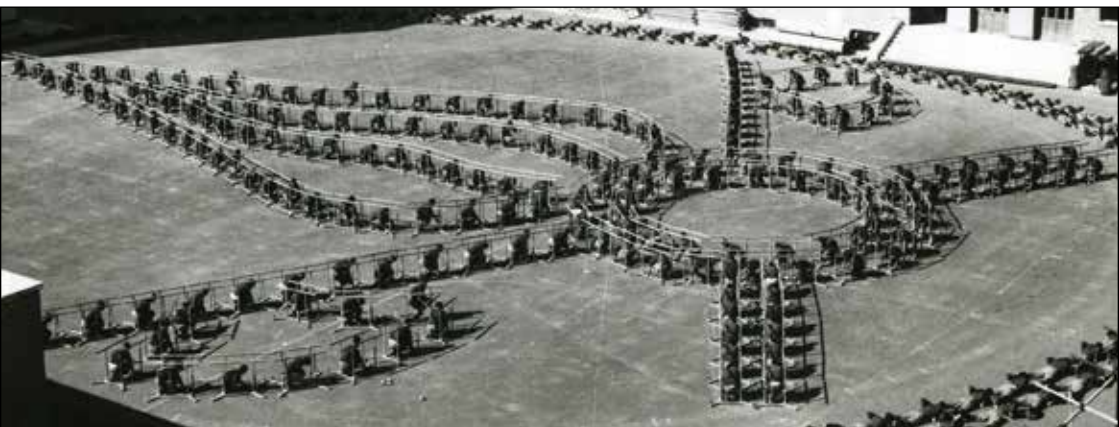


LO SPORT NEI VIGILI DEL FUOCO

PROFESSIONAL MOTOR TRAINING
AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES OF
ITALIAN FIRE FIGHTERS

by Direzione Centrale per la Formazione
of Corpo Nazionale dei Vigili del Fuoco





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D.- *“You know that, despite the many unflattering names you constantly address to your students, at the end of the Course they have a real sympathy for her. What do you attribute this to?”*

R.- *“To the intelligence of young people who instinctively know how to identify those who love them deeply and who understand that everything is done in their interest and in the interest of the country.”*

D.- *“Lei sa che, nonostante i numerosi appellativi poco lusinghieri che lei rivolge costantemente agli allievi, alla fine del Corso loro nutrono per lei una vera simpatia. A che cosa attribuisce ciò?”*

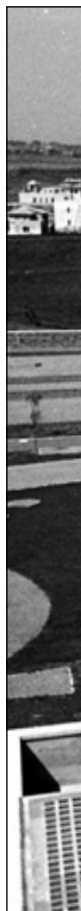
R.- *“All’intelligenza dei giovani che sanno, per istinto, individuare chi li ama profondamente e che comprendono che tutto viene fatto nel loro interesse e nell’interesse della Patria”*

question asked to Professor Massocco

Preamble

In 1939, a Royal Decree-Law (converted into Law n. 1570 of 1941) established the National Fire Brigade Corps. Subsequently, to enhance the training aspect of the staff, the Central Fire Fighting Schools were built. The institute complex, completed in nine months in a record time, was inaugurated on 4 August 1941. Covering an area of more than 65,000 sqm, in full neoclassical and rationalist style, it comprised two large buildings of different shapes but harmonised by the same proportions and a unified architectural order, as well as other smaller buildings, two of which conglomerated in the body of the arcade of the courtyard of honour.

QR-code: Publication on the
80th Anniversary of the
Central Fire Fighting Schools
www.vigilfuoco.it





A high-level complex

Flagship of the Schools was the gymnastics and sports centre, which covered almost half the surface area of the complex and included a football field (with stands), a tennis court, a basketball court, an oval-ball pitch (as rugby was then called), a six-lane athletics track 434 metres long, platforms for the shot put, hammer, javelin and discus throwing, as well as high jump, long jump, triple jump and pole vault. Special attention was paid to the sub-base structures of the fields with regard to the disposal of rainwater and watering water. Next to the structures for outdoor activities, a 50-metre long and 12.5-metre wide swimming



pool was built (stylistically twin to the pool in the “Foro Italico”, Rome), clad on the outside in Roman travertine and, limited to the pool floor, in mosaic. The pool was adorned with several large marble statues (quite similar to those surrounding the Marble Stadium in the capital), representing athletes in various sports disciplines, set within travertine exedras. Interesting were the technical devices concerning water treatment, which was sucked into the deepest part of the pool by two electric pumps, used for circulation and filter washing. The flow rate of the latter was 70 cubic metres per hour and allowed, in about 24 hours, the complete sterilisation cycle of the approximately 1,700 cubic metres of water contained in the pool. Boxing, fencing, wrestling and weightlifting rooms, a large gymnasium, an infirmary, a “bagno finnico” (finnish bathroom) and everything else that could be part of a modern facility in those days completed the sports complex. Today, every fire brigade facility, from the large provincial commands to the smallest detachment, has at least an open yard or a gymnasium equipped for maintaining the physical efficiency of personnel.



The birth of sport groups

Circular No. 138 of 9 December 1941 of the Ministry of the Interior on the 'Gymnastic Sports Service and Choral Singing' gave the new general provisions for physical education, choral singing, and the establishment and operation of sports groups in the fire brigade: *'Each command will set up a sports group within the corps, comprising as many sections as there are sports assigned. The sports group will be directed by the corps commander, who will hold the position of chairman and be responsible to the ministry'*. The disciplines that were to be officially practised at national level for each fire brigade were also definitively established.

The task of preparing the athletes in the eight sports



practised, for national and international matches, was then assigned to five sports training centres: Rome, Sports Centre of the Central Fire Fighting Schools (Heavy Athletics, Athletics, Equipment, Boxing); Milan, 52nd VF Corps (Swimming, Rowing); Piacenza, 64th VF Corps (Rowing); Turin, 83rd VF Corps (Football); Trento, 85th VF Corps (Skiing). The other fire brigades were however free to set up provincial sports groups even outside the disciplines indicated in the ministerial circular and achieved, in some cases, very important results. The athletes, recruited from among the permanent and volunteer fire brigades, could train at set times (on duty or off





duty) for team competitions held in Italy and abroad, with a consequent strong return in terms of image for the national corps. The majority of them came from the pool of volunteer fire fighters, as it was not possible to rely solely on the permanent ones. Instead, the latter became the coaches in a particular sport or were the basic element on which to base team training. The provincial corps also carried out high-level sporting activities, as in the case of artistic gymnastics for Milano and Genova, and continued their parallel work, achieving prestigious successes and including their athletes in national teams taking part in important competitions. From 1941, therefore, almost all the Corps (future provincial Commands) set up sports groups which, from the 1960s onwards, were named in memory of particularly deserving athletes or firefighters who had fallen in the line of



duty. This was the case with the Milano sports group, which was named after **Carlo Galimberti**, Olympic gold medallist in weightlifting in Paris in 1924 and Los Angeles in 1932, who later died in the line of duty in a boiler explosion.



The work of Enrico Massocco

Professor **E. Massocco** was the main architect of the sporting achievements of the athletes of the National Fire Brigade Corps. Born in Venice in 1914, Massocco began his collaboration with the national corps in 1938, in which he went on to hold the position of Director of the Gymnastic Sports Service, which he held until his death at the age of only 60 in 1974. That office, of which he was the undisputed head, was responsible for all gymnastic and sporting activities of the fire brigade. And even today, almost 50 years after his death, that fantastic season of sporting success is still remembered under the name of the 'Massocco era', rightly considered the main architect of the



many achievements, at every level, of the ‘firefighters-athletes’. In fact, it was in the period from the second half of the 1950s to 1974 that Massocco succeeded in comprehensively organising the fire brigade’s sporting activities, involving a large number of trainees from the immense breeding ground represented by the provincial groups, from which the best resources could emerge. In those years, the athletes wearing the red and white colours of the national corps dominated the scene (also in the international and Olympic arena) especially in artistic gymnastics, but they also did well in many other disciplines such as wrestling, weightlifting, boxing, rowing, roller skating



and volleyball. Those athletes, carrying the name and image of the fire brigade high, did themselves credit in every corner of the world. Massocco's untimely death was therefore a huge blow to the entire sports movement of the national corps.

QR-code: [publication by Lamberto Cignitti on Enrico Massocco](#)



Gymnasts

At one time, it was very difficult for a firefighter on active duty to fully devote himself to artistic gymnastics since, when he was exempt for competitions or collegiate rituals, he lacked the minimum number of members in his operational team. From 1941, at the Central Fire Fighting Schools of 'Capanelle', this discipline began to be practised at a high level, so much so that a highly specialised centre was set up where the gymnastic policemen, finally freed from their daily work assignments, could train every day. This choice proved so successful that the list of candidates for the 1960 Rome Olympics included gymnasts who were part of the VF sports groups, who were joined by athletes belonging to companies outside the fire brigade (e.g. **Pasquale and Giovanni Carminucci, Angelo Vicardi, Pietro Grugni and Franco Ghezzi**). On the bases of the names contained on the Olympic list, the top management of the national corps then thought of having talented gymnasts perform their compulsory military service with the fire brigade, and then later put them on temporary duty by concentrating them in Rome. This was, in practice, what was already happening in American colleges and anticipated



in Italy what would later be adopted by the sports groups of the Armed Forces and other State bodies. To implement this project, **Romeo Neri**, Olympic medallist at the 1932 Los Angeles Games and coach of the national artistic gymnastics team until 1958, and **Arrigo Carnoli**, a highly experienced athlete, who prepared the candidates for that prestigious event, were called to Rome. Moreover, thanks to a fortunate intuition from the manager of the Sports Gymnastic Centre, in the period immediately preceding the Rome Olympics, the Japanese men's and women's gymnastics teams, who were highly regarded internationally, were hosted at the Central Fire Fighting Schools, and thus

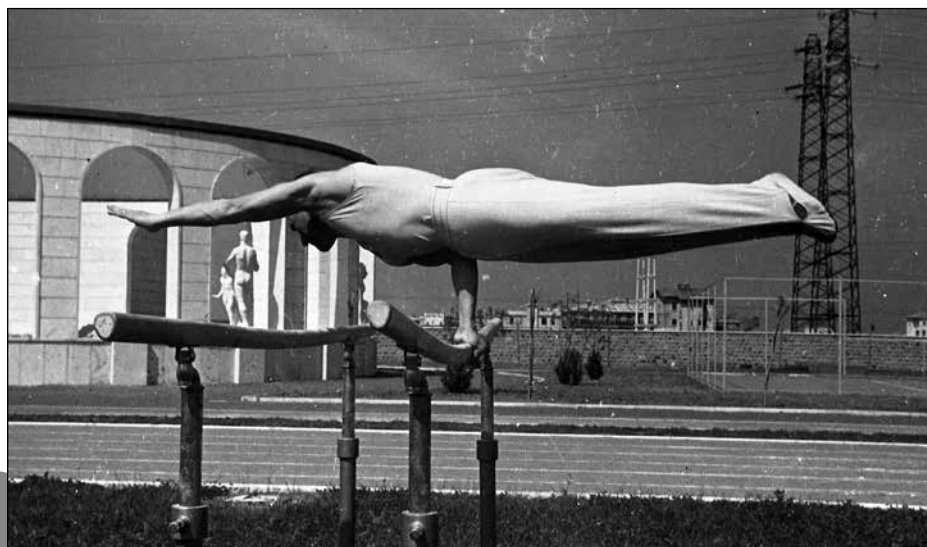


set an example for our athletes. The training sessions were also attended by Italian gymnasts who were not part of the national corps, such as **Riccardo Agabio**, **Franco Menichelli** and **Orlando Polmonari**, and the comparison with these champions exalted the fire brigade athletes, who contributed to the brilliant placing of the “Azzurri” in the team competition at the Games. At the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome,





the Italian artistic gymnastics team, led by the Swiss **Jack Gunthard**, achieved a prestigious third place in the team competition and, in the individual events, a silver medal in the parallel bars with fireman **Giovanni Carminucci**. Out of the eight members of the national team, five were part of national corps, namely the **Carminucci brothers**, **Angelo Vicardi**, **Gianfranco Marzolla** and **Arrigo Carnoli**.



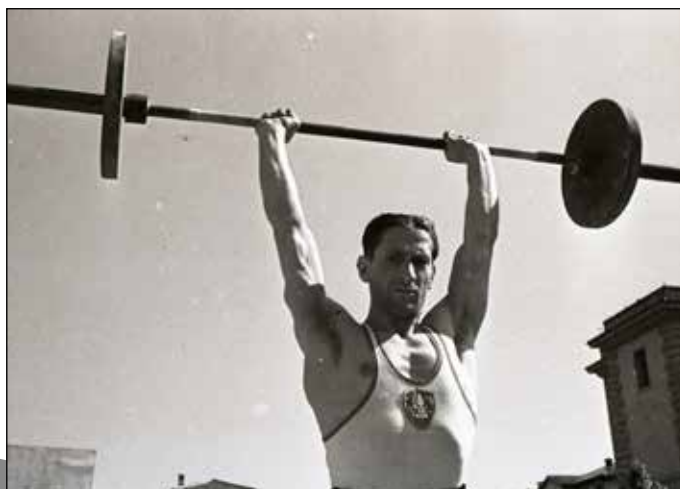
A glorious tradition of champions

The fire brigade gymnasts who won a brilliant third place in the team competition at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome (the already mentioned **Angelo Vicardi**, **Gianfranco Marzolla**, **Arrigo Carnoli**, **Pasquale** and **Giovanni Carminucci**, the latter also winning the silver medal on the parallel bars) would later hold important positions within the national corps and in the federal sphere, alongside other young colleagues in the discipline. With the qualification of instructors (later extended to wrestlers, skaters, weightlifters and boxers) they had, among other things, the task of taking care of the gymnastic-sports training of conscripts and permanent policemen. This task generally kept them busy in the early hours of the morning; during the rest of the day, they could therefore engage in constant training. Thanks to top-class facilities (well-equipped gyms, swimming pools, athletics and skating rinks, football, volleyball and tennis courts) and personal commitment, they continued to achieve excellent results at national and international level.



The VF 'Brunetti' sports group from Rome won the Italian artistic gymnastics team title in 1962, 1963, 1964 and 1968 (in 1957, 1958 and 1965, the laurels were won by the VF 'Galimberti' sports group from Milano), as well as numerous gold medals in the individual events with the **Carminucci** brothers, **Angelo Vicardi** and **Aquilino Santoro**. The 1962 World Gymnastics Championships in Prague saw the participation of the **Carminucci** brothers and **Vicardi**, while at those held in Dortmund four years later, the national team was represented by **Giovanni Carminucci**, **Sergio Fiorin** and **Bruno Franceschetti**. At the 1964 Tokyo Games, in which Italian gymnastics won Olympic gold with **Franco Menichelli**, the **Carminucci** brothers, **Vicardi**

QR-code: publication by
Livio Toschi on firefighters
wrestlers and weightlifters
www.vigilfuoco.it



and **Bruno Franceschetti** competed. The two **Carminucci** brothers, **Franceschetti** and **Vincenzo Mori** were invited to the last collegiate training period for the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. After ceasing their competitive activity, some gymnasts from VF sports groups became coaches, others, who were particularly gifted for teaching, were able to attend the Central School of Sport established by CONI, in order to obtain the title of teacher. In this regard, we recall **Carnoli**, coach of the men's national team at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico and of the women's national team at the 1972 Games in Germany and the 1976 Games in Canada; **Marzolla**, technical director of the 'Azzurri'; **Pietro Grugni**, coach of the VF 'Brunetti' sports group; **Franceschetti**, coach of



champion **Juri Chechi**.

Even in the last thirty years of the 20th century, thanks to highly qualified gymnastic instructors, the national corps was able to field outstanding athletes in many sports disciplines.

At the beginning of the 1970s, dexterity and physical skill exercises ‘close’ to artistic gymnastics were introduced alongside the traditional elements of formal and professional training. These included jumps (especially the back-flip) from the ‘manoeuvring castle’ and evolutions on the horizontal ladders (used in a similar manner to the parallel bars). The former gymnasts thus contributed, thanks also to their experience, to the training of many champions.



Cartolina dei Figli del Fuoco partecipanti alle Olimpiadi Mexico - 1968

Here, then, is the glorious gallery of some of the most representative firemen in the field of artistic gymnastics. Let's start with **Aquilino Santoro**, winner of the absolute national individual title in 1969, member of the Italian team at the 1970 World Championships in Ljubljana and at the 1971 Mediterranean Games in Izmir, Turkey (2nd place in the team) and in various international events; **Roberto Irbetti**, an Italian athlete from 1968 to 1975 in various competitions with foreign teams; **Nicola Caltagirone**, member of the official VF 'Brunetti' team at the 1967 Italian championships together with **Alberto Carminucci** (third of the famous Carminucci brothers). Another gymnast who participated in





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F O T T I S T I C O N. 10/1940

XVII^a OLIMPIADE DI ROMA 25 AGOSTO-10 SETTEMBRE 1936.

Il Corpo Nazionale dei Vigili del Fuoco ha partecipato alla XVII^a Olimpiade di Roma con atleti vigili italiani nelle seguenti sezioni: la della ginnastica artistica, del pugilato, del sollevamento pesi, e del nuoto.

I risultati conseguiti hanno superato ogni aspettativa, coronando con meritato successo, le fatiche e le ansie della lunga ed intensa preparazione e della gara.

La ginnastica artistica italiana ha conquistato la medaglia di bronzo di squadra, dopo i fortissimi giapponesi ed i russi, con i vigili del fuoco:

- CASIMIRUCCI Giovanni - 7^o Corpo V.V.F., Ascoli Piceno
- CASIMIRUCCI Pasquale - 7^o " " " Ascoli Piceno
- MANDOLA Gianfranco - 33^o " " " Milano
- TICARDI Angelo - 11^o " " " Milano
- CARNOLI Arrigo - 35^o " " " Ravenna

e la medaglia d'argento nella gara individuale alla parallele con il giovane vigile CASIMIRUCCI Giovanni.

Per sottolineare l'importanza di questa vittoria basterebbe ricordare che l'Italia alle Olimpiadi del 1932, con il Mar. Ugo dei Vigili del Fuoco Bruno Ferri, non aveva più risalito la pedana olimpica della ginnastica.

Nel pugilato si deve sottolineare la superba vittoria del vigile BENVENUTI Nino dell'11^o Corpo Vigili del Fuoco Trieste, che ha conquistato la medaglia d'oro dalla sua avversaria e la coppa in palio per il pugile più tecnico fra fra tutti i 243 concorrenti.

..

various competitions at the time was **Francesco Piunti**. In the 1980s, however, it was mainly **Rocco Amboni** who represented the national team in gymnastics. A member of the national team from 1977 to 1987, several times overall Italian champion (over 20 speciality titles), he participated in four World Championships (Strasbourg 1978, Fort Wood 1979, Moscow 1981, Budapest

1983) and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. At the 1981 European Gymnastics Championships in Rome, he won the silver medal on the rings and bronze on vault. This winning tradition has continued in more recent times with **Juri Chechi** (five world gold medals, an Olympic gold medal in Atlanta in 1996, and an Olympic bronze medal in Athens in 2004), certainly the most famous of the list of gymnasts who have joined the national corps even if only for military service. In this regard, we recall also **Luppino, Giantomassi, Lazzarich, Lampronti, Montesi, Preti, Colucci, Colombo, Laterza, Sala, Zucca,**

Il mese ha visto il positivo risultato del quattrecentista VAI
LETTI Paolo del 1° Corpo Vigili del Fuoco Piacenza, che ha migliorato
il primato italiano già da lui detenuto.

Nel sollevamento pesi va citato il brillante comportamento degli
atleti:

-SG GENOVA Luciano - 2° Corpo V.V.F. Genova
-BONVICINI Andrea - 51° Corpo V.V.F. Milano

che lottando contro avversari di classe assolutamente superiore, fig-
urarono, con le loro sensazionali forze di volontà, a piazzarsi rispet-
tivamente al 12° posto nella categoria pesi leggeri con Kg. 131,500
e 11° nei massimi leggeri con Kg. 400.

Una medaglia d'oro, una medaglia d'argento e 2 medaglie di bronzo
sono un sensazionale risultato che fa onore al Corpo Nazionale dei
Vigili del Fuoco ed alla sua alta tradizione sportiva.

Il merito di questa affermazione nella più grande competizione
sportiva del mondo va a quei Comandi dei Vigili del Fuoco che hanno
operato con intelligenza e serietà a favore dell'attività sportiva nel
proprio Corpo sviluppando l'organizzazione del Gruppo Sportivo e
curando la preparazione dei propri atleti ed all'Ufficio Centrale
Sportivo Nazionale che si è prodigato con ogni mezzo sia nel settore
organizzativo che in quello tecnico.

Sempre nel quadro delle olimpiadi per il settore maschile ed una
iniziativa viene citata i vigili scotti Giovanni Marsella e Maurizio
Banti del 1° Corpo V.V.F. Roma, designati dal C.C.O.F.I. per l'atletica
maschile nei campi di gara rispettivamente per la ginnastica artistica
e la lotta greco romana, ed il vigile scotto Enzo Raffaele del 3°
Corpo V.V.F. Pavia designato dal C.C.O.F.I. quale allenatore federale
di atletica leggera e preparatore di atleti olimpionici.

Infine, va menzionato l'ex atleta vigile scotto Tognari Nicola
del 1° Corpo V.V.F. Modena che, con i suoi 43 anni, ha preso parte,
insieme fra i giovanissimi, alle Staffette della fiamma olimpica qua-
le leader, portando a termine brillantemente la sua frazione di
percorso.

Tutti hanno fatto onore all'e tradizione sportiva del Corpo Na-
zionale dei Vigili del Fuoco tenendo alto il prestigio dell'organizza-
zione Antincendi in Italia e nel mondo.

I campioni del mondo dal 1902 e le olimpiadi di Tokio del 1964
sono le future mete alle quali le sport italiane punta decisamente;
il Corpo Nazionale dei Vigili del Fuoco dovrà, come sempre, dare il
proprio valido apporto per contribuire a migliorare i risultati delle
olimpiadi di Roma.

Al Gruppo Sportivo dei Corpi ed alle loro sezioni già costituite
ed in fase di continuazione il compito di organizzare e preparare atle-
ti, attuando le direttive di questo Ufficio Centrale, nel duplice
interesse del servizio d'istituto e della sport scurezza.

IL DIRETTORE GENERALE

**Allievi, Masucci, Galli,
Bucci, Luini, Bernardelli,
Rossatto, Centazzo and Igor
Cassina**, the latter Olympic
gold medallist in Athens in
2004.

Further great achievements
have been made over the
decades by top champions
in the disciplines of Greco-
Roman wrestling, freestyle
wrestling, boxing, roller skating,
skiing, weightlifting, rowing
and swimming. Among these we mention **Claudio
Pollio** in freestyle wrestling; **Ignazio Fabra, Pietro
Fiori, Domenico Centurioni, Giovanni Bellini,
Domenico Saccà, Bruno Petrarca and Luciano
Orlandi** in Greco-Roman wrestling; **Nino Benvenuti**
in boxing; **Maurizio Mauri** in roller skating; **Anselmo
Silvino, Roberto Vezzani and Giovanni Scarantino**
in weightlifting; diver **Franco Giorgio Cagnotto**;
skier **Maurilio de Zolt**; **Alessandro Corona** in
rowing and canoeing; **Paolo Pucci, Franco Cagnotto**
and **Simona Quadarella** in swimming.

The Red Flames



The Red Flames, the Fire Brigade Sports Group, was established by decree of 21 October 2013, signed by the Minister of the Interior; by departmental decree n. 351 of 4 December 2014, signed by the Chief of the National Corps, Eng. **Gioacchino Giomi**, its statute was approved.

On 15 December 2014, the first honour was awarded to the newly formed Sports Group: at the Hall of Honour of CONI at the “Foro Italico” in Rome, presided over by the President of CONI, **Giovanni Malagò**, the ceremony was held to award the “Collari d’oro al Merito Sportivo” and Diplomas of Honour to athletes, Azzurri coaches and sports clubs; during the ceremony, the Red Flames were awarded the “Stella d’Argento al Merito Sportivo” for the year 2014, delivered by the President of the Council of Ministers, awarded in virtue of the sports activities carried out by the VV. F. Provincials in past years.


Furthermore, in 2014, the President of the National Union of Veterans of Sport, Avv. **Gian Paolo Bertoni**, awarded the Red Flames the title of “Socio Benemerito”.

After the Gold Flames of the Polizia di Stato, the Yellow Flames of the Guardia di Finanza and the



Blue Flames of the Polizia Penitenziaria, the best fire fighters can now also compete for the same Sports Group, the Red Flames, which is placed under the direct authority of the Department's Sports Activities Office.

The establishment of a National Sports Group finally places the Fire Brigade in a similar position to the



other state corps and the Armed Forces, which, for some time, have entrusted their sporting activity with the task of promoting their image in society and supporting high-level athletes, especially in disciplines where professionalism has not yet arrived.

The sporting organisation of the Fire Brigade, spread throughout the country thanks to the Sports Groups, incardinated in the respective Provincial Commands and in the Central Fire Fighting Schools, continues to be the growth pool for the future levers of Italian sport with the prospect, for the most qualified, of finding satisfactory professional development with the Corps. On 15 May 2015, in the Official Gazette of the Republic, the regulation was published, adopted by Decree n. 61 of 13 April 2015, concerning, among other things, the age and physical, psychic and aptitude requirements for the access of athletes to the National Fire Brigade Corps, pursuant to Article 145 of Legislative Decree n. 217 of 13 October 2005, Ordinance of the Personnel of the C.N.VV.F.



Professional Motor Training

It is no coincidence that the fire brigade has a particularly prominent place in the collective imagination. Indeed, their role has always enjoyed the sympathy of the population because of the important task, which is both difficult and risky, of providing assistance to people in situations of considerable danger. In order to be able to do this job while limiting the risk of accidents, however, it is necessary to be in top shape. This is why, since the beginning of the 1940s, there has been a central structure in the national corps for the physical training of firefighters. From the 1960s onwards, the gymnastic-professional



essays, which took place at the end of the courses held at the Central Fire Fighting Schools, began to gain particular notoriety in the national fire brigade. Yesterday, as today, the physical training of operational personnel was of great importance, and for this reason, sports performances of particular difficulty and spectacularity were also carried out at the same essays.

Until 2002, the structure that was responsible for the physical training of fire fighters was the Sports Gymnastic Service, which was established in 1941. Today, the set of training disciplines for the same



purpose refers to the Professional Motor Training Area. The activities that are envisaged within the Professional Motor Training Office take place mainly in the sports facilities of the Central Fire Fighting Schools, where there is also the swimming pool in which training takes place aimed to improve psycho-



physical efficiency in the aquatic environment and the specific skills and techniques of swimming rescue are acquired, the Operational Training School and the Higher Fire Fighting Institute.

The Office, according to the Ministerial Decree of 7.03.2002, “(...) Provides for the implementation of the motor



training courses assigned to the Area. It defines the modalities for holding the courses, availing itself of the teachers and instructors enrolled in the register of trainers. It takes care of the management of the buildings, facilities and movable property of the Capannelle Sports and Gymnastics Centre in Rome; it takes care of the participation of CNVVF representatives in events, including international events, in the sector”.





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