Funeral Games of Patroclus

After Patroclus’s body was burned on his funeral pyre a monument was built and Achilles called for prizes for the games: cauldrons and tripods, horses, mules and sturdy cattle, grey iron and women in their girdled gowns.

Two-horse Chariot Race Prizes: Winner – a woman skilled in the fine crafts and a tripod with ear shaped handles holding 22 pints, runner up – a pregnant mare 6 years old and broken in, third – kettle holding 4 pints untarnished by flames, fourth – 2 talents of gold, fifth – two handled pan untouched by fire.

Contestants: Eumelus son of Admetus, Diomedes son of Tydeus, Menelaus son of Atreus, Antilochus son of Nestor, and Meriones.

Achilles chose a track with an old monument on it suggesting it was a turning post from an earlier hippodrome. His father’s squire Phoenix stood there to umpire the turn.

During the race Apollo tried to sabotage Diomedes by knocking his whip out of his hand. Athena restored it and broke Eumelus’s yoke so he crashed and scraped the skin off his elbow, mouth and nose and bruised his forehead. Antilochus and Menelaus nearly collided and the crowd argued over who was winning.

Diomedes won with Antilochus second, Menelaus third and Meriones fourth. Eumelus limped in fifth drawing his chariot behind him. Achilles announced that he deserved second place and awarded him the mare but Antilochus objected so Achilles gave Eumelus the bronze and tin cuirass he had taken from Asteropaeus instead. Menelaus accused Antilochus of cheating and Antilochus gave him the mare but Menelaus was satisfied with an apology and gave it back. Achilles gave the fifth prize to Nestor who recalled some of his sporting triumphs at the funeral of Amarynceus winning the boxing, wrestling, foot race and javelin, only losing the chariot race.

Boxing Prizes: Winner (Apollo’s favourite) – mule, runner up – two handles mug.

Contestants: Epeius son of Panopeus, a boxing champion, and Euryalus son of Mecisteus, who was champion at Thebes funeral sports.

Contestants wore special shorts and bound hands with ox hide thongs. Epeius won with a knockout.

Wrestling Prizes: Winner – three legged cauldron worth a dozen oxen, runner up – woman trained in domestic work worth four oxen.

Contestants: Telamonian Ajax and Odysseus.

Contestants wore special shorts and Ajax lifted Odysseus off the ground but Odysseus kicked him in the back of the knee to throw him. A second throw resulted in both falling. Achilles stopped the fight before a third fall was attempted as it had gone on too long and declared both winners.

Foot Race Prizes: Winner – chased silver mixing bowl holding 6 pints, runner up – fat ox, third – half a talent of gold.

Contestants: Ajax son of Oileus, Odysseus and Antilochus son of Nestor.

Ajax led most of the way with Odysseus close behind. Just before the finish Odysseus prayed to Athena who made Ajax slip in the dung left by the cattle Achilles had slaughtered for Patroclus’s funeral pyre allowing Odysseus to win with Antilochus third and Achilles upped his prize after he complemented him.

Fight in armour Prize: spear, shield and helmet taken by Patroclus from Sarpedon and Thracian sword taken by Achilles from Asteropaeus plus a good dinner.

Contestants: Telamonian Ajax and Diomedes son of Tydeus.

After three lunges Ajax pierced Diomedes’s shield but not his breastplate and Diomedes grazed Ajax’s neck drawing first blood so Achilles awarded him the sword.

Discus Throwing contest Prize: lump of iron taken by Achilles from Eetion who had used it as a quoit and was large enough to keep owner in iron for five years.

Contestants: Polypoetes, Leonteus, Telamonian Ajax and Epeius.

Epeius threw first and was beaten by Leonteus who in turn was beaten by Ajax and finally Polypoetes.

Archery Prizes: violet coloured iron 10 double headed axes and 10 single headed axes – a pigeon was tied to a mast and hitting it entitled the winner to all the axes, if he hit the string he got just the single headed axes.

Contestants: Teucer and Meriones.

They drew lots in a bronze helmet and Teucer went first but having failed to promise to sacrifice lambs to Apollo he missed the bird but hit the string allowing the pigeon to escape until Meriones grabbed the bow and praying to Apollo shot the bird. Meriones got the double headed and Teucer the single headed axes.

Javelin Prizes: long bronze spear and new cauldron with floral pattern worth one ox.

Contestants: Agamemnon and Meriones.

Achilles rose and said Agamemnon could not be beaten so awarded him the cauldron and gave the spear to Meriones. Agamemnon was satisfied and gave the cauldron to his herald Talthybius.