

Russian athletes. An Italian who competed against them in that same 1950 Brussels meet testifies, "From what I saw of them, the Russians were friendly, eager to learn, fair to their opponents and good losers."

The Russian men had plenty of practice in losing during the course of the meet. They won only two out of two dozen events. The Russian women, on the other hand, took four out of ten women's events. Anna Andrejeva, a husky twenty-five-year-old Moscow student, won the shot put at forty-seven feet, somewhat shy of her own world's record. Vera Bogdanova took the broad jump with ease. Natalia Smirnitkaja and Nina Dumbadze, also world-record holders, won their respective specialties, the javelin and discus throws, with feet to spare. Eva Setchenova would have captured both sprint titles had it not been for that remarkable Dutch housewife, Fannie Blankens-Koen.

It was much the same in the 1946 European Track and Field Championships at Oslo. There the Russian men took only a single first place, but the ladies crashed through with five. Another international event in which

The wife who hangs on every word her husband utters may only be trying to find one that makes sense.
—HOMER PHILLIPS.

Russian males came a cropper was the world weight-lifting championship in Paris in 1950. This sport is a much bigger thing in Russia than it is in the United States, and the Soviets, who have been reporting record performances for many years, entered with high confidence. Yet they wound up third, behind the United States and Egypt.

Back home they revised the scores and announced that they really had won after all. Russian sports publicists have an infinite capacity for rationalizing defeat into victory. Not long ago, for instance, a Soviet writer proclaimed that "in six basic sports our country holds almost 30 per cent of the registered world's records—58 out of 205." He did not specify what the "six basic sports" were. They must have included women's track and field, weight lifting, rifle shooting and pistol shooting, which are considered minor sports everywhere else. In the two major sports for which world's records are kept—men's track and field and men's swimming—Russia can claim only two records out of ninety.

Is this a clue to Russia's Olympic propaganda strategy? Is Russia pinning its Olympic hopes on the minor sports? Well, even on this basis, the Soviet Union is unlikely to have many talking points. Their women, a rare breed of amazons, are odds-on favorites to top the feminine track-and-field performers. Russia is also a good bet in rifle and pistol shooting and in gymnastics.

Those are about the only sports in which the Russians may rate as favorites, with the possible exception of soccer. There lies the Soviets' best chance of making a really big splash. To many of the Olympic countries, soccer is as important a game as baseball and football are to us. Soccer will take over the center stage in the Olympic Stadium after the track-and-field competi-

tion has been finished, and will hold the spotlight for the remaining seven days of the Games.

The Russians have already demonstrated, in a tour through Great Britain and Sweden by their Dynamo Club team back in 1946, that they play a very high grade of soccer. If they can win the Olympic title, many countries will be impressed. The Soviets will be doubly fortunate from a propaganda standpoint if they draw the United States team in the first round, because the United States is no soccer threat.

Soviet prospects vary in the remaining spots on the Olympic card. They don't stack up very well in swimming, where the United States is favored in both the men's and the women's divisions. The only real Soviet hope for an aquatic title is Leonid Meshkov, their chief swimming coach, who has been clocked in world-record times in the 100-meter breast stroke. At the Olympic least-stroke distance of 200 meters, however, he is liable to be left in the wake of half a dozen or more competitors.

The Russian boxing team is an unknown quantity which could prove to be very good. Nat Fleischer, the ring sage, has speculated that some of the Russian champions might be a match for our leading professionals—who, of course, won't be in the Olympics. On the other hand, Elias Ask, a Finnish professional boxer who has a firsthand knowledge of the Russians, offers this opinion: "Technically, and in style, they are hardly comparable with amateurs from 'traditional' boxing nations. But they are strong, tough and trained to the minute." We'll have to wait and see how good the Soviet boxers are; they were due to test themselves in the 1951 European tournament at Milan, but withdrew in a dispute over the rules.

Russian basketball appears to be good by European standards—good enough for the Soviet Union to clean up against satellite countries, anyway—but it hardly is up to the United States or Argentine level. In weight lifting, despite that 1950 fiasco, the Soviet still rates well above the average. However, the United States heads the list.

At Greco-Roman wrestling, about which we know almost nothing, the Russians are expert, but the Turks and the Swedes are considered even more proficient. In free-style wrestling, which is more to our taste, it is the Russians who will be novices if they show at all.

The Soviet cyclists probably are fast enough to handle any American entries, but quite a few revolutions behind the Italian, French, Belgian and British ones. The Russians may do well—although there is no way of calculating how well—in fencing, in the pentathlon and in the equestrian events. Even less is known about how Russia stacks up in the remaining Olympic sports—canoeing, rowing, water polo, yachting, and field hockey. Anyway, Russia announced last month that it was going to compete in all of these except field hockey.

When the Games of the XV Olympiad are over, those unofficial but widely accepted tabulations of team scores are going to show the United States on top again, far ahead of Soviet Russia. The Russians undoubtedly will have some things to crow about. But the United States and other "decident" democracies are going to have much more to show for their trips to Helsinki. THE END

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