

WEMBLEY STADIUM

AN OLYMPIC CHRONOLOGY 1923-2003

by Philip Barker

The demolition of *Wembley Stadium* means that London no longer has an Olympic stadium. (*White City* was knocked down in 1985) Construction on a new stadium on the Wembley site is set to begin later this year.

January 10th 1922

Duke of York (Later King GEORGE VI) cuts the first sod on the site of the new stadium.¹

April 28th 1923

Stadium is constructed within 300 days. After testing by battalions of soldiers and workmen passed fit for the FA Cup Final. 200,000 are thought to attend this event.²

June 8th 1939

With London slated to host the 1944 Olympics, Stadium director Arthur ELVIN shows an IOC party around the stadium.³

May 1946

Arthur ELVIN (Owner of Wembley) offers the stadium as potential venue for Olympic Games.⁴

July 1948

The Greyhound Track is taken up a cinder track is laid.⁵

July 6th 1948

Olympic Way is opened by the Minister for Transport Alfred BARNES.⁶

July 29th 1948

King GEORGE VI performs the Official opening, and Cambridge Student John MARK arrives with

the final torch from Olympia.⁷ The choir sing the Olympic Hymn *Non Nobis Domine*.⁸

July 30th 1948 Athletics

The Athletics programme begins on day one of the games. Emil ZATOPEK (TCH) wins the 10,000m and Micheline OSTERMEYER (FRA) takes the first of her two titles Womens Discus.⁹

July 31st 1948 Athletics

Harrison DILLARD (USA) win 100m.

August 2nd 1948 Athletics

Fanny BLANKERS-KOEN wins the 100m, the first of her four gold medals. Mal WHITFIELD (USA) wins 800m, Gaston REIFF beats ZATOPEK in a classic race over 5000m, Adolfo CONSOLINI wins the Discus.

August 4th 1948 Athletics

BLANKERS-KOEN wins 80m Hurdles her second gold medal of the games and OSTERMEYER takes her second gold of the games in the shot.

August 5th 1948 Lacrosse/Athletics

Sandwiched between the morning and evening programme of athletics the mens Lacrosse demonstration between *All England* and the *Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of New York* Final result 5-5 .¹⁰

August 6th 1948 Athletics

BLANKERS-KOEN wins gold medal number three in the 200m

August 7th 1948 Athletics

Delfo CABRERA (ARG) wins the Marathon.

1 *The Times* 11th January 1922. The Plaque commemorating the event was placed at the foot of the main entrance to the ground. The Duke of York later became King GEORGE VI and as sovereign he declared open the 1948 Olympic Games.

2 *Daily Telegraph* 30th April 1923. Around 200,000 were estimated to have packed the stadium for the match.

3 *CIO Bulletin* No 42 October 1939. At the invitation of Mr ELVIN, Director of the Wembley Stadium, the members of the committee visited the stadium on June 8th 1939. London had originally been awarded the 1944 Olympics, which never took place.

4 *The Times* May 18th 1946. ELVIN told the (Wembley Stadium) shareholders that the board had agreed to lend the stadium.

5 AM Low *Wonderful Wembley*, Stanley Paul, 800 tonnes of cinders were laid to convert the track to athletics. This was done in a three week period.

6 *Times* July 7 1948.

7 *Official Report XIV Olympiad* London.

8 *The Glory of Sport* – Official Film of the 1948 Olympic Games.

9 *British Olympic Association (ed.): Official Report 1948 Olympic Games London*.

10 *USOC Olympic Report 1948*. The report notes the *Rensselaer Polytechnic* lacrosse team was not part of the Official USA team.

BLANKERS-KOEN anchors the Dutch team to the 4x100 her fourth gold medal of the games.

August 9th 1948 Hockey

Hosts Great Britain reach the Olympic final for the first time since 1920 with a 2-0 victory over Pakistan. Defending Champions India beat The Netherlands 2-1 in the other semi final.

August 10th 1948 Football

Sweden bt Denmark 4-2 in the Olympic Football Semi Final.

August 11th 1948 Football

Yugoslavia bt Britain 3-1 in second semi final match.¹¹

August 12th 1948 Hockey

The Netherlands draw with Pakistan in 3rd place playoff. India bt Great Britain in Final.

August 13th Hockey/Football

The Football medals are all decided at the first time of asking Denmark bt Britain 5-3 in Football 3/4th place Sweden bt Yug 3-1 to take the gold medal

August 14th 1948 Grand Prix

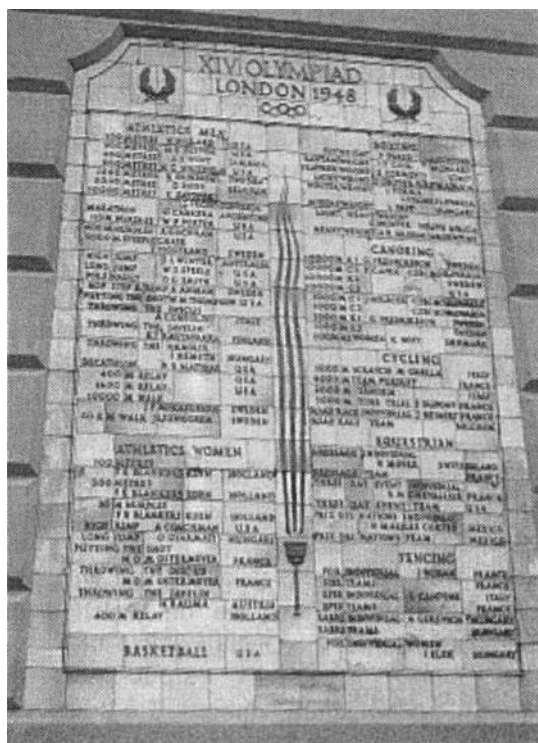
Equestrianism/Closing Ceremony

General CORTEZ wins gold medal for Mexico in final event of Games on Arete. The closing stages of the competition are transmitted by BBC television and delay the start of the Closing ceremony.¹³

The Olympic flag is lowered. Sir Frederick WELLS, Lord Mayor of London, receives the Olympic flag.

April 23rd 1949

The FA Amateur Cup Final is staged at Wembley for the first time. Olympians Eric



Commemorative tablet of the 1948 Olympic Games

FRIGHT and Tommy HOPPER turn out for *Bromley* as they win the trophy.¹⁴ HOPPER scores.¹⁵

April 14th 1950

The commemorative Plaques to record the winners at the games are unveiled. They flanked the Royal Entrance beneath the twin Towers. Lord BURGHLEY and Lord ABERDARE are in attendance along with Lord mayors past (1948) and present.¹⁶ (Sir Arthur ELVIN hosts a banquet for 250 guests to mark the event.)

November 25th 1953

Hungary beat England 6-3. The Hungarian team includes 10 members of the team which took the gold medal at Helsinki 1952. The

¹¹ BUSBY, Matt, *My Story*, Stanley Paul 1958. Matt BUSBY later (Sir Matt) the noted Manchester United Manager was in charge of the Great Britain Olympic Football team in 1948. Earlier in the year his *Manchester United* team beat *Blackpool* in the FA Cup Final at Wembley. In 1958 less than three months after the Munich Air crash, he hobbled round the Wembley sidelines to watch his team lose the FA Cup final to Bolton.

¹² His team included Ronnie SIMPSON, FA Cup winner at Wembley in 1952 with Newcastle United, who returned to Wembley in 1967 as part of the Scotland team which beat England 3-2. Peter KIPPAX had played for *Burnley* in the 1947 Final. Many British Olympic players also took part in FA Amateur Cup Finals which were staged at Wembley from 1949-1974.

¹³ WILLIAMS, Dorian, *Travels of a Commentator*, Methuen 1985. WILLIAMS a noted BBC Commentator on Equestrian Events was the announcer for the Show Jumping Grand Prix in the Stadium.

¹⁴ SEARLE Muriel, *History of Bromley Football Club*. Eric FRIGHT and Tommy HOPPER both returned to the stadium with Bromley in 1949.

¹⁵ GREEN, Geoffrey, *The History of the Football Association*, Naldrett Press 1953. Many former Olympians played in domestic cup finals at Wembley. Amongst the most notable were Bob HARDISTY of *Bishop Auckland* who skippered the 1948 team at the same stadium. Bill SLATER represented Britain at the 1952 Olympic Games and is the last British Olympian to win an FA Cup winners medal (1960 for *Wolverhampton Wanderers* v *Blackburn*).

¹⁶ *The Daily Telegraph* April 15th 1950.



Ποδόσφαιρο
Football

Programmes
1956 & 1971



match was arranged following an invitation from Sir Stanley Rous as he watched the Hungarians during the Olympics.¹⁷

May 12th 1956

Britain's amateur Footballers meet Bulgaria in the second Olympic Qualifying match. The British team draw 3-3¹⁸ but are eliminated 3-5 on aggregate. Lord BURGHLEY is the Guest of Honour presented to the teams.¹⁹

June 18th 1963

Olympic Light Heavyweight Champion Muhammad ALI beats Henry COOPER in the Stadium in the first of their two meetings.²⁰

October 23rd 1963

The *Football Association* celebrate their centenary with a special match at Wembley. Olympian Lev YASHIN (1956) is chosen for a Rest of the World Team which plays England.²¹

July 11th 1966

The World Cup is declared open by Her Majesty the Queen. The Organising Committee includes Denis FOLLOWS, the secretary of the *Football Association*, later to perform the same

role with the British Olympic Association.^{22 23}

July 13th 1966

Mexico's team which draws 1-1 with France includes Olympian Ignacio CALDERON who took part in the Tokyo tournament.

July 23rd 1966

Host nation England beat Argentina 1-0 in a famously controversial match where Antonio RATTIN is the first man to be sent off at Wembley. The Argentinian team includes Roberto PERFUMO another Olympic participant in 1964.

July 28th 1966

Legendary Soviet goalkeeper Lev YASHIN makes his farewell World Cup appearance at the stadium in the third and 4th place play-off. USSR lose 1-2 to Portugal.

July 30th 1966

England win the World Cup beating West Germany in the final.

May 29th 1968

Twenty years after coaching the British team in the 1948 Olympics, Sir Matt BUSBY guides *Manchester United* to victory in the *European Champions Cup*.

July 24th-30th 1968

Show Jumping returns to Wembley Stadium for the first time since the 1948 Olympics. Bill STEINKRAUS achieves the clear round to ensure the USA take the nations cup event.²⁴

Hans Gunter WINKLER of Germany takes the *King George V Cup* and is presented with his trophy by the Queen. Other Olympians from five nations taking part include the D'INZEOS, Marian COAKES and David BROOME.

17 TAYLOR, Rogan(Ed.), *Puskas on Puskas*, Robson Books 1997. The Hungarian team which beat England at Wembley included ten of the team which played in the gold medal match. The exception was BUDAI who only played in the preliminary round at the Olympics. The England team included George ROBB. It was his only full cap but he had represented Great Britain at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki

18 *Great Britain v Bulgaria. Official Programme May 12 1956* Wembley, Stadium Ltd. Lord BURGHLEY is guest of honour at the match, one of the first evening games to be played at Wembley.

19 *The Times* May 14th 1956. Britain lose 3-3 but lose 5-3 on aggregate. However subsequent withdrawals from the final tournament in Melbourne meant the British team was invited to make up the numbers in Melbourne. (They were eventually eliminated by Bulgaria again!)

20 *Daily Telegraph* June 19th 1963.

21 *Daily Express* October 24th 1963.

22 JOSE, Colin/ROBINSON, Michael, *Olympic Football 1900-1964*.

23 *Official Report of the 1966 World Football Championship*, The Football Association/Heinemann 1967.

July 20th 1969

Show jumping is staged at the stadium one final time. Despite the presence of Olympic stars from the Mexico games, crowds are poor. The turf cuts up badly and the decision is taken to move future shows indoors to the Wembley Arena.²⁵

May 5th 1971

Great Britain Olympic XI play their last home qualifier against Bulgaria.

Joe ADAMS scores the goal which gives them a first leg lead.²⁶ They lose the tie on aggregate.²⁷

October 17th 1973

Poland include 3 members of the Olympic Gold medal winning team for a World Cup qualifier. They draw 1-1 with England²⁸ and qualify for the finals where they suffer the same fate as Hungary twenty years before (defeat by Germany).

May 4th 1974

Brendan FOSTER (Olympic Bronze medallist 1976) wins an invitational 3000m race staged before the FA Cup final.²⁹ Also taking part are fellow Olympians Tony SIMMONS (GBR) and Juha VAATAINEN (FIN).

October 17th 1979

1979 Sir Horace CUTLER leader of Greater London Council presents feasibility study on staging the 1988 Olympics using Wembley for Opening and Closing ceremonies.³⁰

July 1st 1985

London announces its candidature for the British nomination for 1992 Olympics.

Sir Alan TRAILL, Lord Mayor endorses candidacy on final day for nominations.

London subsequently lose out for nomination to Manchester and Birmingham.³¹

January 1989

Sebastian COE leads a London 2000 Consortium bidding for the British nomination for a 2000 candidate. Wembley is indicated as the preferred site of the opening and closing ceremonies.³²

1989

The new seating area is opened at Wembley. It will be known as the *Olympic Gallery*.

June 30th 1996

Olympian Jurgen KLINSMANN (Seoul 1988) receives the European Championship from the Queen after Germany's triumph in Euro 96.

March 20th 1998

National Olympic Academy staged at Wembley to mark the 50th anniversary of the Olympic Games. Dame Mary GLEN-HAIG speaks about her 1948 experiences.³³

July 29th 1998

The Princess Royal, IOC Member In Great Britain, and President of the *British Olympic Association* hosts a gathering of 1948 Olympic

²⁴ *The Times* July 31st 1968.

²⁵ *The Times* July 21st 1969.

²⁶ *Great Britain v Bulgaria 24 March 1971 official match programme*.

²⁷ *The Times* 25th March 1971. This was the first leg of the tie and Britain won 1-0. The Bulgarians qualified for Munich after winning the return 5-0. After this match, the *Football Association* decided to abolish the distinction between professional and amateur players effectively ending British participation in the Olympic Football tournament. The West German player Uli HOENESS appeared for the full national team in their 3-1 victory over England in the European Championship at the Stadium before taking part in the Amateur team which played in Munich.

²⁸ MOORE/TYLER, *The Big Matches 1970-79*, Queen Anne Press 1980. The Polish team at Wembley included Jerzy GORGON, Kaz DEYNA and Robert GADOCHA from the gold medal winning match. SYMANOWSKI, and LATO both played in the earlier rounds. Ironically the hero of the Wembley match goalkeeper Jan TOMASZEWSKI did not make his Olympic debut until 1976 in Montreal, but did play in the final which Poland lost to GDR.

²⁹ *FA Cup Final Official Programme 1974*.

³⁰ *Daily Telegraph* October 18, 1979.

³¹ *XVII Olympiad London 1985 Official brochure London Bid committee*. "London has superb sports facilities within easy reach of each other which will be centred at Wembley. Wembley stadium is to have a massive face-lift".

³² *London 2000 Candidature. London Bid Committee Brochure*. It promised Major occasions at historic Wembley to open and close the games. In addition the Football final would be staged at the stadium in the plans submitted by this bid document. The BOA eventually chose Manchester for the British nomination.

³³ *Proceedings of the National Olympic Academy 1998*, Unpublished.



Στίβος
Athletics

competitors to mark the 50th anniversary of those games.

Fanny BLANKERS-KOEN is guest of honour as 120 competitors revisit stadium.³⁴

October 7th 2000

The last match is played at Wembley. England lose a World Cup Qualifier to Germany 0-1.

November 2nd 2000

Sir Steven REDGRAVE is among the Olympians and other sportsmen invited to the closing gala. Sir Elton JOHN is the star of a special concert for Charity.

October 2002

Bulldozers move in to begin the reconstruction of the new Wembley.

December 8th 2002

The Flagstaff which top the twin towers are removed. These will be preserved.

February 7th 2003

The Final demolition of Twin Towers is completed.



The Wembley
Twin Towers

³⁴ British Olympic Association, *Annual Report 1998*.