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A Golden Second Place: Manuel Plaza in South America

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SOUTH AMERICA UNDERWENT PROFOUND CHANGES in the half-century prior to the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. The considerable instability of the decades that followed independence progressively subsided and more stable nations emerged amidst positivist discourses focusing on modernity, progress, and civilization. National economies expanded based on a predominantly export-led model of growth that decisively incorporated them into international markets. This growth was also stimulated by inflows of foreign capital, principally British during the nineteenth century and increasingly from the United States thereafter. The economic prosperity favored the national elites but eventually reached the urban middle class. The working class forming in the rapid urbanization that took place across the region started to demand not only its inclusion but also a more significant role in the political process.

The economic growth also attracted massive immigration, mainly from Europe and especially from Italy and Spain. South American governments welcomed the new laborers. By 1930, immigrants and their offspring comprised 30 to 50 percent of the population in fast-growing urban areas.¹ These groups also pressed for inclusion in the political process. However, the response to this wave of European immigration was mixed. While some politicians, intellectuals, and scholars conceptualized the new arrivals as a force that

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would improve South American nations, others perceived them as a threat to supposedly distinctive and homogeneous national characters.²

Debates over immigration in early twentieth-century South America highlight not only the contentious issue of who was thought to properly belong to, and thus define the identity of, the nation but also the anxiety it produced in society. Who belonged and defined the nation was contested, or—using historian Benedict Anderson’s ideas—imagined, in the political realm as much as in different cultural expressive forms such as art, music, literary productions, or theater.³ As South America embraced modern sport and incorporated itself into the transnational and cosmopolitan Olympic world of the 1920s, dialogues about national identity started to be unpacked through the stories told of the performance of athletes. The dismissive comments, coded in a humorous tone, that Chilean deputy Héctor Arancibia Laso received from his congressional colleagues in 1912 when advocating the importance of sport for the nation had virtually disappeared by the time of the 1928 Olympic games. Years later, recalling the incident, Arancibia Laso wondered who would have imagined back then that sport would be the activity making Chile known all over the world.⁴ By the 1920s, South American states were engaged in efforts to prepare national delegations for the Olympic games. Regional politicians and sport officials were convinced that doing so advertised their nations and showed that they had embraced the “civilized” practices and values of North Atlantic cultures that were so dear to their modernizing projects.⁵

Chilean long distance runner Manuel Plaza lined up to start the 1928 Amsterdam Olympic marathon in this complex regional economic, social, and cultural environment. Plaza nervously toed the starting line along with sixty-eight runners representing twenty-three different nations, mostly from northern Europe or North America: he was the sole participant from South America.⁶ Although ignored by the Olympic powerhouses in pre-race prognoses, in spite of being the most accomplished long-distance runner in South America, Plaza knew that expectations about his performance ran high both in Chile and across the region. He was determined to offer his best effort. While the runner’s potential was widely recognized in South America, in his native Chile he was expected to give a creditable performance. What Plaza did not know, or could not expect, was the intricate reactions and portrayals of his silver medal immediately behind Boughera El Ouafi, an Arab Algerian representing France who was also labeled by the North Atlantic press as an “exotic” runner.⁷ The achievements of these “exotic” runners in the 1928 Olympic marathon stunned experts and fans alike in the “traditional” international track and field centers. In Chile and South America, the narratives and characterizations of El Ouafi’s and Plaza’s 1928 Olympic success reveal a different story—one in which complex genealogies of social class, race, national, and sub-continental identity interweave in unique patterns.

To appreciate these patterns and their national and transnational dynamics requires a review of track and field’s culture in 1920s South America, a familiarity with Plaza’s stellar career and road to Olympic glory, and an analysis of the Chilean, regional, and international media accounts of his 1928 Olympic performance. The saga of Plaza in Amsterdam was affected by the anxiety about national belonging and definition prevalent in South America. Plaza’s success was “nationalized” not only by the Chilean mainstream media but also by the runner himself. Thus, his silver medal was given golden value. At once,

Plaza's victory became Chile's triumph and his perceived qualities those desired for all Chileans. He was considered a national hero who symbolized the common folk. For a brief period, Plaza's success was also "South Americanized." Perhaps, the more lasting image of his race on that damp, cool day in August of 1928 is that of the dynamic and changing status of national identities. Like marathons, and for that matter all races and sports, identities are dynamic and influenced by particular historical contexts. Plaza's own motion in the 1928 Olympic marathon, relatively slow during the first half but decidedly paced during the second half, set in motion powerful images of national identity-making through Olympic sport in Chile and South America.

South American Track and Field in the 1920s

The history of track and field in South America is strongly correlated with that of many other modern sports. It was introduced in the region by British expatriates during the nineteenth century. In Argentina, British residents arranged the first meet in Rosario in 1866 and established the Buenos Aires Athletic Society the following year. Similarly, organized track and field started in Chile and Uruguay in the 1870s through the initiative of the Valparaíso Cricket Club and the Montevideo Cricket Club respectively. It was also the British community that instigated track and field in Peru. The Lima Cricket Football Club initiated meets in the late 1880s. It was during that decade that Brazilian newspapers begun reporting track and field competitions in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, although a German *Turnverein* founded in 1867 in Porto Alegre complemented its activities with such athletic events. Slowly, and sometimes erratically, the sport grew in visibility and prominence. In 1892, the Amateur Athletic Association of the River Plate was established in Argentina to bring together clubs from large cities. Two years later, the administration of Chilean track and field was transferred from the Valparaíso Cricket Club to the Football Association of Chile, which finalized its competitive seasons with a meet that brought together the most important clubs. In 1896, Chilean sprinter Luis Subercaseaux was the only South American entry in the inaugural modern international Olympic games in Athens. Even if Subercaseaux's Olympic participation was a fluke of history, by the end of the century track and field was an expanding activity in large South American cities.⁸

Enthused by the increasing association of modern sports with the tenets of Western civilization and the discovery of their adaptability to different cultural contexts, South Americans were gradually seduced by and earnestly embraced track and field. While the sport continued to flourish in the clubs and schools of the South American British communities, at the turn of the twentieth century the sport became part of the curriculum in public and private schools, and clubs whose names denoted national connotations continued to be created. Argentine educator José B. Zubiatur promoted track and field and other sports in his country based on a legitimating discourse that stressed the link of these activities to Western values.⁹ In 1907, Argentine deputy Carlos Delcasse thought that track and field was going strong in his nation. For Delcasse, his compatriots were capable of achieving Olympic success and at the same time expounding national progress.¹⁰ The blossoming of South American track and field increased the number and quality of the meets in different nations, which gave ample opportunity for athletes to develop their potential. This, in turn, coupled with the inchoate globalization of sport, stimulated and

eventually led to international meets. In 1907 and 1909 these events took place in Montevideo, where most of the competing athletes were from Argentina and Uruguay.¹¹ In 1910, Argentina's festivities to celebrate its centennial included a sport festival commonly regarded as the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* (Centennial Olympic games). The track and field championship featured Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan athletes competing in a program that virtually resembled that of the "real" Olympic games.¹² These developments prompted sport officials and sportsmen to appropriate and "nationalize" track and field.

The "nationalization" of track and field was patently demonstrated in the purposeful transformation of national bureaucracies from a British into a Spanish or Portuguese lexicon. In 1911 the *Federación Pedestre Argentina* (Argentine Pedestrian Federation) was created to organize and legislate track and field in the nation. Although this institution folded in less than a decade due to a rift among Argentine officials, there was no doubt that its replacement, the *Federación Atlética Argentina* (Argentine Athletic Federation), had to keep the Argentine nomenclature. Chilean track and field underwent a similar process. Even though the *Football Association of Chile* had already been renamed *Asociación Atlética y de Football de Chile* (Athletic and Football Association of Chile), in 1914 Chilean track and field became independent of football and the *Asociación de Sports Atlético de Chile* (Association of Athletic Sports of Chile) was born. Shortly after, the word "sports" was struck from the *Asociación's* title and substituted by *deportes*, its Spanish version. In Brazil, the powerful *Confederação Brasileira de Desportos* (Brazilian Confederation of Sports), also established in 1914, controlled national track and field matters. The *Federación Atlética del Uruguay* (Athletic Federation of Uruguay) took control of the sport in Uruguay four years later.¹³

The South American athletic effervescence was also indicated by the increasing numbers attracted to track and field and other modern sports. This did not escape the attention of foreign observers. In 1905, a member of the American-led Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) chapter in Buenos Aires observed that there was "a large and growing interest among Anglo-Saxons here, in cricket, foot-ball, tennis, rowing, etc. This is spreading also among Spanish-speaking youth, who until fifteen years ago took no part in athletics."¹⁴ Thirteen years later, another YMCA officer in Buenos Aires affirmed that "Contrary to their traditional tendency, the Argentines are now developing an insatiable thirst for foreign physical education and sport."¹⁵ That is, according to the YMCA, in less than three decades Argentines were capable of breaking through their supposedly sedentary tendencies to become avid sportsmen. An Argentine official concurred with the YMCA evaluation, stating during a 1918 track and field meet "in which the proportion of competitors ran ten Argentines to one foreigner, that twenty years ago when he organized the only track and field sports in Buenos Aires, the proportion stood exactly sixty-nine foreigners to one Argentine."¹⁶ Even if inflated, self-serving, or politically motivated, these assessments reveal an undeniably growing interest in modern sport, including track and field. By the mid-1920s, the YMCA recognized that it had spread throughout South America.¹⁷

As more athletes enlisted and the sport's national bureaucracies stabilized, the impetus for international competition gained ground. This trend was reinforced by the cre-

ation of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) in 1912, a global sporting bureaucracy in which Chile was a founding member. Local officials must have soon realized that the realities of the incipient global sport system required a regional administration that not only articulated the work of national bureaucracies but also served as a link to the new international governing body. In May of 1918, the *Federación Pedestre Argentina* organized a tournament in Buenos Aires to celebrate Argentina's revolution for national independence. In addition to the host athletes, both Chile and Uruguay sent strong representatives. In spite of having the smaller representation, Chilean athletes accrued the highest number of points in all events and won the team title. The highlight of the tournament was the stellar performance of Chilean runner Juan Jorquera in the marathon. Jorquera won with a world-class time of less than 2 hours 30 minutes. When the whole Chilean team was triumphantly welcomed home by an enthusiastic crowd Jorquera was clearly the man of the day.¹⁸

In addition to Jorquera's feats and the Chilean team success, the 1918 international track and field tournament in Buenos Aires was significant from an institutional point of view. The day before the tournament started, the delegates of the participating nations established the *Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo* (South American Confederation of Track and Field), one of the oldest regional governing body of any sport. The inaugural meeting decided to invite the remaining nations of the sub-continent to join the *Confederación* and to write its bylaws during the new institution's first year of life. To be accepted into the *Confederación*, national federations had to recognize each other as the sole authority of track and field in their respective nations, be affiliated or seek affiliation with the IAAF, and subject themselves to the bylaws of the IAAF and the International Olympic Committee (IOC). These requirements were the essential elements on which the international sport system based its structure and universal appeal. The inaugural meeting also resolved to hold the *Confederación's* first congress and South American track and field championship in April of 1919 in Montevideo. The goal was to organize the *Confederación's* biannual South American track and field championship, staged in odd calendar years so as not to compete with the Olympics; this was only possible after the late 1920s.¹⁹

It is in the context of South America's "nationalization" of track and field, which included the stabilization of national bureaucracies, the expansion of the number of athletes taking part in the sport, and the creation of the *Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo*, that Plaza's career took shape. The increasing opportunities to compete in South America and on the world stage that these conditions created in the late 1920s would prove critical for Plaza. These changes, along with the association of modern sport with Western civilization, the tradition of long-distance running spearheaded in Chile by Jorquera and other prominent athletes, and Plaza's own astounding talent for endurance racing, would make him a national and a continental hero.

Plaza's Career and Olympic Ascendancy

Manuel Plaza, born on March 18, 1900, grew up at a time in which track and field was expanding in Chile and throughout South America.²⁰ At the dawn of the twentieth century, both "conventional" track and field meets as well as a great variety of endurance

events were practiced in his native Chile. The latter races included walking between cities and running long distances in streets, stadiums, or hippodromes. These endurance events were organized by the athletes themselves or impresarios. Martiniano Becerra, a newspaper boy with a talent for endurance events, was inspired by a 12-kilometer exhibition race organized in Santiago in 1900 by the illusionist Guillermo Marini. After that, Becerra successfully challenged professional walkers and runners that came to Santiago. He also toured the country promoting his abilities and endurance feats. These events attracted mainly people of modest economic means, who in some cases made a living from walking or running long distances. In 1905 Becerra walked from Santiago to Chillán and back in two weeks, a distance of about 400 kilometers. Four years later, the first marathon was organized in Santiago's *Hipódromo Chile*; the winner was Antonio Creuz. Creuz, along with Becerra, took part in the marathon organized as part of the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* in 1910. While Dorando Pietri, the legend of the 1908 London Olympics, won in Buenos Aires in the last marathon of his career, Creuz and Becerra finished second and fourth respectively.²¹ Whether Plaza was impressed by Becerra's performances or Becerra by Plaza's promise, their paths crossed in the endurance racing world of 1910s Chile.²²

According to Plaza's father, his son showed an inclination for track and field as early as age twelve. Not long afterwards, Plaza successfully entered competitive events at the *Club Atlético Centenario* (Centenario Athletic Club) and in 1915, he ran in the *Circuito de Santiago* (Santiago's Circuit), a street event. Even after suffering a fall, the young runner came in second, and his recovery from that stumble marked a turning point. From then on, he decided to take his athletic career seriously. His first coach was the famous endurance runner, Becerra, and for some years, Plaza represented a running club named *Club Pietro Dorando*, founded by Becerra in admiration of the Italian star. Plaza's association with Becerra was athletically profitable and also made him aware of the tensions in Chilean track and field. Although by the mid 1910s the *Asociación de Deportes Atlético de Chile* had established itself as the sole track and field authority in the nation, the arrival within the association of many running clubs such as Becerra's intensified the rivalry between the advocates of "conventional" track and field and those of endurance events. The former, allies of the "amateur ideal," were displeased with the commercial character of some of the activities organized, sanctioned, or engaged in by the latter. Endurance athletes felt that on many occasions they were unfairly segregated. The tension between the two groups echoed the controversy in North Atlantic sport circles regarding the role and purpose of modern sports in national life. The "amateur question," which had noticeable class undertones, would not be absent from Plaza's career. Nevertheless, while the different parties fought over this issue in Chilean track and field, throughout the remainder of the 1910s Plaza continued to improve his running skills.²³

He did not take part in the inaugural South American track and field championship organized by the *Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo* in 1919 in Montevideo; instead, he made his debut a year later in his native Santiago. The twenty-year-old runner was placed second in the 10,000-meter and third in the 5,000-meter races, both won by Jorquera.²⁴ In 1922 Plaza continued to make his mark at home and began extending it abroad. He conquered the by then well-established Santiago-Valparaíso endurance race,

over roughly 120 kilometers, in 15:45:00.²⁵ That year, Plaza also dazzled Brazilian crowds with his performance in the *Jogos Latinoamericanos* (Latin American games), a series of sport events organized to celebrate Brazil's centenary. The Chilean won the 3,000-meter, 5,000-meter, 10,000-meter, and marathon races in the games.²⁶ (The 1922 marathon was Plaza's first race at the distance.) His performance in Rio de Janeiro was so outstanding that the Brazilian daily *O Estado de São Paulo* declared the young Plaza "a true champion."²⁷ Count Henri de Baillet-Latour, a future IOC president who attended the athletic festival, acknowledged the quality of Plaza and described him as a national hero.²⁸ Indeed, Plaza received the same adulation in Santiago as Jorquera after his 1918 marathon race in Buenos Aires. However, Jorquera, who struggled and dropped out of the 1920 Antwerp Olympic marathon, did not make the Chilean team in 1922. The previous year he had been declared a professional. Becerra suffered the same fate.²⁹

The bans on his mentors did not distract Plaza. Upon returning from Brazil he declared that he would resume training "to be always ready to win for my homeland."³⁰ Alfredo W. Betteley, an official of the *Asociación de Deportes Atlético de Chile*, appeared to have been as pleased with Plaza's "irreproachable behavior" as with his performance.³¹ A staunch defender of amateurism, Betteley had criticized Jorquera for his performance in the 1920 Olympic marathon and did not have much patience for those he thought abused the principles of gentlemanly athletics.³² Endorsed by the Chilean sport establishment, Plaza's undeniable talent for running became increasingly associated with the Chilean character. The month after the conclusion of the *Jogos Latinoamericanos*, journalist Rafael Maluenda baptized Plaza as Chile's "popular ambassador." According to Maluenda, Plaza became admired by the common people as the representative "of the fighting virtues of the muscular power and of the strong and triumphal will of our race."³³ In this approving environment, Plaza's exploits in Rio de Janeiro were celebrated in November with a popular festival that featured different sports and physical activities. Chilean President Arturo Alessandri Palma crowned Plaza and expressed kind words to this "humble son of Chile." For the journalist of the daily *El Mercurio* reporting the celebration, Plaza defended Chile's colors in front of foreigners that were ignorant of his heart and physical skills.³⁴

The 1922 *Jogos Latinoamericanos* were not officially sanctioned by the *Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo*. No other South American championship was held until 1924. This time it was the turn of Buenos Aires to welcome Argentine, Chilean, and Uruguayan athletes. Plaza turned in another outstanding appearance on the South American stage winning the 5,000-meter, 10,000-meter, and cross country races.³⁵ No wonder he was chosen to represent Chile at the 1924 Paris Olympics. Some Chileans petitioned to lift the ban on Jorquera and Becerra, but to no avail. Long-distance runner Floridor Castillo, who represented Chile in the 1922 *Jogos Latinoamericanos* along with Plaza, was also ruled a professional. The defenders of amateurism prevailed, making Plaza the lone Chilean entry in the long-distance races in Paris.³⁶

The arrangements for Plaza's debut on the Olympic stage were not the most conducive to a strong performance. He was finally told that he would travel to Paris the day before departure. The rushed trip across Chile to Argentina followed by the Atlantic crossing left Plaza exhausted. He had little time to adjust to the European summer, hone his skills, or familiarize himself with the marathon course.³⁷ Many of the coaches in

charge of the South American teams were of the opinion that their athletes' performances were negatively affected by the lack of time to recover their best condition after the debilitating trip across the Atlantic.³⁸ Plaza finished in sixth place, and immediately ahead of El Ouafi, who finished seventh.

The 1924 Olympic marathon was 21 kilometers out and 21 kilometers back. Plaza's start was somewhat erratic. According to newspaper accounts, soon after the gunshot he dropped his hat and had to run backwards some fifty meters to recover it.³⁹ For most of the first half of the race Plaza stayed among the last-place runners. At about the same time that the Finn Albin Stenroos took the lead before the midpoint, Plaza increased his pace and steadily moved forwards. At the 34.85 kilometer control point, the Chilean was sixth. The Finn remained in the lead. Three kilometers later, Plaza moved up to fifth. But despite his efforts, the British runner Samuel Ferris, who had also come from behind, closed the gap on Plaza in the last few kilometers, and took fifth place from the Chilean.⁴⁰ Although it was noted that Plaza started the marathon too slowly, allowing his opponents to establish a considerable advantage early in the race, his performance was praised in South America. For instance, the Argentine daily *La Nación* believed that Plaza had a brilliant marathon because he was able to beat seasoned specialists such as the Estonian Jüri Lossman, who was second in the 1920 Antwerp Olympic marathon. He was also praised for having looked up Stenroos after the race to shake his hand.⁴¹ Comments such as these situated Plaza among the elite of long distance runners in the world and categorized him as a gentleman. Outside South America, Plaza's sixth place did not seem to attract much attention: the *New York Times* simply listed his name among the top ten finishers. Neither Plaza's sixth place nor El Ouafi's seventh place in their Olympic debuts merited any reflection.⁴²

Two years after the 1924 Paris Olympics, Plaza cemented his growing reputation at the South American track and field championship held in Montevideo. This time he dazzled Uruguayan track and field enthusiasts, winning the 3,000-meter, 5,000-meter, 10,000-meter, and cross country races, all of which he dominated quite comfortably.⁴³ Plaza's success fit well, was inspired by, and served as a boost for the vibrant South American track and field culture. By 1926, YMCA officials in South America recognized not only that that year's regional championship was very successfully organized but also "That track and field athletics are gaining in popularity was amply evidenced during these Games, when it was estimated that from 6,000 to 10,000 people were present each day."⁴⁴

Before the championship, Plaza's amateur status was questioned by the *Federación Atlética Argentina*. Apparently, the Argentines were suspicious that Plaza had received a house for his international performances. Chilean track and field officials clarified that, even though a state minister thought of doing so, the idea was discarded after the *Asociación de Deportes Atlético de Chile* advised the politician of the perilous consequences of such a well-intentioned gift. The Argentines felt reassured by the explanation and Plaza proceeded to excel in Montevideo.⁴⁵

Large crowds gathered the next year at the 1927 South American track and field championship. Replicating his performance in Montevideo the year before, Plaza left no doubt in Santiago that he was the continent's best long distance runner. Once again, he conquered the 5,000-meter, 10,000-meter, and cross country races. He also led Chile to

win the 3,000-meter team race.⁴⁶ The overall team competition was fiercely contested between Argentina and Chile. Foreign observers narrated thus the drama:

In no previous year has there been such a close contest in the race for the Athletic Championship of the Continent as this year. Chile and Argentina fought for supremacy day after day, first with one in the lead, and then the other, with victory undecided [*sic*] until the last day. To Chile, the host country, went the honors of final victory, with a total of 77 points. Argentina secured 60 points, and Uruguay but 1.⁴⁷

Plaza's absolute dominance of the long distance events was an enormous contribution to Chile's victory. He was the most successful athlete of the championship. Whereas he won four events, only two other athletes managed to win more than one event—both were Argentines and won two apiece.⁴⁸ With the Amsterdam Olympics a year away, Chilean sport authorities took note of Plaza's recent performances. Supported by the government of General Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, they prepared more thoroughly for the nation's 1928 Olympic excursion.⁴⁹

Unlike in 1924, the Chilean track and field delegation arrived in Europe well in advance of the competitions. By mid July, they were in a training camp in Berlin. Unsurprisingly, the nation's hopes were concentrated in Plaza, "whose heart, energies, and self respect," reported *El Mercurio*, would give Chileans "at least the satisfaction of seeing him in one of the first positions in the marathon."⁵⁰ On July 21, Plaza and the rest of the track and field contingent moved back to Amsterdam. Unfortunately, O. Molina, Plaza's fellow marathoner, broke his foot and dropped out of the race, leaving Plaza as the only Chilean marathon entry in Amsterdam—which made him even more the nation's hope.⁵¹ According to M. Bravo, a Chilean footballer who had participated in that sport's Olympic tournament and had just returned to Chile, Plaza was considered by the many South Americans in Amsterdam as the "genuine representative of this continent." Bravo elaborated that Plaza had followed a scientific training regime and recorded times "that will undoubtedly surprise our compatriots."⁵²

The scientific understanding and practice of athletic training was of mounting concern all over the world. It was believed that the rationalization of athletic training would lead to increases in human performance. In South America, scientific training was also perceived as a sign of modernity and functioned as a metaphor for progress. The arrival of German coach Carlos Strutz in Chile during the early 1920s was a turning point in the practice of track and field. Initially, Strutz's scientific training highlighted the inefficient methods followed by long distance runners; indeed, Betteley derisively called the endurance runners "dogs' trotting," a comment meant to criticize more than just training methods.⁵³ By the 1928 Olympics, Strutz had become Plaza's coach.⁵⁴

The marathon was set for the afternoon of August 5. Following a scientifically programmed training regimen, Plaza concentrated on the challenge lying ahead and in the fortnight prior to the event there were plenty of reports on his training and condition. Speculation about his chances vis-à-vis the runners of the "traditional" Olympic powerhouses also intensified, especially in Argentina and Chile. On July 24, *El Mercurio* announced that Plaza was in excellent shape. The following day, the Chilean public learned that the runner trained for one hour per day. A day later the chronicle reported that Plaza had run for a half an hour on the marathon course. On July 28, the press reported that

Plaza was suffering from the consequences of the warm, humid weather. Despite this, a United Press article featured in the same newspaper announced that among the athletes in Amsterdam there was a rumor that Plaza could be a surprise in the marathon. The article explained that Plaza could challenge the favorite Finn runners and that he had trained on site more than any other runner. In Argentina, the daily *La Razón* replicated the rumor that Plaza could surprise the track and field establishment. The day before the marathon, both newspapers printed another United Press article in which Plaza figured as a possible winner.⁵⁵ “South America is watching with great interest the performance of Manuel Plaza” was *El Mercurio*’s sport pages headline.⁵⁶ The whole of South America expected “the brave exponent of our race” to admirably represent Chile. Plaza’s status as a favorite did not extend much further than sub-continental shores. He figured neither in the *New York Times*’ prognosis nor in *The Times* of London pre-race predictions. Equally oblivious to Plaza’s potential was journalist Tommy Meredith, whose pre-race analysis appeared in *La Razón*.⁵⁷

Better recognized in South America than in the international centers of track and field, Plaza himself was confident of his chances in the 1928 Olympic marathon. From Amsterdam he wrote to his brother Luis that he was waiting for “his great race” and hoped to produce an honorable performance for his country.⁵⁸ After two days rest he left the *Hotel Metropole*, his residence in Amsterdam, for the race. Plaza told Ricardo Müller, who presided over the Chilean track and field team, that he would “do everything possible so that the Chilean flag will fly from the Olympic mast.”⁵⁹ Plaza followed a carefully prepared race plan to conquer the out and back course.⁶⁰ During the first half of the race, he stayed in the middle of the pack. At the race midpoint, he was twenty-third. From then on, Plaza pushed decisively forward: the 30-kilometer mark found him among the top ten runners. Nine kilometers later, El Ouafi had overtaken every runner but one and was in second place, followed by Plaza. Soon thereafter, El Ouafi took the lead and Plaza moved into second. Santiago Pérez, who was in charge of the Chilean boxing team, encouraged Plaza in the last kilometers of the race, appealing to the runner’s patriotism. Running by Plaza’s side, Pérez shouted: “Remember that you are Chilean, Plaza! Run, run!”⁶¹ Plaza heeded Pérez and desperately tried to catch El Ouafi but, although the Chilean significantly closed the gap shortly before entering the stadium, the Arab Algerian runner managed to stave off his efforts. In the end, El Ouafi won with a time of 2:32:57; Plaza crossed the finish line twenty-six seconds later. The Finn Martti Martellin came in third, 1 minute 39 seconds after Plaza.⁶²

As Plaza crossed the finish line he encountered the jubilant greetings of Müller and Carlos Fanta, a journalist, track and field official, and former athlete. A group of ecstatic Chileans quickly gathered around the silver medalist, draped him with the national flag, and rejoiced in his achievement by belting out renditions of the national anthem and the traditional *Canción de Yungay*, another patriotic song. The crowd present in the stadium offered Plaza an ovation while Baillet-Latour, the president of the IOC, congratulated the new Chilean hero. The impact of his Olympic success was only starting to resonate, both in Amsterdam and in South America. That resonance would soon be heard around the world, though its meanings would differ in different places. The reverberations of Plaza’s run in Amsterdam, which gave Chile its first Olympic medal, were not only far reaching but complex and multifaceted.⁶³

The Images of Plaza's 1928 Olympic Marathon Success

Back in the *Hotel Metropole*, Plaza did not have much time to rest after the exhausting race as Chilean officials staged a banquet in his honor on the very night of his marathon success. Plaza's teammates joined the Chilean ambassador to Holland and his staff for the occasion, raising their glasses to celebrate Plaza, President Ibáñez, and Chile.⁶⁴ Earlier, Plaza had publicly thanked President Ibáñez and Minister of Economy Pablo Ramírez for their aid, which in the runner's opinion was "the sole way in which the flag of the Homeland can be seen flying in these contests."⁶⁵ A few days later, Müller cabled President Ibáñez expressing gratitude that, thanks to the president's generous support, Chile's flag had flown on the Olympic mast.⁶⁶ Intoxicated by the symbolism, Müller recalled that Plaza had fulfilled his promise and made the Chilean flag figure prominently in the Olympic stadium. Captured by the same symbolic power, Plaza, accompanied by Müller, had contemplated the Chilean flag still flying high in the Olympic stadium and cried uninhibitedly before leaving for the hotel.⁶⁷ These comments fused Plaza's success with that of his nation and conjured up powerful images of sport as a vehicle for representing the growth of the nation in international arenas and of the role of politicians as facilitators of that manifestation. Plaza's run set the scene for the full emergence of sporting nationalism in Chile. An editorial in *El Mercurio* testified that "Plaza achieved a wonderful victory for his homeland."⁶⁸ In this Chilean context, it comes as no surprise that Plaza's silver medal was given a golden meaning that transformed second place into victory.

In Chile, the public closely followed Plaza's pursuit of Olympic glory. Multitudes gathered in newspaper offices to hear the cables informing Chileans of his fate. They joyously exclaimed "¡Viva Chile!" and shouted hurrahs for several minutes after learning that he had earned the silver medal. The news traveled quickly across Santiago, igniting impromptu expressions of patriotism. Activities going on at the Municipal Theater and the *Hipódromo Chile* were interrupted to inform patrons of the Chilean runner's success. In the *Hipódromo*, the crowd launched into hurrahs for Plaza and Chile while in the theater the assembly sang the national anthem and gave the athlete a thunderous ovation.⁶⁹ As the whole nation celebrated, President Ibáñez cabled Plaza, congratulating him for his brilliant performance.⁷⁰ President Ibáñez formally represented the nation, and his communication fit perfectly with the construction of Plaza as the incarnation of Chile. Plaza received numerous cables in the days following the race, but he was especially pleased with President Ibáñez's telegram.⁷¹ Recalling the race for the press, Plaza revealed to a United Press reporter that nationalism was central to his performance. At about fifteen kilometers, Plaza noted that he had suffered acute rheumatic pains in one of his knees and feared he would have to drop out of the race. However, he "thought that all my compatriots in Chile expected me to succeed, and making a superhuman effort, I ran with all my strength."⁷² Plaza's sentiments reveal that he understood the connection between his performance and the nation—a connection he embraced.

Although Plaza appeared to be fully aware of the relevance that his 1928 Olympic appearance had for his compatriots, Coach Strutz reminded him of his responsibility in a peculiar way. A few days before the marathon, Plaza received a letter from Strutz in which the German warned him of what was to come and how he could successfully overcome all

obstacles. Strutz wrote his protégé that he was used to running among familiar people who loved him and had always been proud of him. But now Plaza had to face the best marathoners in the world, and, unfortunately, Strutz would not be able to cross the Atlantic and support his pupil. The coach recommended that as Plaza ran the Amsterdam course he pretend “that in each tree of the road there is a Chilean that cheers you, that the spirit is comforted, that he helps you win. And you will win.” In other words, Plaza was supposed to imagine Chilean ghosts along the course and to draw inspiration from them. But Plaza’s ghostly compatriots were also an omnipresent phenomenon that would hold him accountable. Imagining Chile, Plaza would be running with and for the nation, and also under its gaze. Many would have experienced such a proposition as a formidable burden, but not Plaza, who, according to journalist Mario Muñoz Guzmán, when referring to Strutz’s letter, felt differently and believed more than ever in his triumph.⁷³ Propelled by both his imagined and present compatriots, Plaza’s run embodied the nation. He did not let Chile down.

Plaza’s connection with the nation was constructed to accommodate specific characteristics thought to be important in the Chilean national character. Repeatedly, the runner was presented as an exemplar of the “Chilean race.” The day after the marathon, Plaza was portrayed as confirmation that “the traditional strength of our race has its exponents well defined who can compete advantageously with other peoples.”⁷⁴ Osvaldo Kolbach, who was in charge of the Ministry of Public Education’s Department of Physical Education, argued that Plaza’s victory, “which is the victory of Chile abroad,” was an example of the value of physical activity in the progress of the nation. Kolbach also implied that Plaza followed the healthy life of body and soul required from one who wants to win his contests. He thought that Plaza’s example should motivate all physical education teachers to promote the relevance of sport.⁷⁵ Similarly, in the Senate, Plaza was honored because his effort in a very demanding event was an occasion to promote “the energy of the race.”⁷⁶ He was also described as a pious, unassuming, determined, and hard-working man. For instance, after the marathon, the press approvingly reported that during his training in Amsterdam Plaza never went out after dinner. That he sent greetings to his wife and coach was not lost on the journalists either. The press highlighted his great heart and will to put Chile on the international stage as the qualities that allowed him to endure so many privations during his months of arduous training.⁷⁷ In short, Plaza embodied the synthesis of the desired Chilean national ideal.

The moral character of the “Chilean race” embodied by Plaza represented an approach to the concept that drew on and blended cultural and biological criteria. Although it did not dominate the narratives of Plaza’s role in the Amsterdam marathon, a racial subtext punctuated his saga. This is not surprising in a country with a large native population in which the elites had adopted the racial theories of the day and associated modernity with whiteness. The “Chilean race” Plaza represented was one with European lineage and Western values; the indigenous population was clearly excluded from this imagined “race.” This was forcefully demonstrated by an exchange between Fanta, the Chilean journalist and sport official, and some foreign colleagues as Plaza was trying to catch El Ouafi in the last few kilometers of the marathon. As they rode together in the bus following the race, Fanta recalled being asked about Plaza’s biographical data. The foreign jour-

nalists wondered if Plaza was the son of foreign parents. When Fanta answered that Plaza was pure Chilean, they concluded: "That means he is Indian." Reflecting about the episode, Fanta commented that for "the majority of the journalists it was a surprise to learn the Chilean race existed."⁷⁸ Implicit in Fanta's reflection is the exclusion of the indigenous population from the imagined "Chilean race." Fanta did not see any "Indians" in the emergence and consolidation of the "Chilean race" that Plaza embodied. In instances such as this the distinction between cultural and biological approaches to the concept of race blurred and the two reinforced each other. For the elite Chileans imposing their views of the nation, the idealized Chileans Plaza had imagined in each tree along the marathon course had no indigenous lineages. Fanta's Eurocentrism allowed no room for an indigenous component in the Chilean vision of Plaza's conquest of the other Occidentals in the marathon—and also ignored El Ouafi's role in the contest.

If racial overtones were mainly an implied subtext in Chilean narratives of Plaza's performance in Amsterdam, social class figured more prominently. The runner's success took on even more importance because it was achieved in an event that was framed by strict amateur rules. After the race Plaza reportedly received lucrative offers to run in Germany, Sweden, and the United States.⁷⁹ The response to these proposals reminded Plaza, and all Chileans, of his social standing and what was expected from him. Juan Livingstone, the Chilean Olympic *chef de mission*, dashed the initial enthusiasm ignited by the prospect of extending Plaza's international racing after his Olympic success. Livingstone declared, "On sober consideration, however, this plan was considered impracticable. That boy [Plaza] must get back at his job of selling newspapers."⁸⁰ It is worth noting that that newspaper "boy" was at the time well into his twenties. The notion that he had initially developed his running abilities through his job was as widespread as the newspapers he delivered. Wary of what might happen during his absence, Plaza had asked his brother Luis to take care of his job and perform it to the best of his abilities.⁸¹

Plaza was not from the leisure class, had a family to support, and could have used the money the professional pedestrian circuit offered. But the pressure for him not to accept the scheme kept mounting. From Chile, Ithel Stewart, an official with the sport club Green Cross who frequently advised the runner, remembered that Plaza had received several offers to run professionally and had always refused them. Stewart took the opportunity to praise Plaza's motivation for such refusal, which reaffirmed the runner's moral qualities in a new light. For Stewart, Plaza had "a very honorable concept of what an advocate of physical exercises should be like."⁸²

Most probably, Stewart was convinced about the virtue of the amateur ethos and had Plaza's best interest in mind. Nevertheless, his comments might have also been partially inspired by the fact that Plaza represented Stewart's Green Cross club. Undoubtedly, the club's reputation would be much enhanced with Plaza, the amateur and Olympic sensation, defending once again the Green Cross colors. Whether Plaza himself seriously considered running professionally or not, he was aware that his name and career were at stake. The comments prompted by Chilean sport officials in relation to the proposals that he run abroad after the marathon, along with first hand knowledge of the disrepute that had befallen Chilean long distance runners who had crossed into the professional ranks, must have deterred any temptations. Judged by his public declarations, Plaza was convinced

that amateurism was the best way to continue his career. A little over a month after the marathon, Plaza declared, "I received numerous offers to run in Stockholm and the United States, but I preferred to return as an amateur to my beloved land where mine and my compatriots are waiting for me."⁸³

Once again, Plaza presented his marathon performance as an unconditional sacrifice for his nation. In doing so, he adhered to the prevailing moral code, helped cement it, and discouraged other runners from exploiting their abilities for commercial gain. Plaza was seen as an advertisement for Chilean progress and adoption of Western values, which in the case of sport demanded following the gentlemanly amateur code. For Chilean sport officials, Plaza's decision to remain an amateur symbolized the disciplining of the unruly long distance runners of old.

Another proof of their controlling power was the inference that Plaza's silver medal was the result of a scientifically designed training method. This training was not only articulated as effective, a further sign of Western rationality, but also as imposing a regimen requiring substantial self-sacrifice. His proficient marathon plan was "careful and well designed" and "the result of an intense daily training that lasted two months."⁸⁴ According to *El Mercurio*, Plaza "had worked with perseverance," and "he had not disappointed us."⁸⁵ Chilean society recognized what Plaza had to endure to plant Chile on the Olympic map and advertised his sacrifice as an emblem of the nation's embrace of Western-style modernity. Ironically, in the near future, the nation would try to reward Plaza monetarily for his achievements and sacrifices while at the same time reminding him of his humble social origins.

A few days after Plaza ran the Olympic marathon, the sport club Green Cross proposed a fundraising effort to provide Plaza's family a home as a token of his compatriots' gratitude for having set Chile on par "with the most advanced countries in sports."⁸⁶ For the club, the house represented a "good practical way to reward Plaza's efforts."⁸⁷ The government agreed and pledged a considerable sum to the project. At the same time, another fundraising campaign was initiated by the daily *Las Últimas Noticias* "to reward the great Olympic champion." The daily solicited contributions of one Chilean peso per person. President Ibáñez was one of the first to "adhere to this popular sentiment," pledging that amount and lamenting that the rules of the fundraising did not allow him to contribute a higher amount. Several state ministers followed the president's example and a host of social institutions then followed suit. The press highlighted the contribution of an association of Argentine residents in Chile, which pledged a peso for each of its members. The rationale for the second fundraising campaign underlined the symbolic connection between Plaza and the nation and highlighted that the star had aroused patriotic sentiment "without more resources than his great heart" and, not coincidentally, his own patriotic drive. Plaza did not own much but he possessed, in the minds of the powerful elite, the right values. Not expecting much, if anything at all in return, the runner was willing to take great pains in order to ready himself to represent Chile.⁸⁸

The fundraising efforts contradicted the amateur code defended by some of the same people who proposed campaigns to reward Plaza. Albeit well-meaning, the proponents of building a house or opening a bank account for Plaza manifested a paternalistic attitude toward the working-class athlete. It is uncertain whether Plaza received any material reward for his marathon run, however, his "popular" status was a recurrent issue in post-race

constructions of his success. On the one hand, this referred to the extensive recognition he enjoyed in Chile and beyond. On the other hand, it served as a reminder of his common social origins. Thus, in proposing its fundraising, *Las Últimas Noticias* declared him “a genuine son of our land.”⁸⁹ Similarly, in the Senate, Plaza was introduced as “a son of the people” able to distinguish himself on the world stage as an exemplar of Chilean sport and to further the nation’s prestige—an exemplar running to the beat of the desired bourgeois moral values.⁹⁰

In addition to Plaza’s image as an ideal Chilean who had extended the prestige of Chile abroad, the runner’s achievement was also presented as a manifestation of South American progress. With the exception of football, in which Uruguay and Argentina had won gold and silver correspondingly, before the marathon the region had not fared too well in Amsterdam. Even before the race, for *El Mercurio*, Plaza stood as “the true idol of this continent” and as the only athlete who could save “the prestige of South American sport.” After the race, the same newspaper pronounced that Plaza had done just that. His silver medal represented “a formidable triumph for the Latin American colors” and “will be celebrated by Chileans but also by the sons of all the nations of this continent.”⁹¹

Argentines agreed with this assessment. *La Prensa* opined that Plaza won the silver medal not only for Chile but “for the South American continent.” The newspaper also agreed that the athletic background of the runner was outstanding and that he was “undoubtedly, the best long distance runner produced by this part of the American continent.”⁹² In the same spirit, the Argentine sport magazine *El Gráfico*, a publication that influenced readers beyond Argentina, declared that Plaza had defended “not only the prestige of Chilean sport, but also that of South American sport.” *El Gráfico* concurred that the runner was “one of the greatest figures” of the regional sport scene.⁹³ The sport magazine reported that at the finish Plaza entered the Olympic stadium calmly and without any signs of fatigue. This story does not correspond with the account of Alex Hanning, a sprinter who was in the 1928 Chilean Olympic team. Hanning declared that he went to hug Plaza after the marathoner crossed the finish line and noticed that he was exhausted and in bad shape. However, Hanning highlighted that Plaza’s “great heart” allowed him to recover in a few minutes, adding that once in the locker room Plaza did not look like a man who had just run a marathon. The marathoner was “happy, fresh, as if he had not participated in the formidable race.” Though he disputed some details of Plaza’s performance in *El Gráfico*, Hanning agreed with the magazine’s main point. For Hanning, Plaza demonstrated the potential not just of Chilean but of South American sport.⁹⁴

Added to *El Mercurio* and *La Prensa*, even if contradictory and somewhat exaggerated, *El Gráfico*’s and Hanning’s commentaries indicate a willingness to infuse Plaza’s run with a heroic narrative and solidify his status in the region. Even in the Argentine socialist daily *La Vanguardia*, which briefly covered the marathon without assigning Plaza’s run special symbolism, his performance did not go unnoticed—it was hardly possible to do so.⁹⁵ Either with conspicuous headlines or succinct allusions, after the marathon, Plaza’s reputation across South America became stronger than ever. Years later, *El Gráfico* recollected that Plaza became a “continental and world value.”⁹⁶

Beyond Argentina, Plaza’s marathon feat was also covered in Peru. *El Comercio*, a traditional Peruvian newspaper, reported on the noticeable impact that the runner’s success had in Chilean society and argued that Chilean expectations about his performance

increased in view of the poor show of the rest of the Chilean Olympic delegation, most notably the football team.⁹⁷ An article in *El Comercio* included Plaza's marathon silver medal among the three 1928 Olympic events that gave "glory and honor" to South American sport along with the Uruguayan and Argentine football final and Argentine swimmer Alberto Zorrilla's gold medal in the 400-meter freestyle. The Peruvian article asserted that Plaza had performed a "great feat."⁹⁸

In Brazil, Plaza's marathon appeared neither to have been extensively covered nor much lauded. This could be due to Brazil's inability to send an Olympic team to Amsterdam and its inactivity in the affairs of the *Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo* after the 1922 *Jogos Latinoamericanos*.⁹⁹ Although *O Estado de São Paulo* informed readers about the outcome of the 1928 Olympic marathon and its reception in Chile, it was not until over a month later that a full account of the race was published in the daily.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps, this was a belated recognition of Plaza's performance. The account read that Chile and Algeria gave the crowd the "main sensations of the great marathon."¹⁰¹

While Plaza's reputation both in Chile and South America was fortified by his Amsterdam performance, the winner of the 1928 Olympic marathon, El Ouafi, received very little attention in the region. South American articulations of the dynamic between the two runners reaffirmed the attempt to situate Plaza, and by extension his nation and region, on the international stage by attracting the legitimating gaze of Western hegemony. Whereas the pre-race prognoses that circulated in the region expected Plaza to give a creditable performance, El Ouafi was not only ignored but, paradoxically, his teammate Seghir Beddari, who did not even take part in the marathon, was listed as a serious contender to win it.¹⁰² In South America El Ouafi was considered an "outsider," while Plaza was seen as not only belonging to the elite of international long distance running but also as talented enough to achieve Olympic glory. Post-race analyses confirmed the picture of El Ouafi as an outsider, though his endurance skills could not be ignored. For instance, the day after the marathon, *El Mercurio* called El Ouafi a "great champion," but said that during the race everyone wondered who he was.¹⁰³ Likewise, *La Prensa* acclaimed El Ouafi's victory but at the same time labeled him unknown among the best marathoners in the world.¹⁰⁴ There was also some confusion about El Ouafi's origins. It was widely accepted that he ran for France, but he was cited as a native of Algeria and Morocco.¹⁰⁵ In the South American contrast between El Ouafi and Plaza only the latter fit in the region's lists of the global marathon international elite.

Ironically, in the "traditional" international centers of track and field, El Ouafi's status as an outsider also extended to Plaza. Most Occidental experts were shocked by the result of the 1928 Olympic marathon, which dethroned the hegemony of North Atlantic marathon runners. The *New York Times* contended that there was no greater surprise in the 1928 Olympics "than the winning of the marathon by the outsider El OUAFI, an Algerian, carrying the tricolor of France." Moreover, for the newspaper, "[i]n the end" El Ouafi "had only to beat another outsider, Miguel [*sic*] Plaza, the newsboy from Chile."¹⁰⁶ Likewise, *The Times* of London categorized both El Ouafi and Plaza as "outsiders." As the *New York Times* did in the case of Plaza, *The Times* took the opportunity to stress the working-class status of El Ouafi, explaining that he "is a turner, employed at the Renault motor works."¹⁰⁷ When reporting the outcome of the marathon in its August 13 issue,

Time magazine also made a point of observing El Ouafi's and Plaza's social standings. However, *Time* did not detail the social backgrounds of any of the other athletes mentioned in the story.¹⁰⁸ It is important to highlight that in remarking about Plaza's job and about El Ouafi as an unlikely winner, the international and South American media oddly coincided. Nevertheless, some marathoners from the leading national powers were not so surprised with the outcome of the race in Amsterdam. For the American runner Clarence DeMar, El Ouafi and Plaza won due to "the improvement in the speed of marathoners from all over the world."¹⁰⁹ These comments, though small in number, provided the "outsiders" with a legitimating point of entry to the international track and field scene.

The characterization of Plaza as an "outsider" by the mainstream media in the United States and Great Britain could not be farther from the reception he was accorded on his return to Chile. Newspapers reported each step of his long journey back home. In late August, Plaza was received by the Chilean ambassador to France in Paris.¹¹⁰ Celebrations were also prepared for his stops in Uruguay and Argentina although, while there, Plaza declared that he was anxious to return to Santiago.¹¹¹ Chileans, in turn, were anxious to have Plaza back home. A large contingent traveled by train to Los Andes, a town 177 kilometers north of Santiago, to welcome Plaza as he crossed the *cordillera* and set foot again in his homeland. The extensive program contrasted with the tiny scale of the town. On September 17, the train station in Los Andes was decorated with flowers and Chilean flags in expectation of the runner's arrival. When the convoy returning Plaza to his homeland entered the station, the national anthem blared, inundating the scene with an even more patriotic feeling. To a rhythm of hurrahs, a multitude carried the champion on its shoulder to the *Hotel Central*, his residence for the night. More than 1,000 people joined him in a banquet, and a gala in the town's theater was hosted in his honor. In the meantime, the nation's capital was preparing more grandiose festivities for the following day, which coincided with Chile's Independence Day. The national media encouraged the citizenry to be as generous in its reception of Plaza as he had been in "offering everything in the demand of a little bit of glory for his homeland."¹¹²

Before departing to Santiago in mid-afternoon, Plaza's activities in Los Andes included a visit to the local prison, a "Chilean breakfast" offered by a local family, attendance at the local Independence Day parade, and a toast in his honor. Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, and elementary school students saluted Plaza as the convoy that would deposit him in the nation's capital slowly left the *cordillera* behind. In every station along the route to the capital, the public and sport officials demonstrated their gratitude to Plaza and celebrated his Olympic accomplishment. They cheered him, offered him flowers, and made speeches. At the rail station of Las Vegas, Plaza boarded a special train chartered by the government and was welcomed by representatives of the Department of Physical Education. The entrance to Santiago's main station was memorable. *Santiagounos* applauded their hero from the streets and the balconies along the way leading to the station, which was filled to capacity by members of sporting and working-class institutions. Plaza's arrival was marred by confusion, as everybody tried to be the first to greet him. While fireworks exploded, hurrahs to Plaza and Chile resonated in the station. Chilean newspaper reports put the number of people in the station at several thousand and described the crowds as "delirious." Eventually, thanks to the intervention of the police force, Plaza made it out of the

station and into a car that drove him to the Department of Physical Education. On the drive across the city, fans showered Plaza with flowers and flags.¹¹³

A large crowd greeted Plaza at the Department of Physical Education. President Ibáñez arrived a few minutes after him. What happened next summarized the images of Plaza constructed in Chile after his marathon race and took them to unprecedented heights. Surrounded by government and sport officials, the Chilean president congratulated Plaza for his Olympic performance. Together, the marathon runner and the chief executive greeted the crowd from a balcony. The speeches that followed marked the apotheosis of Plaza as the embodiment of the nation and its professed values. Osvaldo Kolbach, the director of the Department of Physical Education, remembered that it was Chile's Independence Day and compared the nation's founding fathers to "the ineffable and Olympic feast of Manuel Plaza." Kolbach continued grandiloquently, pronouncing Plaza a "national living hero." Celebrating Plaza's success while connecting it to Chile's heroic traditions, Bernardino Abarzúa, the army's chief chaplain, took the opportunity to articulate even more explicitly the spectacular surge of sporting nationalism in Chile. The chaplain declared:

We have to have faith in those that represent Chile and just as we spilled our blood on the fields of the homeland in the wars of Independence, and just as we had been strong to defeat the enemies, we must be concerned that our nation be honorably represented in the world of sports.¹¹⁴

As much as the Chilean elite publicized its moral ideology and the role assigned to sport through Plaza's success, the working class also appropriated Plaza's performance. During the reception at the Department of Physical Education, Bernardo Quiroga, a delegate of the *Congreso Social Obrero* (Workers Social Congress), welcomed Plaza back in the name of the working class.¹¹⁵ This was a rare opportunity for the Chilean workers to express their class consciousness at the core of their nation's political power. The elite had little to worry about, however, as this expression of solidarity came as part of the national celebration of the newfound Chilean hero.

Additional working-class celebrations continued for some time after the official government welcome. The *Federación Cultural Obrera* (Workers Cultural Federation), the *Circo Spadoni*, and Chilean artists hosted several functions to honor Plaza's triumph. Plaza, nurturing the nationalistic fervor that transcended social class and united Chileans, had taken to Europe a national flag offered to him at the beginning of his long trip to Amsterdam. For the union leader Quiroga, Plaza had complied with his promise to bring the flag back victoriously. In the end, Plaza was venerated by both the elite and the working class for patriotic reasons. Immediately after his success in Amsterdam, a theatrical production, a poem, and a book were written in his honor, a testament to his widespread popularity.¹¹⁶ More importantly, he was given the place of honor in the national pantheon—the first athlete to be elevated to that status. For a brief period, he also represented the whole of South America. Plaza's symbolism for the sub-continent ended four years later, when Argentine long distance runner Juan Carlos Zabala won the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic marathon. Zabala's was the first South American gold medal in track and field. The Argentine's achievement evoked images similar to those constructed around Plaza's 1928 Olympic success.¹¹⁷

Plaza's Olympic Success in Perspective

The images of Plaza's marathon performance in the 1928 Olympic games constructed in Chile and South America reveal a complicated story that wove together in a unique way the national and transnational forces already shaping particular and collective Olympic experiences. In Chile, Plaza's storyline was primarily about national identity created through international sport. Plaza's marathon success came to embody the progress of his nation. His continual associations with Chile's national flag reinforced the correlation between the runner and the nation. Plaza proudly carried a national flag given by a working-class organization to Amsterdam and back to Chile, declared before the marathon that he would put the national flag high in the Olympic stadium, and was wrapped in a national flag by his compatriots after crossing the finish line to earn Olympic silver. Cementing his "nationalization," *El Mercurio* commented that Plaza "ran for the prestige of his country and for the glory of the flag of his nation." Moreover, the daily asserted that it was the lone star of Chile's national flag on Plaza's running shirt that fueled "formidable energy to his great heart." For the newspaper, Plaza's quasi-mythical marathon finished not in Amsterdam but where it started, back in his native land.¹¹⁸

All of Chile coalesced behind the "nationalization" of his success, which was embraced by Plaza himself. The athlete never doubted he was running under the eyes of, on behalf of, and for, Chile. Replicating the images constructed by the mainstream media, politicians reinforced the link between Plaza and the nation. The fact that Plaza arrived back in Chile on Independence Day provided a potent occasion for nationalism that the politicians did not waste. During the recognition ceremony at the Department of Physical Education, Plaza was not only declared a living national hero but also elevated to the same rank as the founding fathers of the nation. In one moment, the Department's director raised Plaza's feats to the same level as those of Bernardo O'Higgins—the military hero who had led Chile to independence a century earlier. That afternoon, modern sports were declared to be as relevant for the future of the nation as the fight for independence once was in its construction. Although an exaggeration, this declaration underscored the power of sport in shaping national identity in 1920s Chile. Thanks to his silver medal at the Olympic games, Plaza became the first hero of a newly articulated Chilean sporting nationalism. Given this ambiance, it is not surprising that Plaza's success generated such a nationalistic fervor.¹¹⁹ During a stop on the journey that would take him to an ecstatic Santiago, Manuel Gaete, a grassroots sport official, saluted the runner with a nationalistic wish: "Plaza, may your Chilean heart never abandon you."¹²⁰

"Nationalizing" Plaza's 1928 Olympic games performance assisted in the imagination of a Chilean identity in two different and interrelated dimensions, one "external" and the other "internal." In both dimensions, diverse national and transnational forces coalesced to enrich and complicate the main storyline of a national identity-making process. "Externally," the nation was publicized on the global stage. The sense of belonging to the Western-defined international order was fostered before the marathon by situating Plaza as a potential winner in what was seen as the archetypical Olympic event. After the marathon, the nation had, through Plaza, fully entered into this order. Ironically, North Atlantic cultures did not reciprocate this view. In the "traditional" international centers of

track and field, El Ouafi and Plaza were still considered “outsiders,” even after the race. This development went unnoticed in Chile, where only El Ouafi continued to be considered an unknown runner. In this regard, a Chilean journalist declared that after the race the popularity of his compatriot was so prevalent in Amsterdam that El Ouafi was forgotten, and “the marathon was remembered only to talk about Plaza.”¹²¹ Minimizing El Ouafi’s run elevated Plaza’s performance and prolonged, at least in Chilean eyes, the display of the nation on the international stage facilitated by the Olympic games.

Unlike the North Atlantic cultures, in much of South America Plaza’s Olympic performance was embraced as a sign of regional progress and common identity, which simultaneously legitimated the Chilean nation in the sub-continent. Replicating the construction of Plaza in Chile, the runner was seen in the rest of South America as a member of a vibrant sporting regional culture that implicitly defied prevailing stereotypes of South Americans as “exotic” non-Westerners. Chileans proudly announced that Plaza represented the whole of the continent and welcomed similar comments advanced in other nations of the region. The South American “regionalization” of Plaza and the other Olympic accomplishments by South American athletes during the 1920s—a period in which the region was in the midst of an “Olympic explosion” that despite its significant challenges and difficulties ultimately inserted it into the Olympic fold—affirmed national and regional identities vis-à-vis the constitutive gaze of the North Atlantic cultures. The mutual appropriation of some of the Olympic accomplishments achieved by South American athletes during the 1920s was conceptualized as a manifestation of regional potential and as a collective identity that differentiated South America from the relevant international “others.” After the 1928 Olympics, *El Comercio* argued, including the example of Plaza, that although it was true that regional sport was not yet as developed as that of other nations, “No one can deny that South American sport advances rapidly.”¹²² Even before Plaza’s success, an editorial in *El Mercurio* embraced a common regional identity forged through sports by highlighting South American achievements against those of the North Atlantic cultures. In the aftermath of the football final in Amsterdam between Uruguay and Argentina, the newspaper declared that

these two American peoples[,] winners against Europeans and Americans from the Saxon continent of the North, are a revelation for the old countries that invented the sports, which considered them for a long time their exclusivity and that now see themselves swept away by new races.¹²³

After the marathon, Chileans included Plaza as an exemplar of the new South American “races” that were supposedly sweeping away North Atlantic athletes in Olympic competition. Indeed, in Chile, Plaza’s will to thrive was defined as “a racial mandate.”¹²⁴ Throughout the 1920s, South American sporting triumphs served as a terrain in which regional differences as well as similarities between the region and Europe and the United States were forged and reinforced. The celebration of a common regional identity could be seen as part of the racial mixing advocated during the early twentieth century by several Latin American intellectuals such as Brazilian Gilberto Freyre, Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, and Mexicans Manuel Gamio and José Vasconcelos. In his 1925 classic work *La raza cósmica* (*The Cosmic Race*), Vasconcelos maintained that *mestizaje* would bring together in “a happy synthesis, the elements of beauty apportioned today among different races.”¹²⁵ In his transnational “race,” the mestizo was “a spiritual beacon of Hispanic

civilization.”¹²⁶ The spirit of Vasconcelos’ *mestizaje* was invoked in Bolivia to make sense of the South American football success in Amsterdam. For the Bolivian daily *La Razón*, Uruguay and Argentina had beaten Europe and Anglo America; moreover, their victory signaled the triumph of *la raza cósmica*.¹²⁷

The Bolivian reference that explicitly highlights the democratic racial discourse embedded in the cosmic race’s admiration of *mestizaje* seems to have been an exception. The customary explanation in the many paeans to the South American achievements in Amsterdam centered on differentiating regional, and national, identities from North Atlantic cultures while at the same time validating them by partaking in practices born precisely in these cultures. That is, the identity-making process functioned through the ambiguous dynamic of “against them” but “like them.” It accommodated difference in the midst of a mimetic effort. This does not come as a surprise as the inclusiveness and equality of *mestizaje* challenged prevalent couplings of North Atlantic cultures with whiteness, modernity, and leadership— notions that resonated loudly with South American elites. Once South American nations became independent, most of these groups sought a close connection with the North Atlantic system, whether in politics, economic matters, intellectual affairs, or, from the dawn of the twentieth century, in sports. This attitude was exemplified by Ricardo C. Aldao, a prominent Argentine sport and Olympic official, who, during the 1924 Olympics in Paris, argued that Argentine democracy mixed white individuals coming from all over the world.¹²⁸ Chile, like Argentina, encouraged European immigration after expanding its Southern frontier at the close of the nineteenth century. In 1928, the celebration of South American boxing, football, swimming, and track and field—sports in which South Americans earned Olympic medals—implied a celebration of a restricted racial mixing in which white values figured prominently.¹²⁹ Days after Plaza represented Chile and South America in Amsterdam, Ramón Subercaseaux, Chile’s ambassador to the Vatican, articulated the nation’s elite racial ideology praising the positive effect that European immigrants had on Chilean workers.¹³⁰

While the implicit “racialization” of Plaza’s and all other South American medals in the 1928 Olympics served to project the progress of the nation as a whole in South America and the entire world, in the domestic climate it intertwined with other national forces and was, therefore, minimized. Although Plaza’s marathon run was commonly associated in mainstream media narratives with the advance of the “*raza chilena*,” it was not coded in relation to the presumably distinct races—especially the indigenous peoples—who had originally inhabited Chile. In this sense, Chilean responses to his marathon did not include overt manifestations of scientific racism, which, of course, did not mean it did not exist. The runner’s implicit “racialization” was most obviously linked to issues of social class, which illustrated the Chilean elite’s preoccupation with integrating the expanding urban working class into the life of the nation. Plaza’s class origins were remarked on throughout his athletic career, starting in 1922 when a journalist declared him the “popular ambassador.” The day he arrived in Santiago from Amsterdam, the masses devotedly greeted Plaza in the streets. During the official reception at the Department of Physical Education, the Chilean president along with other high governmental officers and dignitaries were joined by Quiroga, the representative of the *Congreso Social Obrero*, who welcomed Plaza on behalf of the working class. The occasion was a powerful symbol of the expansion of nationhood to Chileans previously excluded from the national project.

During his 1928 Olympic saga, Plaza's social standing was stressed time and time again. Chileans were reminded that Plaza was a national hero—more precisely, a working-class national hero.

The portrayal of Plaza as a popular ambassador whose skills and Olympic success represented the expanding opportunities of the new Chilean nation is congruent with recent scholarship on Chilean history in this period.¹³¹ Historians Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Alejandra Rosemblatt have argued that

experts thought that the survival and reproduction of the Chilean national race depended on assimilating the previously excluded working classes. The nation's poorer inhabitants could implicitly whiten their racial stock and contribute to national progress through education, hard work, proper nutrition, and health care.¹³²

Working-class Chileans could, as Plaza had so aptly demonstrated, not only contribute to but also display the progress of the nation through sport—a practice that by the 1920s was characteristically associated by South American elites with the “civilized” North Atlantic cultures. Plaza's success was constructed “internally” as typifying the values the Chilean populace needed not just to succeed in sport but to push the nation forward. The performative nature of sport, and more specifically the excruciating demands of the marathon, served as a splendid vehicle to communicate to the masses the elite's conditions for political integration. Plaza was seen as a model of compliance to the morality necessitated to gain access to the Chilean nation.

His 1928 Olympic story was framed as one of self-denial and sacrifice for his beloved and distant nation. The success accomplished in the streets of Amsterdam came to represent industriousness, a balanced life, and the result of a systematic and scientifically designed training. Challenging the best in the world to win athletic glory demanded no less. Plaza was also presented as a grateful man who possessed an affable personality and did not question authority. Whether or not he truly considered running professionally after earning Olympic silver, Plaza preferred to remain an amateur athlete, a view that national sport officials, often members of the Chilean elite, clearly favored. Juan Livingstone, *chef de mission* of the Chilean Olympic delegation, exemplified this attitude declaring that Plaza should go back to Chile to work. Having done otherwise would have ostracized the runner, for breaking the amateur code was perceived as a betrayal of the morality of gentlemanly sport. In a sense, had Plaza run professionally, he would have discontinued representing, at least in the eyes of the elite, the imagined Chilean nation. But he chose the nation over material profits.

The portrayal of what it took Plaza to successfully enter the 1928 Olympic marathon as well as his own understanding of the race embodied the strict morality that the Chilean elite demanded from the working class. Acceptance into the imagined more inclusive Chilean nation required the adoption of this morality. After his marathon success, Plaza became an advertisement for this strategy. No wonder that Kolbach, the director of the Department of Physical Education, believed Plaza ought to be “an example for the Chilean youth.” Working-class activists agreed with Kolbach. What is seen here is an attempt to include the working class into the nation but at the same time to control it. Political inclusion did not mean upsetting social hierarchies: Plaza himself demonstrated this the day he arrived back in Chile from Amsterdam. Although President Ibáñez told him that a

man who owes everything to his efforts does not have to thank anybody, the runner publicly expressed numerous times his gratitude for the governmental support of his Olympic campaign. Beyond diplomatic formalisms, Plaza knew he had to thank his patrons for the opportunities given to him. After all, without the support of the government he would have had a more difficult time preparing for his second Olympic excursion. Plaza had returned to Chile and was ready to go back to work—as his social standing stipulated and the elite constantly reminded him.

The story of Manuel Plaza at the 1928 Olympics captures a key moment in the Chilean nation-making process—a moment that illustrates the always fluctuating and contested boundaries of who counts and who does not as part of the nation. It also captures how the terms of the Chilean national inclusion were manifested in sport and at the Olympic games, and how they in turn became entwined in complex ways with the always fluctuating and contested notions of race and social class. To complicate Plaza's story even further, the globalized nature of the Olympic games added transnational forces to the national and regional ones already at play, resulting in an intricate Olympic experience. Encouraged by the definitive national appropriation of modern sports and the regional integration into the Olympic system during the 1920s, Plaza's success was coded as a Chilean emblem of progress and modernity, which Chilean elites thought legitimated their nation in the eyes of the North Atlantic constitutive "other." This same notion was appropriated in other South American nations to validate a common regional identity that by extension applied to individual nations. In Chile, Plaza also functioned as both an example and a reminder of the desired morality that the working class had to conform to if it was to occupy the novel spaces opened in national life.

Plaza represents a complicated story that accommodated and cross-pollinated transnational processes with national and regional histories. The saga also highlights the seductive power of sport to imagine nationhood and marks the forceful consolidation of sporting nationalism in Chile. Then, as now, athletic victories and defeats animated discussions about the character of nations and who rightly belonged to them. Immediately after the 1928 Olympic marathon, Chilean Senator Juan Luis Carmona defined Plaza as a "son of the people" who contributed to the prestige of the nation.¹³³



Plaza leads the pack at the start of the 32-kilometer race held during the 1933 South American Track and Field championship in Montevideo. *EL GRÁFICO*, 15 APRIL 1933, p. 23.



A cheerful crowd observes Plaza entering the stadium to win the 32-kilometer race held during the 1933 South American Track and Field championship in Montevideo. *EL GRÁFICO*, 15 ABRIL 1933, p. 23.

Although Plaza briefly interrupted his athletic career after returning from Amsterdam, he returned to the South American athletic stage in 1931, finishing fourth in both the 10,000-meter and cross country races. In 1933 he regained his championship form again in the South American track and field championship in Montevideo, winning the 32-kilometer and cross country races.¹³⁴ Still dominant in South America, Plaza retired from international track and field after his Montevideo comeback. The echoes of his athletic career, with the silver medal in Amsterdam as its most conspicuous moment, survived even his passing in 1969. Chile has never produced another track and field athlete of Plaza's caliber. Indeed, not until 2004 did the first Chilean win a gold medal in Olympic competition. In 2004 as in 1928, and in the years in between, sport figured prominently in Chilean narratives of national belonging. Chileans perceived in their athletes' performances desirable and undesirable traits of their national character and imagined and reimagined who should be included and who should not in the ever malleable body politic. As the social construction of Plaza's heroism reveals, sport, by dramatically exposing the performative abilities of the human body, is situated like few other cultural practices to idealize, explore, and contest the embodied experience of nations.



¹Gerald Martin, "The Literature, Music and Art of Latin America, 1870-1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 4: 443.

²The following is a brief list of works dealing with the history of modern Latin America. Leslie Bethell, ed., *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); idem, ed., *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1995); Christine E. Bose and Edna Acosta-Belén, eds., *Women in the Latin American Development Process* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America Since Independence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Historia contemporánea de América Latina*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1970); José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica: situaciones e ideologías* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Candil, 1967); idem, *Latinoamérica: las ciudades y las ideas* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1976); Barbara A. Tenenbaum, ed.,

Encyclopedia of Latin America History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1996); and Rosemary Thorp, *Progress, Poverty and Exclusion: An Economic History of Latin America in the 20th century* (Baltimore, Md.: Inter-American Development Bank, 1998).

³See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴Pilar Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno: Orígenes y transformaciones, 1850-1950* (Santiago: Dirección General de Deportes y Recreación, 1997), 71.

⁵For details of the South American efforts to prepare national delegations to the Olympic games during the early twentieth century, see Marcia de Franceschi Neto, "A Participação no Brasil no Movimento Olímpico Internacional no Período de 1896 a 1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade Gama Filho, 1999); Cesar R. Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements: The Early History of Olympism in Argentina," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18 (2001): 59-92; idem, "Ideas encontradas: la educación física y el deporte en el debate parlamentario sobre la participación argentina en los Juegos Olímpicos de 1908," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 11 (2002): 117-142; and idem, "The Latin American 'Olympic Explosion' of the 1920s: Causes and Consequences," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23 (2006), 1088-1111.

⁶G. Van Rossem, ed., *The Ninth Olympiad: Being the Official Report of the Olympic Games of 1928 Celebrated at Amsterdam*, trans. Sydney W. Fleming (Amsterdam: J.H. De Bussy, 1928), 426-430. A later history claims sixty-nine entrants instead of the sixty-eight in the official Dutch report. See David E. Martin and Roger W. H. Gynn, *The Olympic Marathon. The History and Drama of Sport's Most Challenging Event* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 2000), 127-144, 468-469.

⁷There is disagreement about El Ouafi's first name in different contemporary national sources in North and South America and in Europe. The runner's first name is sometimes listed as Boughera and as Broughera. It also appears as Abdel Baghinel, or some variant thereof, in the contemporary sources.

⁸See Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo* (Santa Fe, Argentina: n.p., 2003), 18, 21, 24, 28, 32; Luis Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano* (Lima: Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, n.d.), 9-12; Roberto Gesta de Melo and Benê Turco, "Atletismo" in *Atlas do Esporte no Brasil*, ed. Lamartine P. DaCosta (Rio de Janeiro: n.p., 2006), 248-249; Andrew Graham-Yooll, *The Forgotten Colony: A History of the English-Speaking Communities in Argentina* (Buenos Aires: L.O.L.A., 1999), 185; Ricardo Hogg, *Yerba vieja* (Buenos Aires: Julio Suárez, 1945), 113; Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 43-45; Eduardo Olivera, *Orígenes de los deportes británicos en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: L. J. Rosso, 1932), 60-77; and Víctor D. Raffo, *El origen británico del deporte argentino* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 2004), 83-89, 141-146.

⁹See Cesar R. Torres, "Mass Sport Through Education or Elite Olympic Sport? José Benjamín Zubiaur's Dilemma and Argentina's Olympic Sports Legacy," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 7 (1998): 61-88.

¹⁰*Diario de Sesiones de la Cámara de Diputados—Año 1907* (Buenos Aires: La Patria degli Italiani, 1907), 1: 491-492.

¹¹See Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 15-17.

¹²See Torres, "Mass Sport Through Education," 73-74; and idem, "Tribulations and Achievements," 69-71. See also *Memoria de la comisión del centenario al poder ejecutivo nacional* (Buenos Aires: Coni, 1910); *Guía-programa de los festejos del centenario, 1810-1910* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Heliográficos de Ortega y Radaelli, 1910); and *Comisión auxiliar de Juegos Olímpicos del centenario: Programa del concurso atlético internacional. Mayo 1910, Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Tipográfico J. Carbone, 1910).

¹³See Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 18, 22, 25; Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 18-19, 23; and Gesta de Melo and Turco, "Atletismo," 248-249. See also *El Gráfico* (Buenos Aires), 23 June 1944, p. 77 [hereafter *El Gráfico*].

¹⁴B.A. Shuman, Report Letter No. 1, Buenos Aires, 22 February 1905, "Argentina. Buenos Aires. Annual Reports. 1902-1918", Kautz Family Young Men's Christian Association Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis, Minnesota [hereafter YMCA Archives].

¹⁵Annual Report Letter of P. P. Phillips, Physical Director Young Men's Christian Association, Buenos Aires, Argentina for the Year Ending September 30, 1918, "Argentina. Buenos Aires. Annual Reports. 1902-1918", YMCA Archives.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Jess. T Hopkins, Continental Physical Notes, Montevideo, 1 June 1926, "South American Federation. Correspondence and Reports. 1914-1950s. Wirt Wiley Correspondence and Reports. 1921-1922," YMCA Archives.

¹⁸See Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 19-21; and Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 117. The exact time of Jorquera's marathon is unclear. While for Gálvez Chipoco it took Jorquera 2:28:3 to finish the race, for Modiano it took him 2:23:5. Both authors mention that Jorquera's time was considered the fastest marathon so far. However, Modiano affirms that the length of the course only amounted to forty kilometers, and thus the time was not officially sanctioned.

¹⁹See Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 39-40; and Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 21-23.

²⁰There is disagreement about Plaza's date of birth. Some sources indicate it as March 17, 1900, while others as March 19, 1902. Yet others locate it in 1901.

²¹The event contested in the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* was commonly regarded as a marathon, but the distance covered was 21 kilometers.

²²Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 47-49; and *El Mercurio* (Santiago de Chile), 6 August 1928, p. 9 [hereafter *El Mercurio*].

²³Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 49-51; and *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9. For analyses of the "amateur question," see Lincoln Allison, *Amateurism in Sport: An Analysis and a Defense* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Norman Baker, "The Amateur Ideal in a Society of Equality: Change and Continuity in Post-Second World War British Sport, 1945-48," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 12 (1995): 99-126; Julio Frydenberg, "Prácticas y valores en el proceso de popularización del fútbol. Buenos Aires 1900-1910," *Entrepasados*, 12 (1997): 7-31; Alan Metcalfe, "The Meaning of Amateurism: A Case Study of Canadian Sport, 1884-1970," *Canadian Journal of History of Sport* 26 (1995): 33-48; Steve W. Pope, *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007); idem, "Amateurism and American Sports Culture: The Invention of an Athletic Tradition in the United States, 1870-1900," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 13 (1996): 290-309; and Ronald A. Smith, "The Historic Amateur-Professional Dilemma in American College Sport," *British Journal of Sports History* 2 (1985): 221-231.

²⁴A general description of the event can be found in César Viale, *El deporte argentino* (Buenos Aires: Librería de A. García Santos, 1922), 70-73, 101-105.

²⁵Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 156; and *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.

²⁶Cesar R. Torres, "'Spreading the Olympic Idea' to Latin America: The IOC-YMCA Partnership and the 1922 Latin American Games," *Journal of Olympic History* 16 (2008): 16-24. See also the 10, 11, 13, 14, 17 September 1922 editions of *El Día* (Montevideo); the 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 27 September 1922 editions of *El Mercurio*; the 11, 13, 17 September 1922 editions of *O Estado de São Paulo* (São Paulo) [hereafter *O Estado de São Paulo*]; and *Jogos Athleticos Latino-Americanos, Resumo dos Resultados Officiaes. Comissão Organizadora dos Festejos Desportivos do Centenario, "Jeux Régionaux. Correspondance, conférences et documents. 1924-1928"*, *Le Comité International Olympique* Archives, Lausanne, Switzerland, [hereafter IOC Archives].

²⁷*O Estado de São Paulo*, 20 December 1922, p. 9.

²⁸Rapport Fait par le Comte de Baillet-Latour sur la Mission qu'il a remplie pour le C.I.O. dans l'Amérique du Sud, l'Amérique Centrale et l'Amérique du Nord, "22 E Session Rome 1923. Rapports. Rap. De mission en Amérique, 1923. 1923-1923," IOC Archives.

²⁹See *New York Times*, 23 August 1920, p. 1; and Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 21-23.

- ³⁰*El Mercurio*, 29 September 1922, p. 7.
- ³¹*El Mercurio*, 30 September 1922, p. 1.
- ³²Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 117.
- ³³*El Mercurio*, 3 October 1922, p. 5.
- ³⁴*El Mercurio*, 27 November 1922, p. 13.
- ³⁵Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 157; and Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 37.
- ³⁶Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 34, 39; and Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 51. See also Comité Olympique Français, *Les Jeux de la VIII Olympiade. Rapport Officiel* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1924), 112, 114, 116, 118, 120.
- ³⁷Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 117-118. See also *El Mercurio*, 5 August 1928, p. 20.
- ³⁸*La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 13 July 1924, p. 2 [hereafter *La Nación*].
- ³⁹*La Nación*, 14 July 1924, p. 2; 6 August 1928, p. 17.
- ⁴⁰For accounts of the race see Comité Olympique Français, *Les Jeux de la VIII Olympiade. Rapport Officiel*, 120; Alain Lunzenfichter, *Le Roman de Marathon* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1997), 57; Martin and Gynn, *The Olympic Marathon*, 119-123; David E. Martin and Roger W. H. Gynn, *The Marathon Footrace. Performers and Performances* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1979), 77-79; and *La Nación*, 14 July 1924, p. 2.
- ⁴¹*La Nación*, 14 July 1924, p. 2.
- ⁴²*New York Times*, 14 July 1924, pp. 1, 8.
- ⁴³Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 158.
- ⁴⁴Jess. T Hopkins, Continental Physical Notes, Montevideo, 1 June 1926, "South American Federation. Correspondence and Reports. 1914-1950s. Wirt Wiley Correspondence and Reports. 1921-1922," YMCA Archives.
- ⁴⁵Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 53.
- ⁴⁶Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 159.
- ⁴⁷Jess. T Hopkins, Continental Physical Notes, Montevideo, 1 July 1927, "South American Federation. Correspondence and Reports. 1914-1950s. Wirt Wiley Correspondence and Reports. 1921-1922," YMCA Archives.
- ⁴⁸Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 159.
- ⁴⁹Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 110.
- ⁵⁰*El Mercurio*, 19 July 1928, p. 5.
- ⁵¹*El Mercurio*, 22 July 1928, p. 34.
- ⁵²*El Mercurio*, 24 July 1928, p. 7.
- ⁵³See Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 103-104; and the chapter written by Sebastián Salinas in Edgardo Marín, ed., *Historia del deporte chileno: entre la ilusión y la pasión* (Santiago: Comisión Bicentenario Presidencia de la República, 2007).
- ⁵⁴*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12.
- ⁵⁵*El Mercurio*, 24 July 1928, p. 10; 25 July 1928, p. 11; 26 July 1928, p. 10; 28 July 1928, p. 10; 5 August 1928, p. 32; *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires) [hereafter *La Prensa*], 28 July 1928, p. 17; 5 August 1928, p. 18.
- ⁵⁶*El Mercurio*, 5 August 1928, p. 20.
- ⁵⁷*New York Times*, 1 June 1928, p. 23; *Times* (London), 3 August 1928, p. 6; *La Razón* (Buenos Aires), 25 July 1928, p. 18.
- ⁵⁸The letter was published in Federico Grünwald, "La historia jamás contada de Manuel Plaza," *Las Últimas Noticias* (Santiago de Chile), 25 August 2004, <http://www.lun.com/ediciones_anteriores_detalle/noticia.asp?idnoticia=C382239248229514&dia=25&mes=8&anno=2004> [1 December 2007].

- ⁵⁹*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12. See also *El Mercurio*, 3 August 1928, p. 10.
- ⁶⁰*El Mercurio*, 3 August 1928, p. 10.
- ⁶¹*El Mercurio*, 7 August 1928, p. 10.
- ⁶²For accounts of the race see Lunzenfichter, *Le Roman de Marathon*, 57-60; Martin and Gynn, *The Olympic Marathon*, 135-141; Martin and Gynn, *The Marathon Footrace*, 91-93; *El Comercio* (Lima), 6 August 1928, p. 13 [hereafter *El Comercio*]; *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12; 7 August 1928, p. 10; *La Prensa*, 6 August 1928, p. 17; *Times* (London), 6 August 1928, p. 5; *New York Times*, 6 August 1928, pp. 1, 22; and *O Estado de São Paulo*, 12 September 1928, p. 9.
- ⁶³Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 129-130; *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, pp. 9, 12.
- ⁶⁴Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 130; *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12.
- ⁶⁵*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12.
- ⁶⁶*El Mercurio*, 9 August 1928, p. 5.
- ⁶⁷*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12.
- ⁶⁸*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 3.
- ⁶⁹*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.
- ⁷⁰*El Comercio*, 7 August 1928, p. 13; *El Mercurio*, 7 August 1928, p. 3; *La Prensa*, 7 August 1928, p. 19; *O Estado de São Paulo*, 8 August 1928, p. 9.
- ⁷¹*El Mercurio*, 7 August 1928, p. 10.
- ⁷²*Ibid.*
- ⁷³*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 12.
- ⁷⁴*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.
- ⁷⁵*El Mercurio*, 7 August 1928, p. 3.
- ⁷⁶*El Mercurio*, 8 August 1928, p. 7.
- ⁷⁷*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, pp. 3, 9, 12; 9 August 1928, p. 14.
- ⁷⁸Modiano, *Historia del deporte chileno*, 128-129.
- ⁷⁹*El Mercurio*, 7 August 1928, p. 10.
- ⁸⁰*New York Times*, 7 August 1928, p. 15.
- ⁸¹See Grünewald, "La historia jamás contada de Manuel Plaza."
- ⁸²*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.
- ⁸³*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 13.
- ⁸⁴*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 12.
- ⁸⁵*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 3.
- ⁸⁶*El Mercurio*, 8 August 1928, p. 5.
- ⁸⁷*El Mercurio*, 9 August 1928, p. 5.
- ⁸⁸*El Mercurio*, 9 August 1928, p. 14.
- ⁸⁹*Ibid.*
- ⁹⁰*El Mercurio*, 8 August 1928, p. 7.
- ⁹¹*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.
- ⁹²*La Prensa*, 6 August 1928, p. 17.
- ⁹³*El Gráfico*, 8 September 1928, p. 25.
- ⁹⁴*El Mercurio*, 11 September 1928, p. 5. Some sources list Hanning's last name as Hannig.
- ⁹⁵*La Vanguardia* (Buenos Aires), 6 August 1928, p. 8 [hereafter *La Vanguardia*].
- ⁹⁶*El Gráfico*, 23 June 1944, p. 79.
- ⁹⁷*El Comercio*, 7 August 1928, p. 13. See also *El Comercio*, 6 August 1928, p. 13; 8 August 1928, p. 13.

- ⁹⁸*El Comercio*, 11 August 1928, p. 14.
- ⁹⁹See Torres, "The Latin American 'Olympic Explosion' of the 1920s," 1103; and Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 32-37, 83.
- ¹⁰⁰*O Estado de São Paulo*, 7 August 1928, p. 10; 8 August 1928, p. 9; 12 September 1928, p. 9.
- ¹⁰¹*O Estado de São Paulo*, 12 September 1928, p. 9.
- ¹⁰²*La Prensa*, 5 August, 1928, p. 18.
- ¹⁰³*El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9.
- ¹⁰⁴*La Prensa*, 6 August, 1928, p. 17.
- ¹⁰⁵See, for example, *El Comercio*, 6 August 1928, p. 13; *El Gráfico*, 8 September 1928, p. 24; *El Mercurio*, 6 August 1928, p. 9; *La Prensa*, 6 August, 1928, p. 17; *La Vanguardia*, 6 August 1928, p. 8; and *O Estado de São Paulo*, 7 August 1928, p. 10.
- ¹⁰⁶*New York Times*, 7 August 1928, p. 20.
- ¹⁰⁷*Times* (London), 6 August 1928, p. 5.
- ¹⁰⁸*Time*, 13 August 1928, p. 28.
- ¹⁰⁹Clarence DeMar, *Marathon* (Shelburne, Vt.: The New England Press, 1981), 122.
- ¹¹⁰*La Prensa*, 22 August, 1928, p. 19.
- ¹¹¹*El Mercurio*, 15 September 1928, p. 23. See also *El Comercio*, 17 September 1928, p. 7; *El Mercurio* 14 September 1928, p. 14; 15 September 1928, pp. 15; 16 September 1928, p. 27.
- ¹¹²*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 12. See also *El Comercio*, 18 September 1928, p. 2; *El Mercurio*, 17 September 1928, pp. 1, 13; 18 September 1928, pp. 12-13. Chile celebrates its independence on September 18. It was on that day in 1810 that Chile proclaimed the *Primera Junta Nacional de Gobierno* and initiated its path to independence. The official proclamation of independence took place on February 12, 1818.
- ¹¹³*El Mercurio*, 19 September 1928, p. 9; *El Comercio*, 18 September 1928, p. 13.
- ¹¹⁴*El Mercurio*, 19 September 1928, p. 9.
- ¹¹⁵*Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶*El Mercurio*, 23 September 1928, p. 40; 24 September 1928, p. 1; 24 September 1928, p. 15; 25 September 1928, p. 5; 26 September 1928, p. 10; 28 September 1928, p. 8; 29 September 1928, p. 7; 30 September 1928, p. 25.
- ¹¹⁷See Cesar R. Torres, "The Endurance of the Nation: Juan Carlos Zabala's 1932 Olympic Marathon Victory and Argentine Nationalism," *Stadion* 33 (2007): 89-110.
- ¹¹⁸*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 12.
- ¹¹⁹See Eduardo Santa Cruz, "Los comienzos de nuestro Olimpo: Los deportistas como nuevas figuras públicas en Chile en las primeras décadas del siglo XX," unpublished manuscript, 2005, copy in possession of author, for a description of the emergence of athletes as public figures in Chile.
- ¹²⁰*El Mercurio*, 19 September 1928, p. 9.
- ¹²¹*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 12.
- ¹²²*El Comercio*, 11 August 1928, p. 14.
- ¹²³*El Mercurio*, 13 June 1928, p. 3.
- ¹²⁴*El Mercurio*, 18 September 1928, p. 12.
- ¹²⁵José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Didier T. Jaén (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 31.
- ¹²⁶Alexandra Minna Stern, "From Mestizophilia to Biotypology: Racialization and Science in Mexico, 1920-1960" in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, ed. Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 191.
- ¹²⁷See *El Mercurio*, 16 June 1928, p. 13. For important works discussing the notion of race in Latin America, see Appelbaum, Macpherson and Rosemblatt, eds., *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*;

Richard Graham *et al.*, eds., *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Marilyn Grace Miller, *Rise and Fall of the Cosmic Race: The Cult of Mestizaje in Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004); Magnus Mörner, *Race and Class in Latin America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); Nancy Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Peter Wade, *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997).

¹²⁸Ricardo Camilo Aldao, *Rapport sur les sports en Argentine* (Paris: Imprimerie Dubois & Bauer, 1924), 4.

¹²⁹See, for example, *El Mercurio*, 13 June 1928, p. 3; 16 September 1928, p. 22; *El Comercio*, 11 August 1928, p. 14; *La Prensa*, 8 July 1928, p. 17.

¹³⁰*El Mercurio*, 16 September 1928, p. 9.

¹³¹See Elizabeth Q. Hutchison, *Laborers Appropriate to Their Sex: Gender, Labor, and Politics in Urban Chile, 1900-1930* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); Thomas Miller Klubock, "Nationalism, Race, and the Politics of Imperialism: Workers and North American Capital in the Chilean Copper Industry," in *Reclaiming the Political in Latin American History: Essays from the North*, ed. Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001); and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Sexuality and Biopower in Chile and Latin America," *Political Power and Social Theory* 15 (2002): 229-264.

¹³²Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Racial Nations," in *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America*, eds. Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosemblatt, 14. For general histories of Chile, see, for example, Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808-1994* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Gabriel Salazar Vergara and Julio Pinto, *Historia contemporánea de Chile* (Santiago: LOM Ediciones, 1999-2002).

¹³³*El Mercurio*, 8 August 1928, p. 7.

¹³⁴Confederación Sudamericana de Atletismo, *Sudamérica en el atletismo*, 161-162; and Gálvez Chipoco, *Historia del atletismo sudamericano*, 88, 101.