

Olympic facts and figures

HISTORY

- The very first Games are generally agreed to have taken place in 776 BC, at Olympia in ancient Greece. Coroibus, a cook from Elis, won the only competition to be held – the stadion race, a race over about 190 meters, measured after the feet of Hercules. The word stadium is derived from this foot race.
- The Games were held every four years, and the period between two celebrations became known as an 'Olympiad'. The Greeks used Olympiads as one of the methods to count years.
- The concept of the Olympic Games was revived during the nineteenth century by a French nobleman, Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin. The first modern Olympic Games took place in Athens in 1896.
- The official Olympic motto is 'Citius, Altius, Fortius', a Latin phrase that means 'Swifter, Higher, Stronger'.
- London first hosted the Olympics Games in 1908, after the original choice of Rome had to be abandoned due to the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 1906. The athletic events took place in the first purpose-built Olympic Stadium, at White City in West London, which was erected in just ten months. Britain won a total of 145 medals during the Games.

THE OLYMPIANS

- Raymond Clarence Ewry (USA) holds the record for the most Gold medals won by an individual, claiming no fewer than ten between 1900 and 1908.
- Larissa Latynina (USSR) won a record 18 medals through her Olympic career from 1956 to 1964.
- The oldest ever medallist was Oscar Swahn (Sweden) in 1920, who was 72 when he won a Silver medal in shooting.
- Sir Steve Redgrave won Gold medals in rowing at five consecutive Olympic Games, from 1984 to 2000, making him Britain's greatest ever Olympian. Only four other athletes in Olympic history have equalled this feat.
- Tessa Sanderson made the most appearances at the Olympics by a British woman, competing six times between 1976 and 1996.

THE PARALYMPICS

- The Paralympic Games is a multi-sport games for elite athletes with a disability. It takes place once every four years in the same city and year as the Olympic Games. As such it is a true 'parallel' to the Olympic Games – hence the name.
- Dr Ludwig Guttman is considered the founder of the Paralympic Games. He was an eminent neurologist, based at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, who believed that sport could play a vital part in the rehabilitation of spinal-cord-injured Second World War veterans. In 1948 he set up competitions between other hospitals and clubs to coincide with the London Olympic Games.
- The Paralympic Movement has grown considerably over the years to include amputees, those with cerebral palsy, the blind or visually impaired and, since 1996, athletes with a learning disability.
- Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson is Britain's most distinguished Paralympian, winning four Golds for Britain in Barcelona 1992, one Gold and three Silvers in Atlanta 1996 and a further four Golds in Sydney 2000.
- Other British Paralympians of note include Chris Holmes, who won six swimming Golds in 1992, Simon Jackson and Deanna Coates, who both won three consecutive Golds, for judo and shooting respectively, from 1988 to 1996.

Sources

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THE SPECTATORS

- The Games were first shown on broadcast television in 1948, when only 50,000 households in Britain had televisions.
- Live international TV coverage began in Rome, 1960.
- The Sydney Olympics of 2000 set a new Olympic record for ticket sales, with more than 87% of available tickets sold across Sydney and interstate venues. This broke the previous record for ticket sales of more than 82%, which was set by the Atlanta Games in 1994.
- On average, European viewers each watched the Athens 2004 Olympics for a total of 14 hours.

THE IMPACT

- Montreal hosted the Games back in 1976, but the city's taxpayers are still paying for the event in 2006.
- The 1996 Games in Atlanta are estimated to have caused a 19% increase in local property prices. There was also a substantial increase in employment prior to the Games, with more than 90,000 new jobs created between 1993 and 1996.
- In 2000, Sydney surveyed its Olympic visitors and found that 28% would 'definitely' return in the next three years, whilst 32% said they would 'probably' return.
- Beijing is to enhance the ambience of the Olympics in 2008 by displaying and restoring its cultural heritage. This is intended to leave a lasting cultural legacy in China.
- It is estimated that for the London 2012 Olympics, there will be an increase in the visitor economy by £244 million in London and £518 million in the UK.

LONDON 2012

- Before the bid was won, it was estimated that around 68% of the UK population wanted the Olympics to come to Britain.
- The Mayor of London and the Government have pledged £2.4 billion to the Games.
- It is proposed that a ship, called 'Olympic FriendShip', will be launched at the Beijing Games in 2008, which will sail around the world before arriving in London to herald the 2012 Games.
- There will be a total of 9.6 million tickets on sale for the London 2012 Olympics.
- By 2013, the 3,600 homes in the Olympic Village will be put on the market for sale and the building of an additional 5,400 new homes will begin.
- LOCOG and volunteer organisations are aiming to recruit as many as 250,000 volunteers in the run-up to 2012.
- Many of the facilities established for the Games will be relocated to other parts of the UK subsequent to the events, including the swimming and training pools, arenas and sports equipment.

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