The 1908 Olympic Individual Gymnastics Competition

By Bill Mallon, Hilary Evans, and the OlyMADMen



Alberto Braglia won the all-round individual gymnastics title at London 1908. He also received a Challenge Prize in 1908, sponsored by the City of Prague. The Italian successfully defended his title in Stockholm four years later. The trophy was to be returned by 1 January 1916, but never reached the IOC. Its fate is unknown.

Photos: Volker Kluge Archive

In 2000 Ian Buchanan, the first ISOH President, and I wrote a book entitled *The 1908 Olympic Games: Results for All Competitors in All Events, with Commentary* (McFarland, 2000). It contained the "complete" results of those early Games and was one of a series I produced, with various co-authors, on the early Olympic Games from 1896 to 1920.

Except the 1908 results were not quite complete. We could never find the full results for the individual gymnastics competition, called the heptathlon in the *1908 Official Report*, because that all-around consisted of seven routines performed on five apparati.

In the book, Ian and I described our efforts to find the full results of this event, which had been futile, noting, "We have not been able to obtain complete results for the individual gymnastics event, and it is the only event at the 1908 Olympic Games for which these results are not available. Be assured it has not been from a lack of effort. Our sources consulted in an effort to find these results include the following: *1908 Official Report*, *Sporting Life*, all major British and American newspapers, multiple Olympic record books, the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG), the National Governing Bodies of gymnastics for every nation which competed in 1908 gymnastics, Olympic historians for every country which competed in 1908 gymnastics, the gymnastics historians of the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Germany, and gymnastics magazines from 1908 in the United States, France, Great Britain, and Germany. The results must exist somewhere, as is evident from Tony Bijkerk and Ruud Paauw's book on Dutch Olympians, *Gouden Boek van de Nederlandse Olympiers*, which contains the placements for all the Dutch gymnasts.



Alberto Braglia (1883–1954) was the first gymnast to win two Olympic golds in the individual combined event. He later performed as a circus acrobat. In 1932, in Los Angeles, he coached the gold medal winning Italian team. The stadium in Modena still bears his name.

"The source was a 1908 magazine published by the Dutch Gymnastic Association. Tony Bijkerk, Secretary-General of the International Society of Olympic Historians (ISOH) kindly provided us with the original Dutch article which gave these placements and scores for the Dutch gymnasts. Unfortunately, it contains no other placements or marks, and does not give a source for its marks. In addition, places and marks are known for the gymnasts of Bohemia, Canada, Finland, and Hungary, so we conclude that there is some 1908 source with the marks, but it has eluded us. Perhaps it is in some obscure archive somewhere or hiding in the attic of a relative of one of the 1908 gymnastics officials. If any reader can provide more complete results, please let us know and we will gladly supplement this work with an errata sheet which would complete the record of the 1908 Olympic Games."

The *1908 Official Report* (technically *The Fourth Olympiad. – Being the Official Report of the Olympic Games of 1908 Celebrated in London Under the Patronage of His Most Gracious King Edward VII and by the Sanction of the International Olympic Committee*, ed. Theodore Andrea Cook, London: British Olympic Council, 1909) lists only the top 19 finishers, but we knew of others from those sources above.

We had 97 entries listed in our book. We did not use the *1908 Official Report* as a final source in all cases, because the British sporting magazine *Sporting Life* and the German gymnastics journal *Deutsche Turn-Zeitung (DTZ)* actually had deeper results in many cases and were better. Those had the top 20 finishers, but then our results

had large gaps, with the next known result at 25th place, then 34th place, and a very large gap from 49th to 59th place. We filled in the missing results after 20th place with the results from the Dutch, Bohemian, Canadian, Finnish, and Hungarian sources noted above.

And that was how it seemed to end back in 2000. At about that time, I was also starting the forerunner of what would become Olympedia (www.olympedia.org – private site but ISOH members may contact me for access), with the Norwegians Arild Gjerde and Magne Teigen, and the Brit David Foster. Jeroen Heijmans (NED) would join a few years later and set up our websites, and shortly thereafter a younger Welsh sheep farmer named Hilary Evans came on board the group we were then calling the OlyMADMen. (It's a take-off on the popular US television show "MadMen", a nod to our crazy devotion to our Olympic statistical hobby, and an acronym for the 4 starting members – **M** – Mallon/Magne, **A** – Arild, **D** – David.)

On a chilly, severe clear morning in Durham, North Carolina, on 9 March 2020, I received an e-mail from Hilary with the tagline "BOOM" and the only phrase "Just checking it out but I think I've found something very important" Imploring Hil to not leave me in the dark, as Hilary could always find things that the rest of us never could, he followed with: "https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5325208t/f2.item.zoom – I think these are the full results of the 1908 individual gymnastics?"

And so they were, found in the pages of the newspaper *Les Jeunes: courrier de quinzaine du journal "Le Patronage"*, the journal of the Fédération sportive et culturelle de France from 8 August 1908. So here is that errata we had hoped for, and promised 20 years ago today.

Ian Buchanan died on 6 April 2008, in the small village of Aylsham, Norfolk, England. To the end, Ian liked his stout, and I suspect when we first published the final bit of the tale of the 1908 Olympic Games on www.olympedia.org (specifically https://www.olympedia.org/results/70048 for those looking), he was raising a glass of it, with a big smile, and that chortle that so endeared him to us.

Here are the full results of the 1908 Olympic gymnastic individual heptathlon competition – after 112 years. ■

GYMNASTICS, COMBINED EXCERCISES, INDIVIDUAL

1.	Alberto Braglia	ITA	317.00
2.	Walter Tysall	GBR	312.00
3.	Louis Ségura	FRA	297.00
4.	Curt Steuernagel	GER	273.50
5.	Fritz Wolf	GER	267.00
6.	Samuel Hodgetts	GBR	266.00
7.	Marcel Lalu	FRA	258.75
8.	Robert Diaz	FRA	258.50
9.	Edward Potts	GBR	252.50
10.	Jules Rolland	FRA	249.50
11.	François Nidal	FRA	249.00
12.	George Bailey	GBR	246.00
13.	Karl Borchert	GER	244.00
14.	Antoine Costa	FRA	241.75
15.	János Nyisztor	HUN	236.00
16.	Thomas Dick	GBR	233.50
=16.	Alfred Hodges	GBR	233.50
18.	Georges Thurnherr	FRA	232.00
19.	Guido Romano	ITA	230.00
20.	Joseph Castiglioni	FRA	227.00
21.	Otello Capitani	ITA	226.75
22.	Joseph Lux	FRA	226.00
23.	William Watters	GBR	225.50
24.	James Graham	GBR	225.00
25.	Josef Čada	BOH	222.50
=26.	Dominique Follacci	FRA	222.00
=26.	Georges Charmoille	FRA	222.00
=28.	Wilhelm Weber	GER	220.00
=28.	Auguste Castille	FRA	220.00
30.	Fernand Castille	FRA	218.00
31.	Joseph Cook	GBR	213.00
32.	Victor Dubois	FRA	212.50
33.	Josef Krämer	GER	212.00
34.	Kálmán Szabó	HUN	209.00
35.	Paulin Lemaire	FRA	207.25
36.	Boris Honzátko	BOH	205.50
37.	G. Meade	GBR	205.00
38.	G. Mounier	FRA	204.50
39.	Imre Gellért	HUN	202.50
40.	Heinrich Siebenhaar	GER	198.50
41.	Paul Fischer	GER	198.00
42.	Edgar Dyson	GBR	195.50
43.	E. Gauthier	FRA	195.00
44.	Jean Van Guysse	BEL	194.00
45.	Sidney Domville	GBR	193.75
46.	Robert Hanley	GBR	193.50
47.	Mihály Antos	HUN	192.50
=48.	John Watters	GBR	187.50
=48.	Michel Biet	NED	187.50
50.	Georg Karth	GER	186.50
51.	William Fergus	GBR	183.50
52.	Carl Körting	GER	181.00
=53.	Wilhelm Kaufmann	GER	180.50
=53.	Félicien Lekim	FRA	180.50
=53.	Antoine De Buck	BEL	180.50
56.	Edmund Aspinall	GBR	177.00
57.	Gaston Ratelot	FRA	172.75
58.	C. H. Smith	GBR	171.75
59.	Allan Keith	CAN	170.00
60.	Gerardus Wesling	NED	165.00
61.	Reinier Blom	NED	160.50
=62.	Isidore Goudeket	NED	159.00
=62.	Johannes Stikkelman	NED	159.00
64.	Emanuel Brouwer	NED	158.00
65.	August Ehrich	GER	156.75
66.	Johannes Posthumus	NED	155.50
=67.	John Skrataas	NOR	154.50
=67.	Aleko Mulos Bey	TUR	154.50
69.	Dirk Janssen	NED	153.50
=70.	Peter Hol	NOR	152.50
=70.	Cornelus Becker	NED	152.50
72.	Jan Bolt	NED	150.50
=73.	Otto Bauscher	GBR	149.50
=73.	Jan Kieft	NED	149.50
75.	Riku Korhonen	FIN	143.50
76.	Carl Klæth	NOR	142.00
77.	Frigyes Gráf	HUN	141.50
78.	Abraham Mok	NED	141.00
79.	A. V. Ford	GBR	140.50
80.	Orvil Elliott	CAN	132.50
81.	Jaska Saarivuori	FIN	132.00
82.	Frithjof Olsen	NOR	127.50
83.	Hendricus Thijsen	NED	127.00
84.	Conrad Carlsrud	NOR	124.00
=85.	Leonard Hanson	GBR	121.00
=85.	Iivari Partanen	FIN	121.00
87.	Per Jespersen	NOR	120.50
=88.	Eetu Kosonen	FIN	120.00
=88.	Emmanuel Boislèvé	FRA	120.00
90.	Johann Flemer	NED	118.50
91.	David Teivonen	FIN	117.50
92.	Ole Iversen	NOR	117.00
93.	Constantijn van Daalen	NED	116.50
94.	Eugen Ingebretsen	NOR	109.00
95.	Herman van Leeuwen	NED	101.00
96.	Jonas Slier	NED	91.00