

The Calvert Sports Column

by Elmer Ferguson

The most compelling figure in Olympic games themselves—will be a blind man. There's something heart-breaking about the blind, their struggle against the mink and tragic blows of Fate that have robbed them of the opportunity to see the physical world as it is. And there's something even more poignant gripping and profoundly inspiring in the struggle of those in the dark to maintain some parallel with the life they cannot see.

No we believe that an almost blind athlete, who has completely lost the sight of one eye, and the other seriously affected, offers a more heroic figure among the great athletes of this continent who will compete for places on the United States Olympic team.

The gallant athlete in question is Bill Bangert. He finished fourth in the slottest feature of the National Indoor track championships held at Madison Square Garden recently. He put the 16-pound weight 52 feet 10 1/2 inches, which was one-quarter of an inch better than his title-winning toss in 1945. Jim Fuchs, world champion, won with 56 feet, 3 1/2 inches.

The remarkable part of Bangert's feat was that the almost sightless athlete had to be led to the putting ring where, of course, he was on his own.

Amazingly, this blind young giant's recent effort was better than any Olympic record prior to that of the London Games, when W. M. Thompson won with 56 feet 2 inches. In that event the great American athlete, Fuchs was third with a put almost exactly the same as Bangert's 55 feet, 10 1/2 inches.

The mighty Ralph Rose, four times U.S. national champion and twice Olympic winner, could not do as well as this sightless boy has done. Rose's best was an even 51 feet.

Bangert's determination and tremendous courage in the face of a disconcerting physical condition, are typical of his entire life—in business, sports. Before his eye-sight failed, he was a nationally football player as well as short and discus star at Missouri University and later at Purdue. He reached the national amateur heavyweight boxing final. He made a success of road-building. He even did a good job as a singer, but it took too much time from business.

The world will wish this gallant soul well in his battle for Olympic fame. Indeed the world admires all athletes who, despite physical handicaps, make their way well along the athletic trail. But those who live in the twilight of vision far below the normal are the most compelling of all, and it is amazing how, in several varieties of sport, they have risen above a deficiency which might be thought insurmountable.

Athletes whose eyesight is below normal do the baseball picture. There are a dozen be-spectacled stars in baseball, in the major leagues, several in the minors. They are by no means blind, of course, but their eye-sight is not good. Yet they have overcome that handicap. Several players in major hockey wear glasses. Hal Laycoe of Boston Bruins is one. Willie O'Rear of the Montreal Canadiens is another. In 1946, one of their stars was the whirlwind "Dutch" Hiller, a little bit of a be-spectacled player who could really fly, but whose defective vision forced him to wear heavy glasses.

Your comments and suggestions for this column will be welcomed by Elmer Ferguson, c/o Calvert House, 431 Yonge St., Toronto.

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AMHERSTBURG, ONTARIO

Motorist's Dream, Mount Blanc Tunnel

One man with a pneumatic drill recently strolled up the slopes of Mount Blanc, from the little Italian village of Entreves, and began chiseling into the mountain-face behind a rubble pile of dynamited rock.

Film-cameras were trained on him, neighboring motorists and journalists drank his health . . . and the man with the drill worked for thirty minutes and then tucked up and went on to another job.

Motorist's Dream Yet, technically, he had chipped the first yard for Italy in what looks like being the greatest engineering achievement of the 1950s. He is cutting of a 7 1/2-mile tunnel through the 15,780-foot bulk of

Europe's highest mountain. Motorists have dreamed for years of a tunnel through Mount Blanc on the direct route between Paris and Rome; and now 5,000 men are being recruited for four years' work to make this dream a fact.

If all goes well, the first cars will drive through in 1965. On an almost straight road, thirty-feet wide, surfaced with non-skid material, they will take less than twenty minutes to complete a journey which takes nearly six hours on existing routes.

A powerful system of shadowless lighting will make every yard as bright as day. Eight 5,000 h.p. ventilating systems to draw out dangerous exhaust fumes, automatic temperature control and conduits to keep the road free of water—all will contribute to ultimate comfort in this spectacular project. Continually patrolling the road, a squad of mobile mechanics will deal with breakdowns that might otherwise impede the flow of traffic.

Paying Proposition The tunnel will also channel electric power from the Italian Alps into France and Switzerland and serve as a short-cut for telephone cables. The three nations are contributing to the \$20,000,000 cost; but dues from 200,000 motorists a year are expected to make the tunnel pay its way.

Ultimately, an international private company is expected to maintain the tunnel on a business footing and run it, in effect, as a twentieth century Suez Canal.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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