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The Danger of Participating in the Heavy Games of the Ancient Olympics

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ABSTRACT

Through the present, we seek to stimulate the interest of researchers and practitioners at the scientific and non-scientific level as well as the athletes and coaches associated with today's so-called combat sports to turn their concern to the proper adaptation of the ancient Greek Olympic ideal and Olympic Games. Our concern is to motivate the Olympic Committee with a view to reintroducing the sport to the Olympics Sports program.

The Olympic Games were the oldest and most remarkable games of the ancient Greek world as a whole, among the events included in the sports program. The Olympics cultivated the body and the mind.

Characterizing Pankration the ancient Greek writer Philostratus said it was the best of the Olympic Games. Although the Olympics were reconstituted, Pankration was not included in the sports program of modern Olympics. However this fact has left a gap in the schedule of the Olympics because it is paradoxical that the absence of the event that contributed to the Olympic Games' prestige is absent.

Research is to present some of the techniques that were used by the most famous athletes in antiquity while trying to investigate the dangers as well as the general danger of using these techniques and the damage to the human body. At the same time reference is taking place of the reactions of the crowd attending these fights (where it was recorded) proving the popularity claim of high-intensity scenes provided by the Pankration.

As the main characteristic of this research, we would like to put the distinguishing feature, since we focus on studying through the ancient sources and not through secondary ones.

Keywords: Pankration, Boxing, Wrestling, Olympics.

INTRODUCTION

It is obvious that the athletes of heavy sports, wrestling, boxing, and Pankration, despite the fact that during training they were prepared to withstand the atrocities that would exist during the official matches. Even though they strengthened their muscular body groups through exercise and, in combination with their technical training, protected their joints and muscular system, nevertheless the risks of injury to their musculoskeletal system were not eliminated. Greater were those facing the boxers as they wore neither the current boxers' mouthpiece nor the protective amphotides that they used only during training, so these athletes were faced with the possibility of undergoing varying fracture injuries, dislocations, concussions, of the skin and bruises. Therefore, the differences in Pale or Pankration techniques were characterized by low or high risk. Very dangerous was the "Anastasia eis upos" technique where the athlete lifted the opponent high and then threw him down with force. This fall could cause concussions, fractures in the cervical spine but also in the spinal cord itself.

Boxing

During boxing matches, injuries were usually caused to the face. Common phenomena were nosebleeds, nasal bone fractures, tearing and swelling of the eyes as well as ears. Injuries became much greater and more frequent when, during the Roman period, they began to use the glove which had the Roman name *caestus* and was coated with metal plates.

In his romance, Theocritus, entitled *Dioscuri*, describes the boxing match between King Amykos and Polydeukus, which illustrates the painful consequences that fist bumps or punches can have.

The Polydeukus is causing terrible wounds in particular Amykos:

"But Zeus' son, moving, from one point to another, hitting with the right and sometimes with the left, forced Amykos, son of Poseidon, to stop his momentum despite his excessive force. Amykos stood like he was drunk by the blows he had received, spitting red blood and the heroes were shouting with joy as they saw his mouth and jaws full of wild wounds and his eyes narrow as cracks in his strangled face. Polydeukus continued to anger him, pretending to hit him from time to time; then, as he saw him paralyzed, he gave him a fist between his nose and eyebrows and tore his forehead to the bone. Immediately the striker fell on his back on the broad green grass. But he got up again and resumed a fierce battle. The opponents were trading deadly blows to each other with the harsh straps. But one, Amykos, the leader of the *Bevricks*, was punching to the chest and below the neck, while the other, the invincible Polydeukus deformed his face with terrible blows [1]. The heroes shouted with joy as they saw his mouth and his jaws full of wild wounds and his eyes narrow as cracks in his strangled face. In addition to the continuation of the book, there is a reference to trauma and rupture of the skin to the nasal seam to such an extent that the solution reached the bone: 'He gave him a punch between the nose and the eyebrows and tore his forehead to the bone. The punches were so intense that they brought about a macroscopic aesthetic deformation of the face: "the invincible Polydeukus, deformed his face with tremendous blows." This passage provides written evidence that boxing may not result in injury only in the frontal, but also in the oral and maxillofacial region. The trauma is directly dependent on the force of the strike and the tactics used to achieve it.

Artemidorus, referring to the sport of boxing in his book *"Oneirocritica"* writes: "Boxing is bad for everyone; because besides shame, it also means damage; because the person becomes ugly and runs blood, which is considered to be money. It's only good for those who make a living from blood; I mean the doctors, the slaughterers, and the cooks [2].

Distortions caused by boxing led some to write satirical epigrams, such as Lucille, 59-139 AD. Specifically: "With the fair play that all the Greeks competing emphatically, Androlus I all fought. They got me one ear in Pisa (Olympia), one eyelid in Platia (Eleftheria). In Pythia, I was raised unconscious, and Damotelis my father is preparing to raise me through the stages with my fellow citizens looking at me dead or mutilated [3].

Another epigram refers to multiple skull fractures as a result of participating in many boxing fights:

The aesthetic deformation of the face is such that it is said that nothing more will happen. Specifically: "Your sieve head Apollofani [4] has become like a worm-eaten, stinking paper of ant-piercings and right letters of Lyrical Lydia and Phrygia. Besides, you fearlessly fight, and if you are hurt more than you have now, you cannot suffer more [5].

Pale

Wrestling techniques also caused various injuries or just physical pain.

- The technique called "meso lamvanein" during which the wrestler or the Pankration wrench tightened the opponent's back and exerted pressure on the lumbar spine to force the opponent to withstand the pain of prohibiting it was particularly painful
- The *strevlizein* where the athletes of these sports could distort the fingers of their opponent could cause dislocation in the phalanges of the fingers
- The technique *trachilizein* which consisted of the entrapment of the cervix opponent can cause unconsciousness and death
- Ram stance: During these stance two hard and rigid surfaces, the front bones collide. This is quite dangerous because only a thin skin surface and no adipose protective tissue are inserted between the frontal bones, as is the case in the abdominal area, resulting in a less than minimal absorption of collision kinetic energy. In the simplest case, it can cause hives, edema, abrasions, and concussions. It can also cause craniocerebral injury and, in particular, external

mammary trauma to the scalp (skin), which may be accompanied by one or multiple strokes (small hematomas). If the injury is more severe than craniocerebral injury may occur accompanied by a brain hematoma

- Akroheirizein: It is a type of fight where the athlete was trying to overthrow his opponent or lead him to quit the fight, using only the fingers of his hand. Specifically in the 5th century BC. during the fighting, Leontiskos of Messina, Sicily, smashed his opponent's fingers, resulting in withdrawal from fracture after multiple fractures. Specifically, the great traveler of antiquity Pausanias states: "Next to Sostratos is the statue of wrestler Leontiskos, who came from Sicily by the Messina. He took the crown of victory by Amphictyons (Delphi) and the Eleans twice; It is said that he was wrestling the same way Sostratos did in Pankration; because Leontiskos did not know how to fight the other wrestlers, used to defeat them by bending the fingers of their hands [6]"

The phrase "Winning him scewing his fingers" indicates that the athlete has achieved victory because of bent fingers opponent. Leontiskos was never defeated by a rival; he had the amazing ability to break the fingers of opponents.

This athlete possessed the necessary power, where in combination with the technique he had adopted, he was allowed to trap the phalanx of the fingers and cause fractures on it or fractures in the fingers. The athlete succeeded in creating intense pain in his opponent and in doing so forced him to withdraw. If it caused a fracture or dislocation injury then in addition to the presence of pain there would be swelling, bruising and transient or permanent decrease in mobility in the opponent's phalanges.

Galen, referring to the wrestlers, mentions the injuries they are subjected to, saying: "In the palestra, you see villains and others with deformed, broken or distorted members. So if, apart from the advantages I mentioned earlier, playing with the ball is not a risk, then it is the best exercise [7].

Pankration

In the Pankration, the following traumatic injuries are initially caused by the use of the legs.

Such may cause the kick, pternizein (Nikostratos) targeting the innards. There was also a special technique of "gastrizein", which took its name from the area where the blow (kick) was applied, to the gastric area (stomach).

According to Pausanias, there was an athlete on the Pankration, who "caused screw dislocation on his opponent's fingers." Specifically: Then there is the statue of the Sikyon pankratist Sostratos, whom they called akrocheiristis because he grasped the ends of his opponent's hands and bent them without letting them down until he realized that the others had surrendered. He had a total of twelve wins in Nemea and Isthmia, two in Pythia and three in Olympia.

In that passage the pankratiast Sostratos is called {'Akrocheiristis} because he caught the phalanges of the upper limbs and forced his opponents to withdraw by "forbidding". The entrapment and dynamic bending of the phalanx are likely to cause fatalities.

Galen says of injuries sustained during Pankration and boxing: "Some people have even become deformed and ugly, especially those dealing with Pankration or boxing. When they have completely broken or distorted a member or have their eyes out, then one can clearly see what kind of beauty their occupation provides. And when they reach retirement age, most parts of their body are crippled [8].

LETHAL ACTIONS IN ALL THREE HEAVY GAMES

Boxing

The intensity of the strikes during the clashes was such that there were cases where they even led to death. In 496 BC boxer Cleomides from the island of Astypalaia, with his blow, crushed the sides and caused a deep injury to the bowels of Ikos's opponent resulting in the death of the latter. Eusebius of Caesarea says of the incident: "He opened his ribcage shoved his hand in and took off one of his lungs." The battle of Diognitus (488 BC) was also a deadly one, where, while defeating and killing its opponent, it was not rewarded by the Greeks. Regarding Cleomides' battle, Pausanias states: "It is said that during the previous Olympiad (496 BC) Cleomides of Astypalaia killed Ikos from Epidaurus, as he was fighting with him. Because the Greeks convicted him of his fault and took away his victory, he lost his mind in regret and returned to Astypalaia."

In another chapter of his work, Pausanias refers to the Boxing fight between Kreugas from Epidamnos and Syracuse Damocene [9]. Because it was evening and the fight was still going on, they agreed in front of everyone to apply the so-called scale giving each other a blow.

Krugas hit Damocene on the head, but to no avail, when Damocene's turn came, he asked Kreugas to raise his hand, and when he raised it, he gave him such a powerful blow causing his fingers to punch in the side and his hand slammed into Kreuga's body, grabbed his bowels and uprooted them by pulling them out: "Then the boxers were not yet wearing hard straps on the wrists of their hands but they were still boxing with the blunt ones, tied around the palms of their hands, so that the fingers would remain uncovered; an old way. Then Kreugas hit Damocene on the head. Damocene instructed Kreugas to raise his hand, and when he lifted it, he struck him with his fingers stretched out straight; his nails were so sharp and the blow so loud that his hand slid into Krug's body grabbed his bowels and uprooted them by pulling them out. Kreugas immediately froze. But the Argylls excluded Damocene because he violated the agreement and gave more than one hit to the opponent, giving victory to the dead Kreugas and making an image of him in Argos."

It is important to state that Damocene was not disqualified for killing his opponent but for striking more than once [10].

Pankration

Arrachion, whose statue had been set up in the Figlia market, in a confrontation with a Pankration rival, was held captive between the legs of the other while he was trying to choke him with his hands. Arrachion managed to crush an opponent's toe, and he immediately froze.

All this brutality of the heavy sports made Latino apologist of early Christianity Tertullian in his work to write:

"But if you claim that the scriptures mention the stage you are well in favor of it. But you will not deny that what is done at the stage is not worth watching: Punches, kicks, blows and all sorts of derogatory brutalities and deformities of the human face i.e., the divine image."

DISCUSSION

Based on the above text, we conclude that despite the violence we continue to be within the Athletic context as we perceive from the writings of the ancient writers, the violent scenes were not missing from the performance of the Heavy Games.

It is a fact that during the fight there were many and complex injuries which in some cases could even cause death

However, based on the actions recorded by the authors, the ultimate goal was to win the fight by any means. Indeed, for the modern Olympic ideal these things are something extraordinary, illegal and forbidden.

However, according to the written confessions we quote in their original form, we find out how the victory in one of the heavy races of antiquity gave the winner a special honor, which was particularly the case for pancreatic.

This claim is evidenced by the words spoken by his coach Arrachion during his fight urging him to defeat telling him how his victory would have been even more valuable even if it cost him his own life it alone is enough to get a more general picture of the impact of the sport on the ancient Greek world.

Judging by the actions of the ancient Greek athletes we can claim that not only was it extremely violent but also unthinkable for an athlete participating in the Olympic Games in modern times.

But it is of major importance that these actions were within the within a sports context.

It was not a war but a performance of a sport that was based on the institution of the ancient Olympic Games to honor the gods.

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