

OLYMPIC SPORTS



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PART 1: SUMMER OLYMPIC SPORTS

1. ARCHERY



ARCHERY, ONE OF THE OLDEST SPORTS STILL PRACTICED, IS CLOSELY LINKED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILISATION. AS A CULTURAL ADVANCE, IT WAS COMPARABLE TO THE DISCOVERY OF FIRE AND THE INVENTION OF THE WHEEL.

ARCHERY IN BATTLE

In 1200 BC the Hittites and Assyrians shot their bows from chariots, becoming fearsome opponents in battle. They made their bows with tendon, horn and wood and also developed a new re-curved shape. This made their bows shorter and more powerful, making them easier to handle for an archer on horseback.

A NOBLE HISTORY

Archery was the favourite sport of the Egyptian pharaohs during the 18th dynasty (1567-1320 BC). Many centuries later, some of the earliest recorded archery tournaments took place during the Zhou (Chou) dynasty (1027- 256 BC) in China. Such events were attended by Chinese nobility. Much later, English writers honoured the longbow for famous contributions to their country's victories in the battles of Crécy, Agincourt and Poitiers.

MOST DECORATED ARCHER

Archery first appeared in the Olympic Games in 1900, was contested again in 1904, 1908 and 1920, then again, after an absence of 52 years, from 1972 to the present. The most decorated archer in Olympic history is Hubert Van Innis of Belgium who competed in 1900 and 1920, winning six gold and three silver medals.

WORLD ARCHERY (FORMERLY FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE TIR A L'ARC - FITA) FORMED IN 1931. ARCHERY MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1900 PARIS GAMES.

WELCOME BACK

Archery was a feature of the Olympic Games from 1900 to 1920, becoming, in 1904, one of the first Olympic sports to include women. It was then off the programme for slightly over 50 years. In 1961 Inger Frith became President of the International Archery Federation – the first woman to serve as president of an international sports federation – and largely through her efforts archery returned to the Olympic programme in 1972. At the 2004 Athens Games, the archery events were staged in the Panathinaiko Stadium, where the first modern Olympic Games had taken place in 1896.

MATCH PLAY

In 1992, head-to-head match play was introduced in an effort to make the event a more exciting spectacle. This vastly improved the sport from a spectator perspective and also helped the sport's ratings on television.

CURRENT EVENTS

Modern Olympic archery has four events, with men and women competing in both individual and team events. The team event was introduced at the 1988 Seoul Games for the first time.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

At the Olympic Games, archers shoot at targets 70 metres away. The target is 1.22 metres in diameter and marked with 10 concentric rings. Individual archers compete in head-to-head matches in single elimination after being ranked from 1 to 64 during qualifications. In each contest both archers shoot 12 arrows and only the winner moves on. Teams are made up of three archers, and team events follow the same competition format as individual events.

2. ARTISTIC SWIMMING



ARTISTIC SWIMMING IS A RELATIVELY NEW DISCIPLINE THAT HAS ITS ORIGINS IN WATER ACROBATICS. IT IS HUGE POPULAR IN THE UNITED STATES.

GLASS TANK PERFORMER

At the turn of the 20th century, Annette Kellerman, an Australian swimmer, toured the United States performing water acrobatics. Her shows proved very popular and a sport was born.

PERFORMING WITH MUSIC

The sport was developed further by Katherine Curtis, who had the idea of combining water acrobatics with music. Her students performed at the 1933-34 Chicago "Century of Progress" Fair, where the announcer, former Olympic swimming gold medallist Norman Ross, coined the term "synchronised swimming".

HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR

Synchronised swimming was later popularised by American film star Esther Williams, who performed water ballet in several American movies. The competitive aspect was developed around the same time when Frank Havlicek, a student of Katherine Curtis, drew up a set of rules.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

A relatively recent discipline, synchronised swimming became an Olympic sport for the first time in Los Angeles in 1984, with solo and duet events. These events also took place at the Olympic Games in 1988 in Seoul and in 1992 in Barcelona. Atlanta replaced them in 1996 by a water ballet for eight people. Since the 2000 Olympic Games, the Olympic programme has included the team event and the duet.

Alongside rhythmic gymnastics, synchronised swimming is the only exclusively female Olympic sport.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE NATATION (FINA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1908.

SWIMMING HAS BEEN CONTESTED SINCE THE INAUGURAL MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1896.

FIRST SWIM

Swimming was still a risky activity at the first modern Games in Athens in 1896. For the 1,200m freestyle event, a boat deposited competitors in the icy waters of the Mediterranean the required distance from the shore. Winner Alfred Hajos later confessed that the will to live had been a bigger motivation than the will to win.

SWIMMING TODAY

Men and women now compete in 16 events, involving four different strokes across a range of distances. Freestyle races cover 50m, 100m, 200m, 400m, 800m, 1,500m, 10,000m; the

800m is for women only and the 1,500m for men only. The butterfly, backstroke and breaststroke races each cover 100m and 200m. All four strokes are used in the 200m and 400m individual medley events. The 4 x 100m freestyle, 4 x 200m freestyle and 4 x 100m medley relays complete the programme.

RACE PROCEDURE

Each race has a maximum of eight swimmers. Preliminary heats in the 50m, 100m and 200m lead to semi-finals and finals based on the fastest times. In relays and individual events of 400m or more, the eight fastest finishers in the preliminaries advance directly to the finals.

DIVING AND SYNCHRONISED SWIMMING

These are judged events. In diving, competitors perform a series of dives and are awarded points up to 10 depending upon their elegance and skill. Points are adjusted for the degree of difficulty, based on the number and types of manoeuvres attempted, such as somersaults, pikes, tucks and twists. The judging for synchronised swimming resembles that for figure skating, with judges awarding marks out of a possible 10 for artistic impression and technical merit.

WATER POLO

In water polo, 12 teams qualify for the men's division at the Olympic Games while eight compete in the women's. Teams play each other in round-robin groups, with the top four from each pool going into the quarter finals in the men's competition, and the top two from each pool going into a pair of semi-finals in the women's competition.

EVENT: WOMEN: DUET AND TEAM

3. ATHLETICS



ATHLETICS WAS CONTESTED IN THE FIRST ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES, AND CHAMPIONS HAVE BEEN RECORDED FROM AS FAR BACK AS 776 BC.

FIRST AND ORIGINAL

Throughout recorded sports history, athletics has always been practised. The first event contested in the ancient Olympic Games was the "stadium" race, a sprint of about 192 metres. Winners in this event have been recorded from as far back as 776 BC.

ANCIENT EVENTS

Much like today, the ancient Olympic Games included a wide variety of track and field events. Such events included longer foot races, a race in armour, and a pentathlon event that consisted of the "stadium" race, long jump, discus throw, javelin throw and wrestling.

ACROSS THE GLOBE

Similar events were held in ancient Greece at the Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian Games. Throughout Europe, local fairs and festivals often included running, jumping and throwing events. In Ireland and Scotland, these developed into organised sets of Tailteann and Highland Games, respectively. There was also a tradition of "pedestrian" events – often with heavy betting involved – in the 18th and 19 centuries, especially in Great Britain, which normally involved walking or running races.

MODERN ORGANISATION

The modern format of athletics, in which a variety of running, jumping, throwing, walking and combined events are competed at a single “meeting” or “meet”, evolved in the late 19th century, when schools and military colleges began to incorporate sports and exercise as part of education programmes. The earliest recorded meeting dates back to 1840 in Shropshire, England, but specialised championships began to thrive in the 1880s in the USA, UK, and throughout Europe, as well as in other developed nations.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Since 1896, athletics has been on the programme of each edition of the Games of the Olympiad. Its presence on the Games programme has allowed its popularity to increase across the world. This popularity was also strengthened by the creation of the IAAF in 1912. Women’s events appeared for the first time at the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, while the men’s programme was standardised as of the 1932 Games in Los Angeles. Although at the beginning women were authorised to participate in only some events, today their programme is almost identical to that of the men.

The 1960s saw a boom in athletics in developing countries, with the success of African runners and sprinters of Caribbean origin. Americans have for a long time reigned over men’s athletics, although European nations have also dominated. For the women, the Soviet Union and the GDR (East Germany) dominated the competitions before their dissolution. More recently, high-level Asian athletes have risen up the ranks. At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, athletes from 62 countries competed in the finals.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATHLETICS FEDERATIONS (IAAF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1912. ATHLETICS HAS BEEN CONTESTED IN SOME FORMAT AT EVERY EDITION OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES, ANCIENT AND MODERN.

ANCIENT AND MODERN

The ancient Games at Olympia began simply with foot races, only occasionally complicated by dressing the runners in infantry armour or making them carry soldiers’ shields. Today, athletics remains one of the most popular Olympic sports.

FEMALE EQUALITY

Women’s track and field athletics began at the 1928 Amsterdam Games, growing steadily to an almost identical programme to the men’s. Since women’s steeplechase was added at Beijing in 2008, the only differences are that men have an extra walk at 50km and a decathlon rather than a heptathlon.

QUALIFICATION

The IOC sets minimum qualifying times for each running event. Those that achieve this minimum standard, and are selected by their National Olympic Committee, compete at the Olympic Games. Track events are decided by running heats, with the top two to four athletes qualifying for the next round all the way up to the final.

EVENTS

Athletics can be divided into four areas: track events ranging from 100m sprints to long distance races of 10,000m; field events such as long jump, discus and javelin; road events comprising the marathons and long distance walks; and the combined events of heptathlon for women and decathlon for men.

MEN'S EVENTS

10000M, 100M, 110M HURDLES, 1500M, 200M, 20KM RACE WALK, 3000M STEEPLECHASE, 400M HURDLES, 400M, 4X100M RELAY, 4X400M RELAY, 5000M, 50KM RACE WALK, 800M, DECATHLON, DISCUS THROW, HAMMER THROW, HIGH JUMP, JAVELIN THROW, LONG JUMP, MARATHON, POLE VAULT, SHOT PUT, TRIPLE JUMP

WOMEN'S EVENTS

10000M, 100M HURDLES, 100M, 1500M, 200M, 20KM RACE WALK, 3000M STEEPLECHASE, 400M HURDLES, 400M, 4X100M RELAY, 4X400M RELAY, 5000M, 800M DISCUS THROW, HAMMER THROW, HEPTATHLON, HIGH JUMP, JAVELIN THROW, LONG JUMP, MARATHON, POLE VAULT, SHOT PUT, TRIPLE JUMP

4. BADMINTON

BADMINTON HAS A COSMOPOLITAN HISTORY. THE RULES OF THE MODERN GAME WERE DEVELOPED IN ENGLAND, BUT IT IS NOW ASIAN COUNTRIES THAT DOMINATE THE SPORT.

BADMINTON HOUSE

Badminton takes its name from Badminton House - home of the Duke of Beaufort in the English county of Gloucestershire. In 1873, the Duke is credited with bringing a version of the game – Poona - back from India and introducing it to his guests.

GETTING ORGANISED

The sport quickly grew in popularity and in 1877 the first set of written rules were devised by the newly formed Bath Badminton Club. The Badminton Federation of England was created 16 years later and in 1899 it organised the first All England Championships.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Badminton made its debut as a demonstration sport at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. It was not until the 1992 Games in Barcelona that it was officially included on the Olympic programme, with men's and women's singles and doubles events. The mixed doubles event made its debut in 1996 at the Atlanta Olympic Games. Since then, the number of events has remained unchanged.

Although the creation of modern badminton is attributed to England, it is Asia that now dominates this sport. Between 1992 and 2008, Asian countries won 69 of the 76 medals available in Olympic competition! The dominant countries are China, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, followed by Great Britain and Denmark.

THE INTERNATIONAL BADMINTON FEDERATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1934 AND HAS SINCE CHANGED ITS NAME TO THE BADMINTON WORLD FEDERATION.

The sport made its Olympic debut at the 1992 Barcelona Games.

INDONESIA CELEBRATES

When badminton was added to the 1992 Barcelona Games, Indonesia had never won a gold medal. However, when Susi Susanti won the women's singles and two hours later her fiancé won the men's, the country erupted. Their return to Indonesia included a two-hour parade through the streets of Jakarta led by a car carrying a gigantic shuttlecock.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

A badminton match comprises the best of three games. A coin is tossed before the first game, and the winner of the toss may serve first or pick an end of the court. Points are scored by one player/pair after every rally and the winning player or pair needs to score 21 points to win each game.

CURRENT EVENTS

Olympic badminton consists of five events – men’s singles and doubles, women’s singles and doubles, and mixed doubles. Each involves a single-elimination tournament, with the top eight players or pairs seeded. The Badminton World Federation’s ranking list is used to determine qualification for the Olympic tournament. For singles, 38 competitors are selected. For doubles, 16 pairs are selected.

MIXED DOUBLES

One of the enduring attractions of badminton is that men and women can compete together on equal terms in mixed doubles, which made its Olympic debut as an event in Atlanta.

5. BASKETBALL



BASKETBALL IS A RELATIVELY NEW SPORT, INVENTED IN 1891. IT HAS NOW GROWN INTO ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

KEEPING STUDENTS FIT

Basketball was invented in December 1891 by Canadian James W. Naismith. An instructor at the YMCA Training School in Massachusetts, he sought a suitable indoor game to keep his students fit and warm during the cold New England winters. He formulated 13 rules, most of which still apply today. In 1893, the first women’s game was played at the Smith College, in Northampton, Massachusetts, USA.

PEACH BASKETS

Originally, basketball was played with peach baskets and balls had to be retrieved manually after each score. Subsequently, a hole was drilled into the bottom of the basket allowing the balls to be poked out with a long rod. In 1906, the peach baskets were finally replaced by metal hoops with backboards

ORANGE BALL

Basketball was originally played with a soccer ball. The first balls made specifically for basketball were brown, and it was only in the late 1950s that Tony Hinkle, searching for a ball that would be more visible to players and spectators alike, introduced the orange ball that is now in common use.

GLOBAL POPULARITY INCREASES

In the early 1900s, students from abroad who had studied in Springfield, started to spread the game. In the 1920s, the first international games were played and by 1950 the first World Championship for Men was held in Argentina. Three years later, in 1953, the first World Championship for Women took place in Chile.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Basketball made its appearance at the Olympic Games in 1904 in St Louis as a demonstration sport, as the competition was held between only American teams and counted as an event of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU of the USA) Championships. At the Games in 1936 in Berlin, basketball joined the Olympic programme, where it has remained to this day. Women's basketball debuted at the 1976 Games in Montreal. The USA dominates international basketball and won all the titles up to 1972, the year it was defeated by the Soviet Union at the Munich Games. In the women's event, the Soviets took gold in 1976, 1980 and 1992, and were later dominated by the Americans between 1984 and 2008, except in 1992.

In 1992 at the Barcelona Games, famous players from the National Basketball Association (NBA) were allowed for the first time to represent the USA. This team, known as the "Dream Team" in the international media, was undoubtedly the best basketball team ever formed. It delighted the public and widely dominated the Olympic tournament in 1992.

THE INTERNATIONAL BASKETBALL FEDERATION (FIBA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1932 IN GENEVA, SWITZERLAND.

Basketball became a full medal sport at the 1936 Berlin Games for men and at the 1976 Montreal Games for women.

DOMINANT FORCE

The United States, where the game had been invented, came to dominate it, and for the first seven men's Olympic basketball tournaments the question was not who would win, but who would finish second.

GLOBALISATION

In the mid-70s the situation started to slowly but steadily change as the rest of the world began to catch up. The 1992 Barcelona Games marked a historic moment for the sport when professional players, including those in the NBA, were allowed to participate at the Olympic Games. Since then, the gap between the US and the rest of the world continues to shrink.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

Basketball is played in 4 periods of 10 minutes each at the Olympic Games. There are two events: the men's and the women's competitions. Both tournaments are played with 12 teams, all teams having to qualify except the host nation and the world champions. Qualification proceeds through championships organised on each continent a year in advance of the Olympics.

THE "DREAM TEAM"

In 1992, for the first time, professional players were allowed to represent their countries in national team competition. The subsequent US men's team was dubbed the "Dream Team" by the world's media and dominated the 1992 Olympic tournament. It is widely regarded as the greatest basketball team ever assembled.

6. BEACH VOLLEYBALL



BEACH VOLLEYBALL STARTED OUT IN CALIFORNIA AS A PASTIME. DUE TO ITS POPULAR APPEAL IT DEVELOPED INTO A THRIVING PROFESSIONAL SPORT

FAMILY FUN

Beach volleyball first appeared in the early 1920s in Santa Monica, California. Then what started out as just some family fun became a sport spreading rapidly across the world. By the 1930s, the game had reached countries like Czechoslovakia, Latvia and Bulgaria.

DEPRESSION FREE

Interestingly, beach volleyball really took off in the United States during the 1930s, perhaps as a little light relief from the Great Depression. The first official two-man tournament took place in 1947, and the first beach volleyball circuit, involving hundreds of players and five California beaches, began in the 1950s.

POPULAR CULTURE

However it was the crossover with popular culture that really launched the sport. In the 1960s, The Beatles appeared at the legendary Sorrento Beach in Los Angeles for a quick hit and US President John F. Kennedy even went to watch a game. Its cool image was a sponsor's dream and prize money soon poured into the sport.

OLYMPIC NEWCOMER

Beach volleyball made its Olympic debut at the 1996 Atlanta Games. USA and Brazil shared all the gold medals in the subsequent four editions, except in Sydney where the Australian women's team dominated.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE VOLLEYBALL (FIVB) WAS FOUNDED IN 1947.

VOLLEYBALL MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1964 TOKYO GAMES.

NEW TACTICS

The sport is very finely balanced between power and speed. Hence while strength and height have become vital components of international teams, the ability of teams and coaches to devise new tactics, strategies and skills have been crucial for success at the Olympic Games.

A BEACH PHENOMENON

Volleyball was introduced to the Olympics in 1964 but the beach volleyball phenomenon arose only at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games in Atlanta. This discipline, although still very young, has become very popular.

CURRENT EVENTS

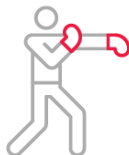
There is a men's and women's volleyball event and a men's and women's beach volleyball event. Volleyball takes place indoors in controlled conditions. Beach volleyball takes place outside, where the athletes have to compete with the added variables of the sand, the sun and the wind.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

Volleyball matches are played to the best of five sets. The first four sets are played to 25 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. A team must win a set by two points. There is no ceiling, so each set continues until one of the teams gains a two-point advantage. In beach volleyball, matches are played best of three sets using the rally point

system. The first two sets are played to 21 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. Again, a team must win a set by two points.

7. BOXING



BOXING IS A SPORT WITH AN ANCIENT HISTORY. IT WAS INTRODUCED TO THE ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES IN THE 7TH CENTURY BC.

IN THE BEGINNING

The earliest evidence of boxing dates back to Egypt around 3000 BC. The sport was introduced to the ancient Olympic Games by the Greeks in the late 7th century BC, when soft leather thongs were used to bind boxers' hands and forearms for protection.

ROMAN DEVELOPMENTS

Later, in Rome, leather thongs were exchanged for the cestus – a glove studded with metal. Unfortunately this did not help the gladiators involved, as boxing matches of the era usually ended with the death of one or other contestant.

AMATEUR BOXING

With the fall of the Roman Empire, boxing came to an abrupt end. It resurfaced in 17th century England, and organised amateur boxing officially began in 1880. Originally only five weight classes were contested: Bantam, not exceeding 54 kilos; Feather, not exceeding 57 kilos; Light, not exceeding 63.5 kilos; Middle, not exceeding 73 kilos; and Heavy, any weight.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

When boxing made its Olympic debut at the 1904 Games in St Louis, it was the USA, the only country entered, which took all the medals. Later, the Americans continued to dominate boxing, winning 109 medals (including 48 gold) out of the 842 up for grabs, closely followed by the Cubans and Russians.

Since its inclusion in the Olympic programme, boxing has been staged at each edition of the Games, except in 1912 in Stockholm, owing to Swedish law, which forbade the practice.

The rules have evolved since the 1980s: 1984 in Los Angeles: protective helmet obligatory; 1992 in Barcelona: set-up of an electronic scoring system to strengthen the objectivity of refereeing; 2007: standardised point scoring.

Women's boxing will make its debut at the 2012 London Games in London. The current 11 men's events will be replaced by 10 men's and 3 women's events.

THE ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DE BOXE AMATEUR (AIBA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1920.

BOXING MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1904 ST LOUIS GAMES.

BANNED AND DANGEROUS

When the modern Games started in 1896, the Athens organising committee omitted boxing, deciding it was too dangerous. The sport reappeared in 1904 in St Louis thanks to its popularity in the United States, but was absent again at the 1912 Stockholm Games because Swedish law banned it. Only in 1920 did boxing make a permanent return to the Olympic Games.

SPECIAL RULES

Since the 1952 Helsinki Games, there has been no contest for third place. Instead both losing semi-finalists are awarded bronze medals. More recently, from the 1984 Los Angeles Games, the wearing of head guards was made compulsory.

CURRENT EVENTS

Boxing at the Olympic Games is organised into weight divisions. This is so men face opponents of similar size, making ability the key factor in any contest. There are eleven weight divisions from light flyweight (under 48kg) through middleweight (64-69kg) up to super heavyweight (91kg and over)

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

Boxers qualify for the Olympic Games through regional qualifying tournaments in Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and Oceania. The number of boxers accepted from any region depends upon the strength of boxing in the region and the weight division. The boxers are paired off at random for the Olympic Games, without regard to ranking, and compete in a single-elimination tournament.

FEDERATION NAME CHANGE

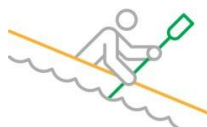
At the end of 2007 the Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur removed the word Amateur from its name to become the Association International de Boxe. The initials AIBA still remain using the combination of the French and English acronyms – AIB and IBA.

MEN'S EVENTS

+ 91KG (SUPER HEAVYWEIGHT) MEN, 46 - 49 KG (LIGHT FLY WEIGHT) MEN
 UP TO 52 KG (FLY WEIGHT) MEN, UP TO 56 KG (BANTAM WEIGHT) MEN
 UP TO 60 KG (LIGHT WEIGHT) MEN, UP TO 64 KG (LIGHT WELTER WEIGHT) MEN
 UP TO 69 KG (WELTER WEIGHT) MEN, UP TO 75 KG (MIDDLE WEIGHT) MEN
 UP TO 81 KG (LIGHT HEAVY WEIGHT) MEN, UP TO 91 KG (HEAVY WEIGHT) MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

48 TO 51 KG (FLY WEIGHT) WOMEN, 57 TO 60 KG (LIGHT WEIGHT) WOMEN
 69 TO 75 KG (MIDDLE WEIGHT) WOMEN

8. CANOE SLALOM

AS WITH CANOE SPRINT, CANOE SLALOM ALSO UTILISES CANOES AND KAYAKS, HOWEVER THERE ARE SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES. THE SPORT WAS MODELLED FROM SKI SLALOM AND BEGAN IN SWITZERLAND IN 1932. IN ITS EARLY DAYS, IT WAS FIRST PERFORMED ON FLAT WATER, BUT LATER SWITCHED TO WHITE WATER RAPIDS.

VARIETY OF CRAFTS

While canoe slalom basically uses the same type of craft as canoe sprint, the boats are designed differently. While in canoe sprint the boats are long and streamlined, in canoe

slalom the boats are small, light and agile, allowing for greater manoeuvrability through the rapids.

FIRST COMPETITION

Canoe slalom became popular shortly before World War II with the first known competition occurring in 1933. The first International Federation to govern canoeing was the Internationale Repräsentantschaft für Kanusport (IRK) founded in 1924. After World War II, this organisation was succeeded by the International Canoe Federation (ICF) which governs both canoe sprint and canoe slalom as well as six other canoeing disciplines. It is located in Lausanne.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Canoe and kayak racing became full medal sports at the 1936 Berlin Games. However events were initially limited to canoe sprint until canoe slalom made its debut at the 1972 Munich Games. Slalom racing was not competed again in the Olympic Games until the 1992 Barcelona Games. Canoe slalom racers compete in four events, three for men and one for women, over the same course.

THE FIRST FEDERATION WAS THE INTERNATIONALE REPRÄSENTANTSCHAFT FÜR KANUSPORT, FORMED BEFORE WORLD WAR II.

The International Canoe Federation (ICF) was founded in 1946. Canoeing became a full medal sport at the 1936 Berlin Games.

SHORTER AND FASTER

In 1924, canoe sprint was introduced to the Olympic programme as a demonstration sport. It became a full medal sport in 1936 with both canoe and kayak events. Women began competing in kayaks from 1948. Recent trends have led away from 5,000m and 10,000m races toward shorter 200m, 500m and 1,000m competitions.

CANOE SPRINT VS. CANOE SLALOM

The International Canoe Federation (ICF) covers canoeing and kayaking, and both of these crafts are used in the two main disciplines. Canoe sprint is based on pure “speed on the course” and requires a calm water surface. Canoe slalom is conducted on flowing water, rushing down a steep course where competitors attempt to negotiate a slalom course in single runs against the clock.

JOHN MACGREGOR

Despite the original origins of canoeing, a Scotsman by the name of John MacGregor would be known by many as the father of modern kayaking. He designed his own kayak, called the Rob Roy, 4m long and 75cm wide, weighing 30kg. Between 1864 and 1867 he toured the British waters and travelled throughout Europe. He founded the Royal Canoe Club in 1866. In 20 years, canoeing would become incredibly popular throughout Europe.

CURRENT EVENTS

There are single, double and four man events. Women race 200m and 500m in a single kayak (K1) and 500m as a double (K2) and four (K4). Male kayakers compete in K1 and K2 at 200m and 1000m and in K4 at 1000m . There are currently only canoe events for men; they are performed in a single (C1) at 200m and 1,000m and double (C2) at 1,000m. In canoe slalom there is only K1, C1 and C2 for men and K1 for women, with no discrepancies over distances. As each slalom course is different and has its various nuances, the athletes must know the course well if they are to succeed.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

In canoe sprint races, competitors are assigned to lanes. Women compete only in kayaks. In Canoe Slalom, the athletes race in order to achieve the best time, while making sure to follow the course accurately and without incurring a penalty to their overall time.

MEN'S EVENTS

C-1 (CANOE SINGLE) MEN, C-2 (CANOE DOUBLE) MEN, K-1 (KAYAK SINGLE) MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

K-1 (KAYAK SINGLE) WOMEN

9. CANOE SPRINT



CANOE SPRINT HAS TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF CRAFT, THE KAYAK AND THE CANOE. THE KAYAK PROBABLY ORIGINATES FROM GREENLAND, WHERE IT WAS USED BY THE ESKIMOS, PRIMARILY FOR HUNTING, FISHING AND TRANSPORTATION. THE CANOE WAS USED ALL OVER THE WORLD AS A METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION, TRADE AND WAR. THE FIRST OFFICIAL SPORTING EVENTS WERE CREATED UTILISING BOTH OF THESE CRAFTS DURING THE MID-19TH CENTURY. CANOE SPRINT HAS BEEN THE TRADITIONAL FORM OF RACING SINCE THE INCEPTION.

HISTORY AND BASICS

The word kayak, meaning “man-boat” in Eskimo, was found predominately in North America, Siberia and Greenland. They were ideal for individual transport and were used primarily for hunting and fishing. The canoe, on the other hand, was used on a wider scale. From Native American tribes to the Polynesians, the canoe had a variety uses, primarily transport, trade and warfare. The basics of Canoe sprint are simple. Get to the finish as fast as possible, the fastest person wins.

CANOE/KAYAK DIFFÉRENCES

The design of canoes varied, depending on their use and where they were built; they varied between open-topped bark canoes to dug-out trees to 130ft war canoes. In contrast, kayaks were built to ensure icy Arctic water did not enter the boat. They were made by stretching animal skins over a wooden frame and could generally only carry one man at a time. Kayaks are closed boats with a cockpit for sitting in. Athletes paddle from a sitting position with a double-blade paddle. Canoes are open boats paddled from a kneeling position with a single-blade paddle.

FIRST COMPETITION

Canoe sport competitions began in the mid-19th century. The Royal Canoe Club of London was formed in 1866 and was the first organisation interested in developing the sport. In 1871 the New York Canoe Club was founded. The first women’s competition was organised in Russia. By the 1890s, canoe sport was popular all over the European continent. Since canoe sprints entered the Olympics in 1936, its events have changed and adapted in order to improve its overall standing and follow current trends and boat technological advances.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

In 1924 in Paris, flat water canoeing featured at the Games as a demonstration sport. It became an Olympic discipline in Berlin in 1936. Later, some of its events disappeared to make way for new ones.

Overall, Europe dominates this sport, at both the Olympic Games and the World Championships, winning 90 per cent of the medals up for grabs. Since the 1948 Games in London, women have competed in the kayak event only. Today, the Olympic canoe/kayak flat water programme comprises a total of 12 events.

The recent trend is towards reducing the course distance. At the beginning, in the World Championships, the courses were staged over 1,000 and 10,000 metres for men and 5,000 metres for women. Today, they are over distances of 200, 500 and 1 000 metres. The Olympic events take place over 500 and 1,000 metres.

For the 2012 Games in London, the three men's flat water 500 metres events will be replaced by 200m events.

MEN'S EVENTS

C-1 1000M (CANOE SINGLE) MEN, C-1 200M (CANOE SINGLE) MEN, C-2 1000M (CANOE DOUBLE) MEN, K-1 1000M (KAYAK SINGLE) MEN, K-1 200M (KAYAK SINGLE) MEN
K-2 1000M (KAYAK DOUBLE) MEN, K-2 200M (KAYAK DOUBLE) MEN, K-4 1000M (KAYAK FOUR) MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

K-1 200M (KAYAK SINGLE) WOMEN, K-1 500M (KAYAK SINGLE) WOMEN, K-2 500M (KAYAK DOUBLE) WOMEN, K-4 500M (KAYAK FOUR) WOMEN

10. CYCLING BMX



BMX RACING TOOK OFF IN CALIFORNIA, INSPIRED BY MOTOCROSS. IT FAST BECAME POPULAR AND MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 2008 BEIJING GAMES.

CALIFORNIA BORN

Bicycle motocross (BMX) started in the late 1960s in California, around the time that motocross became a popular sport in the USA. The motorised version of the sport was the inspiration for the human-powered competition.

BMX SPREADS WORLDWIDE

BMX racing offered exciting action at a low cost and the infant sport became an instant hit, especially in California. This led to the foundation of a sanctioning body for BMX in the USA in the early 1970s. Over the following decade, the sport gradually gained in international popularity.

OFFICIAL INTERNATIONAL SPORT

In April 1981, the International BMX Federation was founded. BMX rapidly developed a unique sporting identity and it became evident that the sport had more in common with cycling than motorcycling. This was officially recognised in 1993 when BMX was fully

integrated into the International Cycling Union (UCI). The sport made its Olympic debut at the 2008 Beijing Games.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

It was in 2008 in Beijing that BMX made its debut on the Olympic programme. The men's event was won by Latvia's Maris Strombergs. In the women's event, it was France's Anne-Caroline Chausson who took the first Olympic title in this discipline.

BMX is one of the fastest and youngest cycling disciplines. Its principle is simple: eight riders compete on a track filled with jumps, tight bends and obstacles. In Beijing, the Laoshan velodrome track was 370m long for the men and 350m long for the women.

THE UNION CYCLISTE INTERNATIONALE (UCI) WAS FOUNDED IN 1900. CYCLING HAS BEEN CONTESTED SINCE THE INAUGURAL MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1896.

TRACK RACING

The races take place on 250m long wooden banked oval-shaped tracks. Both sprint races and endurance races are held on the track. Some events are raced in teams, others individually. Track cycling has been an Olympic discipline since 1896.

ROAD RACING

The inaugural Olympic road race was held on the original marathon course in Athens in 1896, with cyclists doing two laps of the course. Modern road racing is made up of road races and time trials. The road races begin with mass starts. The men's race is usually over 200km and the women's approximately 120km. Time trials are raced against the clock, with riders starting with intervals.

BMX

BMX races are held on circuits of around 350m, including an 8-metre high starting ramp, jumps, banked corners and other obstacles. Eight riders compete in each heat (qualifying rounds, quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals), with the top four qualifying for the next round. There are two medal events: men's and women's individual. BMX entered the Olympic programme at the 2008 Beijing Games.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

Cross-country sees the riders negotiating what is usually a mountainous course over trees, branches, rocks and streams. The races start with mass starts. Men race around 2 hours, women around 1h45 on a 5 km course. Courses became shorter and more dynamic, creating multiple passages at the finish area. Mountain bike made its Olympic debut at the 1996 Atlanta Games.

MEN'S EVENTS

RACE MEN

WOMEN EVENT

RACE WOMEN

11. CYCLING MOUNTAIN BIKE



IN THE 1970S, TOUGH NEW BIKES THAT RELISHED ROUGH TERRAIN WERE DEVELOPED AND MOUNTAIN BIKING WAS BORN. THE SPORT STARTED IN CALIFORNIA BUT ITS POPULARITY SOON SPREAD.

A SPORT IS BORN

In the 1970s, mountain biking developed as a fringe sport in California. Taking a bike off-road was nothing new but the development of a new bike that relished such terrain was; these bikes had fatter tyres, rapid-shift gears, drum brakes and ground-breaking suspension. These bikes gave thrill seeking cyclists a much more freedom and the sport of mountain biking was born.

REPACK DOWNHILL RACE

The members of the Velo Club Mount Tamalpais in California generally receive the credit for establishing mountain biking as a sport. They invented the Repack Downhill race, held regularly between 1976 and 1979 just across the famous Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. The races attracted riders from near and far, and the media soon started taking an interest.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

The first national mountain bike championships were held in 1983 in the USA. But the sport quickly grew in popularity in Europe and Australia. The first mountain bike World Championships, recognised by the International Cycling Union (UCI), were organised in 1990. Olympic recognition followed and mountain biking made its debut as an Olympic discipline at the Atlanta Games in 1996, with a cross-country event for men and women. The programme has remained unchanged ever since.

Among the big names in this discipline is France's Julien Absalon, a two-time gold-medal winner - in 2004 in Athens and in 2008 in Beijing.

MEN'S EVENTS

CROSS-COUNTRY MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

CROSS-COUNTRY WOMEN

12. CYCLING ROAD



CYCLING HAS PROVED INCREDIBLY POPULAR EVER SINCE BICYCLES WERE INVENTED IN THE MID-18TH CENTURY. IT HAS FEATURED IN EVERY OLYMPIC GAMES.

EARLY POPULARITY

Bicycles were first developed in the mid-18th century and have been a popular form of transport ever since.

BIG LEAP FORWARD

In 1885, cycling took a big leap forward when J.K. Starley devised the chain-and-gearing system. Since then, engineers have embraced modern technology to build ever faster, sleeker and lighter bikes.

POPULAR IN EUROPE

From 1880 to 1900, cycling became immensely popular both in Europe and the United States. The professional sport maintained its place in the public imagination, especially in Europe. Over the last 20 years, road cycling has experienced an movement towards globalization.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Like fencing and athletics, cycling is among the rare sports that have always featured on the Olympic programme. Road cycling, however, was not on the programme of the Paris 1900, St Louis 1904 or London 1908 Games.

The first road event in Olympic history took place in 1896 on the marathon route at the first Games of the modern era in Athens. The race started in Athens, headed towards Marathon, then returned to Athens, at the Phaliron velodrome.

Since the 1912 Games in Stockholm, the individual pursuit has been organised at each edition of the Games. The team time trial was on the programme between 1912 and 1992. 1996 marked the debut of the individual time trial at the Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Olympic cycling was added to the women's programme in Los Angeles in 1984, with an individual road event. Later, in 1996, the individual time trial was included in women's Olympic cycling, as it for the men's.

The Europeans have always dominated Olympic cycling, particularly through the contribution of the French and Italians. Eastern European countries have also won many Olympic medals, especially in track cycling.

MEN'S EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL TIME TRIAL MEN, ROAD RACE MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL TIME TRIAL WOMEN, ROAD RACE WOMEN

13. CYCLING TRACK



CYCLING ON WOODEN INDOOR TRACKS REGULARLY DREW LARGE CROWDS AS EARLY AS 1870 AND WAS INCLUDED IN THE INAUGURAL OLYMPICS GAMES.

WOODEN INDOOR TRACKS

As early as 1870, track races in England were regularly attracting large crowds. The riders competed on wooden indoor tracks that closely resembled the modern velodromes of today. Such tracks ensured the event could be competed all year round. But for promoters there was an even greater benefit – spectators could be charged an entrance fee!

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Track cycling events have been organised at all the editions of the Games since 1896, with the exception of the 1912 Games in Stockholm, when only the road race was staged. Between 1924 and 1992, the range of events was generally as follows: sprint, time trial over one kilometre, tandem and team pursuit. The individual pursuit was added to the programme of the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, and the tandem was dropped after the 1972 Games in Munich.

Women have competed in the track events since the Seoul Games in 1988, the year that marked the appearance of women in the sprint event, followed by the individual pursuit in 1992. At the Sydney Games in 2000, several track events were introduced: 500m time trial for women, but also keirin, American and sprint for men.

MEN'S EVENTS

KEIRIN MEN, OMNIUM MEN, SPRINT MEN, TEAM PURSUIT MEN, TEAM SPRINT MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

KEIRIN WOMEN, OMNIUM WOMEN, SPRINT WOMEN, TEAM PURSUIT WOMEN, TEAM SPRINT WOMEN

14. DIVING



COMPETITIVE DIVING, WHICH DEVELOPED FROM GYMNASTICS, STARTED IN SWEDEN AND GERMANY IN THE 18TH CENTURY.

GYMNASTICS BEGINNINGS

Diving became popular in Sweden and Germany in the 18th and 19th centuries. The sport was primarily practised by gymnasts who started performing tumbling routines into the water.

POPULARITY SPREADS

In the late 19th century a group of Swedish divers visited Great Britain. They put on diving displays that proved hugely popular and led to the formation of the first diving organisation, the Amateur Diving Association, in 1901.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Diving was included in the Olympic Games for the first time at the 1904 Games in St Louis. The springboard and platform events have been included since the 1908 Olympic Games in London. Since the Stockholm Games in 1912, women have taken part in the diving events. The first Olympic competitions differed from those which exist nowadays, notably with respect to the height of the platforms and springboards. The diving programme has been relatively stable since the 1928 Games in Amsterdam: men and women take part in 10-metre high-dive and 3-metre springboard events. In 2000, the Sydney Games witnessed the entrance of synchronised diving on both the springboard and the platform.

This discipline was firstly dominated by the USA. This domination started to waiver with the participation of China at the end of the 1980s. When the American Greg Louganis, who is considered as the greatest diver ever, was still in competition, the Chinese managed to achieve some victories. Since Louganis retired, China has dominated the men's events. Lately, China's women divers have proved themselves unbeatable.

ONE OF FOUR DISCIPLINES

Diving, along with swimming, synchronised swimming and water polo, is one of the four disciplines governed by the Fédération Internationale de Natation (FINA).

MEN'S EVENTS

10M PLATFORM MEN, 3M SPRINGBOARD MEN, SYNCHRONIZED DIVING 10M PLATFORM MEN, SYNCHRONIZED DIVING 3M SPRINGBOARD MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

10M PLATFORM WOMEN, 3M SPRINGBOARD WOMEN, SYNCHRONIZED DIVING 10M PLATFORM WOMEN, SYNCHRONIZED DIVING 3M SPRINGBOARD WOMEN

15. EQUESTRIAN / DRESSAGE



THE LONG AND COLOURFUL TRADITIONS OF DRESSAGE GO AS FAR BACK AS ANCIENT GREECE. DRESSAGE, THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF HORSE TRAINING, IS CONSIDERED THE ART OF EQUESTRIAN SPORT AND IS USED AS THE GROUNDWORK FOR ALL OTHER DISCIPLINES.

TRAINED FOR BATTLE

Two thousand years ago, the ancient Greeks recognised that if rider and horse were to survive in battle, complete cooperation was necessary between the pair and developed Dressage as a method to train the horses for war. A horse's ability to move quickly from side to side, burst into a gallop or change direction immediately were all considered vital skills.

MODERN DRESSAGE

With the disintegration of Ancient Greece, the art of riding slowly fell into oblivion, until its revival during the Renaissance period. In the 18th century, classical Dressage reached its peak with the creation of the world-famous Spanish Riding School in 1729 in Vienna, and laid the basis of the modern discipline. More recently and with unprecedented success, the freestyle to music test was introduced and has since become an integral part of Dressage, making its Olympic début in Atlanta 1996. Freestyle is the pinnacle of Dressage execution and when it works, the result is magic.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Equestrian sports featured on the Olympic programme of the Paris Games in 1900, with jumping events, and were then withdrawn until the 1912 Games in Stockholm. Since then, this sport has been on the Olympic programme with remarkable regularity.

Until 1948, only men competed in the events, as the riders had to be officers. This restriction was lifted in 1951, and, since the Helsinki Games in 1952, women have competed with men in the mixed events. They competed first in dressage, then gradually in the other equestrian events.

At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, the Netherlands' Anky van Grunsven confirmed her talent by winning gold for the third consecutive time in the individual dressage event. Her titles total eight medals - three gold and five silver. She is joined by Germany's Isabell Werth (five gold medals and three silver) and Reiner Klimke (six gold and two bronze), who have also won eight medals.

THE FÉDÉRATION ÉQUESTRE INTERNATIONALE (FEI) WAS FOUNDED IN 1921.

Today, the FEI is the governing body for eight equestrian disciplines: Jumping, Dressage, Eventing, Driving, Endurance, Vaulting, Reining and Para-Equestrian

FIRST FEDERATION

Equestrian events were included in the Olympic Games for the first time in 1900 in a format that has remained remarkably consistent to the present day. With the inclusion of the sport in the Olympic Games, it became obvious that recognised rules were essential. In May 1921, delegates from 10 national equestrian organisations met in Lausanne to discuss the formation of an international federation.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Equestrian sport is one of the very few sports where men and women compete on equal terms all the way up to Olympic level. It is also the only sport which involves two athletes: horse and rider. The relationship and mutual respect built up between the two is the key to a successful partnership.

EQUESTRIAN AT THE OLYMPICS

Three equestrian disciplines have been on the Olympic programme since 1912: Jumping, Dressage and Eventing. Since 1912, 2,067 riders from 65 countries have competed approximately 4,000 times in Olympic competitions. Most riders are one-time Olympians. However, there are 43 riders that stand out for having competed in five or more Olympics, namely Ian Millar (CAN) with nine participations, the d'Inzeo (ITA) brothers with eight and Michael Plumb (USA) with seven Olympic participations

MIXED EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL MIXED

TEAM MIXED

16. EQUESTRIAN EVENTING



EVENTING IS THE MOST COMPLETE COMBINED COMPETITION DISCIPLINE AND DEMANDS OF THE COMPETITOR AND HORSE CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE IN ALL BRANCHES OF EQUITATION. IT COVERS EVERY ASPECT OF HORSEMANSHIP: THE HARMONY BETWEEN HORSE AND RIDER THAT CHARACTERISE DRESSAGE; THE CONTACT WITH NATURE, STAMINA AND EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE ESSENTIAL FOR THE CROSS COUNTRY; THE PRECISION, AGILITY AND TECHNIQUE INVOLVED IN JUMPING.

MILITARY BACKGROUND

Developed to test and prepare cavalry horses, Eventing has a long and colourful history. Initially, the purpose was to create a competition in which officers and horses could be tested for any challenges that could occur on or off duty. It also provided a basis to compare training standards between the cavalries of different countries.

FIRST WOMAN

Although women had been allowed to ride in equestrian events since 1952, it wasn't until Helena du Pont competed for the United States at the 1964 Tokyo Games that Eventing saw its first woman representing her country.

KEEPING COOL

Since the 1996 Atlanta Games, extensive studies and research have taken place examining the effects of heat and humidity on horses taking part in equestrian events. The world's experts have poured over the subject and the success of all the measures in place and the knowledge at hand for the 2008 Olympic Games proved invaluable. The wealth of information collected also serves as a great resource for amateur equestrians faced with adverse climatic conditions around the world.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Equestrian sports featured on the Olympic programme of the Paris Games in 1900, with jumping events, and were then withdrawn until the 1912 Games in Stockholm. Since then, this sport has been on the Olympic programme with remarkable regularity.

Until 1948, only men competed in the events, as the riders had to be officers. This restriction was lifted in 1951, and, since the Helsinki Games in 1952, women have competed with men in the mixed events. They competed first in dressage, then gradually in the other equestrian events.

From the three disciplines that make up equestrian, eventing is the most demanding. Indeed, it combines not only jumping and dressage, but also a long cross-country course, on mixed terrain with sometimes imposing natural or artificial obstacles.

At the 2008 Games in Beijing, Canada's Ian Millar did particularly well winning the silver medal in the team jumping, 36 years after his first participation in the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972. At 61, he was the oldest medallist at the Beijing Games.

MIXED EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL MIXED

TEAM MIXED

17. EQUESTRIAN JUMPING



JUMPING DEVELOPED AFTER FENCES WERE PUT UP IN THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE, LEADING FOXHUNTERS TO REQUIRE HORSES THAT COULD JUMP.

THE ENCLOSURES ACTS

The discipline, as we know it today, developed as a result of competition among fox hunters, following the introduction of the Enclosures Acts that came into force in England in the eighteenth century. Previously, hunters would gallop across open fields in their pursuit of foxes. But when fences were erected following the Acts, a new and much desired trait took the fore - the jumping horse.

FEDERICO CAPRILLI

Many regard Italian Federico Caprilli as the “father of modern riding”, a status he earned by revolutionising the jumping seat. Before him, riders would lean back and pull the reins when jumping a fence. However this technique was awkward and uncomfortable for the horse. Caprilli’s solution was the more natural “forward seat” position. This technique is now universally used.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

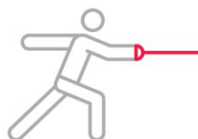
The horse made its first appearance at the Ancient Olympic Games in 680 B.C. when chariot racing was introduced - and was by far the most exciting and spectacular event on the programme. Many centuries later, when the modern Games began, a few unsuccessful attempts, namely 1896, 1900, 1904 and 1908 preceded the success of equestrian in the 1912 Olympic programme. Over the next few decades Jumping was dominated by the military, but with the mechanisation of the army over the years, civilians became more and more prevalent. The decline of the military teams also paved the way for women, who made their first Olympic appearance in Jumping at the 1956 Games in Stockholm, and today are as often if not more on the top spot of the podium.

MIXED EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL MIXED

TEAM MIXED

18. FENCING



SWORDPLAY HAS BEEN PRACTISED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, AND MODERN DAY FENCING BEGAN AS A FORM OF MILITARY TRAINING. IT DID NOT BECOME A SPORT UNTIL AROUND THE 15TH CENTURY.

SWORD FIGHTING AND DUELS

Swordplay has been practised for thousands of years, as evidenced by carvings depicting fencers found in a temple near Luxor dating from around 1190 BC. From the 16th to the 18th century, duels were common, with combatants using a variety of weapons including quarterstaves and backswords. Such bouts were bloody and occasionally fatal.

BIRTH OF THE SPORT

Fencing began the move from a form of military training to a sport in either the 14th or 15th century. Both Italy and Germany lay claim to its origins, with German fencing masters organising the first guilds in the 15th century, the most notable being the Marxbruder of Frankfurt, formed in 1478.

RULES OF THE GAME

Three innovations in the 17th and 18th century led to the popularity of fencing as a sport: the “foil” – a weapon with a flattened tip; a set of rules governing the target area; and the wire-mesh mask. Together, these developments ensured the safety of fencing’s participants.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Fencing was included for the first time at the 1896 Games in Athens, and has remained on the Olympic programme since then. The women’s fencing competition entered the Games in 1924 in Paris. Today, men and women compete in individual and team events, in which three types of weapon are used: foil, epee and sabre. The foil was, at first, the only weapon used by women, until the 1996 Games in Atlanta, when women’s epee was introduced. Women’s sabre appeared for the first time on the Olympic programme in Athens in 2004. Among the figures who have marked this sport, Italy’s Nedo Nadi is the only fencer to have won a medal in every weapon in a single edition of the Games. In 1912, at the age of 18, he won in the foil. Then, after being decorated by his country for acts of bravery during the First World War, he won five gold medals in Antwerp in 1920, a historic and unequalled record: in the individual foil and sabre events, and in the team foil, epee and sabre events. THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE D'ESCRIME (FIE) WAS FOUNDED IN 1913. FENCING HAS BEEN CONTESTED SINCE THE INAUGURAL MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1896.

MASTERS WELCOME

Fencing is one of the few Olympic sports to have acknowledged professionals prior to the 1980s. In fact, the original Olympic rules, written by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, specifically stated that professional fencers, known as “masters”, could compete.

CURRENT EVENTS

Men's fencing has been contested at every edition of the Olympic Games since the inaugural Games in 1896. Women's fencing appeared shortly afterwards, in 1924. Today, men and women compete in team and individual events using the foil, épée and sabre.

DUELS

Individual competition has a direct-elimination format, whilst in the team events, teams of three duel each member of the opposing team. Duels are held on a 14 by 1.5-metre "piste", or playing area. Through wires and special clothing, fencers are connected to an electronic scoring system that indicates if a hit has occurred.

MEN'S EVENTS

ÉPÉE INDIVIDUAL MEN, ÉPÉE TEAM MEN, FOIL INDIVIDUAL MEN, SABRE INDIVIDUAL MEN, SABRE TEAM MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

ÉPÉE INDIVIDUAL WOMEN, FOIL INDIVIDUAL WOMEN, FOIL TEAM WOMEN, SABRE INDIVIDUAL WOMEN, SABRE TEAM WOMEN

19. FOOTBALL



FOOTBALL HAS ITS ROOTS IN ANCIENT CHINA, WHILE THE MODERN VERSION OF THE GAME BEGAN ON THE STREETS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND BEFORE EVOLVING INTO THE MOST POPULAR SPORT IN THE WORLD.

MEDIEVAL ORIGINS

Modern football has its origins in the streets of medieval England. Neighbouring towns would play each other in games where a heaving mass of players would struggle to drag a pig's bladder by any means possible to markers at either end of town.

A ROYAL BAN

Football became so violent in England it was banned by the king for more than 300 years. English public schools are credited with subsequently establishing the modern football codes, thus turning the mob riot into a sport in the 16th century.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Football first appeared on the programme of the Games of the II Olympiad, Paris 1900. It has been on the programme of each edition of the Games ever since, with the exception of Los Angeles 1932.

Europe dominated the competition until after 1992 in Barcelona, where Spain became the last European team to win a gold medal. Since the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, African and South American teams have won all the gold medals.

Also in 1996, women's football was introduced into the Olympic programme. Three times, the USA has been on the highest step of the podium - in 1996, in 2004 in Athens and in 2008 in Beijing. But this team was beaten by the Norwegians in the final of the 2000 Games in Sydney.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (FIFA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1904. FOOTBALL MADE ITS FULL MEDAL DEBUT AT THE 1908 LONDON GAMES.

FIRST TEAM SPORT

In 1900 and 1904, football was introduced as an exhibition sport and became the first team sport included in the Olympic Games. Since 1908, the sport has been held at every Olympic Games with the exception of the 1932 Los Angeles Games.

PROFESSIONALS' INVOLVEMENT

While professionals are allowed in the men's tournament, rules restrict teams to players under 23 years old, with the exception of three over-age players. No age restrictions apply for the women's tournament.

WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT

Women's football debuted in 1996 with an eight team competition at the Atlanta Games. Since then the event has gone from strength to strength, expanding to ten teams at the Athens Games and expanding again to 12 teams in Beijing. The men's tournament is set at 16 teams.

MEN'S EVENTS

16 TEAM TOURNAMENT MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

12 TEAM TOURNAMENT WOMEN

20. GOLF



A VERY SIMPLE SPORT

Golf consists of "playing a ball with a club from the teeing ground into the hole by a stroke or successive strokes in accordance with the Rules". That's the first rule in the Rules of Golf.

A SPORT CODIFIED A LONG TIME AGO

Golf is undoubtedly one of the oldest existing codified sports. Indeed, it was in the city of St Andrews in Scotland that the first rules were established in 1754. But some research shows that a similar sport was practised beforehand under the name "colf" or "kolven" in the Netherlands, and arrived on the British Isles in the 15th century.

DEVELOPMENT OF GOLF

The competition formats and rules date from the second half of the 18th century, and have hardly changed since. At the end of the 19th century, the first women's tournaments were established. The first golf course was constructed in England in 1864.

The Scottish officers who practised this sport in the British armed forces moved on to the four corners of the world, thus leading to the expansion of this sport and its popularity. Today there are over 30,000 golf courses, and the sport is played by over 60 million men and women worldwide.

AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS

For a long time, the major golf tournaments were divided between amateur and professional tournaments. Then the open tournaments appeared, bringing together these

two categories of players. The world's best compete in four major championships, both in the women's and men's games.

TWO COMPETITION FORMATS

Two of the most utilised formats at golf tournaments are stroke play and match play. Stroke play consists of counting the total number of shots that the player has taken to reach the end of the course. The current major tournaments take place over four days, and the players must therefore play the same course of 18 holes four times (i.e. 72 holes). The player who has the fewest number of strokes at the end of the four rounds wins the event. Match play is a competition format in the form of a duel. Golfers compete hole by hole, and the golfer who wins the most holes wins the match. Match play matches do not have to go the full 18 holes. They often do, but just as frequently one player will achieve an insurmountable lead and the match will end early. For example, if a player is 6 ahead with 5 holes to play, the other player cannot possibly win, so the match ends.

GOLF AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Golf has been on the Olympic programme twice: in 1900 and 1904. At the 1900 Games in Paris, two events were staged: one for men and one for women. Americans Margaret Ives Abbott and Charles Edward Sands were the first Olympic champions in the two events. In 1904 in St Louis, the women's event was replaced by a team event.

At the 121st IOC Session, held in October 2009 in Copenhagen, the IOC members voted in favour of re-introducing golf to the Olympic programme. It will therefore be in Rio in 2016 that the titles of Olympic golf champion will be awarded – for the first time in over 100 years! The proposed Olympic tournament is the “stroke play” format for both the men and women. The best players in the world will therefore compete over 72 holes to find out who will be crowned Olympic champions.

THE INTERNATIONAL GOLF FEDERATION (IGF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1958 TO ENCOURAGE THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GAME AND TO EMPLOY GOLF AS A VEHICLE TO FOSTER FRIENDSHIP AND SPORTSMANSHIP.

Recognised by the International Olympic Committee as the official international federation for golf, the IGF comprises 132 federations from 126 countries. The IGF created the IGF Olympic Golf Committee in 2008 to drive its effort for the sport's inclusion in the 2016 Games.

OLYMPIC GOLF

Golf was last an Olympic sport at the 1904 Games in St. Louis, Missouri, USA, when the United States and Canada were the only two competing countries. An indication of golf's globalisation since 1904 is that, in 2016 in Rio, at least 30 countries, from all five continents, are expected to be represented in both the men's and women's competitions.

QUALIFICATION

In both the men's and women's event, the top 15 world-ranked players will be eligible for the Olympic Games, regardless of the number of players from a given country. Beyond the top 15, players will be eligible based on world ranking, with a maximum of two available players from each country that does not already have two or more players among the top 15 to a maximum number of 60 players in total in the competition.

OLYMPIC FORMAT

The IGF recommendation of a 72-hole individual stroke play competition for both men and women reflects leading players' opinion of the fairest and best way to identify an Olympic champion. In the event of a tie for either first, second or third place, a three-hole playoff will determine the medal winner(s).

MEN'S EVENT
STROKE PLAY MEN

WOMEN'S EVENT
STROKE PLAY WOMEN

21. GYMNASTICS ARTISTIC



THE ANCIENT GREEKS BELIEVED GYMNASTICS TO BE THE PERFECT SYMMETRY BETWEEN MIND AND BODY. MODERN GYMNASTICS EVOLVED AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

PHILOSOPHICAL BEGINNINGS

Plato, Aristotle and Homer heartily advocated the strengthening qualities of gymnastic activity. The Greeks believed symmetry between the mind and body was possible only when physical exercise was coupled with intellectual activity.

REBIRTH

The term "artistic gymnastics" emerged in the early 1800s to distinguish free-flowing styles from techniques used in military training. Gymnastic competitions began to flourish in schools and athletic clubs across Europe and made a fitting return when the Olympic Games were revived in Athens in 1896.

ROCKS AND CLUBS

Between 1896 and 1924 the sport evolved into what we recognise as modern gymnastics. Among those disciplines discarded were club swinging, rock lifting and even swimming, which appeared in 1922.

CHANGING TIMES

In the early days of artistic gymnastics at the Games, participants often had a background in ballet, and would reach their peak in their 20s. Nadia Comaneci's and Nellie Kim's perfect scores of 10 at the 1976 Montreal Games, at the age of 14, heralded an era of younger champions, trained specifically in gymnastics from childhood, although gymnasts must now be 16 to compete in the Olympic Games.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Artistic gymnastics was introduced at the very first Olympic Games in 1896 in Athens, and has been present at every edition of the Games since then. At the beginning, it comprised disciplines that are difficult to qualify as "artistic", such as climbing and acrobatics.

The foundations of the Olympic gymnastics programme were laid at the 1924 Games in Paris, when the men's apparatus individual and team competitions appeared. In 1928, women were included in the Amsterdam Games. It was not until 1952 that the women's programme was developed, with seven events, and then stabilised at six events as from the 1960 Games in Rome.

This discipline was mainly dominated by the Soviet Union from 1952 onwards, following the creation of the Russian Gymnastics Federation in 1883. At the 2008 Games in Beijing, it was the Republic of China's turn to win the most gold medals.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE GYMNASTIQUE (FIG) WAS FOUNDED IN 1881, MAKING IT THE WORLD'S OLDEST INTERNATIONAL SPORT ORGANISATION.

Gymnastics has been contested since the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896.

ARTISTIC COMPETITION

In artistic events (performed on an apparatus), men compete on the floor, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bars. Female gymnasts compete on the vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor. The competition includes all-round events and team events, also scored over each apparatus.

PERFECT 10

Nadia Comeneci's perfect score of 10 at the 1976 Montreal Games transformed the sport. By achieving the seemingly impossible seven times, the 14-year old Romanian raised standards to a new level.

TRAMPOLINE COMPETITION

Trampolining made its debut at the 2000 Sydney Games featuring both men's and women's individual events.

RHYTHMIC COMPETITION

Rhythmic gymnastics is a women-only event. The gymnasts, accompanied by music, perform on a 13 square-metre floor area with rope, hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. In the individual event, they perform different routines with four of the five apparatus. In the team competition, teams of five perform together once using clubs and once with two team members using hoops and three using ribbons.

GYMNASTICS ARTISTIC

MEN'S EVENTS

FLOOR EXERCISES MEN, HORIZONTAL BAR MEN, INDIVIDUAL ALL-ROUND MEN, PARALLEL BARS MEN, POMMEL HORSE MEN, RINGS MEN, TEAM COMPETITION MEN, VAULT MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

BEAM WOMEN, FLOOR EXERCISES WOMEN, INDIVIDUAL ALL-ROUND WOMEN, TEAM COMPETITION WOMEN, UNEVEN BARS WOMEN, VAULT WOMEN

22. GYMNASTICS RHYTHMIC



RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS IS A WOMEN-ONLY EVENT IN WHICH GYMNASTS PERFORM ON A FLOOR WITH A ROPE, HOOP, BALL, CLUBS OR RIBBON ACCOMPANIED BY MUSIC, IN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP EVENTS.

FASTER AND STRONGER

In the 1800s rhythmic gymnastics operated under the guise of group gymnastics, and included a trace of elementary choreography. It grew slowly until the first experimental competitions appeared in eastern Europe in the 1930s, when its newfound complexity began to draw a wider audience.

MANY PARENTS

Rhythmic gymnastics evolved from a host of related disciplines. It incorporates elements from classical ballet, such as pliés and arabesques, as well as the German system of emphasising apparatus work for muscle development and the Swedish method of using free exercise to develop rhythm.

FIRST TOURNAMENT

The FIG recognised rhythmic gymnastics as an official discipline in 1963, and a year later organised an international tournament in Budapest. In 1964 the tournament was officially declared the first Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships, and Ludmila Savinkova of the Soviet Union became the first world champion.

WORLD SPORT

The number of athletes grew as interest spread to other parts of the world. Gymnasts from the United States first appeared at the championships in 1973, and rhythmic gymnastics slowly emerged from the shadow of the long-established artistic discipline to enter the Olympic programme in 1984.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Since its integration into the Games in 1984 in Los Angeles, rhythmic gymnastics has always been a part of the Olympic programme. In its inaugural year, it was Canada's Lori Fung who won the gold medal.

Until 1992 in Barcelona, only one individual event was on the programme. A second, team event was added to the programme in 1996 in Atlanta.

At the 2000 Games in Sydney, the Russian Federation won two gold medals: the group and individual multiple competitions.

WOMEN'S EVENTS

GROUP ALL-AROUND COMPETITION, INDIVIDUAL ALL-ROUND COMPETITION

23. HANDBALL



HANDBALL IS A FAST-PACED TEAM GAME THAT WAS FIRST PLAYED IN SCANDINAVIA AND GERMANY AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

EUROPEAN ORIGINS

The modern game of handball was first played towards the end of the 19th century in Scandinavia and Germany. Field handball was first recognised at the turn of the century and G. Wallström introduced the sport of "handball" to Sweden in 1910.

FIRST COMPETITION

The International Amateur Handball Federation (IAHF) was set up in 1928 on the occasion of the Olympic Games in Amsterdam, leading to the first Field Handball World Championships being played in Germany in 1938, following its appearance at the 1936 Berlin Games.

RIVAL CODES

Between 1938 and 1966 both forms of handball were played at separate World Championships: an outdoor, 11-a-side game played on a football pitch and a new 7-a-side indoor version preferred by the Scandinavians.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

After 1936, field handball was no longer played at the Games, except as a demonstration sport in 1952 in Helsinki. Indoor handball was presented for the first time at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. Yugoslavia was victorious and won the first gold medal after a competition between 16 men's teams.

The introduction of women's handball to the Games took place in 1976 in Montreal. The Soviet Union won this first women's Olympic competition, taking home two gold medals after the 11-team men's competition and the six-team women's one.

THE INTERNATIONAL HANDBALL FEDERATION (IHF) WAS FOUNDED IN JULY 1946 IN BASEL, SWITZERLAND. HANDBALL MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1972 MUNICH GAMES.

THE RULES

Handball is a fast-paced game involving two teams of seven players who pass, throw, catch and dribble a small ball with their hands while trying to score goals. The team with the most goals wins the game. A game consists of two 30-minute halves with a 10-minute half-time break.

KNOCKOUT TOURNAMENT

Teams are placed into two pools of six for both men and women. Each team plays the other teams in that pool. The top two teams in each pool proceed to the semi-finals. The remaining teams play classification matches for fifth place and lower. Semi-final winners play for the gold and silver medals. Semi-final losers play for the bronze.

MUNICH AND MONTREAL

Handball (the indoor version) was first present in the 1972 Munich Games. A competition involving 16 men's teams was staged with Yugoslavia winning the first Olympic gold medal. A women's event was then added at Montreal in 1976.

24. HOCKEY



FIELD HOCKEY IS FAST-MOVING, SKILFUL GAME PLAYED OUTDOORS IN TEAMS OF 11.

OLDEST GAME

Hockey is the oldest known ball and stick game: records exist of it being played in Persia in 2000 BC. The name "hockey" probably derives from the French "hocquet", or shepherd's crook, and refers to the crooked stick which is used to hit a small ball.

BRITISH DEVELOPMENT

The first team was the Blackheath Hockey Club, dating back to 1861. The Amateur Hockey Association was then formed in London in 1886, before workers and the military carried the game to the four corners of the British Empire. It became an Olympic sport in 1908.

SMOOTHER SURFACES

Until the 1970s, the game at international level was mainly played on natural grass, but the heavy turf made the game quite slow. When plastic turf was first used, the game suddenly became quicker and more exciting, giving birth to the modern game.

DOMINANT NATIONS

Most of the dominant nations in the sport are, or were, members of the British Empire. This includes India, Pakistan, Australia, New Zealand and, of course, England. Other nations have come to the forefront in more recent times to make the game a truly worldwide sport.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

After a first appearance at the 1908 Games in London, hockey became a firm fixture on the Olympic programme as from the Antwerp Games in 1920. Women made their entrance in this sport in 1980 at the Moscow Games. Since the 2000 Games in Sydney, men have competed in a 12-team tournament and women in a 10-team one.

In its 100 years of Olympic existence, hockey has been essentially dominated by one country. The Indian men's team, with six consecutive titles between 1928 and 1956, was unbeaten in 30 consecutive matches, and scored 197 goals, giving away only eight.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE HOCKEY (FIH) WAS FOUNDED IN 1924. HOCKEY MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1908 LONDON GAMES.

FASTER PLASTIC

Hockey has come a long way since it first debuted as an Olympic sport in 1908. Originally, Olympic matches were played on grass where the heavy turf made the game quite slow. This changed with the introduction of artificial turf in the 1970s. The game suddenly became quicker, more skilful and exciting with new techniques being developed such as the Indian dribble.

KNOCKOUT TOURNAMENT

Teams are placed into two pools of six for the men and five for the women. Each team plays the other teams in that pool. The top two teams in each pool proceed to the semi-finals. The remaining teams play classification matches for fifth place and lower. Semi-final winners play for the gold and silver medals. Semi-final losers play for the bronze.

OLYMPIC DEVELOPMENT

Hockey for men first appeared on the Olympic programme in 1908, was absent until 1920, then has remained on the programme ever since. In 1980, women's hockey was first introduced as an Olympic sport. The women originally competed in an 8-team tournament but this was increased to ten from 1996.

INDIAN DOMINATION

India won all six Olympic gold medals and 30 consecutive games from 1928 to 1956.

Although they continued to perform well, their Olympic dominance came to an end with the switch to synthetic surfaces.

25. JUDO



JUDO IS DERIVED FROM JUJITSU, THE HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT TECHNIQUE OF ANCIENT SAMURAI WARRIORS. IT INVOLVES THROWING OPPONENTS TO THE FLOOR AND HOLDING THEM IN SUBMISSION.

JAPANESE CHOICE

Judo is a traditional Japanese wrestling sport developed in the 1880s. It was Dr Jigoro Kano (1860-1938) who combined the features of the various schools of the sport and codified the rules. Kano stressed the philosophical principles of judo, adding methods of physical, intellectual and moral education, eliminating many of the dangerous parts of jujitsu, and opening his first school, or dojo, in 1882.

“THE WAY OF SUPPLENESS”

In Japanese the word ju-do means “the way of suppleness” referring to the story of the tree branch ‘bending’ under the weight of the snow and not breaking. However, the bouts of five minutes are hardly gentle and can be as physically demanding as boxing and wrestling.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Judo made its very first appearance at the Olympic Games in 1964 in Tokyo. However, it was not included in the Olympic programme in 1968 in Mexico City, but returned, never to leave again, at the 1972 Games in Munich. As for women’s judo, it was added to the Games in 1992 in Barcelona.

Men and women now compete in seven weight categories. There was originally a men’s category open to all weights, but this event was withdrawn after the 1984 Games in Los Angeles.

This discipline is, logically, dominated by the Japanese, followed by the French and then the Koreans, who win a large number of medals.

THE BIG DUTCHMAN

In the 1964 Tokyo Games in the open class, a 1.98-metre Dutchman named Anton Geesink defeated three-time Japanese national champion Kaminaga Akio before 15,000 people at Nippon Budokan Hall. It followed victories earlier in the year over other top Japanese opponents, upsetting the theory that a skilled judoka could defeat any opponent of any size. THE INTERNATIONAL JUDO FEDERATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1951. JUDO’S OLYMPIC DEBUT CAME AT THE 1964 TOKYO GAMES.

EXPANDED PROGRAMME

Judo has grown and developed as an Olympic sport. It is the first Olympic sport to have originated in Asia, with Dr Jigoro Kano being the first Asian IOC member. When it debuted at the 1964 Tokyo Games, it was a men-only discipline and there were just four weight classes. However since 1992, men and women have competed in seven weight classes each; the men’s contests last five minutes whilst women’s contests last four.

KNOCKOUT TOURNAMENT

Competitors (“Judoka”) take part in a single-elimination tournament after being divided into two pools by a draw. An unusual twist is that there are two bronze medals.

BRONZE MEDALLISTS

The two losing semi-finalists move directly into the semi-finals of the competition for bronze. All other competitors who lost to the two finalists compete in a knockout tournament within their original pools, and two winners emerge to fill the remaining semi-final spots. Each pool's winner then faces the losing semi-finalist from the opposite pool, and the two winners compete for the bronze.

JAPAN DOMINANT

The sport, not surprisingly, has been dominated by the Japanese, who have won three times as many gold medals as their nearest rival France. Other strong countries in Judo today are Korea, Russia, China, Brazil and Cuba.

MEN'S EVENTS

- 60 KG MEN, + 100KG (HEAVYWEIGHT) MEN, 60 - 66KG (HALF-LIGHTWEIGHT) MEN, 66 - 73KG (LIGHTWEIGHT) MEN, 73 - 81KG (HALF-MIDDLEWEIGHT) MEN, 81 - 90KG (MIDDLEWEIGHT) MEN, 90 - 100KG (HALF-HEAVYWEIGHT) MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

- 48KG (EXTRA-LIGHTWEIGHT) WOMEN, + 78KG (HEAVYWEIGHT) WOMEN, 48 - 52KG (HALF-LIGHTWEIGHT) WOMEN, 52 - 57KG (LIGHTWEIGHT) WOMEN, 57 - 63KG (HALF-MIDDLEWEIGHT) WOMEN, 63 - 70KG (MIDDLEWEIGHT) WOMEN, 70 - 78KG (HALF-HEAVYWEIGHT) WOMEN

26. MARATHON SWIMMING



Marathon swimming is a class of open water swimming defined by long distances (at least 10 kilometers) and traditional rules based in English Channel swimming. Unlike marathon foot-races which have a specifically defined distance, *marathon swims* vary in distance. However, one commonly used minimum definition is 10 kilometres, the distance of the marathon swimming event at the Olympic Games.

As in all open water swimming, tides, surface currents and wind-chop are major determinants of finish-times. For a given course, these factors can vary dramatically from day to day, making any attempt to draw conclusions about athletic ability by comparing finish times from performances undertaken on different days meaningless.

Long-distance swimming is distinguished from ordinary swimming in that the distances involved are longer than are typically swum in pool competitions. When a given swim calls more on endurance than on outright speed, it is the more likely to be considered a long-distance swim. Long-distance swims, however, may take place in pools, such as the 1st official 24 hours World Championship in 1976 won by Peppo Biscarini with a record of 83.7 km (24 hour swims in a 50 m-long pool) or the current 25 meter pool world record of 2008 Olympic gold medalist Maarten van der Weijden ^[1] Some of the better-known long-distance swims are crossings of the English Channel, Catalina Channel, Fehmarn Belt and Cook Strait.

Ultra-long distance swimming is sometimes referred to as marathon swimming. The minimum distance that constitutes a marathon swim has dramatically shortened over time.

Different organizations adopt various minimum distances. The swimming marathon events at the Olympic games have a distance of 10 km.

Long-distance swims tend to fall into one of two categories: (1) swims in which the start date and start time are chosen by the individual swimmer (often called solo-swims), and (2) swims that involve a group-start.

Long-distance swimming is one of the few events wherein there are women's records that beat men's records under equal conditions.

MEN'S EVENT

MARATHON - 10 KM

WOMEN'S EVENT

MARATHON - 10 KM

27. MODERN PENTATHLON



THE PENTATHLON WAS THE CLIMAX OF THE GAMES IN ANCIENT GREECE. SINCE ITS APPEARANCE AT THE MODERN GAMES, IT HAS UNDERGONE A GREAT DEAL OF EVOLUTION.

THE ANCIENT DISCIPLINES

The ancient pentathlon consisted of running, jumping, spear-throwing, discus and wrestling. The pentathlon held a position of unique importance, with the winner ranked as "Victor Ludorum".

THE MODERN FORMAT

The modern pentathlon was introduced by Baron de Coubertin at the Stockholm Games in 1912, comprising pistol shooting, fencing, swimming, horse riding and running. It was his belief that this event would test "a man's moral qualities as much as his physical resources and skills, producing thereby a complete athlete."

FROM FIVE TO ONE

From 1912 to 1980, the Olympic modern pentathlon was held over five days with one event per day. Now, the event is held over one day. Competitors score points in the first three events, which decide their starting position for the final combined event, composed of the shooting and running disciplines. The first one over the line wins the gold medal.

GATHERING CROWDS

The change to the current format held over one day has helped spectators to understand and connect with the sport, making it a more attractive spectacle.

LASER PISTOL

In 2010 during the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in Singapore, athletes used a laser pistol instead of a traditional pellet-firing air gun for the combined event for the first time during an official international competition. Laser shooting was introduced for both safety reasons and to reduce the environmental impact of the lead bullets. It will see its debut at an Olympic Games in London 2012.

THE UNION INTERNATIONALE DE PENTATHLON MODERNE (UIPM) WAS FOUNDED IN 1948. THE EVENT'S OLYMPIC DEBUT CAME AT THE 1912 STOCKHOLM GAMES.

FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION

Previously held over four to five days, modern pentathlon's current one-day format has resulted in a more exciting spectator spectacle. At the Beijing 2008 Games, it was a sell-out event contested by 36 men and 36 women.

SCORING AND ORDER

Pentathletes achieve performance-related points in each discipline. The first event is a round-robin fencing competition, with a single touch deciding each match, which is followed by a swimming event of 200m freestyle. Equestrian is the third event, and comes in the form of a 12-obstacle show-jumping contest. The athlete has a specific time limit in which to complete the course. The last element of a pentathlon competition is the combined event. Athletes start with a handicap start, then an approx. 20m run to a shooting range, where they are required to hit 5 targets, before beginning a 1000m run. This is repeated two further times for a total of 15 targets and a 3000m run.

EXCITING FINALE

More than anything, the introduction of a handicap start to the combined event helped to really engage and excite spectators. Competitors set off at intervals which correspond in seconds to the overall points difference between themselves and the athlete preceding them. By structuring it this way, the athlete who crosses the finish line first wins the gold medal.

28. ROWING



ROWING IS THE PROPELLING OF A BOAT USING A FIXED OAR AS A LEVER. IN MODERN SPORTS, ROWERS RACE AGAINST EACH OTHER EITHER AS INDIVIDUALS OR IN CREWS OF TWO, FOUR OR EIGHT.

THE BOAT RACE

Rowing was first used as a means of transport in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. As a sport, it probably began in England in the 17th and early 18th centuries, with the Oxford-Cambridge university boat race, which was inaugurated in 1828. By the 19th century, rowing was popular in Europe and had been exported to America.

SCULLING VS SWEEP

The races are divided into sculling and sweep oar. Sculling events use two oars, whilst in sweep the rower holds one. The eight-person crews have a coxswain, who steers the boat and directs the crew, but in all other boats one rower steers by controlling a small rudder with a foot pedal.

ATHLETE OF THE CENTURY

Sir Steve Redgrave of Great Britain is widely hailed as the greatest rower ever. A six-time World Champion, he won gold medals at five Olympic Games and has been loosely crowned Athlete of the Century because of the extreme physical demands of rowing. His female counterpart on the gold medal count is Elisabeta Lipa of Romania, who also won five Olympic gold medals between 1984 and 2004.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Rowing has been staged at all the editions of the Olympic Games, except in 1896 in Athens. It was, however, on the programme, but a stormy sea compelled the organisers to cancel the events.

Women made their debut at the Games in 1976 in Montreal. They competed in a smaller programme. The Olympic Games in 1996 in Atlanta marked the introduction of the lightweight events.

Up to the 1960s, the USA dominated Olympic rowing. Then it was the turn of the Soviet Union, which in turn gave up its place in the 1970s-80s to the all powerful GDR (East Germany). These days, the reunified German team is among the best in the world.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES SOCIÉTÉS D'AVIRON (FISA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1892. ROWING MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1900 PARIS GAMES.

CURRENT EVENTS

The races are divided into sculling and sweep oar, with heavyweight and lightweight divisions. Men and women currently compete in six events. These events are the single, double and quadruple sculls, lightweight double scull, the eight and the coxless pair. Men also race in two further events, the coxless four and lightweight coxless four.

RACE PROCEDURE

All boats race in heats with the top finishers advancing directly into the semi-finals or a six-boat final. The other boats get a second chance, with the top boats again qualifying. The progression system – and necessity or otherwise of semi-finals – depends on the number of boats entered in each event.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

The Olympic rowing programme introduced lightweight event categories for the first time at the 1996 Atlanta Games. The weight limits vary for men and women: individual women must not weigh more than 59kg; the average crew weight can be no more than 57kg. Individual men must not weigh more than 72.5kg; the average crew weight can be no more than 70kg.

MEN'S EVENTS

COXLESS PAIR (2-) MEN, DOUBLE SCULLS (2X) MEN, EIGHT WITH COXSWAIN (8+) MEN,
FOUR WITHOUT COXSWAIN (4-) MEN, LIGHTWEIGHT COXLESS FOUR (4-) MEN
LIGHTWEIGHT DOUBLE SCULLS (2X) MEN, QUADRUPLE SCULLS WITHOUT COXSW MEN
SINGLE SCULLS (1X) MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

DOUBLE SCULLS (2X) WOMEN, EIGHT WITH COXSWAIN (8+) WOMEN
LIGHTWEIGHT DOUBLE SCULLS (2X) WOMEN, PAIR WITHOUT COXSWAIN (2-) WOMEN
QUADRUPLE SCULLS WITHOUT COXSW WOMEN, SINGLE SCULLS (1X) WOMEN

29. RUGBY



A FOOTBALL PICKED UP BY HAND

The legend of rugby has it that, in 1823, during a football match, a student at Rugby School in Great Britain took the ball in his hands and ran over the goal line. That day, William Webb Ellis invented rugby.

FIRST INTERNATIONAL MEETING

This sport has, in reality, much older origins, as, in various forms and with various names, similar games had already been practised in the Middle Ages in many European countries.

Between 1845 and 1848, pupils from the Rugby School and students from the University of Cambridge in Great Britain documented and codified the rules of rugby.

In 1871, the first national federation was created, and that same year saw the first international match played between Scotland and England.

Rugby's International Federation, World Rugby (previously known as the International Rugby Board), was founded in 1886.

RUGBY VARIANTS

At the end of the 19th century and start of the 20th century, this sport saw a rise in popularity at all social levels and was exported worldwide, thus giving rise to different variants.

The two main ones today are rugby union and rugby sevens. There is also "touch rugby", "rugby flag", "rugby 10s" and "beach rugby". Each has its own variation of rugby's rules, but all share the same spirit.

It is said that rugby is a sport for all shapes and sizes. Today, it is practised all over the world, with 120 countries and territories being affiliated to World Rugby.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Rugby union - 15 players per team - has featured on the Olympic programme four times: in 1900, 1908, 1920 and 1924.

In 1900, at the Paris Olympic Games, it was the French team who won the first Olympic tournament on home soil. The tournaments of the other editions of the Games gave victory to Australasia (a mixed Australian and New Zealand team) in 1908 in London; then twice to the USA, at the Antwerp Games in 1920 and Paris Games in 1924.

At the 121st Session in Copenhagen in October 2009, the IOC members voted in favour of re-introducing rugby to the Olympic programme. In Rio in 2016, rugby sevens will make its appearance at the Olympic Games, with men's and women's tournaments each comprising 12 teams.

WORLD RUGBY, PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE INTERNATIONAL RUGBY BOARD (IRB), WAS FOUNDED IN 1886 AND HAS ITS HEADQUARTERS IN DUBLIN, IRELAND.

Recognised by the International Olympic Committee as the International Federation responsible for the sport of rugby, World Rugby currently has 120 affiliated countries and territories.

OLYMPIC RUGBY

Rugby Union - 15 players per team - has been featured on the Olympic programme four times: in 1900, 1908, 1920 and 1924. In Rio in 2016, Rugby Sevens will make its appearance at the Olympic Games, with both a men's and women's tournament.

OLYMPIC FORMAT

In Rugby Sevens, each team has seven players on the pitch, as well as five substitutes. Only three of these substitutes may play during any given match. Every match, except for the final, is divided into two halves of seven minutes each, for a total of 14 minutes. Extra time can be added if needed. The final match will consist of two 10-minute halves, plus extra time if needed.

30. SAILING



SAILING IS THE ART OF MOVING A BOAT BY HARNESSING THE POWER OF WIND. MASTERY OVER EVER-CHANGING CONDITIONS REQUIRES BOTH GREAT SKILL AND EXPERIENCE.

AMERICA'S CUP

International yacht racing began in 1851 when a syndicate of members of the New York Yacht Club built a 101-foot schooner named America. The yacht was sailed to England where it won a trophy called the Hundred Guineas Cup in a race around the Isle of Wight. The trophy was renamed The America's Cup and remained in the hands of the United States until 1983, when an Australian yacht finally brought to an end the New York Yacht Club's 132-year winning streak.

EVOLVING DESIGN

Sailing was first contested as an Olympic sport at the 1900 Paris Games. Since then, the classes of boats allowed to compete have continually evolved to reflect advances in yacht design and technology. Equipment advances over the past 20 years have created a trend towards smaller and lighter craft, placing ever greater demands on both the athletic and technical capacities of the sailors.

CLASS RULES

The sport is organised under a single set of rules for racing published by World Sailing. Olympic racing is now conducted with boats categorised into one-design classes based on similar weights and measurements.

FLEET RACING AND MATCH RACING

Races are sailed in what is known as a fleet racing format: fleets of equally-matched boats racing around the same course area at the same time. Courses are designed to incorporate a variety of different sailing angles: upwind, downwind and reaching.

There are two new additions for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The 49erFX skiff has been introduced for women's sailors and a mixed multihull for male and female sailors to compete side by side.

WORLD SAILING WAS FOUNDED IN 1907 AS THE INTERNATIONAL YACHT RACING UNION. Sailing made its Olympic debut at the 1900 Paris Games.

CHANGING TRENDS

When sailing was first contested at the 1900 Paris Games, the sport was dominated by bigger boats, sometimes with as many as 12 sailors on board, and time handicaps were used to adjudicate the races. Starting from 1924 and increasingly from the 1950s onwards, the trend has been towards smaller and smaller one-design boats with fewer crew members.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Currently in Olympic competition the line-up of boats is a mixture between classes with a long and distinguished history, such as the Star and the Finn, and those reflecting the design and technology advances in the sport, such as the 49er high performance dinghy and RS:X windsurfer.

RACING AND IDENTIFICATION

Races are sailed in a fleet racing format where fleets of equally-matched boats race around the course in a group. The courses offer a thorough challenge to the racers incorporating upwind, reaching and downwind sailing angles. The boats are identified on the water by national flags on the sails and the crew names on the mainsail.

There are two new additions for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games. The 49erFX skiff has been introduced for women's sailors and a mixed multihull for male and female sailors to compete side by side.

SCORING

The competitors contest ten regular races (15 for the 49er). Scores are awarded according to finishing positions in each race (1 point for first, 2 points for second, etc) and each boat can discard their worst score. The ten boats with the lowest accumulated scores qualify for the Medal Race. In this shorter 30 minute race, points scored are doubled and added to the opening series' scores to decide the top ten positions. In the match racing event, the scoring is simple; the first boat across the line wins the match. The teams all compete against each other in a round robin series of matches, with the top teams progressing to the final knockout stages.

MEN'S EVENTS

470 - TWO PERSON DINGHY MEN, 49ER - SKIFF MEN, FINN - ONE PERSON DINGHY (HEAVYWEIGHT) MEN, LASER - ONE PERSON DINGHY MEN, RS:X - WINDSURFER MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

470 - TWO PERSON DINGHY WOMEN, 49ER FX WOMEN
LASER RADIAL - ONE PERSON DINGHY WOMEN, RS:X - WINDSURFER WOMEN

MIXED EVENTS

NACRA 17 MIXED

31. SHOOTING



FROM JUST FIVE SHOOTING EVENTS AT THE INAUGURAL 1896 OLYMPIC GAMES TO 15 TODAY, THE SPORT HAS GROWN STEADILY ALONGSIDE THE ADVANCE IN FIREARMS TECHNOLOGY.

GUN CLUBS

Shooting as a sport has been practised for hundreds of years in European countries, with some German shooting clubs dating back more than 500 years. The popularity of the sport grew in English-speaking countries with the formation of the National Rifle Association in 1959, which originally met in Wimbledon, London, and the National Rifle Association (USA) in 1871.

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

There are 15 events in the Olympic programme, divided into three different groups: rifle, pistol and shotgun. The rifle and pistol competitions are held on shooting ranges, where marksmen aim at targets at distances of 10, 25 and 50 metres. In the shotgun event, competitors shoot at clay targets propelled at a series of different directions and angles.

HEARTBEATS AND BULLSEYES

Marksmen need to be as steady as possible to be accurate. In order to achieve this, they use relaxation techniques to drop their heartbeat to half its normal rate, fire between heartbeats and use blinkers to hit a bullseye, which appears as no more than a tiny dot in the distance.

COMEBACK KING

As an example of overcoming adversity, Karoly Takacs has few peers. He was part of Hungary's world champion pistol-shooting team in 1938, when an army grenade exploded, crippling his right hand. Ten years later, having taught himself to shoot with his left, he won two gold medals in the rapid-fire class.

THE INTERNATIONAL SHOOTING SPORT FEDERATION (ISSF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1907 AS THE INTERNATIONAL SHOOTING UNION, CHANGING ITS NAME IN 1998.

Shooting has been contested since the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896.

OLYMPIC EXPANSION

Shooting has come a long way since its debut at the inaugural Games in 1896. Originally, there were just three shooting events compared to the 15 currently on the Olympic programme. In part, this leap is thanks to advances in the technology of firearms and equipment, but it is also a reflection of the passion shooters have for their sport.

CURRENT EVENTS

At the Olympic Games, there are nine events for men and six for women. The events are divided into three groups: rifle, pistol and shotgun. The rifle and pistol events are held on shooting ranges, with competitors aiming at targets from distances of 10 metres, 25 metres and 50 metres. In the shotgun event, competitors shoot at clay targets propelled in a series of different directions.

WOMEN IN THE RANKS

In 1992, 24-year-old Chinese competitor Zhang Shan sensationally won gold in a mixed-gender Skeet shooting event. In doing so, she became the first woman ever to win gold in an

Olympic event open to both men and women. In 1996 at the Atlanta Games, the shooting programme was segregated, so her achievement could remain unique for a very long time.

MEN'S EVENTS

10M AIR PISTOL MEN, 10M AIR RIFLE MEN, 25M RAPID FIRE PISTOL MEN
50M PISTOL MEN, 50M RIFLE 3 POSITIONS MEN, 50M RIFLE PRONE MEN, DOUBLE TRAP MEN, SKEET MEN, TRAP MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

10M AIR PISTOL WOMEN, 10M AIR RIFLE WOMEN, 25M PISTOL WOMEN, 50M RIFLE 3 POSITIONS WOMEN, SKEET WOMEN, TRAP WOMEN

32. SWIMMING



SWIMMING CAN BE DATED BACK TO THE STONE AGE, BUT DID NOT TRULY BECOME AN ORGANISED SPORT UNTIL THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY.

AN ANCIENT DISCIPLINE

Prehistoric man learnt to swim in order to cross rivers and lakes – we know this because cave paintings from the Stone Age depicting swimmers have been found in Egypt. Swimming was also referred to in Greek mythology.

DAWN OF A SPORT

Swimming was not widely practised until the early 19th century, when the National Swimming Society of Great Britain began to hold competitions. Most early swimmers used the breaststroke, or a form of it.

DISCOVERING THE CRAWL

Based on a stroke used by native South Americans, the first version of the crawl featured a scissor kick. In the late 1880s, an Englishman named Frederick Cavill travelled to the South Seas, where he saw the natives performing a crawl with a flutter kick. Cavill settled in Australia, where he taught the stroke that was to become the famous Australian crawl.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Swimming has featured on the programme of all editions of the Games since 1896. The very first Olympic events were freestyle (crawl) or breaststroke. Backstroke was added in 1904. In the 1940s, breaststrokers discovered that they could go faster by bringing both arms forward over their heads. This practice was immediately forbidden in breaststroke, but gave birth to butterfly, whose first official appearance was at the 1956 Games in Melbourne. This style is now one of the four strokes used in competition.

Women's swimming became Olympic in 1912 at the Stockholm Games. Since then, it has been part of every edition of the Games. The men's and women's programmes are almost identical, as they contain the same number of events, with only one difference: the freestyle distance is 800 metres for women and 1,500 metres for men.

MEN'S EVENTS

100M BACKSTROKE, 100M BREASTSTROKE, 100M BUTTERFLY, 100M FREESTYLE, 1500M FREESTYLE, 200M BACKSTROKE, 200M BREASTSTROKE, 200M BUTTERFLY, 200M FREESTYLE, 200M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY, 400M FREESTYLE
 400M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY, 4X100M FREESTYLE RELAY, 4X100M MEDLEY RELAY
 4X200M FREESTYLE RELAY, 50M FREESTYLE, MARATHON 10KM

WOMEN'S EVENTS

100M BACKSTROKE, 100M BREASTSTROKE, 100M BUTTERFLY, 100M FREESTYLE, 200M BACKSTROKE, 200M BREASTSTROKE, 200M BUTTERFLY
 200M FREESTYLE, 200M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY, 400M FREESTYLE, 400M INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY, 4X100M FREESTYLE RELAY, 4X100M MEDLEY RELAY, 4X200M FREESTYLE RELAY, 50M FREESTYLE, 800M FREESTYLE, MARATHON 10KM

33. TABLE TENNIS

TABLE TENNIS STARTED AS A GENTEEL, AFTER-DINNER GAME, BUT IS NOW A FAST, HIGH-TECH SPORT. IT ALSO HAS THE MOST PARTICIPANTS OF ANY SPORT IN THE WORLD.

HIGH SOCIETY ORIGINS

It is thought that upper-class Victorians in England invented table tennis in the 1880s as a genteel, after-dinner alternative to lawn tennis, using whatever they could find as equipment. A line of books would often be the net, the rounded top of a champagne cork would be the ball and occasionally a cigar box lid would be a racket.

EVOLUTION

In 1926, meetings were held in Berlin and London that led to the formation of the International Table Tennis Federation. The first World Championships were held in London in 1926, but the sport had to wait a long time before it was given its Olympic debut at the 1988 Seoul Games.

MODERN CHANGES

The sport has progressed enormously since it was first invented. Nowadays, players use specially developed rubber-coated wooden and carbon-fibre rackets and a lightweight, hollow celluloid ball. Thanks to their high-tech rackets, they can now smash the ball at over 150 kilometres per hour!

POPULAR APPEAL

It is estimated there are 40 million competitive table tennis players and countless millions playing recreationally, making it the sport with the most participants worldwide. This is largely owing to its enormous popularity in China, which has become the dominant force in the sport.

THE INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION (ITTF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1926. TABLE TENNIS MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1988 SEOUL GAMES.

CURRENT EVENTS

There are four table tennis events on the Olympic programme: men's singles, women's singles, men's team and women's team. Doubles events used to be contested when the sport debuted in 1988. However, they were dropped at the 2008 Beijing Games in favour of

the hugely popular team events in which three players from the same country make up a team.

MAXIMUM NUMBERS

The maximum number of players who can take part in the Olympic Games table tennis events are 86 men and 86 women – with not more than three men and three women from each National Olympic Committee (NOC). Given that China normally has five or more players ranked in the world's top 20, this means competition for a place on the national team can be fierce!

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

In singles, the top 16 seeds advance straight into the round of the last 32, while the other players compete in knock-out qualification rounds for the other 16 places. The main draw is a knockout tournament and matches are played to the best of seven games. The team events for the men and the women are played in two stages. A round-robin stage with groups of four teams is followed by playoffs. The group winners play for gold and silver, while the runner-ups compete with the semi-final losers for the bronze medal.

MEN'S EVENTS

SINGLES MEN, TEAM MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

SINGLES WOMEN, TEAM WOMEN

34. TAEKWONDO



TAEKWONDO IS A TRADITIONAL KOREAN MARTIAL ART PRACTISED IN 206 COUNTRIES.

WHAT IS TAEKWONDO?

Taekwondo is a traditional Korean martial art, which means "the way of kicking and punching". In taekwondo, hands and feet can be used to overcome an opponent, but the trademark of the sport is its combination of kick movements.

A LONG HISTORY

The origin of taekwondo dates back to Korea's Three-Kingdom era (c.50 BC) when Silla Dynasty warriors, the Hwarang, began to develop a martial art - Taekkyon ("foot-hand").

GO GLOBAL

During the early 20th century, taekwondo became the dominant form of martial arts practised in Korea. Subsequently taekwondo was designated as the Korean national martial art to be promoted internationally. In 1973, the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) was founded as the worldwide legitimate governing body of the sport, and the first World Championships were held in Seoul, Korea that year.

RECENT OLYMPIC HISTORY

Taekwondo is one of the two Asian martial arts included on the Olympic programme. Taekwondo made its debut as a demonstration Olympic sport at the 1988 Seoul Games, and became an official medal sport at the 2000 Sydney Games.

WORLD TAEKWONDO WAS FOUNDED IN 1973. TAEKWONDO MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE SYDNEY 2000 OLYMPIC GAMES.

RECENT HISTORY

Taekwondo is one of the two Asian martial arts included on the Olympic programme. Taekwondo made its debut as a demonstration Olympic sport at the 1988 Seoul Games, and became an official medal sport at the 2000 Sydney Games. The sport is practised in 188 countries and there were over seven million individuals with black belts in the world as of the end of 2008.

CURRENT EVENTS

Current events on the Olympic programme include four weight classes each for men and women. Each event involves a single-elimination tournament to decide the gold and silver medals. Contests are scored by awarding one to three points based on scoring areas and techniques performed.

HARD-EARNED BRONZES

The two losing semi-finalists move directly into the semi-finals of the competition for bronze. All other competitors who lost to the two finalists compete in a knockout tournament within their original pools, and two winners emerge to fill the remaining semi-final spots. Each pool's winner then faces the losing semi-finalist from the opposite pool to compete for the two bronze medals

MEN'S EVENTS

- 58 KG MEN, + 80 KG MEN, 58 - 68 KG MEN, 68 - 80 KG MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

- 49 KG WOMEN, + 67 KG WOMEN, 49 - 57 KG WOMEN, 57 - 67 KG WOMEN

35. TENNIS



TENNIS HAS A LONG HISTORY, BUT THE BIRTH OF THE GAME PLAYED TODAY IS THOUGHT TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN ENGLAND.

11TH CENTURY BEGINNINGS

The earliest recognisable relative to tennis, as we know it, was "jeu de paume", played in 11th century France. Played in a monastery courtyard, the game used the walls and sloping roofs as part of the court and the palm of the hand to hit the ball.

TENNIS OVERTAKES CROQUET

By the late 19th century, the popularity of lawn tennis had overtaken croquet in England. For this reason, the All England Croquet Club embraced the sport and designated certain croquet lawns to be used for tennis. It was this natural supply of venues combined with the already existing framework for a racquet game that resulted in the birth of the modern game in England.

AN INTERNATIONAL SPORT

In 1913, lawn tennis was becoming increasingly popular worldwide. Therefore it seemed natural that the existing National Tennis Associations should join forces to ensure the game

was uniformly structured. An international conference was held between 12 nations in Paris and the International Lawn Tennis Federation (ILTF) was created.

PROFESSIONAL DILEMMA

Tennis has a long Olympic history but withdrew from the programme after 1924. It did not return as a medal sport until 1988. Professionals are now welcome to compete, and the Olympic competition includes men's and women's singles and men's and women's doubles. THE INTERNATIONAL TENNIS FEDERATION (ITF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1924 AS THE INTERNATIONAL LAWN TENNIS FEDERATION (ILTF), CHANGING ITS NAME IN 1977.

Tennis made its debut at the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896.

CURRENT EVENTS

Tennis withdrew from the Olympic programme after 1924. It did not return as a medal sport until 1988. Today, Olympic competition includes men's and women's singles and doubles.

SUPERB STEFFI

At the 1984 Los Angeles Games, Steffi Graf won the Olympic tennis demonstration tournament despite being its youngest entrant aged just 15 years old. By the time she arrived in Seoul in 1988 to compete in the inaugural full medal event, she was world number one having completed the Grand Slam less than a week before. She won with some ease.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

As with most tournaments, Olympic tennis is a knockout competition. All matches are played best of three sets except the men's singles and doubles finals, which are best of five. In all four divisions, the semi-final winners play to decide the gold and silver medals, and the semi-final losers play for the bronze.

MEN'S EVENTS

DOUBLES MEN, SINGLES MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

DOUBLES WOMEN, SINGLES WOMEN

MIXED EVENTS

DOUBLES MIXED

36. TRAMPOLINE



DEVELOPED IN 1934, TRAMPOLINES WERE ORIGINALLY USED TO TRAIN ASTRONAUTS OR WERE USED AS A TRAINING TOOL FOR OTHER SPORTS. THEY SOON BECAME POPULAR IN THEIR OWN RIGHT AND A SPORT WAS BORN.

MAN-MADE

The first modern trampoline was built by George Nissen and Larry Griswold around 1934 at the University of Iowa. It was initially used to train tumblers and astronauts and as a training tool to develop and hone acrobatic skills for other sports such as diving, gymnastics and freestyle skiing. People enjoyed the sensation so much, they began to trampoline for sheer fun, and it became popular in its own right.

SPACEBALL

Nissen and Griswold envisaged trampolines being used in a variety of new games, although they never grabbed the public's imagination. In one, called Spaceball, two teams of two on a single trampoline with specially constructed end walls attempted to propel a ball through a middle wall, to hit a target on the other side's end wall.

OLYMPIC DEBUTS

Trampolining made its first appearance at the 2000 Games in Sydney, with men's and women's competitions. The number of events (two) has remained unchanged since then.

MEN'S EVENT

INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION MEN

WOMEN'S EVENT

INDIVIDUAL COMPETITION WOMEN

37. TRIATHLON

TRIATHLON WAS INVENTED AS AN ALTERNATIVE WORKOUT TO TRACK TRAINING IN THE 1970S, AND MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 2000 SYDNEY GAMES.

ALTERNATIVE WORKOUT

Triathlon was invented in the early 1970s by the San Diego Track Club, as an alternative workout to the rigours of track training. The club's first event consisted of a 10km run, an 8km cycle and a 500m swim. Over the next decade, triathlon's popularity continued to build, and it soon gained worldwide recognition.

FIRST WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

In 1989, the International Triathlon Union (ITU) was founded in Avignon, France, and the first official World Championships were held. The official distance for triathlon was set at a 1,500m swim, a 40km cycle and a 10km run – taken from existing events in each discipline already on the Olympic programme.

WORLD CUP CIRCUIT

In 1991, the ITU launched its first full season of the World Cup circuit. Twelve races were contested in nine different countries. More World Cup races have subsequently been added every year as the sport's appeal continues to grow.

OLYMPIC DEBUT

Triathlon made its Olympic full medal debut at the 2000 Sydney Games. This helped the sport to become even more popular. It now has over 120 affiliated national federations around the world.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRIATHLON UNION (ITU) WAS FOUNDED IN 1989. TRIATHLON MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 2000 SYDNEY GAMES.

OLYMPIC BOOST

Triathlon made its Olympic debut at the 2000 Sydney Games after it was awarded full medal status six years earlier. The international popularity of triathlon began to grow after its

inclusion on the Olympic programme. It now has over 120 affiliated national federations around the world.

NO REST

Trained triathletes have learnt to race each stage in a way that preserves their energy and endurance for subsequent stages. In most modern triathlons, events are placed back-to-back in immediate sequence, and a competitor's official time includes the time required to "transition" between the individual legs of the race, including any time necessary for changing clothes and shoes.

CURRENT EVENTS

Triathlon races are held over four distances: Sprint, Olympic, Double Olympic and Triple Olympic. The Olympic triathlon comprises a 1.5km swim, a 40km bike ride, and a 10km run. There are two competitions at the Olympic Games: men's and women's individual.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

After a mass start, the race remains continuous, with no stop between the three legs. Transitions are vital to race strategy. Women typically finish in approximately two hours, while the top men usually finish in about 1 hour 50 minutes.

38. VOLLEYBALL



VOLLEYBALL WAS CONCEIVED AS A LESS STRENUOUS ALTERNATIVE TO BASKETBALL. THE SPORT BECAME POPULAR VERY QUICKLY AND MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT IN 1964.

A SHARED HISTORY

Basketball and volleyball were both invented at Springfield College in Massachusetts within a few years of one another. In 1895, William G. Morgan, after watching basketball develop, decided to invent a less strenuous sport for older people. He called this game "Mintonette". However, a local professor noted the ball being volleyed over the net, and the sport was almost immediately renamed.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The sport quickly became popular across the world. Japan was playing the game by 1896, followed closely by other Asian countries and the sport developed rapidly over the next 20 years. A specially designed ball came into play; six-a-side play became standard and the rules mandating three hits were instituted.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

No country has been truly dominant in volleyball, although the Soviet Union has won the most medals. The Japanese and the Soviet Union women's teams dominated from 1964-1984 but since then the balance of power has shifted to Cuba, then to China and now to Brazil. The United States men's teams were prominent in the 1980s, Italy in the 1990s and Brazil in the 2000s.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE VOLLEYBALL (FIVB) WAS FOUNDED IN 1947. VOLLEYBALL MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1964 TOKYO GAMES.

NEW TACTICS

The sport is very finely balanced between power and speed. Hence while strength and height have become vital components of international teams, the ability of teams and

coaches to devise new tactics, strategies and skills have been crucial for success at the Olympic Games.

A BEACH PHENOMENON

Volleyball was introduced to the Olympics in 1964 but the beach volleyball phenomenon arose only at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games in Atlanta. This discipline, although still very young, has become very popular.

CURRENT EVENTS

There is a men's and women's volleyball event and a men's and women's beach volleyball event. Volleyball takes place indoors in controlled conditions. Beach volleyball takes place outside, where the athletes have to compete with the added variables of the sand, the sun and the wind.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

Volleyball matches are played to the best of five sets. The first four sets are played to 25 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. A team must win a set by two points. There is no ceiling, so each set continues until one of the teams gains a two-point advantage. In beach volleyball, matches are played best of three sets using the rally point system. The first two sets are played to 21 points, with the final set being played to 15 points. Again, a team must win a set by two points.

39. WATER POLO



WATER POLO DEVELOPED INTO DIFFERENT FORMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE. THE EUROPEAN GAME IS NOW UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED.

TOUGH BEGINNINGS

Water polo is a tough sport, but when it first began it was even tougher. Fighting between players was common, if not the norm. In 1897, New Yorker Harold Reeder formulated the first American rules for discipline, which were aimed at curbing the sport's more violent tendencies.

NAMING THE GAME

In the early days, the players rode on floating barrels that resembled mock horses, and swung at the ball with mallet-like sticks. This made it similar to equestrian polo, hence its name. In the United States it was termed softball water polo due to the use of an unfilled bladder as a ball.

CURRENT SPORT

Water polo was developed in Europe and the United States as two differing sports. Ultimately, the faster, less dangerous European style predominated, and today this is the form of the game practised universally. It consists of seven-man teams playing four eight-minute periods.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Water polo made its Olympic debut at the Paris Games in 1900. It was not included in 1904 but would be present at each subsequent edition of the Olympic Games.

Since then, the Hungarians have been by far the greatest ambassadors of this discipline. Between 1928 and 1980, they won medals at every Games. Between 1932 and 1976, they even won six of the 10 gold medals available.

In 2000 in Sydney, Hungary make a remarkable comeback, winning its seventh gold medal in water polo. In the same year, women's water polo made its first official appearance at the Olympic Games, 100 years after the debut of this discipline.

40. WEIGHTLIFTING



WEIGHTLIFTING HAS ANCIENT ORIGINS. IT FEATURED AT THE FIRST MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN ATHENS IN 1896.

A LONG HISTORY

As a means to measure strength and power, weightlifting was practised both by ancient Egyptian and Greek societies. It developed as an international sport primarily in the 19th century and is one of the few sports to have featured at the 1896 Athens Games.

POWER STRUGGLE

At the beginning of the century, Austria, Germany and France were the most successful nations. However in the 1950s, the Soviet Union's weightlifters rose to prominence and stayed there until the 1990s when China, Turkey, Greece and Iran catapulted to the lead. In the women's field, China has been dominant since the very beginning.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Although men's weightlifting has always been on the programme of the Olympic Games - except for at the 1900, 1908 and 1912 editions – women started to participate only at the 2000 Games in Sydney.

The Olympic weightlifting programme has evolved greatly over time. Today, weightlifters compete in snatch and clean and jerk, and are placed according to their total combined result. From the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, men have competed in eight weight categories and women in seven. This total of 15 events remains unchanged.

GREAT CHAMPIONS

Turkey's and Halil Mutlu have each won three gold medals, like Greece's Pyrros Dimas and Kakhi Kakhiashvili. Hungarian weightlifter Imre Földi and Germany's Ronnie Weller and Ingo Steinhöfel hold a special record: they participated in the Olympic Games five times.

In women's weightlifting, China's Chen Yanqing and Liu Chunhong have both won two gold medals.

Weightlifting has been present at 23 editions of the Games, and has placed on the podium champions from 32 different National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

THE INTERNATIONAL WEIGHTLIFTING FEDERATION (IWF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1905.

WEIGHTLIFTING HAS BEEN CONTESTED SINCE THE INAUGURAL MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1896.

EXPLOSIVE STRENGTH

The apparent simplicity of lifting the barbell from the ground and over the head in one or two movements is deceptive. Weightlifting is a highly technical sport that demands speed and mobility as well as raw strength.

TINY YET MIGHTY

Super-heavyweight lifters normally claim the title of World's Strongest Man or Woman. However, kilo for kilo, the lightest weightlifter is often the strongest.

CURRENT EVENTS

Competitions are divided into bodyweight categories. Each category is an event and all competitions are finals. At the Olympic Games men compete in eight events from under 56kg to the super-heavyweights at over 105kg. Women compete for seven gold medals, from under 48kg to over 75kg. They have participated since the 2000 Sydney Games.

TYPES OF LIFTS

Athletes perform two types of lifts – the snatch and the clean and jerk. In the snatch, they lift the bar to arm's length above their head in one movement. In the clean and jerk, they lift the bar to their shoulders, stand up straight and then jerk the bar to arm's length above their head.

MEN'S EVENTS

+ 105KG MEN, 105KG MEN, 56KG MEN, 62KG MEN, 69KG MEN, 77KG MEN, 85KG MEN, 94KG MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

+ 75KG WOMEN, 48KG WOMEN, 53KG WOMEN, 58KG WOMEN, 63KG WOMEN, 69KG WOMEN, 75KG WOMEN

41. WRESTLING FREESTYLE



IN FREESTYLE WRESTLING, WRESTLERS MAY USE THEIR ARMS AND LEGS AND MAY HOLD OPPONENTS ABOVE OR BELOW THE WAIST.

THE OLDEST SPORT

With the possible exception of athletics, wrestling is recognised as the world's oldest competitive sport. Indeed cave drawings of wrestlers have been found dating as far back as 3000 BC. The sport was introduced into the ancient Olympics in 708 BC, shortly after the Games' recorded history began.

POPULAR NEWCOMER

In 1904, Olympic officials added freestyle wrestling, commonly known as "catch as catch can", to the programme. This style had far less history and tradition than Greco-Roman but did possess great popularity, having developed into a form of professional entertainment performed at fairs and festivals across Great Britain and the United States.

GRECO VS FREESTYLE

In Greco-Roman wrestling, the wrestlers use only their arms and upper bodies to attack, and can only hold those same parts of their opponents. As the name suggests, freestyle is a much more open form in which wrestlers also use their legs and may hold opponents above or below the waist.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

The 1900 Games were the only ones where wrestling was not present in any shape or form. Freestyle wrestling first appeared on the Olympic programme at the 1904 Games in St Louis. It was not included in the 1912 Games, but since the 1920 Games in Antwerp, it has been present at every edition of the Games.

At the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the Greco-Roman wrestling programme was modified. Only eight weight categories are now represented in each style, as opposed to the

10 that had been included since the 1972 Games in Munich. The reduction in the number of categories from 10 to seven in freestyle wrestling allowed for the introduction of women's wrestling in 2004, at the Athens Games, where there were four women's events on the programme.

The Japanese women won medals in each category, while the USA and France won two medals each. The first medal was won by Ukraine's Irini Merlino, who dominated her four opponents in the 48kg category and went on to win the final by tie-break.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DES LUTTES ASSOCIÉES (FILA) WAS FOUNDED IN 1905, AND INITIALLY GOVERNED BOTH WRESTLING AND WEIGHTLIFTING.

It became independent as the International Ring Verband in 1912, then changed its name to FILA in 1953. Wrestling has been contested since the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896.

CLASSICAL REVIVAL

When the Olympic Games returned in 1896 after a 1500-year gap, organisers seeking sports with direct links to ancient times found a natural candidate in wrestling. They resurrected Greco-Roman wrestling, a style they believed to be an exact carryover from the way people wrestled in classical times.

FREESTYLE

In Greco-Roman wrestling, competitors use only their arms and upper bodies to attack. They can hold only those same parts of their opponents. In 1904, a second wrestling event was added to the Olympic programme, called "freestyle". In this style, wrestlers can use their legs for pushing, lifting and tripping, and they can hold opponents above or below the waist.

CURRENT EVENTS

At the Olympic Games, men compete in seven weight divisions in both freestyle and Greco-Roman events. Women's wrestling was introduced at the 2004 Athens Games, with four weight divisions in the freestyle event, but with seven categories at the world and continental championships.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

The competition at the Olympic Games is organised in a knockout tournament for each weight division. Each match is decided when one athlete manages to pin his opponent to the floor or hold him in a lock, forcing him to submit.

MEN'S EVENTS

- 55KG MEN, 55 - 60KG MEN, 60 - 66KG MEN, 66 - 74KG MEN, 74 - 84KG MEN, 84 - 96KG MEN, 96 - 120KG MEN

WOMEN'S EVENTS

- 48KG WOMEN, 48 - 55KG WOMEN, 55 - 63KG WOMEN, 63 - 72KG WOMEN

42. WRESTLING GRECO-ROMAN



IN GRECO-ROMAN WRESTLING, ARGUABLY THE OLDEST COMPETITIVE SPORT IN THE WORLD, COMPETITORS USE ONLY THEIR ARMS AND UPPER BODIES TO ATTACK.

THE OLDEST SPORT

With the possible exception of athletics, wrestling is recognised as the world's oldest competitive sport. Indeed cave drawings of wrestlers have been found dating as far back as 3000 BC. The sport was introduced into the ancient Olympics in 708 BC.

THE MAIN EVENT

When the modern Olympic Games resumed in Athens in 1896, wrestling became a focus of the Games. This was because organisers considered it historically significant; indeed Greco-Roman wrestling was deemed a pure reincarnation of ancient Greek and Roman wrestling.

GRECO VS FREESTYLE

In Greco-Roman wrestling, the wrestlers use only their arms and upper bodies to attack, and can only hold those same parts of their opponents. As the name suggests, freestyle is a much more open form in which wrestlers also use their legs and may hold opponents above or below the waist.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

The 1900 Games were the only ones where wrestling was not present in any shape or form. As from the 1908 Olympic Games in London, Greco-Roman wrestling has always been included on the programme. Since the 1920 Antwerp Games, there have been both freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling competitions.

Today, the nation's dominating this sport is the Russian Federation, closely followed by the USA in freestyle wrestling. Iran, Turkey and Mongolia, countries in which wrestling is the national sport, also have some very high-level champions.

At the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, the Greco-Roman wrestling programme was modified. Only eight weight categories are now represented in each style, as opposed to the 10 that had been included since the 1972 Games in Munich. Since the 2004 Games in Athens, men have competed in only seven weight categories.

MEN'S EVENTS

- 55KG MEN, 55 - 60KG MEN, 60 - 66KG MEN, 66 - 74KG MEN, 74 - 84KG MEN, 84 - 96KG MEN, 96 - 120KG MEN

PART 2: WINTER OLYMPIC SPORTS

1. ALPINE SKIING



SKIING HAS AN ANCIENT HISTORY. THE BIRTH OF MODERN DOWNHILL SKIING IS OFTEN DATED TO THE 1850S WHEN NORWEGIAN LEGEND SONDRE NORHEIM POPULARISED SKIS WITH CURVED SIDES, BINDINGS WITH STIFF HEEL BANDS MADE OF WILLOW, AS WELL AS THE TELEMAR AND CHRISTIANIA (SLALOM) TURNS.

ANCIENT ORIGINS

Skiing can be traced to prehistoric times by the discovery of varying sizes and shapes of wooden planks preserved in peat bogs in Russia, Finland, Sweden and Norway. Ski fragments discovered in Russia have been carbon-dated back to circa 8000-7000 BC. It is virtually certain that a form of skiing has been an integral part of life in colder countries for thousands of years.

FIRST COMPETITIONS

Skiing changed its from a method of transportation into a sporting activity during the late 19th century. The first non-military skiing competitions are reported to have been held in the 1840s in northern and central Norway. The first national skiing competition in Norway, held in the capital Christiania (now Oslo) and won by Sondre Norheim, in 1868, is regarded as the beginning of a new era of skiing enthusiasm. A few decades later, the sport spread to the remainder of Europe and to the US, where miners held skiing competitions to entertain themselves during the winter. The first slalom competition was organised by Sir Arnold Lunn in 1922 in Mürren, Switzerland.

OLYMPIC GROWTH

Men's and women's alpine skiing both debuted on the Olympic programme in 1936 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The only event that year was a combined competition of both downhill and slalom. In 1948, this was held along with separate downhill and slalom races. Four years later the giant slalom was added and in 1988 the super giant slalom became a fourth separate event.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE SKI (FIS) WAS FOUNDED IN 1924. SKIING MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT THE SAME YEAR AT THE 1924 CHAMONIX WINTER GAMES.

SKIING DISCIPLINES

In one form or other skiing has been a permanent feature on the Olympic Winter Games programme since 1924. The current six disciplines of skiing are alpine, cross country, ski jumping, Nordic combined, freestyle and snowboarding. The first four are rich in history whilst the latter two are relative newcomers growing in popularity. To compete in these various disciplines one needs to master speed, endurance, dexterity, and determination.

ALPINE – DOWNHILL AND SUPER-G

The alpine competition consists of ten events: five each for women and men. The downhill features the longest course and the highest speeds in alpine skiing. Super-G stands for super giant slalom, an event that combines the speed of downhill with the more precise turns of giant slalom. In these events each skier makes one run down a single course and the fastest time determines the winner.

ALPINE – SLALOMS/SUPER COMBINED

The slalom is the alpine event with the shortest course and the quickest turns. The giant slalom has fewer turns and wider, smoother turns. In both events, each skier makes two runs down two different courses on the same slope. The times are added and the fastest total time determines the winner. In the so-called super combined event, one shortened downhill run is followed by a one-run slalom. The times are added together and the fastest total time determines the winner.

CROSS COUNTRY

The cross country competition consists of 12 different cross country skiing events. Women compete in the sprint, team sprint, 10km individual start, 15km pursuit, 30km mass start and the 4x5km relay. Men compete in the sprint, team sprint, 15km individual start, 30km pursuit, 50km mass start and the 4x10km relay.

SKI JUMPING

Ski jumping is currently competed by men and there are three events: the individual normal hill, the individual large hill and the team event on the large hill. In the individual events each athlete gets two jumps and the athlete with the highest combined score is the winner. In the team event, each team has four members and the field is reduced to the eight best teams after the first jump.

NORDIC COMBINED

There are three Nordic combined events, each consisting of a ski jumping competition and a cross-country skiing race. For the normal hill Gundersen event, ski jumping takes place on the normal hill (90m). For the team and the large hill Gundersen events, ski jumping takes place on the large hill (120m). The cross country portion of the Gundersen events has a 10km race and the team event has a 4x5km relay.

SNOWBOARDING

There are six snowboarding events on the programme of the Olympic Winter Games: men's and women's halfpipe, men's and women's parallel giant slalom, men's and women's snowboard cross.

FREESTYLE SKIING

As of the Vancouver Games, there will be three freestyle skiing events each for women and men on the Olympic programme. In addition to the aerial and mogul competitions, ski cross will make its debut in 2010. The mass start of all four racers sets the stage for fast and exciting competition designed to test the skiers' skills in turns of a variety of types and sizes, flat sections and traverses, as well as rolls, banks and ridges. The fastest skier wins.

MEN'S EVENTS

ALPINE COMBINED, DOWNHILL, GIANT SLALOM, SLALOM, SUPER-G

WOMEN'S EVENTS

ALPINE COMBINED, DOWNHILL, GIANT SLALOM, SLALOM, SUPER-G,

MIXED

ALPINE TEAM EVENT

2. BIATHLON



BIATHLON COMBINES THE POWER AND AGGRESSION OF CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING WITH THE PRECISION AND CALM OF MARKSMANSHIP.

ROOTS IN SURVIVAL

The word biathlon stems from the Greek word for two contests, and is today seen as the joining of two sports; skiing and shooting. Biathlon has its roots in survival skills practised in the snow-covered forests of Scandinavia, where people hunted on skis with rifles slung over their shoulders.

STANDARDISING THE RULES

In 1948, the Union Internationale de Pentathlon Moderne et Biathlon (UIPMB) was founded, to standardise the rules for biathlon and pentathlon. In 1993, the biathlon branch of the UIPMB created the International Biathlon Union (IBU), which officially separated from the UIPMB in 1998.

FIRST COMPETITION

Biathlon-type events in Scandinavia are known to have been held as early as the 18th century. The first modern biathlon probably occurred in 1912 when the Norwegian military organised the Forvarsrennet in Oslo. An annual event, it consisted initially of a 17km cross-country ski race with two-minute penalties incurred by misses in the shooting part of the competition.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

In 1924 in Chamonix, an ancient form of biathlon made its Olympic debut: the military patrol, this event was then in demonstration in 1928, 1936 and 1948. After some attempts to incorporate it into a winter pentathlon, biathlon appeared at the Games in its current form in 1960 in Squaw Valley. Women's biathlon made its first appearance on the Olympic programme in Albertville in 1992.

Until the 1976 Games in Innsbruck, the events comprised an individual race and a relay. In Lake Placid in 1980, a second individual event was introduced.

In Salt Lake City in 2002, a 12.5km pursuit event was added for men and 10km for women. From Turin in 2006, a new mass-start event was introduced for both men and women. This brings together the 30 best athletes from the World Cup.

THE INTERNATIONAL BIATHLON UNION (IBU) WAS FOUNDED IN 1993. BIATHLON MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1960 SQUAW VALLEY WINTER GAMES.

SPRINT EVENTS

There are ten biathlon events, each of which is scored by time. Men and women compete in a sprint, pursuit, individual, mass start and relay. During the sprint, women race 7.5km and men race 10km. Competitors stop twice and must hit five targets with five bullets each time. For each target missed, athletes take a lap around the 150m penalty loop. The top 60 finishers of this competition qualify for the pursuit.

PURSUIT EVENTS

In the pursuit, the competitors start at intervals based on their finishing time in the sprint competition. Since 2002, women have raced 10km and men have raced 12.5km.

Competitors stop four times and then must hit all five targets with five bullets. For each target missed, athletes take a lap around the 150m penalty loop.

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

In the individual event, women race 15km and men race 20km. All competitors stop four times at the firing range and must hit all five targets with five bullets. For each target missed, one minute is added to their total time.

RELAY EVENTS

The relay is a fast-paced team event in which four-person teams tackle four 7.5km legs for a total of 30km for the men and four 6-km-legs for a total of 24km for the women. It begins with a mass start by the first skiers of their respective teams. Each team member has two firing sequences and is allowed three extra bullets (a total of eight) to hit five targets at each shooting stage, yet must load the three extra bullets one by one. For each target left standing, competitors ski a lap around the 150m penalty loop.

MASS START EVENTS

The mass start, an individual competition, was added to the Olympic programme in 2006. It is the most race-like event, with all 30 competitors starting at the same time. The starters are made up from all previous medal winners during the Olympic Games and the top athletes in the World Cup. Women race 12.5 km and men race 15 km. They stop 4 times at the shooting range where they must hit five targets with five bullets. For each target missed, the athletes take a lap around the 150m penalty loop.

MEN'S EVENTS

10KM SPRINT, 12.5KM PURSUIT, 15KM MASS START, 20KM INDIVIDUAL, 4X7.5KM RELAY

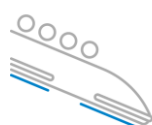
WOMEN'S EVENTS

10KM PURSUIT, 12.5KM MASS START, 15KM INDIVIDUAL, 4X6KM RELAY, 7.5KM SPRINT

MIXED EVENTS

2X6KM WOMEN + 2X7.5KM MEN RELAY

3. BOBSLEIGH



BOBSLEIGH IS A WINTER SPORT INVENTED BY THE SWISS IN THE LATE 1860S IN WHICH TEAMS MAKE TIMED RUNS DOWN NARROW, TWISTING, BANKED, ICED TRACKS IN A GRAVITY-POWERED SLED.

19TH CENTURY BEGINNINGS

The sport of bobsleigh didn't begin until the late 19th century when the Swiss attached two skeleton sleds together and added a steering mechanism to make a toboggan. A chassis was added to give protection to wealthy tourists and the world's first bobsleigh club was founded in St Moritz, Switzerland in 1897.

SUPER HEAVY

By the 1950s, the critical importance of the start had been recognized and athletes with explosive strength from other sports were drawn to bobsledding. In 1952, a critical rule change limiting the total weight of crew and sled ended the era of the super heavyweight bobsledder and rebalanced the sport as an athletic contest.

BACK AND FORTH

In its original form, the first races used skeleton sleds made of wood. However, they were soon replaced by steel sleds that came to be known as bobsleighs because of the way crews bobbed back and forth to increase their speed at the start. Today, the world's top teams train year-round and compete mostly on artificial ice tracks in sleek high-tech sleds made of fibreglass and steel.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

In 1924, a four-man race took place at the first ever Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix. A two-man event was added at the 1932 Lake Placid Games in a format that has remained to the present. The first women's bobsleigh event - the two-woman bobsled - was held in 2002.

THE INTERNATIONAL BOBSLEIGH AND SKELETON FEDERATION WAS FOUNDED IN 1923.
BOBSLEIGH MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1924 CHAMONIX WINTER GAMES.

BOBSLEIGH

Bobsleigh teams include a brakeman and a pilot in the two-man event, while two crewmen/pushers are added for the four-man race. From a standing start, the crew pushes the sled in unison up to 50 metres. This distance is typically covered in less than six seconds and speeds of over 40 km/h are reached before the crew loads into the sled.

SKELETON

Skeleton, which takes place on the same track or "run" as the bobsleigh, starts with a running "push" phase, after which the athlete dives onto the sled and descends the track. Athletes lie prone, facing downhill, with arms at their sides, steering the skeleton with movements of their body.

CURRENT EVENTS

There are currently three bobsleigh events. Men and women compete in two-man/two-woman while men also compete in four-man. In skeleton there are only two events, individual men and individual women.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

In both bobsleigh and skeleton, the competition takes two days, with two runs staged on each day. The four runs are timed to 0.01 seconds, and the fastest total time determines the winner. If two teams complete the competition in a tie, they are awarded the same place.

STARTING ORDER

There is a definite advantage to being among the first down the track while the ice is still fresh and not rough and cut up. Therefore to determine which sliders get the best start positions, the starting order for the first heat of the Olympic Winter Games is based on the world rankings. The remaining start orders are based on the ranking after the preceding heat.

MEN'S EVENT

FOUR-MAN, TWO-MAN

WOMEN'S EVENT

BOBSLEIGH

4. CROSS COUNTRY SKIING



CROSS COUNTRY SKIING IS THE OLDEST TYPE OF SKIING. IT EMERGED FROM A NEED TO TRAVEL OVER SNOW-COVERED TERRAIN AND DEVELOPED AS A SPORT AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY.

NORWEGIAN ORIGINS

For centuries in the snow-covered North, skis were required to chase game and gather firewood in winter time. With long distances between the small, isolated communities and hard, snowy winters, skiing also became important as means of keeping in social contact. The word “ski” is a Norwegian word which comes from the Old Norse word “skid”, a split length of wood.

EARLIEST FORM

Different types of skis emerged at various regions at about the same time. One type had a horizontal toe-piece binding. The modern ski bindings are based on the Fennoscandian model of the 19th century. The East Siberian type was a thin board with a vertical four-hole binding. Sometimes it was covered with fur. The Lapps used a horizontal stem-hole binding. Present-day cross country skis were developed from the type used by the Lapps.

FIRST COMPETITION

Norwegian army units were skiing for sport (and prizes) in the 18th century. Skiing for sport appeared in Norway in the mid 19th century; the first race on record is 1842. The famous Holmenkollen ski festival started in 1892, with the focus initially on the Nordic combined event. However in 1901, a separate cross country race was added to the festival.

SCANDINAVIAN DOMINANCE

The men’s event debuted at the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix in 1924 and the women’s event debuted at the 1952 Oslo Games. The sport has traditionally been dominated by the Nordic countries.

MEN’S EVENTS

15KM FREE, 15KM+15KM SKIATHLON, 4X10KM RELAY, 50KM MASS START CLASSIC, SPRINT CLASSIC, TEAM SPRINT FREE

WOMEN’S EVENTS

10KM FREE, 30KM MASS START CLASSIC, 4X5KM RELAY, 7.5KM+7.5KM SKIATHLON, SPRINT CLASSIC, TEAM SPRINT FREE

5. CURLING



CURLING IS A TEAM SPORT PLAYED BY TWO TEAMS OF FOUR PLAYERS ON A RECTANGULAR SHEET OF ICE. ITS NICKNAME, "THE ROARING GAME", ORIGINATES FROM THE RUMBLING SOUND THE 44-POUND (19.96KG) GRANITE STONES MAKE WHEN THEY TRAVEL ACROSS THE ICE.

BROOM OR BRUSH

There are two types of broom. The most common is a brush or "push broom". The other is a corn/straw/Canadian broom, which, with long bristles, looks much like a normal broom.

ICE

For indoor tournaments the artificially created ice has its surface sprinkled with water droplets which freeze into tiny bumps on the surface. Called "pebbled ice", this surface helps the stone's grip and leads to more consistent curling.

RINK

The rink is 42.07m long and 4.28m wide with a target - or house - at either end.

SHOES

Special curling shoes are common; shoes should grip the ice well. While shooting, extremely slippery surfaces such as Teflon are used on the sliding foot. Some are built into the shoes and others are strapped on over the shoes.

ROCK

Also known as a stone, a curling rock is made of rare, dense granite that is quarried on Scotland's Ailsa Craig. Each rock weighs 19.1kg and is polished.

THE WORLD CURLING FEDERATION (WCF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1966 AS THE INTERNATIONAL CURLING FEDERATION, CHANGING ITS NAME IN 1990.

Curling made its Olympic debut at the 1924 Chamonix Winter Games.

CURRENT EVENTS

Men and women currently compete in 10-team events. The sport is played on temperature-controlled sheets of ice, and the two teams take turns to deliver a 44-pound (19.96kg) stone towards a series of concentric circles. The object is to get the stone as close to the centre of the circles as possible to score more points than the opponent, using sweeping instruments to affect both the accuracy and speed of each stone.

THE PLAYERS

Teams are composed of four players each. "The lead" in each team throws first, followed by "second", then the "third" (also known as the "vice-skip") and finally the "skip", who is the captain of the team. A match starts with the leads alternating throws until they have both delivered their two stones. The seconds then throw in the same manner, and so on. Up to two players sweep each of their own team's delivered stones.

TRUE ATHLETES

Unlike recreational curling, which is suitable for all, curling at Olympic level is highly demanding. High-performance curlers need to be as mentally strong and physically conditioned as any other athlete to achieve peak performance.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

One match consists of ten "ends" or rounds of throws. The score for the end is determined when all 16 stones have been delivered. A team can have one or several stones closest to the centre and score therefore one or several points in each end. The team with the most

points after all ten ends have been completed, or after the opponent has conceded, is the winner.

6. FIGURE SKATING



FIGURE SKATING HAS DEVELOPED FROM A PRACTICAL WAY TO GET AROUND ON ICE INTO THE ELEGANT MIX OF ART AND SPORT IT IS TODAY.

EARLY PIONEERS

The Dutch were arguably the earliest pioneers of skating. They began using canals to maintain communication by skating from village to village as far back as the 13th century. Skating eventually spread across the channel to England, and soon the first clubs and artificial rinks began to form. Passionate skaters included several kings of England, Marie Antoinette, Napoleon III and German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

STEEL BALLETT

Two Americans are responsible for the major developments in the history of the sport. In 1850, Edward Bushnell of Philadelphia revolutionised skating when he introduced steel-bladed skates allowing complex manoeuvres and turns. Jackson Haines, a ballet master living in Vienna in the 1860s, added elements of ballet and dance to give the sport its grace.

OLDEST SPORT

Figure skating is the oldest sport on the Olympic Winter Games programme. It was contested at the 1908 London Games and again in 1920 in Antwerp. Men's, women's, and pairs were the three events contested until 1972. Since 1976, ice dancing has been the fourth event in the programme, proving a great success.

HOLLYWOOD STAR

Sonja Henie made her Olympic debut in Chamonix in 1924, aged just 11, and was so nervous she had to ask her coach what to do midway through her routines. However, she won gold in the next three Olympic Games and developed a huge legion of fans. She later moved into films, where she greatly increased the popularity of her sport.

THE INTERNATIONAL SKATING UNION (ISU) WAS FOUNDED IN 1892. SKATING MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1924 CHAMONIX WINTER GAMES.

FIGURE SKATING SINGLES

Men and women compete in the singles, pairs and ice dance events. The singles event consists of two sections: the short programme, and free skating. The short programme combines eight prescribed elements, such as jump combinations and spins, performed to music of the skater's choice. In the free skating programme, skaters perform an original arrangement of techniques, also to music of their choice. To gain a high score from the judges, a balanced programme is important.

FIGURE SKATING PAIRS AND ICE DANCE

The pairs event also consists of a short programme and free skating. The couple works as one unit, demonstrating overhead lifts, throw-jumps with the man launching his partner, and many other highly technical manoeuvres. This contrasts with ice dance, which is composed of a Compulsory Dance, Original Dance and Free Dance and is more akin to ballroom dancing on ice.

SHORT TRACK EVENTS

Men and women compete in 500m, 1,000m, and 1,500m. There is a 5,000m relay for men, and a 3,000m relay for women. In each event, skaters must outwit and outskate their fellow competitors in a series of elimination heats until the finalists remain to battle it out. Time is a secondary factor. In fact, Olympic and world records have been set in non-medal heats.

SPEED SKATING

Men and women compete in 500m, 1,000m, 1,500m, 5,000m and a team pursuit. There is also a 10,000m for men and a 3,000m for women. In each event, skaters race in pairs against the clock on a standard 400m oval ring. All events are skated once, apart from the 500m, which is skated twice. In this case, the final result is based on the total time of the two races.

MEN'S EVENT

SINGLE SKATING

WOMEN'S EVENT

SINGLE SKATING

MIXED EVENTS

ICE DANCE, PAIR SKATING, TEAM EVENT

7. FREESTYLE SKIING



FREESTYLE SKIING COMBINES SPEED, SHOWMANSHIP AND THE ABILITY TO PERFORM AERIAL MANOEUVRES WHILST SKIING. IT DEBUTED AS A DEMONSTRATION SPORT AT THE 1988 CALGARY GAMES.

'HOTDOGGING'

There are records of people performing somersaults on skis at the beginning of the 20th century in Norway, Italy and Austria, and in the early 1920s, US skiers started to flip and spin. Freestyle skiing really began to take off in America during the 1960s when social change and freedom of expression together with the advances in ski equipment led to development of new and exciting skiing techniques. Freestyle skiing was affectionately known as 'hotdogging'. The name seemed to perfectly capture the breathtaking mix of acrobatic tricks, jumps and sheer adrenalin rush of the sport.

GETTING RECOGNITION

Freestyle was recognised as a discipline by the International Ski Federation (FIS) in 1979. The governing body brought in new regulations in an effort to curb some of the more dangerous elements of the infant sport and the first FIS World Cup series was staged the following year.

OLYMPIC EVOLUTION

Freestyle skiing was contested as a demonstration sport at the 1988 Calgary Games. There were events for both men and women in all three events – moguls, aerials and ballet. Four years later, the mogul event gained medal status at the Albertville Games, as did the aerial event in Lillehammer in 1994. Ski cross made its Olympic debut at the 2010 Vancouver Games. Slopestyle and halfpipe were added to the freestyle skiing programme at the 2014 Sochi Games.

MEN'S EVENTS

AERIALS, MOGULS, SKI CROSS, SKI HALFPIPE, SKI SLOPESTYLE

WOMEN'S EVENTS

AERIALS, MOGULS, SKI CROSS, SKI HALFPIPE, SKI SLOPESTYLE

8. ICE HOCKEY

ICE HOCKEY IS A FAST, FLUID AND EXCITING TEAM SPORT. IT DRAWS BIG CROWDS AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES THANKS TO THE DRAMA AND TENSION OF THE MATCHES.

A CANADIAN PAST

Ice hockey originated in Canada in the early 19th century, based on several similar sports played in Europe, although the word “hockey” comes from the old French word “hocquet”, meaning “stick”. Around 1860, a puck was substituted for a ball, and in 1879 two McGill University students, Robertson and Smith, devised the first rules.

STANLEY CUP

The first recognised team, the McGill University Hockey Club, was formed in 1880 as hockey became the Canadian national sport and spread throughout the country. In 1892 the Governor General of Canada donated the Stanley Cup, which was first won by a team representing the Montreal Amateur Athletic Association.

INTERNATIONAL GROWTH

The sport migrated south to the United States during the 1890s, and games are known to have taken place there between Johns Hopkins and Yale Universities in 1895. Ice hockey spread to Europe around the turn of the century, and the first Olympic Games to include ice hockey for men were the 1920 Antwerp Summer Games.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Six-a-side men’s ice hockey has been on the programme of every edition of the Winter Games since 1924 in Chamonix. Women’s ice hockey was accepted as an Olympic sport in 1992, and made its official debut in 1998 in Nagano.

Unsurprisingly, Canada dominated the first tournaments. However, in 1956, and until its dissolution, the Soviet Union took over and became the number one team. It was interrupted only by USA victories in 1960 in Squaw Valley and in 1980 in Lake Placid.

THE INTERNATIONAL ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION (IIHF) WAS FOUNDED IN 1908. ICE HOCKEY MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1924 CHAMONIX WINTER GAMES.

PLAYERS

A team must not have more than six players on the ice while play is in progress. Typically, these players are one goalkeeper, two defenders, two wings and one centre. However, fewer players can be on the ice as a result of penalties, and a goalkeeper can be replaced for another skater at any time at the team’s own risk.

EVENTS AND DIFFERENCES

Women currently compete in an eight-team tournament, whereas men compete in a 12-team tournament. The chief difference between women's and men's ice hockey is that body checking is not allowed in women's ice hockey.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

A regular game consists of three 20-minute periods, with a 15-minute intermission after the first and second periods. Teams change ends for each period. If a tie occurs in a medal-round game, a five-minute sudden-victory overtime period is played. In the gold medal game, a 20-minute sudden-victory period is played subsequent to another 15-minute intermission.

PENALTY SHOOT-OUT

In the case of a tie after any sudden-victory period, a game-winning penalty shoot competition takes place to determine the winner.

9. LUGE



LUGE RIDERS HURTLE DOWN A SLIPPERY ICE TRACK AT GREAT SPEED, RELYING ON REFLEXES FOR STEERING. UNLIKE BOBSLEIGH, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE NO PROTECTION SHOULD THEY MAKE AN ERROR.

SWISS ORIGINS

Luge is the French word for “sledge” and, like bobsleigh, it was developed as a sport in Switzerland. Its roots go back to the 16th century, but it was not until 300 years later that the first luge tracks were built by Swiss hotel owners to cater for thrill-seeking tourists.

DAVOS

The first international race course was held in Davos in 1883, with competitors racing along an icy 4km road between Davos and the village of Klosters.

NO BRAKES

Luge is one of the oldest winter sports. It involves competitors lying on their backs on a tiny sled with their feet stretched out in front of them, and racing down an icy track at speeds in the range of 140 km/h, without brakes. As well as the singles, there is a pairs event, with the larger of the two team members lying on top for better aerodynamics.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

It was not until 1955 that the first World Championship was organised, i.e. 41 years after the first European Championships. Nine years later, in 1964, luge made its Olympic debut, at the Innsbruck Games, with a mixed event, a men’s event and a women’s event. The programme has not changed since then. Since 1976, this sport has taken place on the same track as bobsleigh.

The discipline was dominated by the East Germans, who won 15 of the 21 gold medals available between 1964 and 1988. One of the undisputed masters of luge is a German: Georg Hackl, who won gold three times consecutively, in 1994 in Lillehammer, 1998 in Nagano and 2002 in Salt Lake City.

THE FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE LUGE DE COURSE (FIL) WAS FOUNDED IN 1957. LUGE MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1964 INNSBRUCK WINTER GAMES.

CURRENT EVENTS

Men and women currently compete in singles events and a doubles event. Officially, the doubles event is open to men and women, but, traditionally, men have ridden together, with the larger man lying on top for a more aerodynamic fit.

SINGLES COMPETITION

In both men's and women's singles, the competition takes two days, with two runs staged on each day. Each run counts. The four times are added up, and the fastest total time determines the winner. Men and women compete on the same track, but the women start from a position further down the course.

DOUBLES COMPETITION

Doubles luge is a one-day competition in which pairs of athletes take two runs down a course. Like singles, each run counts and the fastest total time determines the winner.

FOUR RUN FORMAT

The four-run format is unique to the Olympic Winter Games. It is designed to reward consistency, endurance and ability to withstand pressure, particularly on the second day. At most events, such as the World Championships and World Cup races, singles are contested over two runs.

MEN'S EVENT

SINGLES

WOMEN'S EVENT

SINGLES

MIXED EVENTS

DOUBLES,

TEAM RELAY

10. NORDIC COMBINED

THIS SPORT, WHICH HAS A LONG OLYMPIC HISTORY, COMBINES SKI JUMPING AND CROSS COUNTRY SKIING

NORWEGIAN ORIGINS

For centuries in the snow-covered North, skis were required to chase game and gather firewood in winter time. With long distances between the small, isolated communities and hard, snowy winters, skiing also became important as means of keeping in social contact. The word "ski" is a Norwegian word which comes from the Old Norse word "skid", a split length of wood.

HOLMENKOLLEN SKI FESTIVAL

The famous Holmenkollen ski festival started in 1892 where the main attraction was the Nordic combined event. The festival proved popular and soon attracted skiers from Sweden and other neighbouring countries. In fact King Olav V of Norway was himself an able jumper and competed in the Holmenkollen Ski Festival in the 1920s.

NORDIC DOMINANCE

Nordic combined individual events have featured in every Games since the first Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix in 1924. Unsurprisingly, the sport has been dominated by the Norwegians, supported by the Finns. Indeed, it was not until 1960 that the Nordic grip on Olympic triumphs in this discipline was finally broken when West German Georg Thoma won the gold medal at Squaw Valley in 1960.

MEN'S EVENTS

INDIVIDUAL GUNDERSEN LARGE HILL/10KM, INDIVIDUAL GUNDERSEN NORMAL HILL/10KM,
TEAM GUNDERSEN LARGE HILL/4X5KM

11. SHORT TRACK



IN SHORT TRACK SPEED SKATING, ATHLETES COMPETE NOT AGAINST THE CLOCK, BUT AGAINST EACH OTHER. THIS INTRODUCES THE ELEMENTS OF STRATEGY, BRAVERY AND SKILL NEEDED FOR RACING.

NORTH AMERICAN ORIGIN

Short track (or indoor) speed skating began in Canada and the United States of America where they held mass start competitions on an oval track as early as 1905/06. The lack of 400m long tracks led many North American skaters to practice on ice rinks. However, practicing on a smaller track brought new challenges, like tighter turns and shorter straightaways which lead to different techniques in order to win on a shorter track. These countries began competing against each other on an annual basis. The sport's rise in popularity was partly thanks to the North American racing rules, which introduced a "pack" style of racing. Capitalising on this, the organisers of the 1932 Lake Placid Games, with the consent of the International Skating Union (ISU), agreed to follow these rules for the programme's speed skating events.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

Countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Belgium, France and Japan deserve a great deal of credit in the development of the sport since they participated in international open competitions before the sport was recognized by the International Skating Union. In 1967 the ISU declares Short Track Speed Skating an official sport but international worldwide competitions are not held until 1976. During this period of time countries kept competing amongst themselves.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

After having been a demonstration sport at the 1988 Games in Calgary, short track speed skating became part of the Olympic programme in Albertville in 1992, with two individual events and two relays. The discipline comprises men's and women's events. Since the 2006 Olympic Games in Turin, the programme of this discipline has included eight events. It quickly became popular with the public, who are thrilled to watch rapid races on tight tracks. The skaters race so closely to each other that collisions and falls are inevitable, which is why the walls of the speed skating oval are padded.

ASIAN EMERGENCE

In recent Games, China and Korea have emerged to challenge North American dominance in this event. Indeed at the 2006 Turin Games, it was South Korea who emerged as the nation to beat, winning an incredible six gold medals, and 10 medals in total.

MEN'S EVENTS

1000M, 1500M, 5000M RELAY, 500M

WOMEN'S EVENTS

1000M, 1500M, 3000M RELAY, 500M

12. SKELETON

SKELETON RACING INVOLVES PLUMMETING HEAD-FIRST DOWN A STEEP AND TREACHEROUS ICE TRACK ON A TINY SLED. IT IS CONSIDERED THE WORLD'S FIRST SLIDING SPORT.

THRILL-SEEKING TOURISTS

Sleighing is one of the oldest winter sports. Descriptions of the sport can be found in 16th-century literature, but as a racing sport it can be traced to the mid-19th century, when British tourists started sliding down snowbound roads in the Alps. British and American holidaymakers built the first toboggan run in Davos in 1882.

THE CRESTA RUN

Skeleton sled racing owes its entire early history to St Moritz and the famed Cresta Run. The sport developed in the Swiss resort town as a pursuit for the rich. E. F. Benson put it best when he wrote in 1913, "There is one Mecca, there is one St Peter's, and there is one Cresta."

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Men's skeleton made two early appearances on the Olympic programme at its "ancestral" home of St. Moritz in 1928 and 1948. It was then dropped until it reappeared as a men's and women's event at Salt Lake City in 2002.

13. SKI JUMPING

OVER THE PAST HUNDRED YEARS, SKI JUMPING HAS EVOLVED ENORMOUSLY WITH DIFFERENT JUMPING TECHNIQUES ALLOWING JUMPERS TO ACHIEVE EVER GREATER DISTANCES.

BEGINNINGS IN NORWAY

The origin of ski jumping can be traced to Ole Rye who jumped 9.5m in 1808. Norwegian Sondre Norheim is widely considered the father of modern ski jumping. In 1866 he won what has been described as the world's first ski jumping competition with prizes, held at Ofte, Høydalsmo, Norway.

EARLY PIONEERS

After World War I, Thulin Thams and Sigmund Ruud developed a new jumping style known as the Kongsberger Technique. This involved jumping with the upper body bent at the hips, a wide forward lean, and with arms extended at the front with the skis parallel to each other. Using this technique Sepp Bradl of Austria became the first to jump more than 100 metres when he jumped 101 metres in 1936.

FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

In the mid-1950s, Swiss jumper Andreas Daescher became the first jumper to hold the arms backwards close to the body with a more extreme forward lean. Then in 1985, Swedish jumper Jan Bokloev started spreading the tips of his skis into a “V” shape. Initially ridiculed, this technique proved so successful that by 1992 all Olympic medallists were using this style.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Ski jumping has been part of the Olympic Winter Games since the first Games in Chamonix Mont-Blanc in 1924. The normal hill competition was included on the Olympic programme for the 1964 Innsbruck Games. From 1988, the team event was added as a third competition.

MEN’S EVENTS

LARGE HILL INDIVIDUAL, NORMAL HILL INDIVIDUAL, TEAM

WOMEN’S EVENTS

NORMAL HILL INDIVIDUAL

14. SNOWBOARD



SNOWBOARDING COMBINES ELEMENTS OF SURFING, SKATEBOARDING, AND SKIING. IT MADE ITS OLYMPIC DEBUT AT THE 1998 NAGANO GAMES.

RECENT HISTORY

Snowboarding was developed in the United States in the 1960s as people across the country began to seek out new winter activities. Over the next decade, various pioneers boosted the production of boards and the sport began to gain crossover appeal. Surfers and skateboarders became involved, and by 1980, snowboarding was a nationwide activity.

MOUNTAIN CONFLICT

In the late 1970s snowboarders started to “invade” traditional ski resorts, but faced opposition from skiers who tried to exclude the snowboarders from “their” mountains. By the 1990s, however, almost all ski resorts had accepted snowboarding, and the resorts have found the snowboarders to be an excellent source of new revenue.

GETTING ORGANISED

Competition was the next logical step. The United States held its first national championships in 1982 and hosted the first World Championships in 1983. The International Snowboarding Federation (ISF) formed seven years later and the International Ski Federation (FIS) introduced snowboarding as a FIS discipline in 1994. This helped pave the way for snowboarding’s inclusion in the Olympic Winter Games.

OLYMPIC DEBUT

Men’s and women’s snowboarding made their Olympic debuts at the Nagano Games in 1998 with giant slalom and halfpipe competitions. The discipline proved an instant success and returned to Salt Lake City four years later with parallel giant slalom and halfpipe competitions. In Turin, snowboard cross also made its debut. In this event four riders race across a course studded with jumps, bumps and huge turns.

MEN'S EVENTS

BIG AIR, HALFPIPE, PARALLEL GIANT SLALOM, SLOPESTYLE, SNOWBOARD CROSS

WOMEN'S EVENTS

BIG AIR, HALFPIPE, PARALLEL GIANT SLALOM, SLOPESTYLE, SNOWBOARD CROSS

15. SPEED SKATING

SPEED SKATING BEGAN AS A RAPID FORM OF TRANSPORTATION ACROSS FROZEN LAKES AND RIVERS. IT MADE ITS DEBUT ON THE OLYMPIC PROGRAMME AT THE 1924 WINTER GAMES.

EARLY PIONEERS

The Dutch were arguably the earliest pioneers of skating. They began using canals to maintain communication by skating from village to village as far back as the 13th century. Skating eventually spread across the channel to England, and soon the first clubs and artificial rinks began to form. Passionate skaters included several kings of England, Marie Antoinette, Napoleon III and German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

EARLY COMPETITION

The first known skating competition is thought to have been held in the Netherlands in 1676. However, the first official speed skating events were not held until 1863 in Oslo, Norway. In 1889, the Netherlands hosted the first World Championships, bringing together Dutch, Russian, American and English teams.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Speed skating appeared for the first time in 1924 at the first Olympic Winter Games in Chamonix. Initially, only men were allowed to participate. It was only at the Lake Placid Games in 1932 that women were authorised to compete in speed skating, which was then only a demonstration sport. It was not until the 1960 Games in Squaw Valley that women's speed skating was officially included in the Olympic programme.

The events almost always follow the European system, which consists of skaters competing two-by-two. At the 1932 Olympic Games, the Americans organised American-style events, i.e. with a mass start. This decision brought about a boycott by many European competitors, which allowed the Americans to win the four gold medals. This system would give birth to short-track speed skating, which was added to the Olympic programme in Albertville in 1992.

MEN'S EVENTS

10000M, 1000M, 1500M, 5000M, 500M, MASS START, TEAM PURSUIT

WOMEN'S EVENTS

1000M, 1500M, 3000M, 5000M, 500M, MASS START, TEAM PURSUIT