

Baseball, glima and Gotlandic sport: An analysis of the demonstration sports in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to analyse the demonstration sports (baseball, glima and Gotlandic sport) into the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. Who took the initiative for the demonstration sports? The IOC or the Swedish Organising Committee? How were the demonstration sports received by the public and the press, and what was their legacy? The study is based mainly on primary sources from the 1912 Stockholm Olympics' archive. The 1912 Olympics has been well explored and this gives a good picture of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics from different perspectives. On the other hand, research into the demonstration sports in the Olympic Games is clearly limited and there is thus a great need for further studies. The results show that in 1912 there was no considered strategy on the part of either the IOC or the Swedish Organising Committee concerning the demonstration sports. The initiative for the demonstration sports came from individual representatives of each type of sport, and the Swedish organisers were positive towards baseball, glima and Gotlandic sport. The Swedish organisers had control over which demonstration sports would be included in the programme. This meant that the choice of demonstration sports lay beyond the control of the 1912 IOC.

Keywords

Demonstration sports, competition program, the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games.

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Introduction

The Olympic Games and their history is being increasingly explored. Research has shown an interest in the Olympic Games' competition program and the way in which the sports disciplines have been selected, and how this has changed over time. At the 1896 Olympic Games in Athens, there were 43 disciplines, and 167 in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, so there has been a radical increase in the number of disciplines. Aside from the official competition program, what are known as demonstration sports have also been part of the Olympic program. Research is at variance as to when the first demonstration sports appeared in the Olympic arena. On the other hand, the research is certain that they were removed prior to the Olympic Games in Barcelona and Albertville in 1992. The opinion was that the Summer Olympics had grown too big in terms of competitors and disciplines, which made the Games expensive and difficult to organise adequately. The formal decision to remove demonstration sports was taken at the IOC 95th session in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1989 (Minutes of the 95th IOC Session in Puerto Rico).

As opposed to the official competition schedule, the demonstration sports have not attracted research, and the ambition of the following is to cover a small part of this unexplored area on the Olympic research map. More specially, the aim is to analyse the demonstration sports in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics on the basis of the following questions: Who took the initiative for the demonstration sports? The IOC or the Organising Committee? Who decided which sports should be included? How were the demonstration sports received by the public and the press, and what was their legacy? Were there any differences and similarities in the way in which the different sports were received?

The study is based on primary sources obtained from different parts of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics archive. The archive is very extensive, around 23 shelf metres in total, and well ordered. It was also digitalised a few years ago and is freely available for researchers (www.sok.riksarkivet.se/nad?Sokord=stockholmsolympiaden). The 1912 Stockholm Olympics have been well explored, mainly by Swedish research, but there is also relevant research in English and German which gives a good idea of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics from different perspectives (Molzberger, 2010, Mallon and Widlund, 2002, Jönsson, 2012, Bolling & Yttergren, 2012). As regards research into the

demonstration sports, the position is significantly poorer. The researchers have focused their interest on the official sports in the Olympic programme.

Why research into the demonstration sports in the Olympic Games?

There are several reasons for researching the history of the demonstration sports in the Olympic Games. Firstly, the matter of whether or not the demonstration sports should be in the Olympic programme is not simply about sport - it is also about power; about who controls the Olympic Games' program. Throughout history, it is possible to determine two main power centres: the IOC and the host city's Organising Committee.

Secondly, the role of demonstration sports in the Olympic Games is virtually unknown, despite their having been a part of the Olympic programme to varying extents for nearly 100 years. One exception is a compilation of the demonstration sports in the Winter Olympics, which was done by the Olympic World Library in Lausanne. Unfortunately, no deeper analysis of the demonstration sports is being undertaken - instead, the study more resembles a valuable factual report of when and where different demonstration sports were practised at the Olympic Games. At the moment, more or less incomplete lists of the history of the demonstration sports at different Olympic Games are presented. It is also not clear which sources these lists are based on. This gives an impression that they continue to base on each other, which thereby continues to reproduce any errors and doubt again and again, particularly through various Internet websites (www.topendsports.com/events/demonstration). This means that there really is a need for more studies on demonstration sports in the Olympic Games.

The third reason is that there appears to be some confusion surrounding the concept of what a demonstration sport actually is. A summary review of the literature, both scientific and popular scientific, confirms this confusion. Mallon and Widlund stand against the concept of demonstration sports in connection with the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. They argue that the IOC did not start to use this concept in an official context until after the Second World War. They also mean, although they do not go into detail about it, that the only sport that could be considered to be a demonstration sport in the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games was baseball (Mallon and Widlund, 2002, p.369). Another source claims: "Demonstration sports were officially introduced

in 1912 Summer Olympics, when Sweden decided to include glima, traditional Icelandic wrestling, into the Olympic program, but with its medals not counting as official.” (www.wikipedia.org/Demonstration_sport). An additional source for similar argumentation, but which adds baseball as a demonstration sport in Stockholm in 1912, is: “Demonstration sports were “officially” introduced at the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm. Many resources list only baseball and glima as demonstration sports at these games...” (www.wikipedia.org/Demonstration_sport).

The comprehensive and reliable *The Official Report of the 1912 Stockholm Olympics* by Erik Bergvall adds an additional demonstration sport to the programme. The report claims that Gotlandic sport was also a demonstration sport in 1912, and that there would thus be three demonstration sports in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. In the following, it will be argued that there were three demonstration sports in Stockholm in 1912, namely baseball, glima and Gotlandic sports, and these are the three that will be analysed hereinafter (Bergvall, 1913, p. 770-778). In terms of definition, these three sports are in line with the IOC definition in the 1924 Olympic Charter:

“6. DÉMONSTRATIONS

Le Comité organisateur des Jeux pourra organiser des démonstrations de deux sports ne figurant pas au programme:

1. Un sport national.
2. Un sport étranger au pays organisateur.”

The future research on demonstration sports has at least two questions to investigate: Where there any demonstration sports before 1912 and exactly how should *exhibitions sports* and *demonstration sports* be defined? In the following, therefore, these key concepts will not be defined, deeper research is required in the IOC archives.

The method is traditional historical source analysis and source criticism with the ambition to examine “what really happened” to speak to German 19th century historian Leopold Ranke. Using different sources and literature, a pattern has emerged that brought clarity in the roll of the demonstration sports in the 1912 Olympics. Some historians point out that traditional source criticism is often obsolete in relation to the issues that are relevant to young researchers today. In the following, however,

I mean that traditional source criticism is relevant when it comes to mapping a concrete event at a limited time more than analyzing the “story of” or “the notion of” an event (Tolvhed, 2015, p. 34-35).

Demonstration sports and the Olympic Games before 1912

So, the literature is both at variance and unreliable in its account of what a demonstration sport is and which sports should be called demonstration sports at different Olympic Games. In opposition to others, some literature claims that the demonstration sports were introduced as early as 1896 in the first Olympic Games in Athens. Four years later, in the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris, several sources say that ten or so demonstration sports were featured. Some of these were fairly uncommon and spectacular, such as balloon flying, canon shooting and hang gliding. The American organisers at the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis concentrated particularly on marketing the American sports of baseball, basketball and American football as demonstration sports. They also chose to include the traditional Irish ball sport of hurling as a demonstration sport, which was probably due to the substantial immigrant Irish population in the USA around the end of the 1900s, plus the fact that James E. Sullivan, who was the main person responsible for the Games, was of Irish origin. In the 1908 Olympic Games in London, lacrosse and, for a contemporary reader the slightly odd sport of cycle polo, were demonstration sports (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demonstration_sport; www.polo-velo.net/english/history/jolondres1908; www.topendsports.com/events/demonstration/1912).

On the basis of the above, two conclusions. Firstly, it can be ascertained that before the Stockholm Olympics of 1912, there was a tradition of including demonstration sports in the Olympic programme. Secondly, no policy was expressed or written down by the IOC concerning which sports should be demonstration sports. Organisers were obviously in control of this part of the programme. Another reason why the local organizing committee had greater power in the early Olympic Games was the fact that only a few international federations existed. The competition for power over the Olympics was considerably smaller than today. It can be noted that after the Olympics in Stockholm was IAAF founded, one of the most powerful international federations in the Olympic family. It now remains to be seen what it was like in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics.

The 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games

In Swedish history, as well as international, the Olympic Games in Stockholm have been seen as a success. They were considered to have been well organised and have often been emphasised as a model for future Olympic Games from 1920 onwards. There were a full 2 380 competitors from 27 nations, and all five continents were represented. This made the 1912 Stockholm Olympics the largest Games thus far, seen in terms of the number of competitors and the widest geographical spread. However, contemporary research shows that the Stockholm Games have been described in flattering terms in Swedish sports history literature, and that there was a good bit of criticism of various elements of the Games from foreign participants and leaders (Bolling, 2012, p. 348-350).

The competition program was extensive and, compared with previous Games, coherent and held over approximately three weeks in July. The Games were formally opened at the Stockholm Stadium on 6 July by King Gustav V. The following will show that, beneath the well-polished surface, the Stockholm Olympics were not always that well-organised, but some issues such as the demonstration sports were settled without any pre-determined planning or strategy. Demonstration sports were obviously something that the Swedish organisers had not bargained for, despite their having been included in previous Olympic Games. There was absolutely no preparation for the way in which the Organising Committee would act when the question of demonstration sports came up before the Stockholm Olympics.

Control over the programme

One question which caused intense, long-term discussions before the 1912 Stockholm Olympics was the scope and content of the competition schedule. Which sports should be included and who should determine this or, to put it differently, who should have the power over the programme? This is where there were strong players with different agendas who were to jointly agree on a programme. In principle, as pointed out earlier, two main actors were against each other: the IOC, actually Pierre de Coubertin and the Organising Committee with Viktor Balck, IOC member, and Sigfrid Edström, the pending IOC member and the president, at the top. The Swedish organisers, who were awarded the Games at the IOC's session in Berlin in 1909, initially wanted a very limited programme and no thoughts whatsoever of any demonstration sports. Bearing in mind the incredible time pressure, Viktor Balck

and Clarence von Rosen initially advised a programme consisting of just four sports: athletics, wrestling, gymnastics and swimming (Minutes of the Stockholm Organizing Committee's meeting of 26 January 1910 and of 6 June 1910).

The fact that Balck and the Swedish organisers chose these sports was no coincidence - they were chosen with great care, i.e. they were sports in which Sweden had good and competitive sportsmen from an international perspective and thereby great medal chances. (Bergvall, 1913, p 46).

Following substantial discussion, Balck and the Swedish organisers gave way to what the IOC and Coubertin wanted, and the programme was finally broadened to 13 sports and 102 disciplines (Sylvén & Karlsson, 2008, p. 191) The result making a crucial difference to the original Swedish proposal. Coubertin and the IOC were victorious in the power struggle. However, Viktor Balck and von Rosen were not entirely reluctant to broaden the program? It is worth noting that the demonstration sports did not really form part of what were at times lively discussions between the parties involved concerning the programme (Jönsson, 2012, p. 162-177).

The Organising Committee were also aware that every new discipline in the programme involved an increase in costs where installations were concerned, more practical and administrative work, more personnel for the Games and, of course, more participants, managers and coaches. It is therefore surprising that Viktor Balck and the Organising Committee accepted that demonstration sports would be added to the already comprehensive and radically-expanded programme.

Gymnastic and the boy scouts demonstrations

What further adds to the confusion surrounding the demonstration sports at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics were the extensive gymnastics demonstrations. The Organising Committee decided early that there would also be gymnastics demonstrations. There was a total of nearly 800 male and female gymnasts, primarily from the Nordic countries. The Danish gymnastics troupe alone consisted of almost 500 participants. These gymnastics demonstrations had the official stamp of approval and attracted a lot of attention and were given a lot of time in the comprehensive program (Bergvall, 1913, p. 535-537). The gymnastics demonstrations were prioritised by the Organising Committee. It should be pointed out

that there was a radical ideological difference between Swedish gymnastics and sports. Swedish gymnastics had a strong health orientation and the Swedish Gymnastic federation was against all competitions, even in the Olympics. There was a long discussion in the organizing committee about whether individual gymnastics competitions would occur on the program (Jönsson, 2012, p.395-400).

An odd but extensive element of the games in Stockholm was about 1200 boy scouts from both Sweden and abroad. They made a major demonstration of Swedish gymnastics at the main arena. They also worked as functionaries with easier tasks at the games (Bergvall, 1913, p. 766-770). Both the gymnastics and the boy scouts demonstration fall outside my definition of demonstration sport. They will be seen as an expression of the Swedish organizers as a great opportunity to show Swedish gymnastics for a Swedish and international audience and journalists.

The demonstration sports in a Swedish context

As mentioned, according to the official report there were three demonstration sports in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics (Bergvall, 1913, p. 766-782). The three demonstration sports were Gotlandic sport, Icelandic glima (wrestling) and baseball. They are different in character: the two first-mentioned can be described as traditional sports whose roots lie in a rural environment. The origin of Gotlandic sport is from the island Gotland in the Baltic Sea, primarily in its rural areas, and is/was an important element of the regional identity on the island and an alternative to modern competitive sport (Yttergren, 2002, p. 20-27). Glima is a special form of wrestling which is practised in Iceland and which was not exerted at all in Sweden in 1912. As we know, baseball is an American ball sport and a sport which was scarcely known in Sweden in 1912.

It was not until the start of 1912 that the demonstration sports became an issue for organisers in Stockholm. It was Sigfrid Edström who brought up the question. The reason was that enquires had been received regarding “the arrangement of all sorts of demonstrations in connection with the Games”. The French Olympic committee had certainly put forward a proposal as early as summer 1911 for airplane demonstration in connection with the Olympic Games, but the French enquiry was rejected by the Organising Committee, and after that the question lost immediate interest until it was brought up again by Edström (Bergvall, 1913, p. 61).

One of the more unusual enquiries was a desire to demonstrate “Speed drilling in stone” which, according to the Swedish proposer, was a widespread sport in the mining district of the USA. The proposal did not fall on fertile ground and did not progress beyond a proposal (Letter from J. Johnson 6 februari 1912). Afterwards, several proposals were received by the 1912 Organising Committee from private people for the arrangement of demonstrations, including from representatives of baseball, glima and Gotlandic sport. This meant that it was neither the IOC nor the Organising Committee who took the initiative for the introduction of demonstration sports to the program, but individual private people who sent letters to organisers asking to be able to arrange a demonstration. The special executive committee was asked to deal with all questions about the demonstrations (Protocol of 16 January 1912). It has not come to light which criteria organisers used to select the three demonstration sports and why other proposals were rejected.

Baseball as a demonstration sport

In 1912, there was one single club which played baseball in Sweden, Västerås Baseball Club [Västerås Bäsboll Klubb], and its activity was limited. One source claims that the first time that baseball was played in Sweden was 1904. Västerås Baseball Club had been formed in 1910 by American engineers who worked at ASEA of which Sigfrid Edström was the Managing Director. Edström had lived in the USA for a fairly long period after his engineering studies in Gothenburg. His wife, Ruth Randell Edström, was American so he had strong, close ties to the USA and thereby also knowledge of the American sports. Along with Viktor Balck, Edström was the most powerful person in the Organising Committee before the Olympic Games in Stockholm. With his linguistic skills and skilful ability to negotiate, he built up an important network among key international sports managers during the Stockholm Summer Olympics for a long time to come (Nordlund Edvinsson, 2012, p. 105-132, Hansen, 2014, p. 542-556).

The initiative to make baseball a demonstration sport is not that easy to establish. The sources give a fragmented picture of the course of events, but the majority indicate that the initiative was American. The Organising Committee wrote a letter on 24 May 1912 to Västerås Baseball Club asking if they were interested in playing a demonstration game for “foreigners coming here”

during the Olympic Games. This obviously referred to players from the American Olympic team. At around the same time, James E. Sullivan, wrote a letter to Kristian Hellström, Secretary of the Organising Committee, requesting the options for the American team to demonstrate baseball in Stockholm:

“I think it would be fine if we could give an exhibition just to know that our National Game had been played in connection with the Olympic Games of 1912.” (Letter from Sullivan to Hellström of 31 May 1912).

The organisers obviously wanted to accommodate Sullivan's wishes, and therefore wrote to the only baseball club in Sweden and asked them to set up a game against the Americans. At the same time, it appears that said correspondence had been preceded by an exchange of letters, possibly between Sullivan and Edström, and that the latter-mentioned dealt with the question of involving baseball in Stockholm in 1912. Edström was a man who was used to getting his own way (Yttergren, 2008, p. 296-301). It is worth noting that the initiative to invite people to play baseball took place barely one month before the opening ceremony on 6 July, and during a period when the Organising Committee was working under enormous time pressure, and it still spent time on the baseball. It obviously wanted to accommodate Sullivan.

Västerås Baseball Club was slightly surprised at the request to be able to take part in the Olympic Games, and asked for time to think about it before coming back with a decision (Letter from Västerås Baseball Club to the Organising Committee of 29 May 1912). The fact that the Swedish baseball club was unprepared when it came to taking part in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics and that baseball was a sport that was unknown to most people is shown in several ways. Firstly, the club was ordered by the organizers to print rules in Swedish, English, German and French. These were ready just a couple of weeks before the Games opened on 6 July. Secondly, it obviously had no team uniforms and had to go out and order baseball clothes to be able to compete in the Games. They also ordered balls and gloves and the Organising Committee paid for them (Brev from Västerås Bäsboll Klubb 14, 25 1912 till Kristjan Hellström).

Two baseball matches were played. The first one was played on 15 July at Östermalm sports ground, which was close to the Olympic Stadium and which had been used as a training ground mainly by athletes before and during the games (Bergvall, 1913, p. 770-778).

The game was played between Västerås Baseball Club and a team from the American Olympic team. It was initially thought that the match would be played earlier, but the players were forbidden by the American Olympic Committee to take part while the athletics were ongoing. The American team won easily, 13-3. The Swedish team had to borrow a pitcher and catcher, the most important positions in baseball, from the American team since the Swedes did not think they had enough good players for these two key positions (Bergvall, 1913, p. 770-778).

Another game was played, without the Swedish team, which presumably realised its limitations in relation to the skilled Americans. The second game was played between two American teams, East vs West, where the first-mentioned team won 6-3. This game is known mainly because the athletics star and best sportsman of the Stockholm Games, Jim Thorpe, took part. This was before Thorpe was disqualified for breaching the amateur regulations and his gold medals were taken away as part of the scandal. It should also be noted that baseball has been a demonstration sport in several cases in Olympic Games: 1936, 1956, 1964, 1984 and 1988.

So, what was written about baseball? The official report maintains “that it could be advantageous to learn baseball here in Sweden”. Generally, the relatively short report is characterised by a lack of knowledge about the game and difficulties with the baseball terminology. The author evidently had problems with transferring American baseball terms into Swedish. It was also noted that the public interest was limited and the public consisted mainly of “Americans or Swedish-Americans” (Bergvall, 1913, p. 776).

If there was little public interest, there was even less interest on the part of the press, if that was possible. *Olympiska spelens tidning* [The Olympic Games magazine], which was issued on a daily basis in Swedish and English, commented mainly on the baseball demonstrations. Not even *Dagens Nyheter*, one of Stockholm’s biggest newspapers, mentioned anything about the demonstration matches. Baseball was evidently considered to be of little interest to the circle of readers and the newspapers did not bother writing about the odd and, for almost all Swedes and non-American participants in the Games, completely unknown sport.

Glima – Icelandic wrestling as a demonstration sport

As mentioned above, it was strange that baseball became a demonstration sport in Stockholm in 1912, bearing in mind that it was not played in Sweden (with few exceptions). It is equally strange that glima was also given demonstration sport status. Glima was not practised at all in Sweden in 1912. The Organising Committee had thus accepted two foreign types of sport which were unknown to a Swedish public and press.

The initiative to make glima a demonstration sport obviously came from Iceland rather than from the Organising Committee or from Swedish sports managers. According to the sources, the initiative in October 1911 was taken by “athletics circles” (Protocol of 30 October 1911). The Organising Committee finally ended up with the question on its table, where it became part of a larger political and constitutional law problem. There was a similar problem for Finland and Bohemia, which caused concern for the Swedish organisers (Paasivirta, 1963). The Olympic Games suddenly became political.

In 1912, Iceland was not an independent nation, but became independent from Denmark in 1918 and was designated as an independent state in 1944. The Swedish Organising Committee itself did not dare make a decision on whether or not glima should become a demonstration sport. It decided to ask Denmark’s Olympic Committee whether Iceland should get to take part as a separate “nation in sporting terms” in Stockholm in 1912 (Protocol of 30 October 1911). The Danes emphasised that under constitutional law, Iceland belonged to Denmark and all Icelandic sportsmen who registered for the 1912 Stockholm Olympics should do so through Denmark’s Olympic Committee. The Organising Committee decided to fully comply with the Danes’ decision and the participation of the glima wrestlers was accepted on condition that they registered through Denmark’s Olympic Committee (Protocol of 11 December 1911).

The Icelanders got to neither compete nor march in under the Icelandic flag during the opening ceremony - they were to march in after the Danish troupe. However, it is not clear whether any of Iceland’s athletes participated in the official Games and whether the glima wrestlers actually took part in the opening ceremony. The sources give different information. According the officiell report no Icelanders took part but, according to Mallon & Widlund, two Icelanders took part in the Stockholm Games

(Protocol of 2 December 1911). What is clear is that the glima wrestlers had a sign showing “Iceland” next to the place where the wrestling took place. A total of six glima wrestlers and one judge came to the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. The Icelanders took the demonstration seriously. Money was also collected for a trophy which would go to the winner in Stockholm. The Icelanders had great hopes, and also hoped that the glima demonstrations would become a recurring element of the forthcoming Olympic Games, and that the trophy would continue to be given to the winner at these future Games (Letter from Steinbjörnsson to Viktor Balck). That hope was never realised; glima’s Olympic career was short.

On the morning of 15 July, the glima wrestling began at the Stockholm Stadium, and the official report mentions the wrestling with just a few sentences. However, there are four illustrative pictures, but the overall impression is that glima was not paid much attention in either the official report or the newspapers (Bergvall, 1913, p. 300-301).

Gotlandic sport

The third demonstration discipline was “Gotlandic sport”, which is a traditional sport whose roots lie on Gotland. Around the turn of the century, Gotlandic sport was practised only on Gotland where it was and still is an important part of the regional identity.

Gotlandic sport consisted of three different sports: “pärk”, caber tossing and “varpa”. Pärk is a complicated ball game. You play the best of three sets in a points system similar to that of tennis. Varpa is a throwing game where you throw a varpa at a stick 20 metres away. The varpa is made of either stone (traditional) or metal (modern). Caber tossing is a strength sport and consists of the athlete lifting a long, heavy pole, 4.5 metres long, and trying to throw it as far as possible. So, there were some slightly strange sports from Gotland which were to be demonstrated and which had rarely or never been seen on the mainland.

The initiative to demonstrate Gotlandic sport at the 1912 Olympic Games was taken by a Lieutenant Bengt Lindvall from Visby on Gotland. In January 1912, he put forward a proposal to the Organising Committee to be able to demonstrate Gotlandic sports at the Olympic Games in Stockholm. The Organising Committee was positive, but had some points of view regarding the scope of the demonstration (Letters between Bengt Lindvall and the Organising Committee). The Gotlanders took the task seriously

and sent 16 athletes plus a manager to Stockholm. They had ordered special clothes for the demonstration of Gotlandic sport, far different from the traditional clothes worn when practising Gotlandic sport, which were often synonymous with work clothes (Yttergren, 2002, p. 143-148). The Gotlanders had white trousers, white jumper and yellow and blue belt plus training shoes. In their enthusiasm at being able to demonstrate Gotlandic sport at the Olympic Games, they paid all of the costs themselves.

As with baseball, the extremely complicated rules were translated on many occasions into the three major languages at the Games: French, English and German.

The official report gives just one review of rules and one description of the way in which the different disciplines in Gotlandic sport were played. Nothing is mentioned about the actual demonstration, the result, etc. Nor was the Gotlandic sport mentioned in the Olympic Games' daily paper. This gives the impression that they had not even seen the demonstration.

Afterwards, the Gotlanders were very disappointed at the lack of attention paid to their demonstration and the way in which they had been treated by the organizers. They sent a letter to the organisers, complaining about their reception and when the actual event had taken place and how it had gone. The Gotlanders thought they had been asked to demonstrate at a very inappropriate time, 19:00 on a Sunday evening when no other activities were on at the Olympic Stadium, which was thereby virtually empty, and the Swedish and foreign officials were eating dinner (Letter from A. Dahlbäck of 26 February 1913).

Final considerations

The purpose of the article was to analyse the demonstration sports at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics. The results show that there was no advance, considered strategy on the part of either the IOC or the Organising Committee concerning the demonstration sports. The initiative came from individual representatives of each type of sport in the USA, Iceland and on Gotland a few months before the Games were due to be opened. It was thus the Organising Committee that made decisions and had control over which demonstration sports would be included in the programme. The choice of demonstration sports therefore lay beyond the control of the IOC in 1912. The fact that in 1912 international federations

were very few made the Organising Committee more powerful than today. The competition for power was more or less limited between the IOC and the Organising Committee.

From a contemporary perspective, the choice of the demonstration sports in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics appears to be particularly remarkable and surprising. The chosen demonstration sports had little or no basis in the Swedish sports life, and nor did the demonstration mean that they played any role in the context of future Olympics, with the exception of baseball that was on the official Olympic program between 1992 and 2008. The traditional sports of glima and Gotlandic sport were handed back to Iceland and Gotland, without making any impression on either Sweden's national sports life or the international sports life. It should also be noted that no official Olympic champion was selected in the 1912 demonstration sports, and no medals were awarded (Bergvall, 1913, p. 770-778). After the First World War, the IOC specified and formalised which types of discipline would be demonstration sports in the Olympic Games. There was to be one national sport and one foreign sport. Here, the Stockholm Games constituted a model for the selection of demonstration sports in future Olympic Games.

It is difficult to understand why the Organising Committee chose to have demonstration sports in the programme, bearing in mind the scope thereof and the enormous time and work pressures for the organisers. However, the demonstration sports were not successful in terms of sport, the media or the public. They constituted an obscured presence. They disappeared in the enormous range of the official competition program.

The history of the demonstration sports did not cease in 1912, but they continued to form a part of the Olympic programme until 1992. The formal decision to remove demonstration sports was taken at the IOC 95th session in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 1989.

From the 1920s, the IOC decided to give the organisers control to decide for themselves that two demonstration sports could form part of the Olympic programme:

“6. DÉMONSTRATIONS. Le Comité organisateur des Jeux pourra organiser des démonstrations de deux sports ne figurant pas au programme: 1. Un sport national. 2. Un sport étranger au pays organisateur” (Olympic Charter 1924).

This paragraph was still in the Olympic charter in the 1970s, but the IOC had made the requirements for the organisers slightly less stringent: “The Organizing Committee may add two sports Demonstrations (but no tournaments nor championships) to the program: a National sport and a Foreign sport.”(Olympic Charter 1971). According to the Olympic charter, the requirement that there should be one foreign and one national demonstration sport was removed in the 1980s:

“Demonstration Sports

The OCOG, with the approval of the IOC may choose not more than two sports from the recognised sports as demonstrations during the period of the Games in accordance with bye-laws.” (Olympic Charter 1982 and 1989).

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