

# MISSIONARY "ATTENTION GETTERS"

## BASKETBALL IN GERMANY

By MELVYN M. COWAN

*Of the German-Austrian Mission*



"THE MORMON BOYS ON THE DEFENSIVE"  
Extreme left: Charles J. Perschon, Salt Lake; immediate foreground (in black trunks): La Von Earl, American Fork.  
Guarding the "shooting" man: (left) Donald L. Snelaker, Thornton, Idaho; (right) Thomas J. Curtis, Salt Lake.  
Referee: Melvyn M. Cowan, Salt Lake.

THE OLD TRUTHS ARE STILL THE SAME, BUT MISSIONARIES FIND THAT NEW WAYS MUST BE ADOPTED TO BRING THEM TO THE ATTENTION OF BUSY, INDIFFERENT PEOPLE. HERE IS THE STORY OF ONE NEW METHOD THAT WAS PROJECTED SUCCESSFULLY SEVERAL MONTHS AGO IN GERMANY.

THE METHODS of approach utilized by the missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in carrying the restored Gospel to the peoples of the world are as diverse and varied as the multiplicity of fields in which they labor. Each respective nation, section, sub-section, city, and rural district presents peculiar and particular problems and obstacles, that are to be surmounted by the enterprising activities of the Mormon missionaries.

In Great Britain and South Africa, baseball—championship baseball—has made untold hundreds of our friends living in these two sisters of the great Commonwealth "Mormon" conscious. The radio, one of the world's greatest advertising media today, has proved of inestimable worth in the destruction of prejudices and hatreds, born of falsehoods and ignorance, in our own United States.

And now in Germany's great and active "dritten Reich," "Mormonism" is being proclaimed in the wake of the basketball activities of the widely renowned and respected *Mormonen* quintet, because of the assistance that missionaries in various sections of Germany are lending in the introduction and instruction of this tremendously popular American game. In other words, Olympic enthusiasm is proselyting *Mormonismus*.

Perhaps no nation in the world to-



MELVYN M. COWAN

day is more "sports-minded" than Germany because of the Olympic games of 1936. Interest in athletics has achieved undreamed of proportions. The great appeal of two of America's leading sports, basketball and baseball, had—up until recently—completely failed to extend, to any great degree, into the hearts of the Continental sportsmen. Today, thanks to the influence of the Olympics, it is coming into its own! Germany is playing basketball!

The story associated with the introduction of the "Casaba" sport among the Germans links up very definitely with the work which is being performed by the Latter-day Saint missionaries of the German-Austrian Mission. Many of the particularly adept Mormon boys have attained considerable promi-

nence and recognition for the assistance and instruction they have extended various German organizations in acquiring a playing knowledge of the rules and fundamentals of the court game.

Some time ago, a group of Mormon missionaries who had been playing basketball once a week in Berlin as a means of worth-while diversion, was approached by representatives of the German Olympic Association and invited to assist in the organization and instruction of likely candidates for the German Olympic Basketball team. The opportunity was accepted with pleasure, with the result that the American boys were the recipients of generous nation-wide newspaper publicity. Later two of the Berlin missionaries, Charles E. Skidmore (Logan, Utah) and H. Bowman Hawks (Ogden, Utah) spent considerable time at the official Olympic training camp serving as coaches and trainers for the prospective team.

The movement inaugurated in Berlin soon spread into other sections of Germany, being received with particular enthusiasm by the Gera division of the German National Confederation of Athletics. There Elders Blythe M. Gardner (Richfield, Utah) and Morrel Ashby, (American Fork, Utah) were called upon by several athletic associations to provide, at the expense of these organizations, necessary

equipment and to undertake the schooling of interested members in the science and technicalities of basketball.

The two young Mormon coaches presented their proteges for the first time in an exhibition game as part of a week's sport program devoted to the development of the Olympic Games. The spectators, as well as the participants in the game, were delighted with the skill, speed, and accuracy which the new sport demanded. The ultimate result was that preliminary arrangements for a game between the "Mormon five" from Berlin and an "all-star" Gera team were immediately concluded, with Elder David E. Wright (Ogden, Utah) and officials of the National Federation of Athletics and of the (National Socialists Entertainment Association), "Kraft durch Freude,"\* acting as representatives of the respective groups.

**A** SATURDAY in November of 1935 was fixed as the day for the eagerly anticipated contest. No methods were spared in an effort to publicize the coming event: innumerable articles appeared in the sport columns of all of Gera's leading newspapers regarding the personnel of the Mormon team, explanations of the game, and progress of the "all-star" quint in the course

\*The literal translation of "Kraft Durch Freude" is: "Strength Through Joy."

of its diligent training preparations; announcements of the game were carried, via radio, into all of the surrounding towns, the most prominent of which is Leipzig—one of Germany's largest and most popular cities; and thousands of handbills were printed and mailed to all of the party-members living in the section. Gera and the surrounding territory awaited with eagerness the arrival of the American athletes, and elaborate preparations were made to afford them a most hearty welcome.

The Mormon team consisted of the following missionaries; Elders David E. Morrell (Ogden, Utah), captain and guard; H. Bowman Hawks (Ogden, Utah), center; Charles Perschon (Salt Lake) center; Alma LaVon Earl (American Fork, Utah), guard; Donald L.



REAR VIEW OF THE "MORMON" QUINTET SHOWING THE PROMINENTLY BLOCKED-WORD "MORMON" DISPLAYED ON THE BACK OF THEIR ATTRACTIVE SWEAT-SUITS.

sweat-shirts, bearing the large block-letter word *Mormon* prominently displayed in white across the back, trotted onto the finely equipped floor amidst the enthusiastic applause of several hundred spectators. The ease and grace with which they handled the "old apple" in the warm-up, invited a constant murmur of favorable comment. It might be well to add that it is very doubtful if one ever experienced a thrill at the appearance of his Alma Mater quintet comparable to that which a small group of missionary and Church member spectators derived from such an unforgettable event on this particular night in far-off Germany.

After an enthusiastic welcome at the hands of Herr Seifert, head of the Gera division of the German National Confederation of Athletics, the respective teams marched to the center of the floor and, as is customary today in Germany, saluted each other with outstretched hands and a vigorous "Seig Heil!" Referee for the evening, Melvyn M. Cowan (Salt Lake), was then introduced to the audience; teams were called into position; the referee's whistle shrieked, two vying centers leaped into the air, and the game was under way!

The final results are history! After fifty minutes of breakneck speed, intensive contest, and unsurpassable sportsmanship, which kept the spectators in a perpetual frenzy of excitement, the game ended in the favor of the Mormon five by the score of 27-21. The prowess of the German team in an entirely new sport, however, attested to the unquestionable competency of its two missionary coaches, David E. Wright (Ogden, Utah) and Donald E. Driggs (Salt Lake), and of the original organizer of the squad, Elder Gardner.

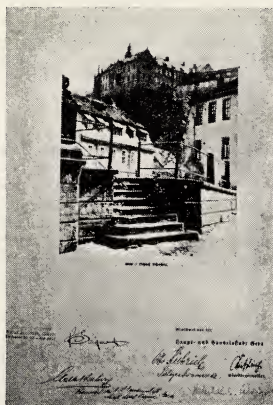
After the excitement attending



ELDERS DAVID E. WRIGHT, OGDEN, UTAH (EXTREME LEFT), AND BLYTHE M. GARDNER, RICHFIELD, UTAH (RIGHT CENTER) SHOWN WITH TWO OF GERA'S GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WITH WHOM THEY COOPERATED IN INTRODUCING BASKETBALL INTO THAT CITY.

Snedeker (Thornton, Idaho) forward; Jerome J. Christiansen (Salt Lake), forward; and Thomas J. Curtis (Salt Lake), forward. They arrived in Gera Friday afternoon and were the recipients of some typically German hospitality! The team was heartily greeted by a personal representative of the mayor of the city of Gera, who extended the "key of the city" to the Mormon boys amidst the favorable applause of the curiously interested throngs. Captain Morrell was then called upon to say a few words of acknowledgment in behalf of the members of the squad. At the conclusion of the welcoming ceremonies, the players were escorted to their splendid hotel in a large bus. Later in the afternoon, the Mormon boys—together with several of the other missionaries from the surrounding fields, who were in to lend moral and vocal support to their brethren athletes—were treated to a splendid sight-seeing trip of Gera and the vicinity.

At 8:15 p. m. the Mormon boys, handsomely attired in navy-blue



REPLICA OF THE DOCUMENTS WHICH WERE PRESENTED TO THE MISSIONARY PLAYERS, COACHES, AND REFEREE, BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MAYOR OF GERA, AS A TOKEN OF ESTEEM AND APPRECIATION. THIS PARTICULAR DOCUMENT, BEARING THE SIGNATURES OF MANY OF GERA'S LEADING GOVERNMENTAL AND PARTY OFFICIALS, WAS PRESENTED TO ELDER BLYTHE M. GARDNER AS AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS DILIGENCE AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SPORT IN THAT CITY.



## CHURCH MUSIC INSTITUTES ANNOUNCED

the conclusion of the play had subsided somewhat, the American players, the referee, and the Gera missionary coaches were called once again to the center of the floor, were congratulated by the official representative of the mayor, and were presented with attractive documents, bearing the signature of the mayor, as tokens of appreciation and gratitude from the city of Gera.

AS A FITTING and worthwhile conclusion to the night's entertainment, Elder Wright conducted an interesting illustrated lecture dealing with Utah's renowned National parks, after which some fifteen hundred tracts, concerning various phases of the Gospel, were distributed among interested spectators as they left the sport-hall. The evening was a success, and inestimable missionary work had been accomplished! "Mormonism" had become a word of esteem and respect in Gera!

Largely as a result of the conspicuous activities of the missionary basketball team in Berlin, an amateur league consisting of several teams has recently been organized in that city. The *Mormons* were regarded as the most potential contenders for the title, and each victory means another notable step towards popularizing our message and overcoming indifference and opposition. At the same time, the German nation is benefited in a particular way in that the "Mormon boys," both directly and indirectly, assisted her to prepare for the 1936 Olympics.

But even more significant—a new means has been provided whereby the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be preached by words and actions, to the youth of a nation—a youth less available, perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, than at any other period since the establishment of the Church in Germany.

## Landmarks in the Netherlands Mission

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and parents had never accepted the Gospel.

To my great happiness, and to the surprise of Mr. de Jong, the old house was still standing. One of the red-brick walls—the one on the north side—had collapsed, and the workmen whom Mr. de Jong had thought had demolished the house had merely rebuilt the wall



HOW TO PLAY SUITABLE SACRAMENT MUSIC WAS THE SUBJECT OF THIS PARTICULAR PIPE ORGAN CLASS, CONDUCTED LAST SEASON BY TRACY Y. CANNON AS ONE PHASE OF THE CHURCH MUSIC INSTITUTES WHICH ARE NOW BEING EXPANDED TO CHURCH-WIDE SCOPE.

OVER twelve hundred organists and choristers from the wards and stakes are expected to be enrolled by November 1st in a new series of Church Music Institutes, according to an announcement by Elder Melvin J. Ballard, Chairman of the Church Music Committee.

A special appropriation by the First Presidency makes possible the giving of special training to Church musicians, with the cost of instruction to be shared jointly by the local wards, stakes, and by the Church as a whole. Separate courses for organists and choir directors are planned, similar to the first institute concluded last spring at the McCune School of Music and Art, Salt Lake City.

Classes will meet one evening each week for a term of twenty-five weeks, except in some rural areas where the work will be condensed to two-hour

periods for a term of twelve weeks. The staff of more than a dozen special instructors met in June for a three day teacher's institute.

As rapidly as it can be organized the work will be taken into all sections of the Church. Tentative plans call for establishment this fall of teaching centers in Provo, Salt Lake City, Ogden, Garland and Logan, Utah; while in Idaho it is hoped to inaugurate classes in Rexburg, Idaho Falls, Burley, Pocatello and Preston. Instructions for registration are now being sent to bishoprics and stake presidencies in these areas.

An illustrated bulletin describing the new institutes has just been issued by the Church Music Committee and copies may be obtained by addressing Tracy Y. Cannon, Director, McCune School of Music and Art, 200 North Main St., Salt Lake City, Utah.

and given the house a new roof of thatch. Other than this necessary restoration, the small red-brick house still stands almost exactly as it did when the rays of Gospel truth first penetrated to the hearts of its tenants seventy-five years ago.

An invitation has been received from the present residents of the old house to come and hold a meeting within its historic walls again. What is more important than this invitation, is the fact that we have been requested by the present tenants to come and explain the truths of the

Restored Gospel to them, just as the first valiant missionary, Anne W. van der Woude did to his brother and sister-in-law three-quarters of a century ago.

It is planned to erect a stone marker at the site where the first baptisms in this land were performed, and to place a bronze plaque on the gable of the little Frisian farmhouse, that these sites might be remembered and become places of pilgrimage for those who wish to keep alive the story of this important event.