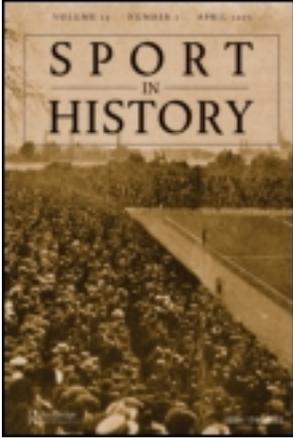


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The History and Geography of a Forgotten Olympic Project: The Spring Games

André Suchet, Dominique Jorand & John Tuppen

This article concerns the project put forward in the late 1980s to create a third type of Olympic Games in the French Pyrenees. The idea consisted of organizing a gathering for new outdoor sports (climbing, mountain biking, rafting, canyoning, hang gliding, paragliding, skateboarding, etc) designed as a third Olympic event: the Spring Games (the Jeux de Printemps in French). The whole project was entitled: Pyrénées: Laboratoire de l'Olympisme (literally, Pyrenees: Laboratory of the Olympic ideal). This study, based on written documents and oral accounts, provides details of the nature of the project and the major actors. Complications in the local organization of the programme caused it to end prematurely, and only a first event took place under the name of the Pyrenean Games of Adventure in 1993 on the boundary between France and Spain (Jeux Pyrénéens de l'Aventure or los Juegos Pirenaicos de la Aventura).

Introduction

In sport history, as Guttman noted, 'very few cultural phenomena attract as much attention as the Olympic Games'.¹ In his bibliographical essay, Guttman presents what he considers to be an exhaustive list of the thousands of books in numerous languages about the Olympics; whether they are laudatory books, essays or critical analyses, most of the authors

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he cites focus on the Summer Olympics and to a lesser degree on the Winter Games. This focus is also apparent more generally in the literature on the Olympic movement but it hides several other events that also constitute the Olympic phenomenon, such as regional games, the Paralympics, Women's Olympics and Gay Games. After a review of these 'alternative Olympic histories' (in the words of Kidd),² this article looks at a similar but forgotten project, put forward in the late 1980s, to create a third type of Olympic Games in the French Pyrenees.

'Alternative Olympic histories'

Given the narrow focus of much of the Olympic literature, it is important to first record just how varied the Olympic phenomenon actually is. The first example of alternative Olympics is provided by the various forms of regional games. In Europe, since 1985, the Games of the Small States of Europe have been organized every two years by the national Olympic committees of Andorra, Cyprus, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, San Marino, and, since 2006, Montenegro. The All-Africa Games, sometimes called the African Games or Pan African Games, were an idea launched by Pierre de Coubertin but they only materialized in the 1960s with decolonization.³ The Mediterranean Games, embracing all those countries bordering the Mediterranean, have existed since 1951.⁴ Within the Mediterranean, the Pan-Aegean Games have also been organized at different periods in Greece where the Hellenic Games originally took place. Mytilene, on the Greek island Lesbos, hosted the first Pan-Aegean Games in July 1927 on the initiative of the Pallesbiakos Gymnastikos Syllogos athletic federation. According to one commentator, 'These first Games were a huge success for their time, welcoming athletes from Chios, Samos, Limnos and Lesvos.'⁵ However, despite this success, partly for political and financial reasons, for nearly sixty years no further Games were held. Then in 1986, under the leadership of Minister Sfirou, with the participation of the Greek Armed Services, the Pan-Aegean Games were revived. Subsequently, a number of sites in the Greek islands have hosted the Games.

The Asian Games, also called the Asiad, are regulated by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) under the supervision of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The first Asian Games were held in New Delhi in 1951 and they were continued in 1954 and 1958. Currently, the OCA organizes: the Asian Winter Games; the Asian Indoor-Martial Arts Games, (the result of the merger of the Asian Indoor Games and the Asian Martial Arts Games, the first edition of which should be held in Doha,

Qatar, in 2013); the Asian Beach Games; the Asian Youth Games (the first Asian Youth Games will be hosted by Singapore in 2009 as a test in preparation for the Youth Olympic Games to be held in 2010); and the Asian Para Games.⁶ For the 1962 Asian Games in Jakarta, Kidd relates that when Indonesia barred athletes from Taiwan and Israel from participation, the IOC consequently suspended Indonesia from the Olympic Movement.⁷ As a result of this decision, president Sukarno of Indonesia established the Games of New Emerging forces to unify Asian, African, Latin American and Socialist countries and to 'shake the world balance of power and weaken the economic domination of the world by industrialized countries'.⁸ Other examples of these Regional Games include the Indian Ocean Island Games, the Far Eastern Championship Games from 1913 to 1934, the Jeux Pan-Arabes in 1953 and the Pan American Games which have existed since 1951.⁹ The Spartakiad was an international sports event that the Soviet Union attempted to use to both oppose and replace the Olympics.¹⁰ In relation to political movements, Riordan recalls the organization of the Workers' Olympics.¹¹ The first Workers' Games were held in Prague in 1921, and the first Workers' Olympics were staged in 1925 in Frankfurt; the second was held in 1931 in Vienna and attracted over 80,000 worker-athletes. The Pan-Armenian Games have been held between ethnic Armenian competitors from the Armenian diaspora and Armenia since 1999. Similarly, the Maccabiah Games, an international Jewish athletic event originally conceived by Yosef Yekutieli, a fifteen-year-old inspired by the 1912 Stockholm Olympic Games, took place originally in 1932 and 1935 and have continued ever since 1950.¹² Finally, the 1930 British Empire Games were the first of what later become known as the Commonwealth Games.¹³

Other types of events are also part of the Olympic phenomenon: The most well-known are the Paralympic Games for athletes with physical and visual disabilities. The Games were originally held in 1948. Sir Ludwig Guttmann organized a sporting competition involving World War II veterans with spinal cord injuries at the rehabilitation hospital in Stoke Mandeville, England. The Games continued in England in 1952 and 1956.¹⁴ In 1960, the ninth Stoke Mandeville Games were held in Rome, following the Coubertin Olympic Games. These are considered to be the first Paralympic Games, but the Stoke Mandeville Games continued to be organized as a multi-sport event for wheelchair athletes. Games are still held annually in Stoke Mandeville, initially under the direction of the International Stoke Mandeville Games Federation (ISMGF) which subsequently became the International Stoke Mandeville Wheelchair Sports Federation (ISMWSF).¹⁵ The Paralympic Games are held every four years,

governed by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), and since 2001 the IOC and IPC have signed an agreement which guarantees that host cities would be contracted to manage both the Olympic and Paralympic Games. There are also the Special Olympics World Games. These were founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of President John Fitzgerald Kennedy, as an international competition for athletes with intellectual disabilities and are organized every two years by the Special Olympics international foundation.¹⁶ The first International Special Olympics Summer Games were held at Soldier Field in Chicago, Illinois, 19–20 July 1968. The Deaflympics (previously called the International Games for the Deaf, and occasionally referred to as the World Silent Games) are organized by the Comité International des Sports des Sourds (CISS), supported by the IOC. The first Games were held in Paris, in August 1924, a few days after the Olympic Games of that year.

As well as regional events, the Olympic phenomenon also consists of games based on gender. In March 1921, a women's international sporting meeting, the Women's Olympics, was organized by the International Sporting Club at Monte Carlo, presided over by Camille Blanc. Events took place on the lawn in front of the Pigeon Shooting Range below the Monte Carlo Casino.¹⁷ Stimulated by this success, a first Women's Olympics Games was organized by the Fédération Sportive Feminine Internationale (FSFI), led by the French lady Alice Milliat.¹⁸ The event took place in Paris in April 1922. A second Women's Olympics, was then held in Götting, Sweden in April 1926. The growing prestige of women's track and field events forced the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) to enter into negotiations with the FSFI. 'The FSFI agreed to change the name of its competition to the Women's World Games, in exchange for ten events for women at the 1928 Olympic Games and gender parity on the IOC', but the IOC and IAAF did not honour their part of the bargain.¹⁹ The Gay Games represent a further manifestation of this trend. These Games were founded in 1982 by Tom Waddell, an American Olympic decathlete. He wanted to create an event to give visibility to lesbians, gays, bi-sexuals, transsexuals and queens. The first event occurred under the name of the Gay Olympics in 1982 in San Francisco, but the United States Olympic Committee threatened a law suit, and it was renamed the Gay Games.²⁰ Since then Kidd has noted a 'schism has developed in the movement' and in 2006 competing events were held in Chicago (seventh Gay Games) and Montreal (first World Outgames).²¹

Other factors, sometimes of an explicitly geopolitical nature, have also been a motivating force behind the organization of games. Thus, Terret shows that the Inter-allied Games organized by the YMCA in 1919 in

Paris, were also connected to the Olympic movement.²² The initiator of these competitions, Elwood Brown, had negotiated with Pierre de Coubertin a form of global sharing of sport; on the one hand the IOC would be responsible for elite sport and, on the other, Christian associations would be in charge of 'sport for all'. Unfortunately, the death of Elwood Brown in 1924 put a halt to this project. Similarly, in the context of the Cold War, the Goodwill Games were an international sports competition, created by Ted Turner as a reaction to the various boycotts of the 1980 and 1984 Olympics.²³ The first such Games were held in Moscow in 1986 and the last event took place in 2001 in Brisbane. The World Games, meanwhile, were created for sports that are not contested in the Olympics and since 1981 have been organised by the International World Games Association (IWGA), under the patronage of the IOC.²⁴ Since 1925, the Socialist Workers' Sport International (SWSI) has organized a People's Olympiad in opposition to the Olympic Games of the IOC. In particular, the third People's Olympiad was intended as a protest against the Berlin Olympics of 1936. It was to have taken place in Barcelona in July 1936 but it coincided with the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and the Games never took place, although some of the athletes' delegations had already arrived.²⁵

Thus the Olympic phenomenon extends far beyond the winter and summer games. This may make the project to create a third type of Olympic Games in the French Pyrenees less surprising but it is important nonetheless. The idea of the Spring Games, proposed in 1988, was for a gathering for new outdoor sports including rock climbing, mountain biking, rafting, canyoning, hang gliding, paragliding and skateboarding. There has been no previous academic study of this subject beyond a very limited discussion which simply summarized the main event.²⁶ This study therefore explores the Spring Games project in greater depth, particularly in terms of the potential relations and interactions between the ambitions of these Games and the Olympic movement.²⁷ The project is discussed here with reference to the concept of sportification.

The project of the Spring Games

The formula and the principles of the Spring Games were an idea of a caving guide, Jacques Marion (see Figure 4), who was based in the central Pyrenees. Creator of the Maison des Gouffres and founding-president of Ouarnède Loisir, Jacques Marion regretted the 'image deficit of the Pyrenees compared with the Alps' which he argued handicapped the local population in benefiting from mountain tourism.²⁸ Inspired by the

dynamic effects induced by the preparations for the Winter Olympic Games to be held 1992 at Albertville (in the French Alps) and by those of the Mediterranean Games envisaged in 1993 in Agde (Languedoc-Roussillon, France), Jacques Marion wanted to create a Spring Games.²⁹ For Jacques Marion: 'just as there are summer Olympic Games with athletics and team sports . . . and Winter Games for skiing, ice-skating and bobsleigh . . . the idea is to create an Olympic Games with new sporting activities such as outdoor and adventure sports.'³⁰

In the long term, Jacques Marion proposed a ten-year marketing programme for the Pyrenees based on adventure sports and the Olympic ideal. He envisaged these new activities as the future of sport. The whole project was entitled: *Pyénées: Laboratoire de l'Olympisme* (literally, Pyrenees: Laboratory of the Olympic ideal).³¹ In a wider context this idea can be seen to be related to new and/or alternative sports³² which themselves were associated with the countercultural social movement of the 1960s and early 1970s in the United States.³³ The widespread diffusion of this model was often in opposition to existing competitive and institutional sports.³⁴ However, Jacques Marion imagined a common denominator between the Olympic ideal and these new adventure sports: *l'exploit* (the notion of achievement). In his programme he proposed organizing Spring Games every two years in the Pyrenees using the Olympic model for new adventure sports such as mountain biking, paragliding, canyoning, rafting, climbing and skateboarding. In the Games' official charter, the word 'spring' indicates both the season (the event is in May) and the emerging nature of the sporting activities within it. The first Spring Games were initially set to take place in 1996 at Pau, France (see Figure 1).

In fact, the logic of the Spring Games was the opposite to that of the Winter and Summer Games. The latter bring together institutionalized Anglo-Saxon sports, while the Spring Games aimed to develop new activities outside this institutional framework and to promote the sportification of these new forms of leisure. The principle therefore consisted of not preserving activities once they become institutionalized (as for example, mountain biking after the Atlanta Games of 1996),³⁵ but of developing more, lesser known adventure sports. The rationale behind this step was part of a socio-marketing plan designed to attract a youthful public and participants by preserving intact the image of sporting innovation.

The charter of the Games organized by Jacques Marion states that: 'the Games . . . in spite of the newness of the disciplines concerned, want to be in the tradition of the spirit of the Olympic ideal as defined by Pierre de Coubertin. . . The goals of the Games . . . are those of the Olympic ideal'.³⁶

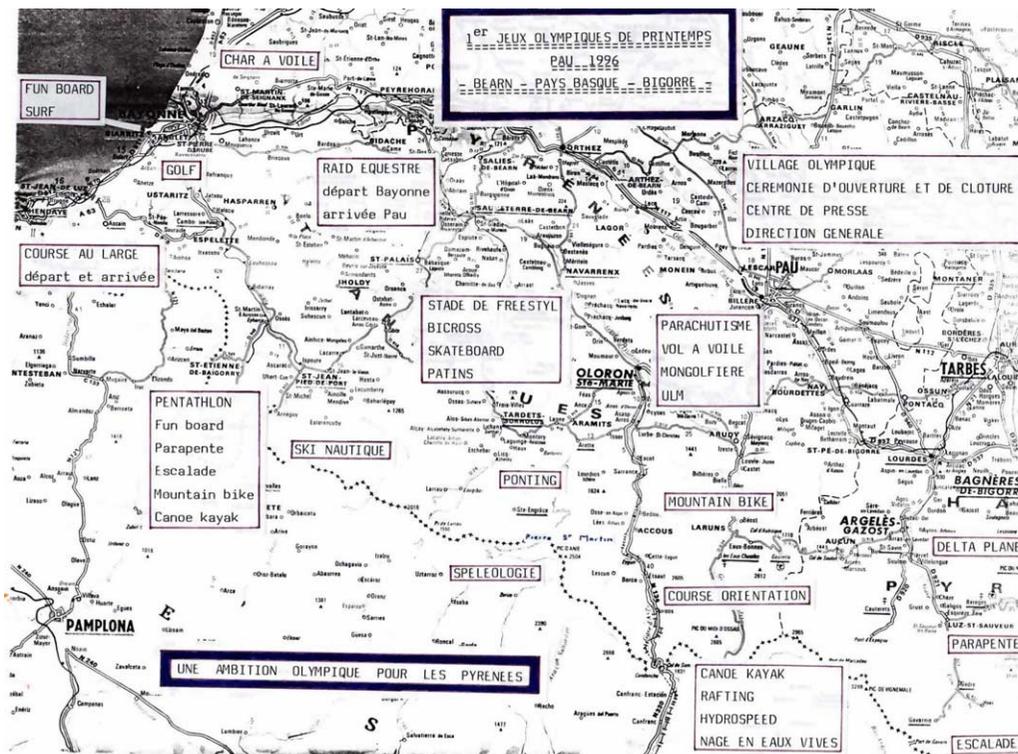


Figure 1 Extract of the first document of the project Spring Games, Jacques Marion, 1988.
Source: Personal archives of Jacques Marion.

Moreover, the Spring Games were designed to contribute to the global sportification of physical activities, which was one of the hidden aims of the Olympic Movement identified by several authors.³⁷ Sportification through the Olympic movement has different elements (Figure 2).

Firstly, there has been the diffusion of Anglo-Saxon sports through the Summer and Winter Games.³⁸ Secondly, sportification has taken place of activities which did not initially have a formal sporting character. Thus, Regional Games may be seen as contributing to the sportification of traditional games such as Basque pelota, sea jousting in Europe and many other folk games. As Errais and Fates note, ‘the Regional Games, counterpart on a different scale of the Olympic ones, cover the World space and help in the efficient spread of sport’.³⁹ The Olympics are not the only means of diffusion for modern sports, but this was clearly one of their goals. For example, when Pierre de Coubertin proposed the idea of the African Games in 1923, he said, ‘Sport will conquer Africa’.⁴⁰ For some, this became the means for a colonization of sport and a colonization by sport. Moreover, from a Marxist and critical thinking perspective, Brohm writes that the IOC represents ‘a rotten businessman of the sportification of the world’.⁴¹ Thirdly, the project of the Spring Games offered the Olympic Movement a further possibility for sportification, this time of new informal sports and leisure activities. The Spring Games’ formal structure and rules would introduce a sporting orthodoxy to these new sports.

From the idea of the Spring Games to the organisation of the Pyrenean Games of Adventure

Using the idea of the Spring Games, in March 1988 Jacques Marion tried unsuccessfully to obtain support from various local authorities in the Midi-Pyrénées region. Subsequently, at the beginning of 1989, with the

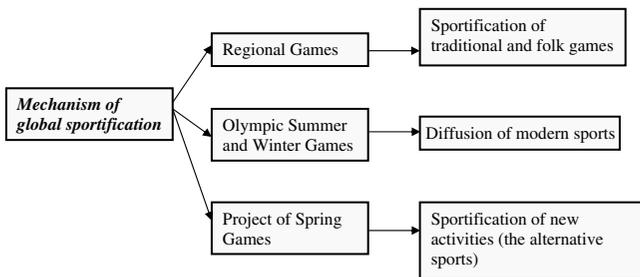


Figure 2 Spring Games in the global Olympic sportification system.

help of a consultant, Yves Janvier, Jacques Marion convinced the Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale (DATAR) to give him a grant of 300,000 francs (€45,700) for a feasibility study of his project. The DATAR, however, imposed a cross-border dimension with Spain. In the related discussions the Spring Games become the Pyrenean Games of Adventure, emphasizing the territorial anchoring of the project. In October 1989, Jacques Marion created an association called the Association Jeux Pyrénéens de l'Aventure, mobilizing several sports' associations from the Midi-Pyrénées region. This organization produced the competition schedule, and specified the types of competitions and the security conditions necessary for the proper conduct of the Games. The feasibility study, which gave a positive conclusion, estimated the overall cost of the event at 60 million francs (€9,100,000). The project was ambitious (Figure 3) and Jacques Marion set up a small company under the name of Nouvelles Pyrénées to work under contract for the Association Jeux Pyrénéens de l'Aventure. The Games' charter and other related documents recognize the importance of environmental concerns and of the cultural character of the sites selected for the event with the reinvention of the idea of pyreneism. The spirit of the association was innovative, international and Olympic. Publicity for the Games focused on moments of intense effort (for example Figures 3 and 4) and not Olympic themes (for example, teams on the starting line, podiums, national flags or overviews of spectators). Similarly, photographs illustrate jumps in skateboarding, loops in paragliding, abseiling in front of a waterfall, all clearly related to the theme of adventure, performance and challenge, or in other words achievement.

Having gained support from Jean Glavany, the French inter-ministerial delegate for the 1992 Olympics, the Pyrenees Games developed rapidly. The planned contacts with various representatives of the Olympic Movement occurred. On March 5, 1991, a letter from Nelson Paillou, president of the Comité National Olympique et Sportif Français (CNOSF), announced that this organization would act as patron for the Games. This letter secured further support from the Olympic committees of Spain and Andorra, as well as from the Association of the European National Olympic Committees (AENOC, renamed later the EOC).⁴² At the same time, groups of interested sports' associations were contacted and most also gave their support to the Games.⁴³ The Association Jeux Pyrénéens de l'Aventure became co-presided by Maurice Dubarry in France and by Luis Escalona and then Jose Luis Sierra in Spain. Both of them were mayors of local towns. Within each of the Games' disciplines, the world's best athletes were invited to compete. Finally, on the eve of the

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du Midi — Jeudi 2 janvier 1992

Les Pyrénées, banc d'essai des JO de l'an 2000

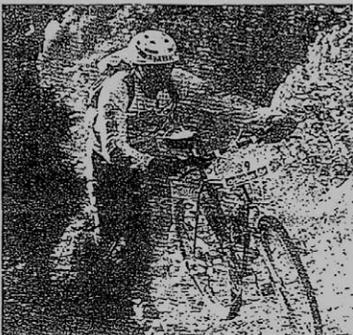
Les sports de loisir — escalade, biathlon, parapente et autres — seront-ils au programme des Jeux de l'an 2000? Les comités olympiques et parisiens et vont les "tester" dès 1992 en vallée d'Aure où sera organisé le premier championnat du monde de ces disciplines.

LES SPORTS-LOISIRS AU SECOURS DE LA COMPÉTITION

EXCLUSIF

L'avenir des JO se jouera dans les Pyrénées !

Événement : Parrainés par les comités olympiques espagnols et français, les Jeux pyrénéens de l'Adventure mettront en scène de nouvelles disciplines, directement issues de la mode loisir. Ces Jeux serviront de laboratoire pour préparer un éventuel « lifting » des JO de l'an 2000.



En profitant des splendeurs géographiques des Pyrénées, le val de montagne pourrait bien accéder au statut olympique.

<p style="text-align: center;">LES NATIONS</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Deux-trois nations sont inscrites aux premiers Jeux. Une délégation peut compter, au maximum, quatre-vingt-deux membres. Pour l'instant, seules la France et l'Espagne, organisatrices, ont assigné ce quota.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Voici les dix-neuf pays : Allemagne, Autriche,</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LES ÉPREUVES</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">En tout, on regroupera seize épreuves réparties en quatre groupes : montagne, alpinisme, eau vive et freestyle.</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Voici les épreuves (entre parenthèses le nombre de séries attribuées) : Montagne — Escalade (1), alpinisme (1), voile de montagne (2), voile à bord de montagne (1).</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Aér. — Parashooting (1), vol à voile (2), alpinisme (1), escalade (1).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LES SITES</p> <p style="font-size: x-small;">Voici les sites choisis pour l'édition de 1992 en vallée d'Aure : centre d'accueil et d'entraînement à Sarzanoulet, vallée de l'Arrou, centre de presse à Guzet, hôtel d'hiver à Saint-Lary, PC de secours à Lannan à Pau-Engos, PC de secours aux Pyrénées à Baret, espace de tentes à Valcarlos. Autre hébergement du personnel séjourné et d'entraîneurs à Guzet (à l'ancien) « maison de... ».</p>
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Figure 3 A newspaper article entitled ‘The future of Olympic Games is in the Pyrenees’.
 Source: Personal archives of Maurice Duchene.

Games, IOC president Juan Antonio Samaranch delighted the Pyrenean Games administrators with the news that the IOC would be the patron for the whole event.⁴⁴ In mountain biking, the winner would be given the IOC President Cup.

The Pyrenean Games of Adventure took place in the Valleys of the Aure in France and the Sobrarbe in Spain from 15–23 May 1993 (Figures 4 and 5). Several newspaper articles and radio and television reports covered the event.⁴⁵ For a week the Olympic flag flew above the athletes’ village which was based in Saint-Lary-Soulan. Paillou Nelson (president of CNOSE), Isidre Baro-Houses (president of the Comité Olímpic Andorrà,

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PYRÉNÉENS
DE L'AVENTURE**
du 15 au 23 MAI 93
(VALLÉE D'AURE / SOBRARBE)
HAUTES-PYRÉNÉES ARAGON
SOUS LE PARRAINAGE DES COMITÉS OLYMPIQUES FRANÇAIS ET ESPAGNOLS

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650 ATHLETES, 24 NATIONS, 15 SPORTS D'AVENTURE

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sous le patronage du Comité International Olympique.

Figure 4 French poster of the Pyrenean Games of Adventure. Other versions exist in Spanish.

Source: Personal archives of Maurice Duchene.

[COA]) and Carlos Ferrer (president of the Comité Olímpico Español, [COE], and also the representative of Juan Antonio Samaranch, (IOC president) gathered at the opening ceremony, coordinated around the theme of water. With over 1,000 athletes, twenty-six countries represented and 21,000 visitors, the Pyrenean Games of Adventure 1993 were considered a success despite some variances in the spring weather in the mountains.⁴⁶ This success might be gauged from the fact that the event attracted some of the most esteemed athletes from around the world such as: Filip Meirhaeghe, Nicolas Vouilloz, Anne-Caroline Chausson (in



Figure 5 Jacques Marion, creator of the project, in front of the Olympic flag during the Pyrenean Games of Adventure in 1993.

Source: Personal archives of Jacques Marion.

mountain biking), François Legrand and Yuji Hirayama (in rock climbing). In terms of handling the security and organization of the competitions, help was given by almost 300 volunteers and sixty organizers. The athletes' village housed some 650 people each day. Interestingly enough, for some of the more obscure activities such as canyoning and spelunking that were hosted by these Games, it was the first and last time they would ever be organized as international competitions.⁴⁷ France came out victorious from this event, winning fourteen gold pyrenées (the name given to medals), followed by Italy with six, and the USA and Britain finishing with four each. Conversely, Spain, the co-organizer of the Games, finished with only one medal, tying with Chile.⁴⁸

The abandonment of the programme

Although the Games were a success, the project had encountered several difficulties at the organizational level. In 1991, despite considerable progress, a power struggle emerged between Jacques Marion, the founder and idealist who set in motion this whole event, and the politicians who provided funds and felt 'it is he who pays that decides'. Secondly, in 1992, there were many changes in local policy making, brought about by the election of a new president to the General Council of Hautes-Pyrenees, which threatened to destabilize the project's organization. Finally, in 1993, further disruption was caused by the bankruptcy of the companies

responsible for marketing and financial sponsorship. These financial constraints forced the organisers to reduce the number of sporting competitions, but even so, with a total cost to France and Spain of 13.2 million francs or €2,010,000⁴⁹ (which excluded the construction of tracks for BMX and rollerblading around Vielle Aure lake, estimated at one million francs or €152,000) the event ran a deficit of two million francs (€305,000). Moreover, such was the extent of disagreement between the Games' officials and project creator, Jacques Marion, there was an exchange of blows between them during the event's closing party.⁵⁰

After the Games, with the support of the General Council of Hautes-Pyrenees, Maurice Dubarry, co-president of Pyrenean Games of Adventure and Maurice Duchene technical director of this same event, tried to repeat the success of this competition by duplicating the event on another site. The goal was to 'sell the Games to Andorra'.⁵¹ However, the reputed deficit of the previous Games and the complexity of their organization limited the number of investors. Despite the success of the event and the idea's considerable potential for further development, a second Pyrenean Games of Adventure has never been organized and at the same time the project entitled *Pyrénées: Laboratoire de l'Olympisme* was abandoned.

Shortly after the Pyrenean Games, in 1995 Jacques Marion proposed re-launching this Olympiad of Adventure in Morocco, once again under the name of Spring Games, and he was in contact with the Moroccan government.⁵² However, although they expressed interest in the programme, the Games did not come to fruition. Still more recently, a second proposal was made in Morocco to host the Spring Games in 2002, under the name of the Games of Adventure, but this time the project received almost no support and the Games did not take place.⁵³ On both occasions, however, Jacques Marion, benefited from some support of the Dialogic agency, which is an advertising, public relations and public affairs agency of the IOC.⁵⁴

Today, the time of these Games can be considered to be over, and it is not really possible to see them being reborn. Many of the ideals embodied in the programme *Pyrénées: Laboratoire de l'Olympisme* have been incorporated in other events, again rendering these Games unnecessary.⁵⁵ Thus, the Youth Olympic Games have been created to rejuvenate and revitalise the Olympic Movement,⁵⁶ the X Games have become a major event for adventure sports in the United States,⁵⁷ again designed to interest young people; and since 1997, the Trophy Desman (a form of cross-border adventure racing) has been developed in the Pyrenees with the help of European funding.⁵⁸ However, the memory of the Games persists. For example, some of the organizers of the Pyrenean Games of

Adventure have asserted recently that the idea of the X Games 'was plagiarised' by American journalists working for the American cable television network ESPN which subsequently invented and, since 1994, has organized these Games.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Taken forward under the responsibility of a local enthusiast, the *Pyrénées: Laboratoire de l'Olympisme* was an unknown project aimed at integrating outdoor and adventure sports into the Olympic field. The project consisted of creating a third type of Olympic Games, referred to as the Spring Games, in the French and Spanish Pyrenees. Despite the importance of the overall project for the promotion of sport at a global scale, locally there were organizational difficulties which contributed to the fact that the programme, as it was initially conceived, was never fully implemented. Indeed, only one edition of the Games took place on the boundary between France and Spain, under the name of the Pyrenean Games of Adventure in 1993 (*Jeux Pyrénéens de l'Aventure* or *los Juegos Pirenaicos de la Aventura*).

Given the importance of the original programme (with the project of Spring Games), and the sporting success of this one event (the Pyrenean Games of Adventure), it might seem strange that these questions have not already been subject to detailed study. Several factors, however, explain this situation. At the time that these ideas were formulated, the financial implications of the project (particularly its losses) meant that the subject was highly controversial and that politicians and businessmen were extremely reluctant to discuss it. Today, however with the passage of time, this reticence has largely disappeared and archival material has become available.

Regardless of the detail of the organization, this work reveals a global project for the sportification of new adventure activities in the late 1980s and during the 1990s. This was an attempt to link the Olympic ideal and adventure sports through a common denominator: the notion of '*exploit*' (achievement). Thus, the article focuses on an important phase in the history of the Olympics, but also contributes to developing knowledge of these new practices of outdoor and adventure sports.

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Notes

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