

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1956)
Heft: 1275

Artikel: Swiss sports and garden party
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689884>

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SWISS SPORTS AND GARDEN PARTY

AT THE POLYTECHNIC STADIUM, CHISWICK

ON SATURDAY, 2nd JUNE, 1956

For one reason or another the weather authorities seem to harbour a secret grudge against the Swiss Sports. As mentioned on a former occasion, out of the 28 sports meetings held so far, only on seven occasions did the sun consent to shine from beginning to end.

This year's conditions could be described as "indifferent" swelling the number of these to nine. A cold and strong wind was blowing, which in a few cases favoured some of the sports events such as long jump or running, but it was less pleasant for the onlookers in the big stand. Still, the rain kept mercifully off until the prize distribution took place for which we must be grateful, considering that in the past it had rained continuously on twelve meetings.

Previous to the war, at one time a slump with regard to both attendance of spectators and competitors at the Swiss Sports had set in, but I am glad to say that since restarting after the war, an improvement each year can be registered. The attendance on June 2nd, was about 500 competitors and onlookers, which exceeds slightly last year's figures. I doubt very much that we shall ever reach the figures of some of the early pre-war attendances at Herne Hill, owing to the steady and unfortunate dwindling of the Colony.

To inspire the competitors, and entertain the spectators, an Ampligram was installed which was liberally "fed" with gramophone records, playing Swiss tunes in all the four languages of our country, perhaps some times rather a little too loudly, but it nevertheless helped to stimulate the proceedings and the Management of Scintilla, Ltd., which kindly introduced the musical part of the programme, deserves our thanks. The time when we could afford a military band — alas — has passed.

I am still not very happy with the description "And Garden Party" which I take is synonymous with "Garden Fête". Those who are familiar with the Chiswick ground will, no doubt, agree with me that there are no gardens, and those who would like occasionally to have a stroll round to stretch their legs, or to get a closer view of some of the events taking place are often admonished by perhaps over eager officials to "keep of the grass", this can apparently not be helped, as by overcrowding the track competitors would be hampered. But, if we must call it a "Garden party" then let us have, as years ago, some side shows, such as f.i. a Punch and Judy show, or even a little roundabout, booths where one can "fish for bottles" or "guessing the weight of a cake", etc., etc. There is ample accommodation available at the side of the big stand. This would be a great boom for the children and would not interfere with the sports events, and may in addition help to defray some of the expenses which are mounting every year.

This year again the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, attended the Swiss Sports together

with his collaborators at the Legation and their families (Madame Daeniker was unable to be present, being in Switzerland).

Studying the voluminous programme, I unfortunately read too late the notice "All betting strictly prohibited", and I am much distressed having inadvertently broken this rule by betting my wife 6d. that my friend P. Jacomelli, would win the 880 yards Men's Final, and with a guilty conscience I kept within distance of the policeman who was in attendance. I shall now remit this amount — which by the way, I had lost — to the committee with my humble apologies.

* * *

Five minutes earlier than billed on the programme the first heat of the 100 yards Men's race was run. All the results will be published in our next issue (owing to lack of space in this number), and with a few exceptions I will desist for the same reason, from commenting on the performance of individuals or teams.

Comparing this year's results with those of last year, I have been told, that no new records have been established, but that some of the achievements in the classical races, especially in the long jump, have been very satisfactory.

Five very exciting races to watch were the 880 yards Men's Final, won by K. Hediger (Swiss Bank Corporation), the 4 x 110 yards Relay Race, won by the Swiss Mercantile Society; the 440 yards Men's Final, won by E. Benz (Swiss Mercantile Society); the one mile Relay Race, won by the Swiss Mercantile Society; and the 100 yards Men's race, won by C. Cassellini (Unione Ticinese).

The 100 yards Ladies race (run in sports costume) was easily won by Miss A. Voser.

As usual the pillow fight, which this year was won by R. Horn, caused much amusement, many were the competitors who lost their reputation on the pole. It is indeed a most excellent opportunity for settling personal grievances without making it look too obvious.

The High and Long Jumps, always interesting were held too far away from the spectators to be watched. The High Jump was won by F. Wahrenberger (Unattached), and the Long Jump by C. Cassellini (Unione Ticinese).

The Tug-o'-War was another item which claimed the interest of the onlookers, some of whom (against the rules) invaded the track to witness this event from close quarters.

This year four teams competed, namely the Swiss Y.M.C.A., the Swiss Mercantile Society, the Swiss Legation and the Swiss National Tourist Office. The winners were easily the Swiss National Tourist team, their opponents in the final were the team of the Swiss Mercantile Society. Why some members of the latter team pulled "bare footed" is incomprehensible,

surely without shoes or boots they could hardly expect to get the necessary grip.

A pleasant surprise was the 440 yards Veterans' Walking Handicap (for Swiss over 40 years of age). For the last few years there were very few entrants for this event, and it began to look as if all the veterans have either "passed out" or have become too shy to perform. Thanks to the special efforts of the President of the Swiss Sports Committee, Mr. R. de Cintra, quite a large number of either portly or lean Gentlemen lined up, handicapped according to their ages (I considered the handicappers of being somewhat generous), and when the signal for the start was given they began to walk with grim determination, panting and puffing like horses either at Epsom or Ascot. The winner of this memorable race was Mr. Th. Ritter, who can look back on 77 springs and I heartily congratulate him on his remarkable performance. I just wonder whether he always walked as quickly to his office. Whilst on former occasions this race (or shall we call it walk?) caused some disagreement between competitors and judges, this time the walkers really walked, or the judges had in the meantime acquainted themselves with the rules governing this item, so that no disqualifications occurred. Strong pressure was put on me to take part in this competition, but owing to the innumerable functions which I have to attend throughout the year, affecting to a certain degree my old heart, I decided to abstain lest I should make an inglorious exit on a stretcher.

The many events for children, and adults, such as Wheelbarrow Race, Rolling-out-the bottle, Egg and Spoon race and Three-legged race, seemed to have been enjoyed by competitors and spectators alike. Whilst some of the youngsters showed a remarkable amount of self confidence and eagerness, others with equal nonchalance ran as if they did not care whether they get there or not, and not a few showed a remarkable lack of sense of direction.

A new, and much appreciated innovation was the Open Obstacle Race for Men, which was won by K. Trueb (Swiss Mercantile Society). The course took them through all sorts of obstacles such as creeping under nets, over hurdles, through water, etc., finishing by blowing up a balloon, the latter proved to be the hardest "obstacle" of all.

The "George Dimier Challenge Cup", awarded

to the Swiss Society or Subscribing Firm scoring the highest number of points in athletic events was won — as last year — again by the Unione Ticinese, and the athlete scoring the highest number of points was C. Cassellini (Unione Ticinese), his score being 13.

Shortly before 6 o'clock the prize-giving took place, with a short introduction by the President of the Swiss Sports Committee, Mr. R. de Cintra, who, first of all thanked the Swiss Minister, and the members of the Legation for having honoured the Sports Meeting with their presence — calling for three cheers for the Minister — and then the various committee members and competitors.

In the absence of Madame Daeniker, Madame Koch, the wife of Colonel Koch, Military and Air Attaché at the Swiss Legation, presented the prizes to the lucky winners, fulfilling her task in a charming manner, for which she was deservedly presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers. It was most delightful to watch the happy faces, especially of some of the little ones, carrying off their prizes with much pride and joy.

In summing up, I must heartily congratulate the members of the Sports Committee for their unselfish and painstaking efforts in making this year's Swiss Sports again the success it used to be, there is no need to pick out any special names, as all worked in a good team spirit which so happily contributed to the smooth running of this festival.

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