

Swiss Olympic echo

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SWISS OLYMPIC ECHO

Switzerland is one of the few countries whose Olympic competitors can be said to be wholly amateur. Unfortunately, the Games in Mexico were not so much championships of sportsmen as of nations. The Swiss competitors went as much as individuals as representatives of the Helvetic Democracy, though the whole country jubilates because 39 Swiss (out of a total of 93 participants) were amongst the ten first places. Gold and Silver medals are more and more difficult to get for small nations, and a bronze to them is a great achievement. Of the 115 nations, only 46 reached medal class (as was published in the last issue, Switzerland got four silver and four bronze medals), and many larger countries had to return with less or nothing. The Olympic Games are the Games of the Young. Here, too, it is interesting that the four oldest members of the Swiss team figure amongst medal holders: the yachtsmen Noverraz (born 1902) and Stern (born 1922), and the two horsemen Fischer (1915) and Chammartin (1918).

To the results published in the last issue, we add the following: 7th place: Monica Bachmann and Gustav Fischer (Riding), Peter Loetscher (Epée), the team Bitterli/Fankhauser/Wirz (Rowing) and once more Peter Jutzeler (Wrestling). In 8th place: The Pentathlon champion Meta Antenen with three new national records, the javelin thrower Urs von Wartburg and the yachtsmen Bernet and Amrein: In 9th place were the dressage champion Henri Chammartin and the young gymnast team Berchtold/Ettlin/Greutmann/Huerzeler/Mueller/Rohner. Marianne Gossweiler was in 10th place in dressage.

A number of Swiss athletes were unable to reach their home-best and returned disappointed. But there, the motto should apply, namely that what matters is to participate, not to win. There was some criticism with regard to team managements and delegation chiefs, and it is held that Switzerland should at last realise that such responsible posts should not be looked upon as rewards for services rendered or as privilege awards; they should be given to real experts. Apparently, there were some complexes, too, in connection with the high-altitude difficulties of Mexico. Special training had been given at St. Moritz to get the athletes accustomed to the high altitude, and longer leave of absence was granted to participants in order to get used to conditions in Mexico itself.

During 1968, international cultural events take place in Mexico, in which Switzerland participates, too. "Pro Helvetia" supported the exhibition of works by the sculptor and architect Willi Gutmann. A number of representative Swiss art treasures have been sent by the Section for Art and *Denkmalpflege* of the Federal Department of the Interior to be exhibited at the show "Selected Works of World Art". The Swiss National Tourist Office took in hand the Swiss contribution of 10 children's drawings to a special exhibition "The World of Friendship". Some dolls wearing national costumes were sent by S.N.T.O. and "Pro Helvetia". The Swiss Postal Museum put some special stamp collections at the disposal of the organisers of "International Olympic Stamps". Two children of the Swiss School in Mexico took part in a festival for mural painting in October, and young Swiss residents in Mexico were invited by the Swiss Olympic Committee to take part in the Olympic World Youth Camp.

During October, the Swiss Gymnastic and Sports Museum arranged an exhibition at Jelmoli's in Zurich on the pre-columbian sports, historic cults and religiously inspired dancing of the Maya, and methods of physical training of the old South-American peoples.

The famous Swiss watch firm of Omega was appointed official time-keeper for the Olympic Games. Since 1932, the firm has taken part in the timing of all Olympic Games with one exception. It has created electronic devices recording differences down to hundred thousandths of a second. The instruments used in Mexico recorded differences to the nearest thousandth of a second only, quite sufficient for the purpose. Preparations were long and detailed and tests were carried out and everything was thought of that could possibly go wrong. Above the wrestlers, triangular clocks were installed, and swimmers touched electrically charged pads to record their times.

The St. Moritz G.P., Dr. F. Auer, was medical adviser to twelve nations taking part in the yachting championships in Mexico.

The Alimentos Findus s.a., Mexico, subsidiary company of Findus International s.a. Vevey, held the exclusive sales right for deep-frozen foods. For the 10,000 athletes, 60 tons of fruit and vegetables were provided, and for the officials and the Press, 35 tons. Findus arranged a special course of instruction for the 20 cooks in the Olympic village.

One team was absolutely certain of Olympic success, and its head is not even a sportsman: the Zurich-based master boat builder Alfred Staempfli who has scored one international success after another with his made-to-measure boats. At least 40% of all the craft competing in Mexico will have been made by him and his team of 35 Swiss, Italian and Spanish craftsmen. The business was started in 1896 by the present builder's grandfather. In 1966, the Oxford Crew won the Boatrace with a Staempfli boat, the first time, a foreign-built craft was used.

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