SERBIAN HUNDRED YEARS IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT (1912-2012) AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERBIAN SPORT

(Red Research note)

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Abstract

In the second half of 19th century, the ideas on renewal of the Olympic Games have reached the Kingdom of Serbia from European countries. At the end of 19th century the Olympic idea was accepted and found its place in private schools and civil gymnastic societies in Belgrade, which started using the term Olympic movements. The Olympic idea was definitively accepted by establishment of the Serbian Olympic Club (Committee) in 1910, which was admitted to the International Olympic Committee - IOC in 1912 in Stockholm during the Fifth Olympic Games. Captain Svetomir Đukić became the IOC member and he stayed there until 1948. The admission of the Kingdom of Serbia to full membership of this international association was of utmost importance for further development of the Olympic movement and sport in Serbia.

Keywords: Olympic movement, Olympic Games, Serbian Olympic Club, gymnastic societies, sports competitions

INTRODUCTION

The ideas about renewal of the Olympic Games came to the Principality of Serbia from the European countries as early as the second half of 19th century. Regarding this it has been noted that in the sixties a public lecture on “The Greeks’ Olympic Games” was held at the Casina hotel in Belgrade.

At the end of 19th century the Olympic idea was accepted and it found its place in private schools and civil gymnastic societies in Belgrade, which started using the term Olympic competitions.

Thus, the equestrian competitions held in Ćuprija in March 1896 were called “The Olympic Festivities”, while the Chivalrous society “Dušan the Mighty” announced the schedule of a public lecture (held in February 1896) where “the famous Olympic Games with the swords from the ancient times of the Greeks” were going to be performed for the first time.

Professor Sreten Gujković in his book “Physical Education and Its Reforms” (1897) wrote that it was necessary to maintain The Serbian Olympic Festivities.

At the beginning of 20th century a Belgrade gymnastic society named itself Serbian Olympia, whereas the Chivalrous society “Dusan the Mighty” of Belgrade, together with the Belgrade press, organized The Olympic Games (1908) at Ada Ciganlija.

In a high school in Jagodina, the teachers and their students established The Olympic Club (1910), which organized The Students’ Olympics (1910).

Finally, the Olympic idea in the Kingdom was practically realized by establishing the Serbian Olympic Club (Committee) in 1910, which was admitted to the International Olympic Committee - IOC (1912) in Stockholm during the Fifth Olympic Games, where two athletes from the Kingdom of Serbia took part, and Captain Svetomir Djukic was admitted as a new member of IOC, where he remained until 1948.

METHODS

The historical method was applied in this paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Olympic movement establishment and development in the Kingdom of Serbia

The development of modern sport in Europe, which encouraged the idea of restoring the ancient Olympic Games, also enabled that idea to occur, to be accepted and developed in numerous private training schools, civil gymnastic societies and the sports clubs of Serbia as well.

Therefore, it can be understood why the names of their competition programs quite often contained the
term Olympic competitions. In the nineties of 19th century they named their competitions folk celebrations and chivalrous competitions, but we should not forget that the ancient ceremonial games (Olympic, Pythian, Nemean, Isthmian, Panaeathian), were also called: folk celebrations.

It encouraged more young people to join the gymnastic societies and sports clubs, to become familiar with various sports, to practice and compete. Thus, a number of young people who became engaged in sports, as well as a number of sports clubs, increased.

Throughout the Kingdom of Serbia public competitions and sporting events whose names often contained the Olympic characteristics were organized in many cities. The most prominent example was the Chivalrous society “Dusan the Mighty” which organized public lectures, for instance, in February 1896, and announced that there” the famous Olympic Games with the swords from the ancient times of the Greeks were going to be performed for the first time.”

This shows that the idea of the Olympic movement had arrived among the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia before the First renewed Olympic Games were held in Athens in April 1896.

A great and significant incentive for even wider acceptance of the Olympic idea in Serbia was a five-day stay of King Aleksandar Obrenovic in Athens in 1896, during the First Olympic Games. King Aleksandar, like the sovereigns of all European countries, was invited to the Olympic Games by the Greek king George and his visit to the Olympic venues was noted in the Serbian press, so the attention of the Serbian public was directed towards the events related to the Olympic Games as well. Playing the Serbian national anthem and raising the flag of the Kingdom of Serbia meant the official presence of the Serbian king at that great sporting event, but, in a way, the presence of Serbia at the Olympic Games as well.

In the late 19th and the early 20th century the Olympic idea was accepted in many sports clubs which organized the competitions named “The Olympics”, thus the Society “Dusan the Mighty” together with the press, organized The Olympic Games (1908) at Ada Ciganlija. The competitions were held in rowing, swimming, fencing, and 3,000 m running.

The rapid acceptance of the Olympic idea led to the fact that the societies and clubs containing the term Olympic in their names were established throughout Serbia, such as a Belgrade society which was called “Serbian Olympia.”

The establishment of the Serbian Olympic Club (SOK) on the 10th of February 1910 meant that the Olympic idea had been accepted and that the athletes wanted to join the international Olympic movement. In the following years the Serbian Olympic Club attempted to get involved in the International Olympic Community.

It was founded with the aim of encouraging and supporting the work of “the chivalrous societies and any other institutions and works which would contribute to the improvement of military and physical education of our people”.

At the beginning of 20th century the Olympic movement was accepted in Serbia as the modern sport movement, and participation in the Olympic Games was the ultimate goal of every athlete. More things were found out about the Olympic movement, so that there were many young people who at first became its members, and later on they became its supporters, promoters, and holders of its further development as well.

During the four-year period of war, i.e. from its establishment until the beginning of the First World War (1910-1914) the Serbian Olympic Club (Committee) launched a wide activity and played an important role in further development of the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia. Many competitions were organized in various sports and the Olympic movement reached the full affirmation by organizing the pre-Olympic competitions, and it achieved its international recognition by the participation of the athletes and the delegation of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Fifth Olympic Games in Stockholm.

At these Olympics the athletes Dragutin Tomasevic (marathon) and Dusan Milosevic (100-meter race) took part, and they were led by the delegation of Captain Svetomir Djukic, Lt. Dragutin Vojinovic and Adra Jovic, the athletes’ coach. The first participation of the two athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Olympic Games was satisfactory given their inexperience, disease and injuries and lack of preparedness.

The Serbian Olympic Club was admitted to the International Olympic Committee, and Captain Svetomir Djukic was proposed and elected a member of the International Olympic Committee. The admission of the Kingdom of Serbia to full membership of this international association was of utmost importance for the future development of the Olympic movement and sport development in Serbia as well. The wish that came true was the crown of all the efforts of the entire sport and the Olympic movement of the Kingdom of Serbia.

Immediately after the admission to the IOC, the Serbian Olympic Club, in its documents, changed its name into the Serbian Olympic Committee, in analogy with the name of the International Olympic Committee. Thus, simply and without a special decision-making procedure, the Serbian Olympic Club changed the word “Club” in its name into “Committee”.

Sport development in Serbia in accordance with the Olympic movement development

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Committee to the International Committee created a new period in its work. The organizational changes in the management structure of the Olympic Committee in Serbia were made according the structure of the IOC. The started development of sport and the Olympic movement in Serbia would have certainly been faster and more successful if the war with Turkey (the First Balkan War) had not begun just a few months after the Olympics in Stockholm,
when the entire management of the Serbian Olympic Committee went to the war together with the youth and the athletes of Serbia. It followed up with the Second Balkan War with Bulgaria, so that it was almost one whole year spent in fighting the war. Many members of the Serbian Olympic Committee died, some of them disappeared, so that it took a long time to reorganize the Committee again after the war and continue its previous successful activity, at the end of 1913. Due to the First World War the overall activity of the World Olympic movement was interrupted. The sixth Olympic Games planned to be held in Berlin 1916 were cancelled.

Upon creating a new country - the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the need for a unique Olympic Committee occurred. At the inaugural meeting of the Yugoslav Olympic Board in Zagreb on December 14th 1919 Mr. Dr. Franjo Bucar was elected the president of the Yugoslav Olympic Board (JOO), and Mayor Svetomir Djkic and Dr. C. Zizek were elected the vice-presidents.

Mayor Svetomir Djkic represented the Olympic Committee of Serbia at the IOC Congress in Antwerp on August 18th 1920 where he was also admitted by the IOC as a delegate of the Yugoslav Olympic Board. Svetomir Djkic personally asked for Dr. Franjo Bucar to be admitted to the International Olympic Committee as well. Thus, the Serbian Olympic Committee continued its work as the Yugoslav Olympic Board and since 1927 as the Yugoslav Olympic Committee, when the seat of the YOC was brought from Zagreb back to Belgrade.

During the period between the two world wars Serbian sport further developed within the sports movement of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on the basis of the sports achievements of the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia. By the end of the Second World War and the revival of the Olympic activities worldwide, ahead of the Olympics in London 1948, the Yugoslav Olympic Committee renewed its work within the Yugoslav Association of Physical Education (FISAJ), and it became independent in 1951. It became a holder of the further development of the Olympic movement within the Yugoslav sport associations. The Serbian athletes achieved significant results as the members of the Yugoslav teams at numerous world championships and the Olympic Games.

Conditioned by the political changes, the Yugoslav Olympic Committee, in accordance with the changes in the country, changed its name into the Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro on April 3rd 2003, and upon the dissolution of Serbia and Montenegro and after the end of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, the Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro changed its name into the Olympic Committee of Serbia on July 8th 2006.

The athletes of the Republic of Serbia have continued their sport activities within the new state of the Republic of Serbia, thus continuing the sports tradition of their country which began over a century ago.

CONCLUSION

The development of modern sport in Europe encouraged the idea about the renewal of the ancient Olympic Games and enabled that idea to occur, to be accepted and developed in many private training schools, civil gymnastic societies and the sports clubs of the Kingdom of Serbia.

A great and significant incentive for even wider acceptance of the Olympic idea in Serbia was a five-day stay of King Aleksandar Obrenovic in Athens in 1896 during the First Olympic Games, when the attention of the Serbian public was drawn also towards the events related to the Olympics. Playing the Serbian national anthem and raising the flag of the Kingdom of Serbia meant, in a way, the presence of Serbia at the renewed Olympic Games as well.

The establishment of the Serbian Olympic Club meant a further incentive for the organizational connecting of all present civil societies, sports clubs and their associations into a single system of sports competitions. It meant a lot for further successful development of sport and the Olympic movement in Serbia as well.

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Club and Captain Svetomir Djkic to the International Olympic Committee was not only the recognition of the results achieved in the sport development and the development of the Olympic movement in Serbia, but also a strong stimulus for its more successful and faster further development. It was also a personal acknowledgment to Captain Svetomir Djkic for his contribution to the development of sport and the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia.

During the period between the two World wars Serbian sport further developed within the sports movement of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on the basis of the sports achievements of the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia. After the Second World War the Serbian athletes achieved great results as the members of the Yugoslav teams at numerous world championships and the Olympic Games. After the dissolution of Serbia and Montenegro and after the end of the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, OKSCG (The Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro) changed its name into the Serbian Olympic Committee on July 8th 2006, and the athletes of the Republic of Serbia have continued their sport activities within the new state of the Republic of Serbia, thus continuing the sports tradition started a century ago.

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