

Exciting Olympics Now History-

Large Crowds See Records Toppled by Native Athletes

By JACQUELINE GLASGOW
Staff Writer

There is a look that passes over the face of an athlete as he checks out the competition, a look that says: Am I the best? There is another look that passes between near-equals and fellow men when they have shared three days of contests and come away with a healthy respect for

the opposition.

The 1972 World Eskimo Olympics held July 27-28-29, cemented friendships between one village and another, between Eskimo athletes and Indian athletes, between resident Alaskans and out-of-state visitors, and between Canada and America.

Besides which, the three day event broke several standing records, saw the coronation of a queen, the near loss of a contestant's ear, the non-fatal eating of muktuk, and was a heck of a lot of fun.

As the Olympic flame flickered in seal oil lamps at one end of the Patty Gymnasium at the University of Alaska, spectators watched the parade of contestants around the floor to the beat of Eskimo drums. The 1972 competition was off to a start.

The close relationship between the Natives and the wild-life sharing the land with them was dramatically demonstrated in the Native dances, dances about oogruk and walrus, Wolf dances and Raven dances. The rich fur and feather trimmed costumes were a beautiful study in earth colors, pale golds ranging to tans, browns, and raven-black.

The world-famous Barrow dance group took first place honors in dance competition, with the outstanding King

Islanders and the highly original Fairbanks Interior Eskimos taking second and third.

Clayborn Tunik received the best dancer award, and 79 year old John Kakaruk received thunderous applause from the other contestants and audience as he received a Special Outstanding Dance award for a solo performance of his own song. John is a member of the Anchorage

(Continued on page 9)

1972 Olympics Now History . . .

(Continued from page 1)

Urban Natives Dance Group, appearing for the first time in the Olympics.

There was no shortage of athletic talent. The arrival of Eskimo competitors fresh from Inuvik's Winter Games two weeks ago sharpened the excitement.

While they waited turns, sitting relaxed on the gym floor with babies and little brothers climbing over them, Canadians and Alaskans joked and talked with one another, renewing many old friendships.

In many cases, blood ties relate the Inuvik people to the Alaskan.

But when each man stood up for a shot at the event, he was on his own, sometimes competing against brother. Concentration paid off.

Reggie Joule of Kotzebue outbested a field of challengers and toppled records in the one foot high kick, kicking to an unbelievable 7' 10", and landing back on his kicking foot. On the first night Joule consistently showed great style and form and was clearly going to be a man to watch for the remaining events.

The Killbear brothers set the pace for the tough Knuckle-Hop event, with Gordon Killbear of Barrow beating out Billy's 45' 7" and going a total of 70' 5", breaking his own 1971 record by 9' 5". Killbear who has worked in Inuvik said the Canadian team practices and trains for the events. When asked if he himself did, he said, "No, that's not our way. Just whoever is able to do it, that's it."

Marty Edwin of Fairbanks soared upward in the nalukatuk event. Nalukatuk means "tossing up" in the Inupiat language and it takes sturdy hands and know-how to toss the contestants skyward.

With a few eager but inexperienced tossers, 1972 entries did not reach their potential. Nonetheless Marty dazzled the crowd and Laura Bergt, a former champion momentarily stepped out of her role as judge and took second place.

Reigning queen Mary Keller took a try at the nalukatuk, briefly lost her queenly dignity, and decided to stick to fashion shows.

Reggie Joule, the young man who soared to heights in the high kick, soared again on the walrus skin "blanket", easily taking the men's nalukatuk as he went up and up and up.

The two foot high kick narrowed down to a grueling battle between Joule and a tall Inuvik carpenter, Mickey Gordon. As the target moved higher and higher, the two battled to the limits, Gordon taking a bad fall once on the slick paper.

Joule also took a fall and neatly turned a somersault to right himself. At 6' 11½" Joule hit the mark but landed incorrectly.

Gordon, leaping all the way to a height of 7' ½", bested his record from the Inuvik Games, to a loud round of applause from breathless spectators.

Later in the evening, Gordon suffered an injury in the final round of the Ear Pull contest with Barrow's Joe Kaleak. Mickey,

hanging in there with determination, lost out to Kaleak as the heavy cord that stretches between the men's ears cut into Gordon's and drew blood.

A crowd favorite, Mickey was rushed for medical attention but returned to the gym before the night was over.

Another event tough on ears was the ear weight contest in which lead weights are hung on a cord from the ear and a man walks until he can no longer carry them. Joe Kaleak of Barrow outwalked and out-eared the few brave enough to compete, going a distance of 720 feet with 14 lbs. of lead.

Lorry Schuerch, who did an excellent job overseeing the games as an official referee, entered the Indian Stick Pull. Making it look easy, Schuerch who is a state trooper from Barrow, hung onto the greased stick against all comers, making one think it would be a good idea to be law-abiding in Schuerch's territory.

Another Barrow strong man, Morgan Sakeagak carried four men weighing over 600 pounds a distance of 32'. Emcee Alfred Grant commented Sakeagak would be a good man to have around in moose season.

Several new games were introduced by the Inuvik team and although willing Alaskan Natives had a crack at most, the Inuvik men walked away with all events, except Drop The Bomb, an incredible test of strength which few men in the entire world can even attempt to do, won by Gordon Killbear, who showed unbelievable endurance in the Knuckle-Hop.

Inuvik's Buck Dick won the unusual Swing-Kick, touching to 52", with Joule taking second place. Inuvik men demonstrated the Knee Jump, another game new to the Olympics, similar to a standing broad jump, but beginning in a kneeling position.

Poldine Carlo, using a version of the Native women's ulu, demonstrated the age-old skill of fish-cutting — cleaning, gutting, and beheading about a thirty pound salmon in one minute 30 seconds.

Dorcas Rock, eager to put Point Hope in the winner's bracket, completed her fish in the shorter time of one minute 5 seconds, but judging is based also on the quality of the job, "not how fast you do it but how good you do it," said emcee Grant.

Dorcas entered the seal-skinning contest for the first time, once again taking second place, but showing that she will probably be hard to beat with a little more experience.

Elizabeth Lampe of Barrow, working swiftly with the ulu, neatly skinned her seal in one minute 27 seconds. Elizabeth is also a member of the prize-winning Barrow dance team.

Barrow's Isa Sovalik won the Parky Contest with a beautiful, full-length, all hand-sewn fur parka. The literally priceless garment was stolen some years back but finally made it back to the farthest North city from somewhere in Detroit, Michigan.

Authentic Native costumes played an important part in

judging the Native Baby and Queen contest. Three wide-eyed babies were paraded around the gymnasium by proud mothers also in costume.

Little Teddy Joe Boston from Chistochina, whose Indian name means Snowbird, charmed his way to his first Olympic gold trophy. It will be a while before spectators see how well Teddy Joe does in future Olympic competition, as he did not sign up for any of the other events. But watch out, big guys, in a few more years. . . .

Ten month old Jack Omelak of Anchorage took second place in an authentic fur parka of Eskimo design. Little Jack looked a little confused as to why he should be wearing his "warmies" while all kinds of strangers watching him fanned themselves with programs to cool off.

Third place honors went to Indian beauty Katherine Tulana, a pert little miss with lynx tails on her ponytails and dress, also carried by a beautiful mother in Native costume. Katherine's dress was created by her great aunt who followed as closely as possible an ancient design.

Katherine may have her eyes on the ivory crown of Miss World Eskimo Olympics some sixteen years hence. It was with a touch of sadness that Mary Keller, who won the hearts of everyone during her 1971 reign, removed her crown at its end.

With tears in her eyes, Mary said this had been the fullest year of her entire life and urged everyone to support future Olympics which bring together people from all over the world.

"I love you all and God bless," said the departing Mary, a queen in every possible way.

The crown passed to a lovely Athabaskan beauty, Helen Andon of Tanana, wearing a long Indian dancing dress with decorative beadwork, slippers of moose hide trimmed in beads and rabbit fur, and a matching beaded belt, medallion, and headband.

Already showing the attributes of a queen, Helen presented the award trophies to the winning contestants with grace and warmth.

Linda Pete from the Kuskwim area of the AVCP region was chosen both runner-up and Miss Congeniality, receiving an armload of yellow and red roses.

The royal court of young ladies, proudly modeling their Native costumes were: Alma Ahnangnatoguk from Nome, Mary Anderson from Bettles, Donna Demoski from Fairbanks, Pauline Adams from Barrow, Lorraine Englishoe from Fort Yukon, Martha Moses from Bethel, and visiting queen Carol Keipe from California.

Close to midnight, Helen Andon, the lovely new queen upon her satin throne was seen to yawn in ladylike fashion. Like Cinderella's pumpkin, the exciting 1972 Olympics turned back into an empty gymnasium. A litter of programs and discarded film boxes covered the floor and grumbling janitors came in with mops and brooms. The magic was over.