

Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement

Edited by John E. Findling and Kimberley D. Pelle. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996 (460 pp.)

Olympic Politics (2nd ed.)

By Christopher Hill. Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 1996 (283 pp.)

Olympic Glory Denied, and a Final Opportunity for Glory Restored

By Frank Zarnowski. Glendale, CA: Griffin Publishing, 1996 (280 pp.)

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In an increasingly crowded field of works on the modern Olympic Games, each of these three books makes a useful and distinctive contribution. The first two complement each other well in advancing the trend toward closer analyses of the social, economic, and political significance of the Olympic Movement. The third has a very different focus, recounting the stories of Olympic heroes-that-might-have-been, but it too contextualizes these stories in a way that highlights the sociopolitical setting of elite sport.

The *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, edited by John Findling and Kimberly Pelle, is an ambitious and impressive undertaking. Its 460 pages include succinct entries on the background and significance of every summer and winter Games since their (re)introduction in 1896 and 1924, respectively. Each is accompanied by brief bibliographical essays, as well as a prologue on the Ancient Games, appendices on the International and US Olympic Committees, each IOC president, and bibliographical essays on Olympic documentaries, feature films, and general works. The 54 contributors are a broadly international group, including many of the leading scholars of Olympic affairs.

The *Dictionary* is distinguished from the usual range of Olympic commemorative and journalistic sources by its broader and deeper analytical focus. As the editors note, its concern is with the historical context of the

Modern Olympics. Authors were asked to “emphasize such matters as site selection and development, political questions or controversies, collateral events, programmatic changes, and political and economic consequences, while keeping their discussion of winners and losers to a minimum” (xi). Given both the brevity of each entry (roughly 2–10 pages) and the fact that some Games were more politically and economically charged than others, the individual contributions vary in depth and interest. Some are relatively descriptive and superficial, but others—for example, the entries on Berlin, Mexico City, Montreal, Moscow, and Grenoble—are excellent short essays and illuminate key insights. Naturally, some very interesting themes cannot be developed, including James Riordan’s assertion that the Moscow boycott was “an abject failure” (164) and Kevin Walmsley’s Gramscian-inspired approach to the Calgary Games. Still, these and other entries provide provocative points of departure for those seeking to understand the lessons of each Games.

Among the most useful entries are the appendices covering the careers of each IOC president. Because of their longer historical sweep, they give the reader a clearer sense of the changing forces that have shaped Olympism. Indeed, one of the limitations of the chronological organization of the *Dictionary* is that key forces and themes—for example, amateurism/elitism vs. professionalism/commercialism, gender, nationalism, regionalism, and the like—are addressed in a piecemeal and inconsistent fashion. At the risk of further extending this already-lengthy work, it would be helpful to incorporate thematic entries on these types of issues in a future edition. Overall, however, this volume will be of considerable interest and value to students of Olympic affairs.

Complementing the *Dictionary*, with its analytical limitations born of the short-entry format, is the second edition of Christopher Hill’s *Olympic Politics*. This work remains probably the best single-authored political-economic analysis of the modern Olympic Games, certainly in the post-1980 Samaranch era. The emphasis throughout is on the indissoluble, though evolving links between modern Olympism and politics at the international, national, and domestic (i.e., intrasport) levels. Hill begins with a good chapter on Pierre de Coubertin and the revival of the Games, followed by useful if quite descriptive background chapters on politics, power, and authority, and the financial dimensions of the Olympic Movement. He then provides a very interesting account of recent British bids for the Games, forming an excellent comparative point of departure for studies of other bids. The book also includes chapters on each Olympiad since 1980, covering the same ground as several entries in the *Historical Dictionary* but in greater depth, and a new chapter on the Olympic Movement and South Africa, that compares favorably with all other available accounts of this celebrated case. His conclusion considers some of the most pressing chal-