

OLYMPIC ENTREPRENEURS - ALICE MILLIAT: THE 1ST WOMAN OLYMPIC ENTREPRENEUR

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Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivos definir a posição de um empreendedor olímpico e estabelecer a francesa Alice Milliat como a primeira empreendedora olímpica. A partir da literatura especializada foi feito um levantamento das características de empreendedores que foram ajustadas ao contexto olímpico. A partir de então os conceitos foram aplicados resultando na identificação de Pierre de Coubertin como primeiro empreendedor olímpico da era moderna, Juan Antonio Samaranch como o mais recente e Alice Milliat como a primeira empreendedora olímpica. Ela organizou os Jogos Olímpicos Femininos (Jogos Mundiais Femininos) na década de 1920 e conseguiu ultrapassar barreiras de preconceito incluindo as mulheres nas competições de atletismo nos Jogos Olímpicos. Alice Milliat estabeleceu um modelo para mulheres que quisessem se tornar organizadoras, gestoras e empreendedoras no esporte olímpico.

According to the specialized literature, an entrepreneur is an individual who undertakes and operates a new enterprise or venture, who organizes and manages any enterprise and who is willing to put his career and capital on an uncertain venture. Entrepreneurs are risk bearers, leaders, organizers in charge of the coordination, organization and supervision of enterprises, and above all they are hard workers. An Olympic entrepreneur is an individual who attains all of these characteristics and apply them to sports ventures in Olympism. The very first Olympic entrepreneur of the modern era was the founder of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Baron Pierre de Coubertin (MacAllon, 1981).

Based on these premises, this study has the following objectives: (i) to determine the status of an Olympic entrepreneur and (ii) to establish Alice Milliat as the first woman Olympic entrepreneur. The importance of this research lies in the fact that it should help people to understand and appreciate Olympic entrepreneurship as a powerful venture capable of changing not only sport but society. It also becomes relevant as it establishes the role played by a woman in

the leadership of a movement that helped women conquer their space in the Olympic movement as athletes and administrators.

This research utilized the historical method of research to gather, and analyze various kinds of materials including secondary sources but mainly essential primary sources available only at the Olympic Studies Center (OSC) located at the Olympic Museum, in Lausanne, Switzerland, such as the Minutes of the Annual Sessions of the IOC, the Minutes of the Executive Board Meetings, Olympic Charters, newspapers and magazines and private correspondence.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin was the first successful Olympic entrepreneur of the modern era to stage the Olympic Games and to keep them taking place every four years. He had been preceded by Zappas (Greece), inspired by Thomas Hughes and William Penny Brookes (England), influenced by the Olympic Games of antiquity and by modern British sport (19th century). Coubertin's first Olympic attempt was the proposals presented at the Sorbonne, University of Paris in 1892, but it did not succeed. His second attempt was fruitful and he organized the International Olympic Congress and founded the International Olympic Committee-IOC in 1894 in Paris. He was the president of the IOC between 1896 and 1925, when he retired. Coubertin was the supposed 'prototype' of the Olympic entrepreneur, when he personified the so many characteristics inherent to entrepreneurs.

Among other leaders, Juan Antonio Samaranch, 65 years later, from 1980 to 2001, would follow Coubertin's steps when the IOC, after a long period of expansion, was going through various situations imposed by political, geographical, and economic contexts (Miller, 1992). Samaranch had been the 7th President of the IOC 1980-2001, and now Honorary President for Life. Again, he represented the Olympic entrepreneurship, securing the IOC's status as an international leading organization, he structured IOC's finances (TV rights, sponsorship programs), keeping the Olympic flame alive during the crisis years of boycotts, undertook major reforms to the structure of the IOC created the Sport and Environment Commission, mended bridges between Soviet- and NATO-bloc countries following boycotts of the Moscow (1980) and Los Angeles (1984) Games, worked out a compromise that permitted both China and Taiwan to enter Olympic teams, allowed participation by a post-Soviet team in 1992, developed the WADA (1999), welcomed professional athletes to Olympic sport, and encouraged the election of the first two women IOC members. Moreover, Juan Antonio Samaranch opened the Olympic Museum in Lausanne in 1993, the long-held dream of its visionary, Baron Pierre de Coubertin.

However, this context of outstanding deeds had a contrasting failure: women had always to overcome obstacles to participate in the Olympic Games as athletes. As sport seemed to be in male hands during the 19th century, it was very difficult for women athletes to succeed in sport. In spite of Coubertin's and other conservative IOC members' resistance to women's participation in competitive sport, some female athletes managed to participate in the early Games, particularly through disciplines which were socially acceptable to women of that time such as tennis, golf, archery, swimming and some gymnastics. Athletics was not opened to women and those who took up any track and field discipline were looked down upon and many times discriminated against.

Alice Joséphine Marie Million, later on Alice Milliat, became the first woman Olympic entrepreneur as she very skillfully negotiated women's track and field entry in the Olympic Games. Alice Milliat became a sportswoman early in life, devoted her life and energy to women's sport as she wanted women's sport to be recognized by male sports organizations. She became president of the Parisian club "Fémina Sport" in 1915 (one of the three major societies in France for women's sports, founded in 1912), was elected treasurer of the Fédération Française Sportive Féminine (1917), became general secretary of the Fédération Française Sportive Féminine in 1918, and was unanimously elected president of the Fédération des Sociétés Féminines Sportives de France (FSFSF) in 1919.

Milliat organized various championships such as women's soccer and cycling. Moreover, she entered a plea for the inclusion of women's track and field in the Olympic Games before 1920. As she was not heard, she organized the first International Women's Meeting in Monte Carlo in 1921 (Monte Carlo Women's Olympics) with five countries and created the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI) in 1921 with five nations: Czechoslovakia, Great Britain, France, the U.S. and Spain. After that she entered another plea for the inclusion of women's track and field in the Olympic Games in 1921. As again she was not heard, she organized the first Women's Olympic Games in Paris on August 20, 1922 before 15,000 spectators. She was so successful that the August newspaper edition of "Le Sportif" compared Madame Milliat to Coubertin (Drevon, 2005).

As a result of her success, the IOC demanded that she drop the word 'Olympic' from the women's Games, which then became Women's World Games. However, very cleverly she negotiated with the IOC the participation of women in track and field in the Amsterdam Olympic Games of 1928 with five disciplines: 500m, 100m, 4x100, high jump and discus throw.

Milliat continued her entrepreneurial mission with the organization of the Women's World Games in Gothenburg (Sweden) in 1926, in Prague

(Czechoslovakia) in 1930 and in London (England) in 1934). The pressure that had been building up on her in addition to the proximity of the war made Madame Milliat retire from the sporting scene.

Milliat's efforts to make female Olympians in athleticism had been rewarded not only because of the inclusion of women in track and field but also because the exposure of women as athletes inspired millions of women who wanted to do sports. As a result, new women's federations and clubs were founded, other women's championships and games were developed in various countries and more attention ended up being given to women's sport.

It is then possible to conclude that Olympic entrepreneurship is not a male phenomenon as Alice Milliat opened the doors of sports for women, managing to include women's athletics in the Olympic Games. Alice Milliat had also set up a model for women to become organizers, managers and entrepreneurs in Olympic sport.

Suggestions for future studies include the use of primary sources worldwide in various languages to investigate not only women as administrators in clubs, sports federations, institutions, of different nations, which have encouraged the practice of sport but also women as Olympic entrepreneurs.

References

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