

with the use of ancient sources and modern perceptions.

Chapter Eight (Problems connected with the Olympic Games) includes many sub-chapters focusing on miscellaneous issues: exclusion of women from Olympia, Olympic lists of victors, the first event of the Olympic Games, roots of athletic nudity, and relation between athletic nudity, homosexuality and pederasty. In his extremely analytical study of ancient sources Mouratidis concludes that women were excluded from Olympia due to the local cult of Hercules. Similarly, women were also prohibited access to altars, temples and ceremonies in honour of Hercules throughout Greece. According to the author, the reason for women's exclusion was that their presence in the ceremonies of Hercules could cause damage to and physical deterioration of that hero's strength.

Chapter Nine (Problems of games and athletes) deals with a variety of issues relevant to ancient games and athletes such as the importance of Pan-Hellenic sacred games for kings, tyrants and politicians; records and performances of athletes, their deaths, diet, professionalism; the use of baths; significance of music in games, contemporary criticisms of ancient Greek sports, ball games, swimming, rowing, etc.

Chapter Ten (Sports and games for boys and women. Local games) refers to sports and games for boys as well as to the participation of women in athletic activities. Mouratidis discusses here the most important local games in the ancient Greek world with extensive references to the *Panathenaia* Games.

In the final chapter (Games and spectacles of Rome), the author describes and analyzes athletic activities in ancient Rome, causes and consequences of the *panem et circenses* policy, attitude of Roman intellectuals towards public spectacles and Emperor Nero's passion for Greek games and arts.

The book is completed with an extensive summary, a Greek and English index of people and subjects, as well as exhaustive bibliography and coloured photographs (pp. 661-670). Mouratidis's book is a truly unique work. Undoubtedly, it is the best, concise Greek publication on the history of physical education and sports in the ancient Greek world. Using a vast array of ancient sources and observations of modern historians, Mouratidis reconstructs ancient Greek sports, athletic festivals and details of specific events. He dares and provides new interpretations on subjects such as the exclusion of women from the ancient Olympic Games, presence of Hercules in Olympia, origins of athletic nudity, the birth date of the Olympic Games or lists of Olympic victors. These perspectives, differing from the hitherto prevailing opinions and supported with excellent bibliographic sources and extensive analysis, open up new research paths in the area of history of physical education and sports in ancient Greece.

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Janusz Iskra, *Lekkoatletyka w starożytnej Grecji i Rzymie. Klasyczne wzorce i ich implikacje we współczesnym sporcie (Track and field athletics in ancient Greece and Rome. Classical patterns and their implications in modern sports)*, Politechnika Opolska, Opole 2007, ISSN 1429-6063.

Janusz Iskra is certainly a remarkable author. He is a researcher, trainer and methodologist of general athletics. Iskra has published scientific articles in a number of renowned periodicals, such as *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* and *New Studies in Athletics*.

In his coaching career Janusz Iskra has trained nearly twenty sprint and hurdles runners – members of the Polish National Team. One of his trainees was also the 1998 European 400 m hurdles

champion, Paweł Januszewski. Iskra's studies on sports training have been published by various international publishing houses, e.g. 'The Hurdles. Contemporary theory, technique and training', Mountain View, California, 1999 and 2004.

Iskra also wrote many papers on didactics and methodology of athletics, such as 'Bieg przez płotki. Teoretyczne podstawy i praktyczne rozwiązania treningowe' (Hurdles. Theoretical bases and practical training solutions) and prepared

numerous course lectures for students, e.g. 'Athletics' or 'Athletics Methodology at School for Children and Youths'.

The reviewed book 'Athletics in Ancient Greece and Rome. Classical patterns and their compilations in the modern sports' is therefore a work of a theoretician, pragmatist and trainer in one, which itself is a strong encouragement to read it. The volume is a compilation focusing on two 'worlds of athletics': ancient and modern. It was published by the Opole Technical University in 2007 with a rather disappointing circulation of merely 150 copies.

It is an excellent publication addressed to a wide spectrum of readers as well as a useful introduction to the culture of ancient sports. It is not only meant for track and field fans, but also for scientists, historians and sports theoreticians. The book has a specific type of narration, as it was written from the standpoint of a sports trainer, theoretician and active athletics propagator. It is a valuable repository of knowledge on athletics in Ancient Greece and Rome.

The book consists of six chapters with numerous sections. It also contains a glossary of athletics terms, lexicon of ancient athletes, index of mythical names and names of ancient and modern athletes. The book title suggests a comprehensive coverage of issues of athletics in the ancient and the modern world. It takes into consideration historical and training aspects, and it also refers to present-day athletics statistics. The author tells the history of ancient athletics in chronological order and takes into account divisions of modern athletics competitions.

Chapter One describes athletics in the Greek and Roman mythology, while Chapter Two focuses on athletic forms of movement, such as running, jumping, throwing in Homer's and Virgil's poems. The legends and myths about heroes of ancient Greece and Rome, but also about the characters from Homer's and Virgil's epics, confirm the long-lasting people's interest in athletics for over 2,500 years.

Chapter Three attempts to confront ancient athletic sports with the contemporary forms of walking, running, throwing and multi-discipline events in the form of charts. It contains a general description of some interesting athletic forms such as lampadedromia, i.e. running with torches.

The fourth chapter depicts 'athletic' competitions in Greek agonistics, with a particular

emphasis on the best ancient competitors. Moreover, the author characterizes individual Olympic and non-Olympic competitions, their rules and techniques. With 210 pages it is the most spacious chapter of the book. The two remaining chapters are devoted to ancient women's athletics and preparation systems of ancient athletes, respectively.

Janusz Iskra is not in the least the first to have made an effort to analyze ancient athletics events. One can easily recall here numerous publications on ancient physical education by Wojciech Lipoński or Ryszard Wroczyński.

The positive sides of the book are overwhelming. A number of qualifiers can be used: intelligent, thought-provoking, based on theoretical and practical premises, and proving that the development of athletics has its background in the organization of sports 2,500 years ago. Iskra's work contains a great number of interesting quotations, and a large collection of iconographic sources.

What is then the main novelty of Iskra's work? Having read the book, anyone can have a different look at problems of today's athletics as well as on the future of this great sports discipline. Athletics is one of the most rooted and popular sports in the world. What new can be expected? Training methods or boosting the number of athletic competitions during Olympic Games?

It is hard to resist the impression that the book has a small defect. Despite the fact that it refers to ancient and modern athletic forms, their compilation is too short. The relation to the present day in the discussed systems of contests, training and fitness is also insufficient.

Thanks to this book Janusz Iskra will definitely attract a plethora of readers. It is a valuable work in terms of its merits. Getting all the materials for this work was undoubtedly hard work. To my mind the reviewed book is a great source of knowledge and it is worth reading beyond any doubt.

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