

At a Glance Article- March 2010
The Olympic Games- A Brief History

The Olympic Games that we enjoy so much today actually trace back over a couple thousand years, and have a deep history. The first Olympic Games of which there is record were held in 776 B.C., and consisted of one event, a foot race of about 200 yards held on a plain by the River of Alpheus just outside the little town of Olympia in Greece. It was from that date the Greeks began to keep their calendar by "Olympiads," the four year spans between the celebrations of the famous games. As the Olympic Games began to grow and there were many more games added to be played, the time period of the games lengthened as well, and soon became an event that lasted for four consecutive days.

The modern Olympic Games, which started in Athens in 1896, were then the largest sporting event ever held on an international level. With almost 250 athletes participating in these games, they quickly became popular around the world, and it was decided that the games would be held again, four years later, as the traditional games had been held. The second games were then held four years later in Paris, France, and became even more popular.

Today the Olympic Games have become one of the biggest sporting highlights across the world, with over 200 countries participating in the games. These games bring the people of various countries together in a way that nothing else has been able to do.

Interesting Olympic Facts

The winter Olympic Games were first held in 1924, beginning a tradition of holding them a few months earlier and in a different city than the summer Olympic Games. Beginning in 1994, the format of having both the summer and Winter Games in the same year changed. Summer and Winter Olympics now alternate every two years.

Women were first allowed to participate in 1900 at the second modern Olympic Games.

Because of World War I and World War II, there were no Olympic Games in 1916, 1940, or 1944.

The Olympic symbol is five interlocking circles colored blue, yellow, black, green and red, on a white background, representing the five continents. At least one of those colors appears in the national flag of every country.

The United States has won more medals (2,189) at the Summer Games than any other country.

The first Olympics covered by U.S. television were the 1960 Summer Games in Rome by CBS.

In 1908, the marathon standard had been set at exactly 26 miles. However, at the Olympic marathon in London, it was decided that the royal family needed a better view of the finish line so organizers added an extra 385 yards to the race so the finish line would be in front of the royal box. It's been that way ever since.

