1930s the space dedicated to physical exercise became one integrated section of welfare strategy in urban planning in which spatial differentiation of the sports fields emphasized the accuracy of the instrument. Sports space created the framework for building 'the healthy body of the nation'. Seen from the urban planning point of view, they meant more strict regulation of the activities in urban environment – they assumed the role of keeping order in the interwar Finnish society.

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Aino Sarje

Photos as Mirrors of Women's Gymnastics

It is maintained in this article that photographs are mirrors that reflect sports performance. One can study the characteristics of each sport in them. In the article two series of photos showing women's gymnastics are studied from the angle how their analysis could deepen our conception of Finnish women's

gymnastics in view of the theories of dance by Rudolf Laban and John Martin. Such a photo analysis of historical photos of gymnastics has never been tried before.

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Alan Bairner

Sport, Nationalism and Regionalism in Britain and Ireland

By applying certain key theoretical concepts, this essay reveals the extent to which sport in Britain and Ireland not only contributes to the reproduction of distinct national identities but is also deeply implicated in the creation of disunity and diversity within the various nations. Furthermore, Britain and Ireland are by no means unique in relation to the problematic use of such concepts as nationality and national identity. Thus scholars of British and Irish sport and of sport in the Nordic region and elsewhere are encouraged to use such terminology carefully and to good effect.