

Summaries

Woodchips.

The Yearbook of the Finnish Society for Sports History (FSSH) 2016

Matti Hintikka:

Finnish Flagbearers at the Olympic Games

Three kinds of criteria have been applied over the years in the selection of flagbearers of the Finnish team at the opening ceremonies of Olympic Games. For the most part the honor has been bestowed on an athlete as a reward for his or her past Olympic achievements. Sometimes the choice has fallen upon a promising young athlete in expectation of great things to come. At the Games following the two world wars, however, the choice was based on military record rather than athletic prowess.

Finland's blue-cross flag was first used at the Olympic Games in Antwerp 1920, having been adopted as official symbol of the newly independent nation in 1918. At the opening ceremony the flag was carried by the army officer Emil Hagelberg, who participated in modern pentathlon. Hagelberg had served in the Finnish volunteer (Jaeger) battalion which had been trained in Germany during the war, seen action on the Eastern Front and fought in the Finnish Civil War of 1918. His selection could be seen as a silent pro-German statement from Finnish sports authorities. Hagelberg's service in the German army was apparently kept secret from the Belgian hosts.

Reserve officers with high credentials of front-line service in the wars against the USSR were selected to carry the Finnish flag at the postwar Games of 1948 and 1952. It was hardly a coincidence either that the flagbearers in both St. Moritz and London 1948 were men who had lost their homes when Finland ceded areas to the Soviet Union after the war.

Kalle Rantala:

Orienteering – The Winner of the War

Orienteering gathered masses into its newly established federation in Finland after World War II. The article focuses on the background of the phenomena – why such an amount of people was ready to join the Orienteering Federation of Finland?

Moving in the nature has always been a vital part of the Finnish life. People have the right to use private land for bypassing and thus orienteering is possible anywhere. The use of map and compass is vital for army troops. Voluntary organizations, such as the White Guard (Suojeluskuntajärjestö) and scouts arranged orienteering training and competitions in the 1920s and 30s. During World War II a large-scale effort for education in orienteering was organized in the junior section of Suojeluskuntajärjestö, Soldier Boys (Sotilaspojat). Meanwhile, orienteering as a sport was developing in some sports clubs and student organizations, partly by the same men who were in the White Guard. The sudden increase of civil orienteering was mainly based on the widespread education of orienteering which was dedicated to the defensive purposes.

Aino Sarje:

The Post-war Gymnastics Mass Performances by Women

After the dreadful experiences of the war, women wanted to do something positive together. The end of the war gave good reason to celebrate, and during the years 1946 and 1947, massive gymnastics festivals were organized. About the extent of the efforts, tells the fact that everybody got a performance dress and sport shoes at a time when everything was in short supply. Gymnastics federations and the Government encouraged citizens to improve their physical condition. Both Finnish- and Swedish- speaking bourgeois middle-class women, as well as working-class women,

had their own mass performances. In performances by thousands of women, sometimes more than ten thousand women at a time, the ideology of civic education was strong. The gymnasts moved in the mood of rebuilding of one's country, with strong feelings of patriotism. Huge gymnastics performances provided experience of togetherness. Most of gymnasts were beginners and the choreographies were in accordance with this. Absolute discipline made it possible to organize thousands of gymnasts marching in straight rows in regular open order, and movements were performed simultaneously. There were bold approaches in choreography with group formations and patterns. Colourful gymnastics costumes contributed to the effect.

Antero Holmila:

"Blood in the Water": The 1956 Melbourne Games, the Hungarian Uprising and the Olympic Movement from Perspective of the Press

One of the best known Cold War era conflict in the sporting field – or in this case in the pool – was the Melbourne games' water polo semifinal between Hungary and the USSR, played on 6 December. In international sports literature the event is known as the "blood in the water" match. The Hungarian uprising which had begun in October and was still continuing when the semifinalists met formed the background context for the bloody match which the Hungarians won 4–0. Given the background events, the Hungarian uprising and escalating Cold War mentality in the Olympics, the match was evidently more about politics than sports in itself.

In historiography which examines the collision between Olympic Games and politics/international relations, the match has attained an iconic status which is often referred to when research seeks to

highlight the role which politics has played in the Olympic movement. This article sets out to explore how the Finnish and Anglo-American press wrote about the politics surrounding the Melbourne games in general and the water polo match in particular. I will examine to what extent the politics of sport featured in the press while these events were unfolding. I will ask whether the press reporting framed these events as "sport and politics" or whether the more traditional frame of sports reporting prevailed concentrating more on the description of athletic endeavors, the Olympic spirit, and fair play in which the politics was pushed to the background.

Vesa Vares:

Nationalist Feelings, Political Messages: Some Ideological Aspects of Sports Films

The article deals with the following question: how have sports movies reflected the political backgrounds and transmitted political messages in a society in which they were produced? The films that have been used for this article deal with periods that could have had elements of political themes: national identity, nation building, cold war, racism, etc. The examples are all based on real historical events (fictional films are excluded), and they include, among others, *Children of Glory* (Hungarian water polo in 1956), *Das Wunder von Bern* (German football), *Dream Team 1935* (Latvian basketball), *Jesse Owens story* (anti-racism and anti-Nazism), *Invictus* (post-apartheid South African rugby), *Miracle on Ice* and *Miracle* (the US ice hockey team versus the Soviet Union in Lake Placid Olympics in 1980), *Prefontaine* and *Without Limits* (both based on the career of Steven Prefontaine). In the end, some Finnish films are compared to the international ones.

Most sports films avoid politics, which is probably very much in accordance with the wishes of their main spectators. They are interested in sports and

hero stories as such and want to rejoice and feel compassion in other fields than politics.

However, also sports films raise emotions and are often connected to national myths and national identity. This aspect should not be exaggerated – even the most “political” sports films need human interest stories and romanticism – and the sports films are not unique. Basically the same values and methods are used also in other films: heroes and villains, us and them, traumas and joy, disappointment and fulfillment, virtues and vices, moral upbringing. Also the narratives of guts and fighting spirit, defending justice and overcoming overwhelming odds can be found in other sectors of life.

However, a sports film can be an exceptionally good tool to make all this clear, visible and concrete – and its language can be understood everywhere. As the Dallas Cowboys owner stated about a film on athletics, *Chariots of Fire*: “It had all of the things that make up a great sports movie from the standpoint of determination and overcoming the odds. But it also added elements that you don’t always see in a sports film, things such as ethnic bias, the political side of Olympic competition and spiritual conviction. *Chariots of Fire* did a wonderful job of capturing a bygone era in sports. It took you back in time to a day when the athletes traveled by boat and train” (Ray Diding-er – Glen Macnow: *The Ultimate Book of Sports Movies*. 2009, 89).

All films mentioned above are proof of some aspects of these things.

Heikki Roiko-Jokela:

The Less Pleasant Aspects of Sports

It has been a tradition throughout history that people have mainly taken a positive attitude toward sports. The adjectives that have been associated with the sports are usually positive: it is good for health, it is fair and lively. The sports have also a way to educate the children and youth so that they will be respectable, respectful and conscientious citizens who can serve the fatherland. However, the world of the sports is hardly perfect. There are also darker dimensions to it.

Sports have united nations throughout history but, by the same token, it has also created conflicts and disagreements between nations. Because of its overly patriotic focus – real or supposed – sports has played its own part when it comes to the stirring up the arms race and the confrontation between nations. The sports have been converted into a political tool while its fundamental purpose, which is to be respectable and commanding, has been lost.

The sports have been politicized. This indicates, among other things, that sports have been attached closely to societies. This relationship has become stronger and more complex during the decades. One cannot separate the connections between the sports and society. Because of this ‘pact’, sports have also become more commercial, casting more shadows upon it. In this situation money makes the rules and sport values are those which disappear, or at least bend. As the importance of money becomes increasingly greater it means that there is temptation for athletes, coaches, managers and sponsors (among other actors) to use deceitful means such as doping and other unethical methods. The athlete is left between what is right and wrong. Everybody does not cope with the difficult situation with honor.

Tero Matkaniemi:

Aulis Kähkönen – The Journey of an Olympic Swimmer in Times of Depression

People interested in sports generally advance in their careers according to their own preferences and backgrounds. Aulis Kähkönen's (1930–2016) journey to becoming an Olympic athlete began as a physically active child in Vyborg. In addition to being physically active in his free time, he was also connected to sports associations. During the years after the Second World War and after experimenting with many different sports, Kähkönen, who was on the cusp of adolescence, set his focus on swimming. The working class swimmer quickly became successful both nationally and internationally. Kähkönen's career was shadowed not only by the Great Depression, but also by Finland's central sports organizations being involved in a conflict affecting their everyday operations. Changes in Kähkönen's living conditions were frequent in his childhood and having to leave Vyborg because of the war and ending up first in Juva, and then in Helsinki, then in Turku and finally in Helsinki again required a great capacity to adapt. As a child of a generation whose parents had been to war Kähkönen grew up setting aside his own needs before those of his family's. For Kähkönen, growing up during war time was a resource that helped him put his adversities in the sports world into perspective.

Heikki Halttunen:

Laurie Niemi – Finnish-American Football Star

The second-generation Finnish-American Laurie Niemi had a tremendous career as a football player and coach. Niemi was born in 1925 in Red Lodge, Montana. After a few years his family moved to state of Washington. Laurie Niemi was a three letter

sportsman in Clarkston-Adams High School in football, basketball and baseball.

Niemi was a successful college star in Washington State University. After his last season 1948 he was selected to the All-American team.

Washington Redskins selected him to play professional football. Niemi became one of the top linemen in the NFL and he was a two time Pro Bowler in 1951 and 1952. On his fifth pro year he fulfilled his dream and scored a touchdown after a fumble return in a game vs Philadelphia Eagles. Niemi's pro career continued in Canada where he played during 1954–1955 seasons in the British Columbia Lions in Vancouver.

After his player career Niemi started coaching. He coached offensive linemen for five years in Montana State and Washington State Universities. The 1961 NFL champions Philadelphia Eagles hired 36-year old Niemi to their assistant coach. After three years in professional football he returned to Washington State where he coached his last years.

The respected and much loved coach died too early at age of 42 years in 1968, due to a long illness. Niemi was inducted to the Washington State Athletic Hall of Fame in 1978. Laurie Niemi Award is given annually to the Washington State University football team's player who best represents Laurie Niemi's character traits of courage, persistence, and a positive attitude.

Ismo Björn & Hannu Itkonen:

Finnish Ski Jumping – Expansion, Social Contexts and Goals

The purpose of the article is to analyse the expansion of Finnish ski jumping. The main research questions are: who were the early actors in Finnish ski jumping; which were the social backgrounds of the ski jumping pioneers; and which were the changing goals of ski jumping actors. The article draws on different documents like histories, newspapers and assorted material.

The ski jumping in Finland started in the 1880s by Norwegian sport pioneers. The first national ski jumpers were students at Sortavala teacher seminar, soldiers of army and middle-class jumpers in south Finland. The influence of Finnish White Guard for the expansion of ski jumping was very important since the 1920s. For sport organizations ski jumping was one bravery demanding sport in the whole sports family. Before the World War II the Finnish ski jumping was not an internationally successful sport.

Jyrki Talonen:

Samurais – From the Battlefields to the Computer Brackets

Budō or modern Japanese martial arts have spread around the world and some have even become Olympic sports. However, it has been possible relatively recently in the Western countries practice older Japanese warrior skills – koryū bugei.

Edo-period (1600–1868) formed in Japan a long period of peace when the martial arts techniques were no longer tested in battlefields. Kata or ritualised pattern practice as the only training method was criticised by the increasing amount of warriors. That eventually led in the 1750s to the development of bamboo swords and protective equipment for the practice matches. Many of those martial arts schools which were formed in the second half of the Edo period focused more on duelling and civil situations, not tactics suitable for the battlefields. During the Meiji period (1868–1912) in Japan there were attempts to define jū-jutsu as a method for physical education, and it began to fascinate also larger numbers of female practitioners. Out of that development emerged a new type of jū-jutsu, shomin or ippan yawara, the “ordinary people’s self-defense” and jūdō.

In Finland, the first textbooks of jū-jutsu were translations from English books and published soon after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Finland

was part of Russia and the works highlighted the Japanese military fitness and victory from Russia, which was seen to be partly due to jū-jutsu.

During the 20th century in Japan mythical ideals of the samurai culture as well as the cult of sword and bayonet were created. The weapons were sometimes used in wartime executions. However, new ideals and interpretations had hardly anything to do with the warriors of feudal times. After the Second World War people tried to forget militaristic past of the Japanese modern martial arts (budō) by emphasizing the sport aspects and as well as values associated to a Zen Buddhist ideal of self-development. Budō as a concept is therefore very ambiguous.

Modern Japanese martial arts came to Finland since the 1950s in addition to the jū-jutsu that has been practiced in small circles before, for example, jūdō (1954), karate (1960/1967), aikidō and iaidō (1970) as well as kyūdō (1984) and kendō (1986). They have merged into the Finnish sports culture mainly as sports and as a way for self-improvement. People see some of them also as self-defence systems although they are not designed purely for that purpose. Because of the different historical development paths modern martial arts (budō) are quite different from the early koryū bugei intended to battlefields – just different, not worse or better.

Koryū bugei systems arrived to our country a little later than modern martial arts: Ryū kyū kobu-jutsu hōzon shinko kai (1977), Hontai yōshin-ryū jū-jutsu (1988), Daitō-ryū aiki jū-jutsu Takumakai (1995), Hyōhō niten ichi-ryū kenjutsu (1997), Tenshin shōden katorishintō-ryū (1990’s/2000’s) and Suiō ryū iai kenpō (2006). They do not belong to central sport organizations in our country.