



The African Telatelist

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Olympic Games (W.Stobrawe)



The modern **Olympic Games** (French: *Jeux olympiques*) are the leading international sporting event featuring summer and winter sports competitions wherein thousands of athletes variously compete. The Olympic Games are considered the world's foremost sports competition with more than 200 nations participating. The Olympic Games are held every four years, with the Summer and Winter Games alternating by occurring every four years but two years apart. Their creation was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece, from the 8th century BC to the 4th century AD. Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894. The IOC is the governing body of the Olympic Movement, with the Olympic Charter defining its structure and authority.

The evolution of the Olympic Movement during the 20th and 21st centuries has caused several changes to the Olympic Games. Among these adjustments are creating the Winter Games for ice and winter sports, the Paralympic Games for athletes with a disability, and the Youth Olympic Games for teenage athletes. The IOC has adapted to economic, political, and technological advancements, shifting the Olympics from pure amateurism, as envisioned by Coubertin, to allow participation of professional athletes. The growing importance of mass media created the issue of corporate sponsorship and commercializing the Games. World wars caused the 1916, 1940, and 1944 Games' cancelations.

Large boycotts during the Cold War limited participation in the 1980 and 1984 Games.

The Olympic Movement comprises international sports federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and organizing committees for each specific Olympic Games. As the decision-making body, the IOC chooses the each celebration of the Games' host city, which organizes and funds the Games according to the Olympic Charter. The IOC determined the Olympic program, which comprises the sports to be contested at the Games. Several Olympic rituals and symbols; e.g., the Olympic flag, torch, and opening and closing ceremonies. Over 13,000 athletes compete at the Summer and Winter Olympic Games in 33 different sports and nearly 400 events. The first, second, and third place finishers in each event receive Olympic medals: gold, silver, and bronze, respectively.

The Games have so grown that nearly every nation is represented, creating many such challenges as boycotts, doping, bribery, and acts of terrorism. Every two years the Olympics and its media exposure provide unknown athletes with the chance to attain national and sometimes international fame and the host city and country to present themselves to the world.



Above: Olympic Flag

The Olympic Movement uses symbols to represent the ideals embodied in the Olympic Charter. The Olympic symbol, better known as the Olympic rings, consists of five intertwined rings and represents the unity of the five inhabited continents (Africa, America, Asia, Oceania, Europe). The colored version of the rings—blue, yellow, black, green, and red—over a white field forms the Olympic flag. These colors were chosen because every nation had at least one of them on its national flag. The flag was adopted in 1914 but flown for the first time only at the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. It has since been hoisted during each celebration of the Games.

The Olympic motto, *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, a Latin expression meaning "Faster, Higher, Stronger" was proposed by Pierre de Coubertin in 1894 and has been official since 1924. The motto was coined by Coubertin's friend the Dominican priest Henri Didon OP, for a Paris youth gathering of 1891.

Coubertin's Olympic ideals are expressed in the Olympic creed:

The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well.

Months before each Games, the Olympic Flame is lit in Olympia in a ceremony that reflects ancient Greek rituals. A female performer, acting as a priestess, ignites a torch by placing it inside a parabolic mirror which focuses the sun's rays; she then lights the torch of the first relay bearer, thus initiating the Olympic torch relay that will carry the flame to the host city's Olympic stadium, where it plays an important role in the opening ceremony. Though the flame has been an Olympic symbol since 1928, the torch relay was introduced at the 1936 Summer Games, as part of the German government's attempt to promote its National Socialist ideology.

The Olympic mascot, an animal or human figure representing the cultural heritage of the host country, was introduced in 1968. It has played an important part on the Games identity promotion

since the 1980 Summer Olympics, when the Russian bear cub Misha reached international stardom. The mascot of the Summer Olympics in London was named Wenlock after the town of Much Wenlock in Shropshire. Much Wenlock still hosts the Wenlock Olympian Games, which were an inspiration to Pierre de Coubertin for the Olympic Games.

OLYMPIC SPORTS:

The Olympic Games program consists of 35 sports, 30 disciplines and nearly 400 events. For example, wrestling is a Summer Olympic sport, comprising two disciplines: Greco-Roman and Freestyle. It is further broken down into fourteen events for men and four events for women, each representing a different weight class. The Summer Olympics program includes 26 sports, while the Winter Olympics program features 15 sports.

Athletics, swimming, fencing, and artistic gymnastics are the only summer sports that have never been absent from the Olympic program. Cross-country skiing, figure skating, ice hockey, Nordic combined, ski jumping, and speed skating have been featured at every Winter Olympics program since its inception in 1924. Current Olympic sports, like badminton, basketball, and volleyball, first appeared on the program as demonstration sports, and were later promoted to full Olympic sports. Some sports that were featured in earlier Games were later dropped from the program.^[121]

Olympic sports are governed by international sports federations (IFs) recognized by the IOC as the global supervisors of those sports. There are 35 federations represented at the IOC. There are sports recognized by the IOC that are not included on the Olympic program. These sports are not considered Olympic sports, but they can be promoted to this status during a program revision that occurs in the first IOC session following a celebration of the Olympic Games. During such revisions, sports can be excluded or included in the program on the basis of a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the IOC. There are recognized sports that have never been on an Olympic program in any capacity, including chess and surfing.

In October and November 2004, the IOC established an Olympic Programme Commission, which was tasked with reviewing the sports on the Olympic program and all non-Olympic recognized sports. The goal was to apply a systematic approach to establishing the Olympic program for each celebration of the Games. The commission formulated seven criteria to judge whether a sport should be included on the Olympic program.^[127] These criteria are history and tradition of the sport, universality, popularity of the sport, image, athletes' health, development of the International Federation that governs the sport, and costs of holding the sport. From this study five recognized sports emerged as candidates for inclusion at the 2012 Summer Olympics: golf, karate, rugby union, roller sports and squash. These sports were reviewed by the IOC Executive Board and then referred to the General Session in Singapore in July 2005. Of the five sports recommended for inclusion only two were selected as finalists: karate and squash. Neither sport attained the required two-thirds vote and consequently they were not promoted to the Olympic program. In October 2009 the IOC voted to instate golf and rugby union as Olympic sports for the 2016 and 2020 Summer Olympic Games.

The 114th IOC Session, in 2002, limited the Summer Games program to a maximum of 28 sports, 301 events, and 10,500 athletes. Three years later, at the 117th IOC Session, the first major program revision was performed, which resulted in the exclusion of baseball and softball from the official program of the 2012 London Games. Since there was no agreement in the promotion of two other sports, the 2012 program featured just 26 sports. The 2016 and 2020 Games will return to the maximum of 28 sports given the addition of rugby and golf.

MEDALISTS:

The athletes or teams who place first, second, or third in each event receive medals. The winners receive gold medals, which were solid gold until 1912, then made of gilded silver and now gold-plated silver. Every gold medal however must contain at least six grams of pure gold. The runners-up receive silver medals and the third-place athletes are awarded bronze medals. In

events contested by a single-elimination tournament (most notably boxing), third place might not be determined and both semifinal losers receive bronze medals. At the 1896 Olympics only the first two received a medal; silver for first and bronze for second. The current three-medal format was introduced at the 1904 Olympics. From 1948 onward athletes placing fourth, fifth, and sixth have received certificates, which became officially known as victory diplomas; in 1984 victory diplomas for seventh- and eighth-place finishers were added. At the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, the gold, silver, and bronze medal winners were also given olive wreaths. The IOC does not keep statistics of medals won, but National Olympic Committees and the media record medal statistics as a measure of success.

Some phonecards representing Olympics are depicted below:-



