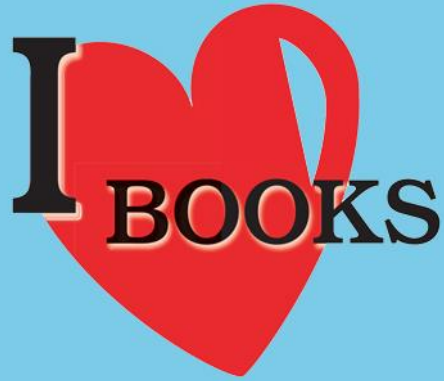




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THE GAMES ARE REVIVED

Over the centuries, Olympia was buried by earthquakes and floods. But after archaeologists rediscovered it, there was a huge surge of interest in the ancient Games which led to the founding of the modern competition in 1896.



In 1875, the remains of temples, sculptures and pots were unearthed at a big archaeological dig at Olympia led by German archaeologist Ernst Curtius.

Inspired by the rediscovery of Olympia, French nobleman and keen sportsman Baron Pierre de Coubertin had the idea of reviving the Games.



Pierre de Coubertin



Cycle racing at the Much Wenlock Olympic Games of the 1870s

A multi-sport festival called the Much Wenlock Olympic Games was being held regularly in the small English town of Much Wenlock. De Coubertin went to watch to get ideas.

Finally, in 1894, he managed to form the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and organize the first modern Games, to be held in Athens. The IOC is still in charge of the Games today.



At this early meeting of the IOC, de Coubertin is second from the right.

De Coubertin used to say that the most important thing at the Games – and in life too – was not the winning but the taking part.



A magazine advertises the 1896 Games with an ancient Greek warrior.

At Athens 1896, more than 200 male athletes from 14 countries competed in nine different sports: athletics, cycling, fencing, gymnastics, shooting, swimming, tennis, weightlifting and wrestling.



Swimming events weren't held in a pool, so competitors had to dive out of a boat and race through the cold, rough sea.



The start of the 100m race in 1896

The first Olympic champion since the ancient Games was an American called James Connolly. He spent almost all his savings on the 17-day boat journey to Europe, but won the hop, step and jump (now called the triple jump).

The marathon race was invented for the 1896 Games. It was inspired by a story about an ancient Greek soldier, Pheidippides, who ran about 40km (25 miles) from the town of Marathon to Athens, with the news that the Greeks had beaten the Persians in battle.



James Connolly with the flag of the USA

The Greek spectators were delighted when their entrant for the marathon, a shepherd called Spyridon Louis, stormed to victory well ahead of anyone else.

Spyridon Louis wore Greek national dress at the medals ceremony.



The Greek king's sons, who were watching, were so excited that they jumped onto the track and ran with Spyridon to the finishing line.



COMBAT SPORTS

There are four hand-to-hand combat sports at the Games. Contestants fight in different groups, depending on their weight.

Wrestling has two disciplines. In Greco-Roman, done by men only, contestants can only fight with their arms and upper body. In freestyle, they can use and grab the legs as well. Freestyle is done by men and women.



Greco-Roman gold medalist Jung Ji-Hyun of South Korea topples Roberto Monzón of Cuba in the 2004 final.

Boxing at the Games only became open to women in 2012. Although punches to the head are allowed, from 2016 men will no longer wear helmets.



Nicola Adams of Great Britain became the first-ever female boxing gold medalist. Here she aims a punch at Ren Cancan of China.

Taekwondo is an ancient Korean martial art whose trademark is its combination of kicking and punching. It became an Olympic sport in 2000.



Hadi Saei of Iran kicks his way towards gold in 2004 against Huang Chih-hsiung of Chinese Taipei.



Ayumi Tanimoto of Japan throws Lucie Décosse of France on her way to a judo gold medal in 2008.

At the ancient Games, there were no weight divisions, so the heavier fighter usually had the advantage.

ON THE WATER

Rowing, sailing and canoeing are the Olympic boat sports, with canoeing split into two disciplines.

Canoeing sprint events take place in flat water and competitors race straight for the finish. Canoeing slalom is held in steep whitewater rapids, and they have to weave around poles.



Slovakian twins Paval and Peter Hochschorner battle the rapids in canoe slalom in 2012. They won bronze, but already had three previous golds.

Sailing races are grouped by size and weight of boats. In general, boats are being made smaller and lighter, which means it takes greater skill and athleticism to control them in the wind.



Four-times gold medal winner Ben Ainslie of Great Britain manoeuvres his boat in 2004.

Both canoeing sprint and canoeing slalom have separate events for canoes and kayakers. What's the difference?

Kayakers use double-bladed paddles and sit in their boats ...



... but canoeists use single-bladed paddles and kneel – on both knees in slalom, on one in sprint.

Rowing and sailing were on the Olympic programme as early as 1896 but had to be cancelled that year due to dangerously strong winds.



Rowing events are split into two types: sculls, where each rower has two oars, and sweep, where they only have one. Rowing events are the only ones done backwards, apart from backstroke swimming.



The Romanian women's team celebrate a gold in 2004. Elisabeta Lipa (fourth from left) has won more rowing medals than anyone else – five golds, two silver and one bronze.

FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

Adopted by Pierre de Coubertin, 'Faster, higher, stronger' is one of the mottos of the Olympic Games. Here are some of the amazing records that have been achieved.

SUMMER GAMES

Most medals (men): 22
Michael Phelps (USA)
for athletics (swimming), 2004-2012.
18 of these were gold, which makes Phelps the gold medal record holder too.

Most medals (women): 18
Larisa Latynina (USSR)
for gymnastics, 1956-1964.
9 of these were gold, which makes her the women's gold medal record holder as well.

Most gold medals at the same Games (men): 8
Michael Phelps (USA)
for athletics (swimming), 2008

Most gold medals at the same Games (women): 6
Kristin Otto (German Democratic Republic)
for athletics (swimming), 1988

Youngest known medalist: 10 years old
Dimitrios Loundras (Greece)
for gymnastics (team bronze in parallel bars), 1896



Larisa Latynina

Youngest gold medalist in an individual event: 13 years old
Marjorie Gestring (USA)
for athletics (3m springboard diving), 1936

Oldest medalist: 72 years old
Oscar Swahn (Sweden)
for shooting (team silver in running deer double shots), 1920

Most Games participations: 10
Ian Millar (Canada)
in equestrian, 1972-2012



Oscar Swahn



Ian Millar



Biggest stadium: 110,000 seats
Sydney, 2000

Most volunteers: hundreds of thousands
Beijing, 2008



In 1900 an unknown French boy acted as coxswain for a pair of Dutch rowers and they won gold. Afterwards he disappeared but could have been as young as 7.

WINTER GAMES

Most medals (men): 13
Ole Einar Børndal (Norway)
for biathlon, 1994-2014

Most medals (women): 10 each
Raisa Smetanina (USSR)
for skiing (cross-country), 1976-1992
Stefania Belmondo (Italy)
for skiing (cross-country), 1992-2002
Marit Bjørgen (Norway)
for skiing (cross-country), 2002-2014

Youngest medalist in an individual event: 14 years old
Scott Allen (USA)
for figure skating (bronze), 1964

Youngest gold medalist in an individual event: 15 years old
Tara Lipinski (USA)
for figure skating, 1998



Ole Einar Børndal

PARALYMPIC GAMES

Most medals (men): 21
Michael Edgson (Canada)
including 18 golds, for visually-impaired swimming, 1984-1992

Most medals (women): 55
Trischa Zorn (USA)
including 41 golds, for blind swimming, 1980-2004

Youngest Paralympian: 11 years old
Natalia Partyka (Poland)
limb deficient table tennis, 2000



Trischa Zorn

PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Most medals (men): 22
Gerd Schoenfelder (Germany)
including 16 golds, for amputee alpine skiing, 1992-2010

Most medals (women): 27
Ragnhild Myklebust (Norway)
one for every event she ever entered, including 22 golds, for sit-ski cross-country skiing, ice sledge speed racing and biathlon, 1988-2002



Ragnhild Myklebust

GAMES DATES AND VENUES

Summer Games

1896 Athens, Greece
1900 Paris, France
1904 St Louis, USA
1908 London, Great Britain
1912 Stockholm, Sweden
1920 Antwerp, Belgium
1924 Paris, France
1928 Amsterdam, Netherlands
1932 Los Angeles, USA
1936 Berlin, Germany
1948 London, Great Britain
1952 Helsinki, Finland
1956 Melbourne, Australia
1960 Rome, Italy
1964 Tokyo, Japan
1968 Mexico City, Mexico
1972 Munich, Federal Republic of Germany
1976 Montreal, Canada
1980 Moscow, USSR
1984 Los Angeles, USA
1988 Seoul, South Korea
1992 Barcelona, Spain
1996 Atlanta, USA
2000 Sydney, Australia
2004 Athens, Greece
2008 Beijing, China
2012 London, Great Britain
2016 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
2020 Tokyo, Japan

Games were not held in 1916, 1940 and 1944 because of the World Wars.

Winter Games

1924 Chamonix, France
1928 St Moritz, Switzerland
1932 Lake Placid, USA
1936 Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany
1948 St Moritz, Switzerland
1952 Oslo, Norway
1956 Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy
1960 Squaw Valley, USA
1964 Innsbruck, Austria
1968 Grenoble, France
1972 Sapporo, Japan
1976 Innsbruck, Austria
1980 Lake Placid, USA
1984 Sarajevo, Yugoslavia
1988 Calgary, Canada
1992 Albertville, France
1994 Lillehammer, Norway
1998 Nagano, Japan
2002 Salt Lake City, USA
2006 Turin, Italy
2010 Vancouver, Canada
2014 Sochi, Russian Federation
2018 Pyeongchang, South Korea
2022 Beijing, China



In 1956 equestrian events had to be held in Stockholm because of strict quarantine laws in Australia.

In 2014 Russian cosmonauts took an Olympic torch - suit - for a spacewalk on its way to Sochi.

