



INTERNATIONAL  
OLYMPIC  
COMMITTEE

Historical Archives  
Olympic Studies Centre

## Henri de Baillet-Latour

### *Fonds list*

Overview of the content of the archives concerning his biography, mandates and activities from 1902 to 1994

14 April 2011



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**Reference:** CH CIO-AH A-P03

**Dates:** 1902-1994

**Level of description:** Fonds

**Extent and medium:** 0.54 l.m. Text documents.

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### **Name of creator**

International Olympic Committee (IOC).

### **Administrative / Biographical history**

Count Henri de Baillet-Latour was born in Brussels, Belgium, on 1 March 1876. The eldest of three children, he was the son of Count Ferdinand de Baillet-Latour, former Governor of the Province of Antwerp, and Countess Caroline d'Oultremont de Duras.

After studies at the University of Louvain, he undertook several diplomatic missions abroad for King Leopold II, whom he had known since childhood. In 1903, the King tasked him with organising sport in Belgium. This new mission came at just the right time, as Baillet-Latour was co-opted as a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Belgium that same year. In this connection, his first well-known contribution to Olympism was the successful organisation of the 3rd Olympic Congress in Brussels, in 1905. Between his election as an IOC member and the holding of this Congress, he married Countess Elisabeth de Clary on 14 July 1904. The couple had two children: Guy and Sophie.

Baillet-Latour took part again in the Olympic adventure when he helped to found the Belgian National Olympic Committee in 1906. One of the tasks of this body was to organise Belgium's representation at the Olympic Games (OG). As such, on two occasions Baillet-Latour found himself acting as Chef de mission for the Belgian team, coordinating his country's participation in the Games in London (1908), then Stockholm (1912).

The first OG organised after the Great War were in Antwerp, in 1920. Baillet-Latour had the delicate task of planning these Games, as Chairman of the Executive Committee for the VII Olympiad. Despite the political sensitivities resulting from the conflict, the short time available and the meagre budget available to him, he rose to the challenge skilfully and made the Games a success. His leadership, diplomacy and organisational talents were clear to see.

At the Prague Congress in 1925, taking advantage of his reputation acquired from the Antwerp Games, Baillet-Latour was elected for a first eight-year term as IOC President, as the successor to Baron Pierre de Coubertin. He was re-elected for a second term at the 1933 Session in Vienna, and remained President until his death in 1942. His presidency was marked chiefly by the issue of amateurism, discussions over recognising the International Federations (IFs) and the Second World War, which among other things forced the cancellation of the Games in 1940. In addition, being more pragmatic than Coubertin, Baillet-Latour was concerned mainly with the more technical aspects of Olympism. Among other things, he ensured that the IOC's rules, and the decisions taken at the congresses, were respected when the Games were organised.

The third IOC President died in Brussels on the night of 6 January 1942, a few months after the accidental death of his son on a mission with the Free Belgian Forces.

### **Immediate source of acquisition or transfer**

The fonds was received by the IOC Historical Archives in 1993, following the construction of the new Olympic Museum in Ouchy.

### **Scope and content**

The fonds covers the work of Count Henri de Baillet-Latour within the Olympic Movement, as an IOC member in Belgium (1903-1942), co-founder of the Belgian NOC (1906) and IOC President (1925-1942). It gives details of the Count's election as an IOC member and his participation in Belgian Olympic activities. In this connection, it describes Baillet-Latour's organisation of the Olympic Congress in Brussels (1905) and the OG in Antwerp (1920). Some documents refer to the Count's election as IOC President, at the Prague Congress in 1925, while others describe the presidential

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Last update: mars 11



hand-over from Pierre de Coubertin to Baillet-Latour. Lastly, the Count's correspondence between 1902 and 1942 gives details of his relations with various members of the Olympic family, including Pierre de Coubertin, Godefroy de Blonay, J. Sigfrid Edström, the French NOC and the IOC Secretary General, Albert Berdez. This correspondence covers a variety of topics such as the organisation of the OG – including the controversial Games in 1936 – amateurism, IOC relations with the IFs, the impact of the Second World War on Olympism – including the cancellation of the Summer and Winter Games in 1940 – and strengthening the ties of Olympism with South America and the Far East.

The fonds consists mainly of correspondence, but also contains interviews with Baillet-Latour published in various newspapers, some biographical texts and documents produced by the Count, such as circulars, speeches, travel reports and press articles.

**Accruals**

No

**System of arrangement**

The files are classified by subject, by document type or by activities in alphabetical order. The documents in the files are classified chronologically, from latest to earliest.

**Conditions governing access**

The documents are freely accessible, subject to the provisions established by the IOC to this effect.

**Language / scripts of material**

The documents are mainly in French. Some documents are in German or English.

**Notes**

The content of this fonds, including the Olympic identifications, are the property of the IOC.

**Rules or conventions**

Description complies with ISAD(G).

**Date(s) of descriptions**

August 2006