

VIVE LE SPORT!

THE GLORY OF SPORT
(Ruk-G.F.D.)

I COULD not have ignored Mr. Rank's Olympic record even if I'd wanted to—when it opened in Wellington it was the only film of any consequence showing which I had not seen. But I had several other reasons for attending. I naturally wanted to see how it compared with Leni Riefenstahl's effort in 1936, and I wanted to see Fanny Blankers-Koen. Besides—if I may borrow a phrase—it's not every day you have the chance of contributing a shilling to a sacred gas-ring.

The Glory of Sport is a valuable record of the 1948 Games, but not quite so valuable as it might have been. Over the German film it has the advantage of natural (and at times supernatural) colour, but apart from some interesting work in slow-motion, which has a real instructional value for track and field athletes and produces occasional amusing effects as well, the

photography is uninspired and unimaginative, and sometimes downright foolish.

I've never taken what might be called a burning interest in athletics, if I except one occasion in the army when I suffered a slight attack of athlete's foot, but I can imagine the feelings of frustration with which the enthusiasts will be overwhelmed when they see the final of the women's 100 metres sprint—photographed in slow motion, and from a point somewhere behind the tape. It is difficult to imagine what good purpose that kind of treatment serves. The sight of half-a-dozen young women in parti-coloured blouses and shorts bounding towards one with a lethargic grace has, no doubt, a curiosity value, but I can't think of any other value it can have. What I wanted to see was, if I may be allowed a Hibernianism, a straightforward side-on pan shot of the race taken at the correct speed. After all, it is of the essence of a sprint that it should be over quickly. To stretch it out three times its natural length was a piece of Procrustean procrastination which I

BAROMETER

FAIR: "The Glory of Sport."
DULL: "Casbah."

found unforgivable. This passion for *festina lente* had so strong a hold on the cameramen (or on Mr. Castleton Knight, the producer) that it is extended even to the final of the men's 100 metres, the race for the crown of the "world's fastest human."

In its place, slow-motion produced some unusual and delightful effects. I recall, for example, the wonderful stride of Reiff in the 5000 metres (the race in which Zatopek failed yet triumphed), and the smooth reciprocation of muscle and tendon in the long dusky legs of the Jamaican Wint. One of the delightful effects was the slow burgeoning of a smile on the face of Nemeth, the Hungarian, when he won the hammer-throw—an expression of purest human happiness unclouded by the shadow of any iron curtain.

There were amusing results as well—Ewell's exuberant but premature *pas seul* when he thought he had won the 100 metres, and the facial contortions of the shot-putters (one of the Finns spat on the shot for luck).

The effect of the whole film on me, and I suppose it is quite a natural effect in a film of this kind, was that

of a succession of vivid but unrelated impressions. *The Glory of Sport* is a valiant attempt to present the Games as the supreme expression of the Sporting Spirit—in contrast to the pagan glorification of physical perfection which Leni Riefenstahl specialised in—but a very sporting desire to give as many competitors as possible a turn before the cameras tended to slow the pace of the film, in the earlier stages at least, without contributing any unity or cohesion to it.

But the fleeting impressions, the moments of victory or defeat, were worth watching and remembering. From the Winter Olympics (which are also included in the film) I remember most clearly the spectacular leaping of the American Dick Button in the figure-skating, and the pure grace of Barbara Ann Scott. "She had also won the compulsory figures," the commentator told us, and one couldn't help thinking how pleasant it would be if figures like Barbara Ann Scott's were compulsory.

The verdant green and glowing brick-red of field and track in the opening Wembley sequence was almost out of this world but it set the stage admirably for the kaleidoscopic march-past—the brilliant scarlet of the Swiss contingent, the seemingly endless ranks of Americans (I saw no ivory-handled revolvers, but somehow or other was

(continued on next page)

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