

Swiss National Day celebration and annual Swiss sports

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION AND ANNUAL SWISS SPORTS

at HERNE HILL SPORTS GROUND, S.E.24

on MONDAY, 1st AUGUST, 1949

In bygone years the "Swiss Sports" were held either during the months of May or June. This year, it was decided, to combine this Meeting with the 1st of August Celebration, which was a splendid idea.

The last "Swiss Sports" Festival took place in June 1939, also at Herne Hill, and thus ten long and eventful years have passed since this ever popular Meeting was held.

Many of those, who had either taken an active part in the arrangements or had competed in the various sports events, have, alas, passed away, such names as George Dimier, Ch. Barbezat, P. F. Boehringer, P. Hilfiker, H. Senn, and many others, will always be remembered with affection by the sporting fraternity.

"Swiss Sports Weather" had almost become a joke in the Colony, as most of the meetings in the past had been spoilt by bad weather conditions. The outlook for this year's Sports Meeting was not very promising, rain was forecast and the day started dull and thundery; but I am glad to say, that, with the exception of about two minutes drizzling rain, the weather was kind to us, in fact the conditions were most suitable for sports in general.

The main and adjoining stands were gaily decorated with large Swiss flags and the cantonal escutcheons, which fluttered to and fro in an exhilarating breeze.

During the last few years, previous to the war, attendance at the "Swiss Sports" had declined alarmingly, and more than once the question arose, whether this event should be discontinued; it is therefore most encouraging to state, that last Mondays attendance has beaten all the records since this Festival was first started. Well over 2,000 spectators filled the Grand Stand and adjoining stands, and there was not a seat to be had immediately in front of the track.

Before describing some of the events, I would like to make a few general remarks which might prove useful for future Meetings, in doing so, I do not wish to criticise the Committee, who, I know have made strenuous efforts to make the meeting as interesting as possible.

I agree with the complaints of some of the spectators, that the Meeting "dragged", there was not enough *entrain* and the intervals during the various events were far too long, this was partly due to the fact, that would be competitors for some of the sports items were slow in coming forward, in spite of the really fine prizes which were given.

On a former occasion a military band (Royal Engineers) was engaged, which greatly helped to foster "Stimmung", this time, as before, gramophone records were very sparingly used, and the musical programme fell rather flat. If, for economical reasons,

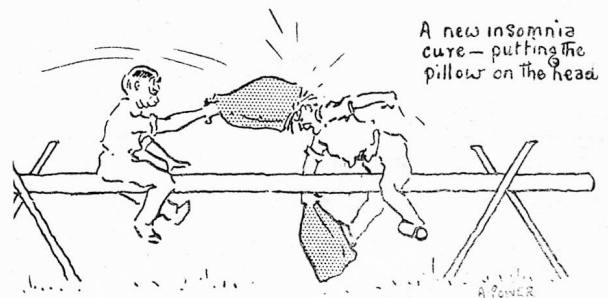
a brass band cannot be obtained, somebody should be delegated to assure that suitable records should be played during the greater part of the Meeting.

Some of the children's events, such as Egg and Spoon Race, Three legged Race, etc, were held in the furthest corner of the Sports Ground, and could only be seen with difficulty from the stands, thus the intimate contact between the competitors and the spectators was lost.

The announcing of the various items on the programme was done with the aid of a microphone, and let me tell you that the operator handled this instrument with great skill, it was done in exactly the same way, as at any of the large sporting events in and around London, and here, is where I consider lays the snag.

The "Swiss Sports" besides being, as the name indicates, a sports event, is also to a certain extent a social Meeting, and the announcer would have a great opportunity, in making various other comments, apart from the purely sporting ones, to liven things up considerably. Take f.i. an announcement with reference to the pillow fight. He could say:

"On the pole are now the Editor of the "Swiss Observer", and the President of the Swiss Sports



Committee; they shake hands — they smile — the President disappears — they are on the pole again — the Editor gets a tremendous smack in the eye, and falls like a log." What a tremendous cheer would greet such an announcement; or, "the Vice-President of the Sports Committee has just been heavily defeated, it looks as if a certain ornament of his face has been knocked off — no — it is still there — great applause from the Stands, and the swooning wife recovers."

Then he could mention, that a young couple on the border of the track have taken it into their heads to make violent love to each other, with the result that all the young ladies and gentlemen would get a bit closer together, and would squeeze hands, what an entertaining sight that would be, and how it would demonstrate to our English friends what a united and loving family the Swiss are.

Apart from such announcements, I would suggest, that the operator should make a few explanatory remarks about events like f.i. "Throwing the Javelin" and "Putting the Weight" as a good many of the spectators have but a hazy idea what is really done with these "gadgets". I am convinced, that if the announcer took a more intimate part in the happenings, things could be considerably made more interesting, and what about some of the side shows held on former occasions? Such as "fishing for bottles", "guessing the weight of a cake", "coconut shy", "beauty parade", etc., this would all help to make things jolly.

* * *

Punctually at 11 a.m. the Sporting Events started with the 100 yards Men, Heats, and the fine sprinting was a delight to watch.

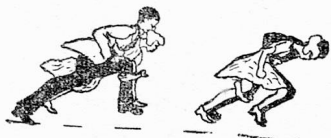
The classical races were followed with the greatest interest, and were principally won by members of the Unione Ticinese, who gave a really fine display of endurance.

Results in Long and High Jump did not come up to expectations, and were considerably behind the results obtained in former competitions. I was informed that lack of training, as well as "insufficient feeding" were answerable for this decline.

However, good results were obtained in "Throwing the Javelin" and the "Relay Race".

Another attraction proved to be the Pillow Fight. Many a reputation was lost on the pole and many a grudge was settled with a pillow.

There were, of course, various races for little boys and girls and such fancy events as the egg and spoon race and the three legged race, caused great hilarity.



An event which always attracts the attention of the onlookers is the Veterans' 220 yds. handicap race for men over forty years of age; there were well over a dozen valiant men lining up on the track, and I greatly resented the disparaging remark of one of the young spectators who exclaimed: look what a mouldy lot!

They were far from "mouldy", as when the pistol was fired, they started to walk like heroes, some were even so keen to get to the post that they indulged in little spurts of running, which resulted in some of the judges asking them to "kindly step out" but they would have none of it and gaily "ran on".

Shortly before the end of the Sports Events, it was announced that the Swiss Minister and Madame de Torrenté had arrived, on ascending to the Grand Stand they were heartily cheered by the entire company. It was noticed, with great pleasure, that Madame de Torrenté was dressed in Swiss costume (town dress of the patrician Ladies of Sion, Ct. Valais) a beautiful white dress of brocaded silk.

In the Minister's party were: M. and Madame de Graffenried, Colonel and Madame Rieser, Dr. Lindt, M. and Madame Bircher and M. Hurter.

At 5.30 p.m. the distribution of the prizes began. The steps leading to the Grand Stand were lined by a bevy of pretty girls dressed in the various national

costumes carrying flags, and through this attractive alley the prize winners passed to receive their rewards from the hands of the charming wife of our Minister.

Mr. R. Dupraz, President of the Swiss Sports Committee, accompanied by Madame Dupraz, officially welcomed the Minister and Madame de Torrenté, thanking the latter for having kindly consented to present the prizes.

Great cheering broke out when it was announced that the Unione Ticinese had won the George Dimier Challenge Cup for scoring the highest aggregate number of points. Runners up were the Swiss Mercantile Society.

The Unione Ticinese certainly deserved to win this cup, they gave a splendid exhibition of skill and good sportsmanship and the kiss which the captain of the team received from one of the pretty Ticinese Ladies, on descending was well merited. I believe this is the first time, that the Unione Ticinese has won this cup. (I am open to correction).

To say "thank you" for the charming way in which Madame de Torrenté presented the prizes, she received a beautiful bouquet of red and white carnations from one of the little girls dressed in national costume. This marked the end of the Swiss Sports of 1949.

* * *

National Day Celebration.

Our National Day Celebration started with the singing, by the entire company, of our National Anthem. In front of the Grand Stand were lined up 24 girls in Swiss costume carrying their respective cantonal flags, then the Swiss flag was carried in, and amidst an impressive silence, Pastor Blum, true to traditions, said a prayer, invoking God's blessing on our country.

Amidst great cheering the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté then addressed the patriotic gathering, first in English, then in "Schwyzerdütsch", French and Italian. If I said "Schwyzerdütsch" I meant "Bärndütsch" and I heartily congratulate him on having acquired such an efficient "Bärner" accent, no doubt "picked up" on occasion of his many visits to the Federal Political Department in the capital.

Space unfortunately does not allow all the contents of the speech to be published and we therefore reproduce the one spoken in French.

The Minister said:

"Chers Compatriotes,

Nous commémorons aujourd'hui le 658ème anniversaire de la fondation de la Confédération. Il est peu d'Etats au monde qui puissent faire remonter aussi loin dans la nuit des temps l'origine de leurs institutions politiques. Cette seule constatation suffirait à établir la valeur et la permanence des principes formulés dans notre charte nationale. Ceux-ci nous ont permis de surmonter les vicissitudes des siècles; ils apparaissent aujourd'hui encore comme un idéal vers lequel tendent les nations démocratiques. Il n'est pas jusqu'au principe du fédéralisme qui ne soit considéré par de bons esprits l'un des moyens les plus efficaces de restaurer l'Europe.

En fait, cinq ans après la fin de la seconde guerre mondiale, la Suisse apparaît encore cohérente, unie et prospère au milieu d'un monde en fusion. Le mot du

Dr. Johnson n'a jamais été plus vrai : " Let those who despise the capacity of the Swiss, tell us by what wonderful policy, or by what happy conciliation of interests, it is brought to pass, that in a body made up of different communities and different religions, there should be no civil commotions, though the people are so warlike, that to nominate and raise an army is the same." Cette situation privilégiée, nous la devons tout d'abord à la Providence, vers laquelle montent en ce jour nos sentiments de gratitude en communion avec tous nos compatriotes de Suisse et de l'étranger.

Nous la devons ensuite à notre peuple lui-même, à ses vertus de labeur et de persévérance, à sa confiance dans l'effort. Le travail est notre plus précieux patrimoine, une source de richesses durables que les événements extérieurs ne sauraient tarir. Nous comptons d'abord sur nous-mêmes, c'est là le secret de notre stabilité. Puis nous avons su garder le sens de la mesure. L'étranger attribue parfois au seul hasard ce privilège d'avoir deux fois en un quart de siècle échappé au cataclysme qui s'est abattu sur le monde. Certes, cela est vrai; nous sommes les premiers à voir en cela quelque chose de providentiel. Mais il n'en convient pas moins de souligner la sagesse de notre peuple qui, depuis plusieurs siècles, a renoncé à toute ambition territoriale. Confinée dans ses frontières et dans sa neutralité, la Suisse s'est occupée avant tout de perfectionner ses institutions politiques et ses instruments de travail tout en affirmant sa volonté de défense contre toute agression et en s'imposant à cette fin les plus lourds sacrifices. La Suisse a refusé de s'agrandir au détriment de ses voisins; elle n'a pas cherché à subjuguier d'autres peuples et à assurer sa subsistance autrement que par le travail, le courage et l'initiative personnels. Quel est le pays qui peut se prévaloir de tant de prudence et de modération? Dans ces conditions, n'était-il pas équitable et même logique que nous échappions à des querelles dont nous n'étions nullement responsables?

En revanche la Suisse n'a jamais excipé de sa situation pour se dérober à ses devoirs d'humanité, de collaboration et de solidarité. Berceau de la Croix-Rouge, elle abrite aujourd'hui la Conférence diplomatique chargée de reviser les conventions pour l'amélioration du sort des blessés et des malades et pour le traitement des prisonniers de guerre ainsi que pour élaborer une convention sur la protection des personnes civiles en temps de guerre. Elle a également ratifié la convention de l'Organisation européenne de coopération

économique. Cela par solidarité européenne, car elle n'est pas partie prenante et qu'elle a déjà fourni en faveur de ses voisins un effort aussi considérable, compte tenu de sa population, que les Etats-Unis à l'égard de l'Europe par le Plan Marshall. C'est dans le même esprit que nous collaborons à toutes les organisations techniques des Nations Unies et que nous participons aux travaux de la Commission économique pour l'Europe.

Ainsi, la Suisse, berceau et champion de la démocratie dans le monde, reste fidèle à sa mission internationale; c'est ce qui lui assure, malgré l'exiguïté de son territoire, un crédit moral et politique de premier ordre. Et c'est dans ses institutions politiques qu'elle a puisé une foi inébranlable en sa mission. "C'est par la pratique de la démocratie", a dit l'un de nos plus éminents hommes d'Etat, " que notre peuple a su comprendre la grandeur d'une mission qui consiste d'un côté à faciliter les rapports entre hommes d'origine et de culture différentes, de l'autre à renforcer, en vue de conflits internationaux inévitables, les garanties du droit contre les tentations de la force." "

The sincere address of the Head of the Swiss Colony was acknowledged with enthusiasm, and before resuming his seat, the Minister, read out a cable sent by Federal-Councillor Max Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister to the Colony in London, as well as the reply to same to be sent to Berne. Here are its contents :

Berne, 30 juillet 1949.

Swiss Legation, London.

A vous et par vous à nos colonies qui célèbrent au loin l'anniversaire de la Patrie j'adresse mes vœux et exprime ma gratitude pour ce que tous et chacun faites et ferez encore pour le Pays.

MAX PETITPIERRE.

Londres, 2 août 1949.

Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral Max Petitpierre,
Chef Département Politique fédéral Berne.

Légation et Colonie suisse de Londres réunie pour commémorer 1er août vous remercie respectueusement message patriotique et assure par vous Conseil Fédéral attachement et fidélité Mère Patrie.

TORRENTÉ.

The Swiss Male Choir then sang the beautiful song : " O Mein Heimatland " in which many of the audience joined.

Then came the surprise item — expectations having been duly raised — there emerged from the Grand

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Stand, two young Ladies respectively in Swiss red and white colours and British, red, white and blue, carrying our national flag and the Union Jack, accompanied by the sounds of martial music. They advanced to the middle of the field, where they dipped their flags in salute, then the bearers of the cantonal escutcheons appeared lining up on either side of the Swiss and the British emblems. It was a most impressive moment, to see all the flags grouped around the flag which represents, what we so affectionately call, "La Patrie", and at that moment, like a happy omen, a ray of sun pierced the heavy clouds lighting up the scene and bringing out the colours both of the costumes and flags.

A flag display then followed culminating in the formation of the Swiss Cross, after which the National emblem, accompanied by the cantonal flags lined up again for the final salute.

It was a most colourful performance, which received a thunderous applause from the large audience. The cheers had hardly died down, when the members of the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese appeared garbed in their becoming native costumes. They played and sang lustily and heartily their bewitching songs, and in many of the audience they evoked memories of happy times spent in their beautiful little canton. Great was the applause which they well merited.

And so came to an end another 1st of August celebration; it was a simple but none the less impressive function, which will leave behind nothing but pleasant memories.

Once again, our compatriots living far from the mother country have demonstrated their deep attachment to their country, little in size, but great in achievements.

* * *

In conclusion the organisers of both functions, should be heartily congratulated, and if not everything went smoothly, it will, I am sure be remedied on future occasions. Mr. R. Dupraz, and his faithful collaborators on the committee, deserve the thanks of all those who spent an enjoyable day at Herne Hill. Many thanks are also due to those who subscribed so generously towards the costs, to the performers during the 1st of August celebrations, the Swiss Male Choir, Mrs. Bolla, who introduced the flag display and the

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"Corale" of the Unione Ticinese, and I nearly forgot, the weather authorities who so kindly refrained from "watering" down our enthusiasm.

ST.

(We regret to say, that the photographs taken of the Group of Ladies in Swiss costumes and flag bearers, did not come out well enough for reproduction.)

* * *

Results:

100 Yds. Men: 1st. H. Gisin (unattached); 2nd. P. Jacomelli (U. Tic.); 3rd. L. Jacomelli (U. Tic.).

High Jump: 1st. M. Lechner (S.M.S.); 2nd. H. Gisin (unattached); 3rd. P. Costeggioli (unattached).

Throwing the Javelin: 1st. H. Hunziker (S.M.S.); 2nd. M. Lechner (S.M.S.); 3rd. J. P. Viret (Swiss Bank Corp.).

Putting the Weight: 1st. F. Rothenbühler (Swiss Bank Corp.); 2nd. W. Meier (unattached); 3rd. E. Lüdin (Swiss Bank Corp.).

Long Jump: 1st. W. Meier (unattached); 2nd. P. Costeggioli (unattached); 3rd. J. Diviani (U. Tic.).

220 Yds. Men: 1st. J. Diviani (U. Tic.); 2nd. L. Jacomelli (U. Tic.); 3rd. P. Jacomelli (U. Tic.).

Pillow Fight: 1st. F. Rothenbühler; 2nd. M. Folken; 3rd. Casada.

100 Yds. Ladies (Sports costume): 1st. Miss D. Payne (Swiss Bank Corp.); 2nd. Miss J. Povey (Swiss Bank Corp.); 3rd. Miss E. Salmina (U. Tic.).

80 Yds. Boys (11-15 years): 1st. Roy Chase; 2nd. J. Burren; 3rd. J. de Maria.

50 Yds. Boys (9-10 years): 1st. Colin Chase; 2nd. C. de Graffenried; 3rd. M. Trottmann.

50 Yds. Boys (5-8 years): 1st. R. Seward; 2nd. J. Tyropynski; 3rd. J. Byron.

880 Yds. Men: 1st. P. Jacomelli (U. Tic.); 2nd. F. C. Petit (unattached); 3rd. J. Diviani (U. Tic.).

50 Yds. Girls (5-8 years): 1st. Miss M. Berti 2nd. Miss V. Fischer; 3rd. Miss S. Fini.

80 Yds. Girls (9-15 years): 1st. Miss A. Bähler; 2nd. Miss J. Brennen; 3rd. Miss N. Pontin.

80 Yds. Ladies' Handicap (Town Dress): Heat 1: 1st. Miss L. Steiner; 2nd. Miss J. Petit; 3rd. Miss M. Bryner. Heat 2: 1st. Miss S. Rueff; 2nd. Miss A. Finden; 3rd. Miss M. Erisman. Heat 3: 1st. Miss D. Payne; 2nd. Miss J. Povey; 3rd. Miss M. Streit.

Three Legged Race (Mixed): 1st. Miss J. Bovin, Mr. J. A. Viret; 2nd. Mrs. Jimsen, Mr. Jimsen; 3rd. Miss Stucki, Mr. F. Bassi.

1 Mile Men: 1st. P. Jacomelli (U. Tic.); 2nd. F. C. Petit (unattached); 3rd. C. A. Berti (U. Tic.).

440 Yds. Veterans' Walking Handicap (For Swiss over 40 years of age): 1st. D. E. Bonnet; 2nd. Mr. Casada; 3rd. E. Oggier; 4th. E. Gautschi.

Egg & Spoon Race: Heat 1: 1st. Miss J. Lindt; 2nd. Miss M. Brenner. Heat 2: 1st. Miss J. Angrist; 2nd. Miss K. Suter. Heat 3: 1st. Miss M. Erisman; 2nd. Miss D. Payne. Heat 4: 1st. Miss J. Käser; 2nd. Miss M. Käser.

Relay Race (One Mile): 1st. Unione Ticinese; 2nd. Swiss Bank Corporation; 3rd. Swiss Mercantile Society.

Georges Dimler Challenge Cup: Winners, Unione Ticinese, 52 points; Runners up, Swiss Mercantile Society, 29 points.