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SERBIAN HUNDRED YEARS IN THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT (1912-2012)

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Abstract

The idea of the Olympic Games revival reached Serbia at the end of 19th century, and was realized by foundation of the Serbian Olympic Club (Committee) in 1910, which was subsequently admitted to the International Olympic Committee - IOC (1912) in Stockholm during the 5th Olympic Games, where two athletes from the Kingdom of Serbia participated and captain Svetomir Đukić became the IOC member. He was IOC member until 1948.

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Committee to the International Olympic Committee marked a new era in the development of Olympism in Serbia. The management structure of the Olympic movement underwent organizational changes according to the IOC structure, and Nikodije Stevanović became its President while captain Svetomir Đukić was elected director.

Surely, the development of sport and Olympic movement in Serbia would have been even faster and more successful if the First Balkan War had not started only few months after the end of the Stockholm Olympic Games, and the entire management of the Serbian Olympic Committee had gone to war together with the Serbian athletes and the youth. It was followed by the Second Balkan War, so that almost an entire year passed at war.

At the beginning of 1914, in Belgrade, the Serbian Olympic Committee resumed organization of great sports competitions, often called "Olympic matches" and the First Olympic Congress was scheduled for 8th September 1914. No one could forecast the great series of conflict, which soon encompassed the entire world. World War stopped further development of the world, as well as the Serbian Olympic Movement.

The creation of the new state - Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, resulted in a necessity to create a common Olympic movement. At the foundation Assembly of the Yugoslav Olympic Council in Zagreb, dr Franjo Bučar, was elected the President of the Yugoslav Olympic Board (YOB), while major Svetomir Đukić and dr Č. Žižek were the Vice Presidents.

At the IOC Congress in Antwerpen 18 August 1920, major Svetomir Đukić represented the Olympic Committee of Serbia and on that occasion the IOC recognized him as the delegate of the Yugoslav Olympic Council. Thus Serbian Olympic Committee continued to work as Yugoslav Olympic Council, and since 1927 as the Yugoslav Olympic Committee. The same year the YOC seat was relocated from Zagreb to Belgrade.

After the end of the Second World War and the revival of the Olympic activities all over the world, prior to the 1948 London Olympic Games, the Yugoslav Olympic Committee restarted

its activities within the FISAY, and in 1951 it became independent. The name of the Yugoslav Olympic Committee was kept until 3 April 2003 when in compliance with the changes within the state, was changed to the Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro.

Upon the dissolution of Serbia and Montenegro, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro ceased to exist and on 8th June 2006 the OCSG changed its name into the Olympic Committee of Serbia.

Key words: Olympisam / Olimpik Club / Svetomir Djukic

Introduction

In the second half of 19th century, the idea about renewal of the Olympic Games came to the Principality of Serbia and to the Kingdom of Serbia from the European countries; the idea was accepted and gradually implemented in Serbian sport. In relation to this, it has been noted that, in the sixties, a public lecture on “The Greeks’ Olympic Games” was held in Belgrade.

At the end of 19th century, many private schools and civil gymnastic societies in Belgrade started using the term the Olympic competitions. The equestrian competitions in Cuprija, held in March 1896, were called “The Olympic Festivities”, while the Chivalrous society “Dusan Silni” 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.

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 occurrence of the Olympic idea and the establishment of the Olympic movement

The development of modern sport which encouraged the idea of restoring the ancient Olympic Games, also enabled that idea to occur, to be accepted and developed in numerous private 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, Panaethan), were also called: *folk celebrations*.

The Chivalrous society “Dusan Silni” in Belgrade organized trainings of various contents as well as public lectures where the members of the Society presented acquired skills and knowledge. For the event held in February 1896, they announced that there “*the famous Olympic Games with the swords of the Greeks from the ancient times were going to be performed for the first time.*”¹

This means that the members of this Society connected their programs to the current renewed Olympic Games, at the time of preparation and organization of the First Modern Olympic Games, scheduled to be held in April 1896 in Athens.

Similarly, a month before the First Olympic Games were held in Athens, the equestrian competitions called “*the Olympic equestrian festivities in Cuprija*” were organized in Serbia

¹ Mali žurnal. Br. 72. Beograd, 12.03.1896.

in March 1896. A significant incentive for the acceptance of the Olympic idea in Serbia, providing more complete knowledge of this great sporting event, was a five-day stay of King Aleksandar Obrenovic in Athens in 1896, during the First Olympic Games. King Aleksandar was invited to the Olympic Games by the Greek king George and although this visit was of a multiple character (a Hilandar tour and meeting the Greek royal family, for King Aleksandar's possible marriage) 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.

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 Silni" 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*." This Society, established in the early 20th century, organized a range of competitions called "*Olympic Games*" every year. They gathered a great number of followers, spreading and propagating the Olympic movement, thus strengthening its foundations and accelerating its development.

The establishment of the Serbian Olympic Club (SOC)

All this meant that the Olympic idea was accepted and that the athletes wanted to join the international Olympic movement. As a result of those needs and desires of the athletes *the Serbian Olympic Club* was established in Belgrade on 10th (23rd) of February 1910, which attempted to get involved in the International Olympic Community in the following years. The Serbian Olympic Club (SOC) was established by the editorial board of "Novo vreme" magazine, in the "Moskva" hotel, with the aim of encouraging and supporting the work of "the chivalrous societies as well as any other institutions contributing to the improvement of military and physical education of our people".

In its adopted Action Plan, specified in the Club's Statute, the Serbian Olympic Club decided to further develop sport and the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia.²

The Serbian Olympic Club had a board of directors consisting of six members, out of whom four were officers in the Serbian army, which indicates the role of the Serbian officers in the establishment and the development of many sports clubs and organizations, as well as in the realization of the Olympic idea and the Olympic movement in Serbia.

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

The development of the Olympic movement

At the beginning of 20th century the Olympic movement was accepted in Serbia as the modern sport movement, and the 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 activ-

² Srpski vitez. No. 8. Belgrade, 1910. p. 11.

ity and played an important role in further development of the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia. During this period, two stages of its work may be noted:

**The work of the Serbian Olympic Club from 1910
to its admission to the IOC - July 10th 1912**

This period of work of the Serbian Olympic Club represents a significant period in the development of the Olympic movement in Serbia, when many competitions in various sports were organized. The Olympic movement achieved full recognition by organizing the pre-Olympic competitions, and it achieved its international recognition by the participation of the delegation and the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Fifth Olympic Games in Stockholm.

During its first year (1910), the Serbian Olympic Club (SOC) organized the simplest running competitions where all citizens, encouraged also by the financial rewards provided by the Club, could take part. The Club's administration informed gymnastic societies and sports organizations about its Program, inviting their members to take part in these events.

In the first year of its work, the Club managed to realize a varied program of sports competitions which gathered thousands participants as well as a great number of spectators. The most significant competitions organized by the Club were:

1. Great pedestrian event (a running competition) from Obrenovac to Kosutnjak, with a length of 32 kilometres, which was attended by more than a hundred of participants. King Petar I Karadjordjevic, the Prince and the Crown Prince Aleksandar were also present at the competition.
2. Equestrian show jumping competitions - attended by more than 20 participants.
3. Swimming competition organized at the Sava river, together with several swimming clubs from Belgrade, attended by more then 70 participants.
4. Olympic Games, along with a special soldiers' competition, where more than 200 soldiers and 80 citizens took part.
5. Moto racing from Nis to Belgrade, organized together with the First Serbian Velocipede Society.
6. Skating competitions.
7. Boxing and fighting competitons.

In the second year of its work (1911) the Serbian Olympic Club continued to organize several large mass events as follows:

1. Great equestrian rally in Kragujevac.
2. Great pedestrian rally in Krusevac.
3. The first plane flight over Belgrade.

The Club continued to organize other *sports* competitions as well:

1. Horse races.
2. Football matches.
3. Running competitions.
4. Archery competitions.
5. Swimming competitions.

This extensive program and a wide activity of the Serbian Olympic Club required a stronger and more numerous organizational structure of the administration. Therefore, at the end of 1910, the number of members of the administration increased from 6 to 55 members, out of whom 22 were officers.

At the end of 1911, the Serbian Olympic Club changed its name into the Serbian Olympic Committee. In order to coordinate the work of 33 local Olympic clubs more effectively, the Central Committee Board was established.

The work of the Serbian Olympic Committee in the third year (1912) was quite intensive, because the preliminary competitions for the Fifth Olympic Games were organized. In the first half of 1912, its work was directed towards the preparation and the participation of the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Fifth Olympic Games. With the aim of involving Serbian athletes in the International Olympic Movement more quickly, the Serbian Olympic Club sent a letter to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for the purpose of its admission to this organization.

Qualification competitions of the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia for the Fifth Olympic Games (1912)

In the first half of 19th century, the Serbian Olympic Club performed a number of activities in order to increase the athletes' interest in the upcoming Olympic Games. In order to select the best ones who would participate in the Games, in May 1912, the Club organized the qualifications only in two athletic disciplines: 100m running and the marathon.

The qualification race in 100m running discipline was held on the 20th of May 1912 on the grass plateau of the "Kosutnjak" picnic area. Apart from Serbian athletes, several athletes from Macedonia and Montenegro also took part in this event.

Dusan Milosevic, running in full football equipment, since there was no other at that time, won the race with the score of 12 seconds. The competition was attended by a great number of spectators because the citizens of Belgrade accepted it as a national event, which was attended by the representatives of the Serbian government and the Army as well as many foreign diplomats and the members of the Court. Overall atmosphere of the competition was enhanced by the orchestra of the Guard.

A week later, on the 27th of May, the marathon qualifications were organized, where 40 runners competed. Falcons, soldiers, the practitioners of other societies and the athletes from various sports clubs took part.

Despite the bad weather conditions, since it rained heavily the night before the race, the marathon race was held on the track from Obrenovac to Kosutnjak. The race was won by Dragutin Tomasevic, a good gymnast and an even better long-distance runner from "Dusan Silni" Society, who was a soldier of the 18th Infantry Regiment at the time. The Director of the Serbian Olympic Club, Captain Svetomir Djukic, was a troop commander in this Regiment. The representatives of the Government, the Court and the Army and the diplomats were also present at this event.

Thus, Dragutin Tomasevic and Dusan Milosevic qualified for participation in the Fifth Olympic Games in Stockholm as the representatives of the Kingdom of Serbia. An official delegation was also elected:

1. Captain Svetomir Djukic, the president of the SOC, 2. Lieutenant Dragutin Vojinovic, the President of the Belgrade sports society and 3. Engineer Andra Jovic, the athletes' coach.

The three member delegation, together with the selected athletes, set off the journey on June 12th (25th) 1912. They arrived in Stockholm after a two day journey where they were welcomed by an honorary Serbian consul, Karlson.

The performance of the athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia in the Fifth Olympic Games

Upon the arrival of the Serbian delegation in Stockholm, Svetomir Djukic and Dragutin Vojinovic were introduced to King Gustav, and they were also received by the President of the International Olympic Committee, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, and by the President of the Swedish Olympic Committee.

Dusan Milosevic won the third place in 100m running preliminary competition, so he failed to qualify for the finals.

Dragutin Tomasevic, despite the injury, endured the entire marathon race, where 62 athletes competed, and won the 37th place.

The first appearance of the two athletes of the Kingdom of Serbia, who showed great fighting spirit and desire for even greater success, was accompanied by the sympathy of the audience. Their performance may be assessed as satisfactory taking into account their inexperience, lack of preparedness, illness and injuries.

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Club to the International Olympic Committee (IOC)

Since the Serbian Olympic Club had submitted the request for the admission to the International Olympic Committee before, on its meeting held on 4th July 1912, the letter from the Serbian Olympic Club was read, and on the last meeting held on 10th July 1912, the Serbian Olympic Club was admitted to the International Olympic Committee, and Captain Svetomir Djukic was proposed and elected a member of it.

The admission of the Kingdom of Serbia to the full membership of this international association was of utmost importance for further development of the Olympic movement in Serbia. This wish that came true was the crown of all the efforts of the entire sport and the Olympic movement in 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 making any special decisions, the Serbian Olympic Club changed the word "Club" in its name into "Committee".

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Club and Captain Svetomir Djukic in the International Olympic Committee was not only recognition for the achievements in the development of sport and the Olympic movement in Serbia, but also a powerful incentive for its faster and more successful further development. It was also the personal acknowledgement to Captain Svetomir Djukic for his contribution to the development of sport and the Olympic movement in the Kingdom of Serbia.

Conclusion

The admission of the Serbian Olympic Committee to the International Olympic Committee created a new period in its work. The organizational changes in the management structure of the Olympic Committee in Serbia were made according to the structure of the IOC.

There were 17 members in the newly formed Serbian Olympic Committee (SOC), the President was Nikodije Stevanovic, a retired general, whereas Captain Svetomir Djukic, the representative of Belgrade, was a director. The majority of the Serbian Olympic Committee's members were the officers, i.e. 14 out of 18 members.

Two years later (in May 1914) the Serbian Olympic Committee Board was formed, consisting of 11 members out of whom only 4 were officers. Captain Svetomir Djukic and Nikodije Stevanovic were still there among them.

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.

In early 1914, the Serbian Olympic Committee continued with the organization of great sporting events in Belgrade, which were often called "the Olympic matches".

The Serbian Olympic Committee planned to organize the First Olympic Congress on September 8th 1914. However, no one could predict the Great War, which after the beginning of the war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary spread to entire Europe and very soon expanded to the entire world.

Due to the First World War the overall activity of the World Olympic movement, and thus of the Serbian Olympic movement as well, was interrupted. Almost all the members of the Serbian Olympic Committee took part in it, as well as many athletes who interrupted the preparation for the upcoming Olympic Games (in Berlin in 1916) by going to the war.

Just before the outbreak of the First World War, the Olympic Congress, in the honor of the 20th anniversary of the decision on the renewal of the modern Olympic Games (in Paris in 1894), was held in Paris from June 13th to June 23rd 1914. About 140 delegates of the national Olympic committees took part in the presence of the senior officials of France.

At this congress, Svetomir Djukic also took part, for the Serbian Olympic Committee, and he should have been joined by four junior officers studying in France, thus forming a five member delegation of the Serbian Olympic Committee.

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 and only upon its end the Olympic activity in the whole world was restored.

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 Djukic and Dr. C. Zizek were elected the vice-presidents.

Mayor Svetomir Djukic 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 Djukic 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.

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, and it retained its name, the Yugoslav Olympic Committee, until April 3rd 2003 when, in accordance with the changes in the country, it changed its name into the Olympic Committee of Serbia and Montenegro.

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.

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