

Just the Girl for a Greek God

IN THE days of the old Greeks and the great Romans, men liked their girls big and athletic, like Rena MacDonald. For centuries powerful puellae were the rage. Men admired women who could work and, physically, they were a great race.

Then, along with the decadence of the Middle Ages, women began to get smaller and weaker. They actually dwarfed. They stopped exercising. And began fainting. They pinched their waists and their feet. And soon they were roly-poly. Short, plump creatures. Short-winded, and without an ounce of strength.

They were no longer "towers of strength," but "clinging vines." They bore children with greater difficulty. And the span of their life was shortened.

After a few generations, they discovered they were fat, and started to diet. And, woman-like, they went to extremes. Tens of thousands became emaciated. Many of them died from diseases brought about through malnutrition. And the sanatoriums were filled with nervous wrecks.

THE Greek ideal of womanly beauty tipped the scales at 160, plus. She wasn't fat, but her proportions were generous, and she was very muscular.

Now the American girl wears herself out, trying to keep under 120. Look at Rena MacDonald, pictured on this page. She weighs 155. She has a beautiful face, and a perfect body. Praxiteles would have liked to sculpt her. Pygmalion would have gone crazy about her. Any of those old Greeks or Romans would have battled for her, like they did for Helen of Troy.

But Rena couldn't get a job with Ziegfeld today, because times—lamentably—have changed. Physical perfection is out-moded. And that is what makes Miss MacDonald one girl in a million.

HER beauty is unique. Her athletic prowess has made her one of the world's foremost women athletes. And she has been blessed, besides, with beauty of feature. And measurements that rival Venus!

Miss MacDonald is world's champion woman shot putter. And she is, besides, a champion all-around athlete.

She holds, also, the national record for throwing the discus. And she has annexed many national track and swimming crowns.

At meets all over the country, she competes in dashes, hurdles, discus, shot, javelin, and standing broad and high jumps. Her favorite swimming distance is the half mile, using either free style or breaststroke. She plays volleyball, basketball, field hockey, ice hockey, football, and baseball. She is an excellent horsewoman, and plays a good game of tennis.

Probably there is not a more unusual athlete than Miss MacDonald. Surely no other athlete ever became proficient in any sport in the space of a few weeks to make an Olympic team.

EVER since she was a little girl, Rena had been tossing shots around. A shot, in case you don't know, is a ball of iron that weighs eight pounds. Rena heaved it 42 feet, four and a half inches, to break the world's record. That happened in Chicago, last August. Since then Rena has devoted a good deal of spare time to tossing the ball around, and the other day she very nearly broke her own record.

For several years she has felt sure that she could put the shot further than any other woman, and she was counting on her prodigious strength to take her over to the last Olympics. It was not until a few weeks before the American teams were chosen, that Rena learned that no shots would be put at Amsterdam. European women, it seems, go in for discus throwing.

Everybody has seen pictures or plaster copies of the old Greek discus thrower. The form, as you can plainly see, is quite different from that of the shot putter. In fact, putting the shot is largely a matter of strength. While throwing the discus is almost entirely a matter of skill.

"Oh, well," said Rena, "I'll have to get me a discus."

"It's tough luck," the trainer told her. "But there's no use trying, Mac. You can't get in shape before the tryouts. The thing's too tricky."

"Can't I?" said Rena. "You watch me."

AND she took her discus, and went out into a vacant lot, and started practicing. Every spare moment she spent hurling the thing. But the trouble was Miss MacDonald hasn't many spare moments. She works in an insurance office, and they keep her pretty busy.

So she bought a little statuette of the familiar discus thrower. And she placed it on her desk for inspiration. Every time she looked up from her work her eyes fell on the Greek youth, so that, almost unconsciously, she learned the proper form.

Within a few weeks, Rena had qualified as a discus thrower. And, when the American teams were chosen, there was no doubt as to her eligibility. There wasn't a better woman discus thrower in the country.

"Great work!" the coaches said. "Making an Olympic team overnight, as you might say."

"Shucks!" said Rena. "That's nothing. Anybody can do anything they want—if they want to bad enough."

JUST to prove it, this versatile young woman plans to go to Czechoslovakia this summer, as a runner.

"Now, of course, I'm not built for a runner," admits Rena. "But they're not taking hurdlers, nor jumpers, nor discus throwers, nor shot putters, nor swimmers. Just runners. And they're only taking 20, at that. The 20 best girl runners in America. So the only chance I have of seeing Czechoslovakia is making the track team."

"I'd never run much, until I heard about this meet. Soon as I learned of it, I started practicing—trotting around the country, and loping round the track. And now I've made the Boston Swimming Association relay team. The coach was pretty much surprised when I went out. And the girls were sure surprised, when I made the team. But, there you are—perseverance turned the trick. It's like I always say—



"I'm not built for a runner," admits Rena. . . . But they wanted runners, and she made herself into one . . . because she wanted to compete.



In Olympic rig. . . . Perfect co-ordination is as necessary as strength . . . in the shot put.

want a thing bad enough, and go right after it—and you'll sure enough get it.

"Why, I was just a little kid when I read about the Olympics. It was when I was in grammar school. And the teacher told us about how the first games were sacred affairs, put on as a spectacle for the gods. The Olympic games started about 800 years before Christ. And they were abolished by the Christian Emperor Theodosius, in 393 A. D., as a gesture against paganism."

"In 1920, when the American team went over, for the first time after the war, I was 11 years old, and I was all thrilled about the glory of the ancient Olympics, and the Great Adventure of the present ones. And I made up my mind I was going to be an athlete, and get over there myself."

"It's kind of a funny thing, but I come from a rather small family. I've four brothers, and, though they're pretty fair athletes, they're all little fellows. They played baseball, and hockey, and games like that. But they weren't any of them big league stuff. My oldest sister is married now, but she was a pretty good diver when she was younger."

"Then there's Agnes—Agnes is 17 now, and she might be a grand swimmer. Only her heart's not in it. She'd rather be a professional dancer."

"The only real athlete in the family, besides me, is my little sister, Anne. Anne's 13, and crazy about sports. I've great hopes of making an all-around world champion of her. She does everything I tell her to, and trains like a hero. . . . But what I started to say was, we were just an ordinary, rather under-sized family. Anne was a baby in those days, and I was only 11 myself. My oldest sister was a feminine model, and mother was a little bit of a woman."

"They didn't want me to be a tomboy. Florence—she's my married sister—she thought swimming was all right, but she didn't approve of boys' sports."

"The way I doped things though, swimming wasn't enough. I wanted to be good in everything. In other words, I didn't want to put all my eggs in one basket, and be nothing but a champion swimmer and diver, like Florence. So I went out for everything."

"And pretty soon I started to develop. As I said, I was a little kid—just a runt. I started getting tall, and putting on weight. Not fat. Just muscle. I'm hard as steel.

"I never had a sweetheart," admits Rena. . . . But all men are not fooled by the tugs for ribs . . . even today.

NOW I'm five feet, six and a half inches tall. And I weigh 155 pounds. This varies, you understand, according to how finely I'm trained, but my normal weight is about 155 pounds. That makes me the heaviest person in the family. Heavier than father, or any of the boys. They're all small but me. Anne is a little thing now, but she's coming right along. I wouldn't be surprised, if she was bigger than I am by the time she gets her growth."

An artist, interested in Miss MacDonald's extraordinary physique, took her measurements recently to compare them with those of the celebrated, armless Venus—Venus de Milo, whose figure has become a sort of standard of comparison for the feminine form.

"They were amazingly similar," admits Rena. "But you know that doesn't mean a thing. Venus might have been a wow in her day. But she's too big for men's tastes today."

Here are the proportions of the goddess, in one column. And here are Rena's, in the other. You can see for yourself how nearly Miss MacDonald approaches ancient perfection:

VENUS	RENA
14 inches Neck	13 1/2 inches
24 1/2 inches Bust	24 1/2 inches
28 1/2 inches Waist	29 inches
38 inches Hips	38 inches
19 1/2 inches Thigh	21 1/2 inches
13 1/2 inches Calif.	15 inches
8 1/2 inches Ankle	8 1/2 inches

THE reason I'm so big," explains Rena, "is that I've always gone in for field sports. Sometimes I lay off for a while, and concentrate on swimming. If I swim twice a week for a month, I can lose 10 pounds. That's a good tip for anyone who wants to lose weight. Running takes it off, too, of course. But my chief interest is field sports, and that's what has developed me."

"Personally, I feel that girls would be a lot better off if they chose to limit their weight by taking part, moderately, in healthful sports like swimming and running, than in trick diets and no exercise at all."

"There's nothing very spectacular in shot putting, from the standpoint of the spectator. But it is a most fascinating exercise for an athlete. It isn't simply a matter of picking up

Rena MacDonald, world champion woman shot putter and the best American woman discus thrower, isn't the type you'll find in a Follies chorus, but she rivals Venus for classic beauty which all the ancient poets raved about

an iron ball, and throwing it. If you want to get championship distance, every ounce of muscle comes into play. And that isn't all, either. You have to attain an absolutely perfect balance.

"To reach the co-ordination of mind and muscle that makes for long throws, you have to practice constantly. You must try this, and try that. Balance a little further back, or a little further forward. Let go of the shot a fraction of a second sooner. Or a split second later. It's a matter of perfect timing, as well as of strength."

"It isn't, generally speaking, a good exercise for girls. . . . takes more strength than most girls have, and more weight than they want."

"Besides, shot putting takes an entirely different sort of temperament than the sports that are faster and more spectacular. One must have the dogged determination to practice and practice—usually all by oneself. The girl runner or swimmer can always have plenty of company. But the girl shot putter is a sort of lone wolf."

FIVE years I've been in amateur athletics now. Ever since I was 16, I've been competing in meets. I want to make the 1932 Olympics. And then I'll be ready to sacrifice my amateur standing, and turn pro. I'd like to coach in a girl's college. And I think if I have two Olympics back of me, I may be able to get the sort of job I want."

"Athletics are my sports now. But I have to earn a living at an office job. I want to make sport my livelihood. But I can't turn pro and make a decent living until everyone knows what a good amateur I am. That's why I'm so anxious to make the track team that is going abroad this summer."

"I run one evening a week now, and swim two evenings. That schedule, by the way, is a great way to reduce. Every night I jog along for almost two miles, and when I hit the scale, after my shower, I've lost three pounds. It's a good way for a girl to drop superfluous weight. Much more sensible than dieting, and not half so tough. Of course I don't mean that you could lose three pounds every night. But you'd lose every loose ounce. The next day you might put a bit of it on again. But, between running and swimming, a girl can whip her figure into pretty good shape."

PERSONALLY, I don't want to get thin ever. I like to put the shot too well to take any chances on losing my strength. My notion of keeping in condition is staying big and strong. I keep fit without any difficulty, because I don't care about the things that run a lot of girls. I used to like to dance, and run around to the movies. But I don't care about either of them now."

Miss MacDonald doesn't care about boys either. "I never had a sweetheart. And I reckon I never will."

But then, of course, Rena has never had much time for beaux and dates. She is only 21 now. And a very stunning young person, with auburn hair, and handsome features. She has patrician eyebrows, exquisitely arched, and fine, fearless eyes.

The chances are that a physical super-man will come along some day, and he will look as good to her as the statue of the Greek discus thrower. Many an old Roman would have crossed the Rubicon for a girl like Rena. And there's many a young American with the Roman's sensible appreciation of true womanly beauty—the sort of beauty that makes a race worth while.

"I guess I'm too boyish myself," she says. "I never had a sweetheart. And I reckon I never will."

As her daily task . . . Rena pounds a mean typewriter.

