

## The Origins of Diving

### DIVING

The origins of modern diving can be traced to two European venues.

#### GERMAN ORIGINS

In the little German town of Halle on the river Saale, it was a traditional specialty of the guild of salt-boilers, called Halloren, to practise certain swimming and diving skills. As they were used to staying in the water in order to rinse the baskets, many of them achieved high dexterity in moving into the water. Back in the 17th century, it was possible to follow their special custom of demonstrating their water skills and activities on the occasion of great princely festivals near the residence of the town sovereign. The Halloren used to perform a series of diving feats from a bridge into the River Saale.

When employment in saline work declined, many of the salt-boilers changed their way of earning a living to teaching swimming and diving. From Halle, some of them spread to other places, and two, Lutue and Tichy, went to Berlin where at the beginning of the 19th century some baths were established in the River Spree.

In 1840, in contact with the German gymnastics movement created by Jahn, Tichy finally formed the world's first diving association, the «Tichy'sche Frosche» (1840-1845). Most of its members were gymnasts starting their tumbling routines as a kind of water gymnastic. We owe thanks to two of them, H.O. Kluge and Clark Euler, for publishing the first detailed book about diving. Thus, diving became very popular in Germany.

#### SWEDISH ORIGINS

Other influences on the development of diving appeared in Sweden. Wooden scaffolding was erected around many lakes, inviting courageous fellows to perform diving feats. In 1898, the "Encyclopedia of Sport", reported enthusiastically about diving in Sweden: «One has to go to Sweden to see this beautiful branch of the art displayed to perfection. There, somersaulting from great heights, and swallow-like flights of a whole team are common».

#### APPEARANCE OF COMPETITIONS



1900 - Paris/Asnières: first Olympic diving exhibition

The beginning of competitive diving corresponded to the rise of swimming clubs and associations. In Germany, the oldest club "The Berliner Schwimmverein von 1878" called "Neptun" started international diving contests from a lower board and from a tower in 1882. In 1891, the first diving rules were adopted, and the following year, the first tables were published in Germany.

#### AMERICAN ORIGINS

At the turn of the century, another branch of diving found numerous followers in the USA: the bridge and artistic leaping. However, its development was stopped due to the high number of serious and frequently fatal accidents.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, diving obtained growing acceptance in the international arena. In 1904 in

Saint-Louis, with the support of the Germans, it was added to the Olympic programme. German divers dominated the springboard scene during the first two decades. The very famous Gottlob Walz won three gold medals in 4m, 8m and 12m diving at the so-called «Intermediate» Games, which celebrated the 10th anniversary of contemporary Olympic Games in Athens. He had taken his own diving board to the event. When high diving from a platform was introduced in 1908, the Swedish athletes dominated these contests.

## **RULES FOR ALL**

At that time, the diving rules were not recognized by all. They permitted curiosities such as backward somersault with "run header sideward". For the 1908 Games in London, a diving table was composed listing the types of dive allowed, giving descriptions of them and setting a difficulty value for each and fixing the number of required (4) and voluntary dives (3). The table contained 14 dives for high board and 20 for springboard. Recommendations for judging were also given. Following this first attempt to standardize diving rules on the international level, constant changes came about. At the FINA meeting in 1914 in Budapest, the German proposals for springboard and the Swedish proposals for high board diving were adopted as internationally binding rules.

German diving placed particular emphasis on the good body position during flight, whereas the Swedish set a high value on the courageous aspect of the dive and the splashless arrival in the water.

The terms of the dives were slowly established. They were often given the name of their inventor ("Islander" or "Auchbach" for a reverse dive) or after the image they represented ("Flying Dutchman" for a reverse dive) etc. In 1901, the Amateur Diving Association of England, the first ever diving association, was formed. It was active until it came under the aegis of the ASA of Great Britain in 1936.



## **TWO REPUTED COACHES**

From 1920, US divers asserted their supremacy for several decades. Two great coaches can be credited for most of these victories: Ernst Brandsten, an outstanding Swedish diver at the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, and Fred Cady. Their ideas, teaching methods and contribution to the improvement of equipment enabled them to produce a constant stream of high-calibre American diving champions. Brandsten and Cady introduced a more flexible board with a moveable fulcrum allowing the divers to leap higher and perform more difficult moves. These "Brandsten Boards" were officially accepted and used until the late 1940s. The American school of diving combined the values of the German and Swedish heritage.

## **WORK OF THE TDC**

A milestone in the further development of diving was the creation of the FINA International Diving Committee (IDC), currently known as the Technical Diving Committee (TDC), in 1928 at Amsterdam. The first important action of this Committee was to publish a new table in 1929 which divided all dives into five groups for springboard and six groups for platform diving. The same system is still used today. The following body positions were also established in this table: a) straight, b) piked, c) tucked and d) free. Until the 1920s, most dives were performed in the straight position. In 1921, the ADA of England permitted the pike and tuck position to facilitate completing somersaults and dives from lower boards. The free position was added later to allow new, more complicated dives.

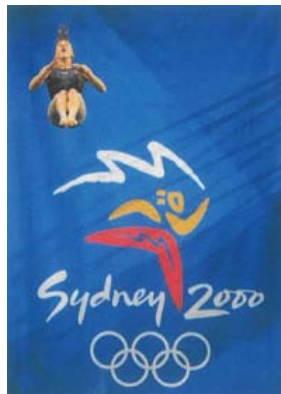


Alexandre Despatie (CAN)

### EVOLUTION OF EQUIPMENT

Technical improvements in equipment, new dives with higher degrees of difficulty, scientifically founded methods of coaching and new attractive international events helped diving develop to the current high standard. The laminated Brandsten board was quickly replaced by the aluminium board used at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. Then Ray Rude developed the "Duraflex Board", made of a single piece of tapered and riveted aluminium. Finally, in 1969, the "Mariflex" double tapered board was introduced. This, and the fibre-glass board which is also used, are very elastic, allowing much higher leaps and thus more dives with higher degrees of difficulty. Until 1920, high platforms were frequently temporary and shaky structures made of wooden scaffoldings. Then concrete towers with vertical stairs replaced the wooden constructions, and today many of them are equipped with elevators. That's progress!

### NEW INTERNATIONAL MEETS



Laura Wilkinson (USA)

Since their first edition in 1973, diving has been part of the World Championships programme along with the other FINA disciplines. In 1977, Age Group Championships, which have since become Junior Diving World Championships, appeared in the calendar, as did the World Cup in 1979 and the FINA Diving Grand Prix in 1995 with its Superfinal since 1998. In 2007, for the first time will be introduced the FINA Diving World Series in the objective to present the best international divers for more and more spectacular competitions.

### THE BEST



Min Gao (CHN)

Amongst the great diving champions of all time should be mentioned the first Olympic champion, the Swede Greta Johansson, who married her coach Ernst Brandsten, and moved with him to the USA with great success, as previously reported in this section.

The list of divers winning several Olympic and World Championships or World Cup gold medals includes the unforgettable names of Greg Louganis (1978-1988), Klaus Di Biasi (1968-1976), Betty Pinkston (1924-1928), Sammy Lee (1948-1952), Pat McCormick (1952-1956), Ingrid Kramer (1960-1964), Phil Boggs (1973-1978), Irina Kalinina (1975-1979), Min Gao (1986-1992), Mingxia Fu (1991-1994), Shuwei Sun (1991-1995) and Dimitri Sautin since 1992. Presently, the Chinese (Jingjing Guo, Lian Tian, Jia Hu...) have their hands on the most international titles.



Melbourne 1956 - Patricia McCormick

## Diving in the Olympic Games

Diving was first introduced in the official programme of the Summer Olympic Games at the 1904 Games of St. Louis and has been an Olympic sport since. It was known as "fancy diving" for the acrobatic stunts performed by divers during the dive (such as somersaults and twists).

The first Olympic diving events were contested by men and consisted of a platform diving event ("fancy high diving") and also a plunge for distance event, which heralded victorious the diver who could reach the farthest underwater, while remaining motionless after a ground-level standing dive. At the 1908 Summer Olympics in London, men's springboard diving was added to the programme replacing the plunge for distance, regarded as uninteresting.

The women's diving debut happened at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics in the platform event and was expanded to springboard diving at the 1920 Antwerp Olympics. A parallel platform diving event for men, called "plain high diving", was presented at the Stockholm Olympics. No acrobatic moves were allowed, only a simple straight dive off the platform. It was last contested at the 1924 Paris Olympics after which it was merged with "fancy high diving" into one competition renamed "highboard diving" (or just "high diving").

From 1928 until the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, the diving events remained the same. However, four years later in Sydney, the inclusion of a synchronized diving variant for the springboard and platform events elevated the list up to eight events.