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Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games (Waterloo 2007).
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SCHAUS, GERALD P. AND STEPHEN R. WENN, eds. *Onward to the Olympics. Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games*. Publications of the Canadian Institute in Greece 5. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007. Pp. xxvii + 376. CAD \$65.00. ISBN 0-88920-505-1.

Gerald Schaus and Stephen Wenn's collection of conference papers is the latest entry in an increasingly competitive market of books on sport in antiquity, and specifically on the Olympic Games. Unlike the majority of work to appear lately on this topic, however, this volume presents not only its ancient but also its modern history under a single cover. In this way, the editors have sought "to bridge this [ancient/modern] divide effectively so that scholars of quite different historical periods could learn from each other and offer insights into the forces of change governing the Games" (p. xiv). The resulting volume is wide-ranging in subject and approach but ultimately falls short of realizing its mandate.

In his introductory essay, Gerald Schaus helpfully outlines the volume's aims and summarizes its contents. The latter are organized into two parts, the first on the Olympics in antiquity, the second on their modern revival. The subjects of the papers in both parts run the gamut from the familiar to the obscure, while their approaches range from syntheses to detailed examinations of particular issues or problems.

The first part is divided into five sections. In the first, "An Overview," Nigel Crowther surveys "The Ancient Olympic Games through the Centuries," a reprinted article which helpfully places his topic within recent scholarship. Four papers on "Origins" follow in the next section, including Senta German's analysis of the Bronze Age evidence (although she unfortunately overlooks important work on this topic by Eleanor Loughlin, "Grasping the Bull by the Horns: Minoan Bull Sports," in *Games and Festivals in Classical Antiquity*, ed. S. Bell and G. Davies, 1-8. Oxford, 2004), Thomas Hubbard's study of the role of Heracles as founder (especially as seen through the work of Pindar), Max Nelson's chapter on the staging of the first games, and Paul Christesen's investigation of their sixth-century transformation. Two papers on "Ideals and Losers" follow: Nigel Crowther's enlightening study of the differing sets of ideals that underwrite the games in antiquity and today (despite the widespread assumption that they are closely allied, if not identical, in purpose), and Victor Matthews' account of the sporadic appearance of "Olympic losers" in the written record. The next section, "Details of the Festivals," looks at the mechanics of staging the Games. Again, the topics here range widely, from their administration, including judging (David Romano) and sortition (Aileen Ajootian), to their participants and observers, especially women (Donald Kyle), to the types of activities performed, such as the *halma* or jump

(Hugh Lee). The fifth and final section, “Another View of Olympia,” looks at the site and its Games from a more distant remove: first from the perspective of another site, Stymphalus (Gerald Schaus), and then through the medium of coinage, both ancient and modern (Robert Weir).

The volume’s second part consists of ten chapters organized into four sections. Robert Barney’s “The Olympic Games in Modern Times,” a pendant to Crowther’s survey in the first part, offers an accessible overview of the origins and evolution of the Games. This is followed by three papers in a section on the Olympics prior to World War II, including one Hawaiian champion’s career set against the background of the Islands’ rise as a modern state (Jim Nendel), a Dutch architect’s coining of the torch relay (Robert Barney and Anthony Bijkerk), and the positive coverage of the 1932 Olympics despite contemporary societal hardships (Jonathan Paul). The next four papers concentrate on the ways in which pressing social issues—gender equality (Kevin Wamsley), apartheid (Courtney Mason), and physical disability (David Greig)—and the rise of new media (Stephen Wenn and Scott Martyn) have effected change to the organization, role and perception of the post-World War II games. The final two papers look to the future, and include an appeal for a more elastic understanding of the “Olympic Ideals” (Tim Elcombe) and predictions for “The Olympic Movement’s Second Century” (Mark Dyreson).

The quality of the individual contributions is generally quite high, and some of these do indeed promote the kind of ancient/modern dialogue to which Schaus refers and which appears to be the volume’s chief selling-point (based upon its jacket). For instance, in comparing the evidence of ancient and modern “commemorative” coins (those issued on the occasion of the Games), Weir’s chapter offers the kind of accessible treatment of an overlapping topic that is sure to appeal to a wide (especially undergraduate) readership. Similarly, Nigel Crowther’s (second) contribution, on “The Ancient Olympics and Their Ideals,” and—to a lesser extent—Dyreson’s valedictory chapter usefully glance both backwards and forwards. While these papers go far in realizing the editors’ mandate of breaking down the “historical divide,” most of the others are fairly insular in scope. This is not helped by the partitioning of the papers into two sections, ancient and modern, each with its own bibliography. As a result, the volume as a whole is not entirely successful in accomplishing its stated aim of cross-historical dialogue.

Inevitably given its subject matter (and its glossy presentation), this volume invites comparison with other recent books on the Olympic games (e.g. Nigel Spivey, *The Ancient Olympics*. Oxford, 2004; David C. Young, *A Brief History of the Olympic Games*. Malden, Mass., 2004) and thus raises the question of audience. As someone who has taught a course on sport in antiquity, I cannot see using this collection as one of the core texts. This

may be due to my own broad conception of the topic as sport *and* spectacle, but I found the contents of this book to be too eclectic to set as readings over the course of a semester. That said, it is a useful reference tool which I expect many readers (especially Classicists) will revisit often on account of its synthetic treatments as well as its expert case studies of material, both familiar and overlooked, related to the Games.

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