

= 1896 Summer Olympics =

The 1896 Summer Olympics (Modern Greek : ??????? ?????????? ?????? 1896 , Therinoí Olympiakoí Agó ? nes 1896) , officially known as the Games of the I Olympiad , was a multi @-@ sport event held in Athens , Greece , from 6 to 15 April 1896 . It was the first international Olympic Games held in the modern era . Because Ancient Greece was the birthplace of the Olympic Games , Athens was considered to be an appropriate choice to stage the inaugural modern Games . It was unanimously chosen as the host city during a congress organised by Pierre de Coubertin , a French pedagogue and historian , in Paris , on 23 June 1894 . The International Olympic Committee (IOC) was also instituted during this congress .

Despite many obstacles and setbacks , the 1896 Olympics were regarded as a great success . The Games had the largest international participation of any sporting event to that date . The Panathenaic Stadium , the only Olympic stadium used in the 1800s , overflowed with the largest crowd ever to watch a sporting event . The highlight for the Greeks was the marathon victory by their compatriot Spyridon Louis . The most successful competitor was German wrestler and gymnast Carl Schuhmann , who won four events .

After the Games , Coubertin and the IOC were petitioned by several prominent figures , including Greece 's King George and some of the American competitors in Athens , to hold all the following Games in Athens . However , the 1900 Summer Olympics were already planned for Paris and , except for the Intercalated Games of 1906 , the Olympics did not return to Greece until the 2004 Summer Olympics , 108 years later .

= = Reviving the Games = =

During the 19th century , several small @-@ scale sports festivals across Europe were named after the Ancient Olympic Games . The 1870 Olympics at the Panathenaic stadium , which had been refurbished for the occasion , had an audience of 30 @,@ 000 people . Coubertin adopted Dr William Penny Brookes ' idea to establish a multi @-@ national and multi @-@ sport event ? the ancient games only allowed free male athletes of Greek origin to participate . In 1890 , Coubertin wrote an article in La Revue Athletique , which espoused the importance of Much Wenlock ? a rural market town in the English county of Shropshire . It was here that , in October 1850 , the local physician William Penny Brookes had founded the Wenlock Olympian Games , a festival of sports and recreations that included athletics and team sports , such as cricket , football and quoits . Coubertin also took inspiration from the earlier Greek games organised under the name of Olympics by businessman and philanthropist Evangelis Zappas in 1859 , 1870 and 1875 . The 1896 Athens Games was funded by the legacies of Evangelis Zappas and his cousin Konstantinos Zappas and by George Averoff who had been specifically requested by the Greek government , through crown prince Constantine , to sponsor the second refurbishment of the Panathenaic Stadium . This the Greek government did despite the fact that the cost of refurbishing the stadium in marble had already been funded in full by Evangelis Zappas forty years earlier .

With deep feeling towards Baron de Coubertin 's courteous petition , I send him and the members of the Congress , with my sincere thanks , my best wishes for the revival of the Olympic Games .

On 18 June 1894 , Coubertin organised a congress at the Sorbonne , Paris , to present his plans to representatives of sports societies from 11 countries . Following his proposal 's acceptance by the congress , a date for the first modern Olympic Games needed to be chosen . Coubertin suggested that the Games be held concurrently with the 1900 Universal Exposition of Paris . Concerned that a six @-@ year waiting period might lessen public interest , congress members opted instead to hold the inaugural Games in 1896 . With a date established , members of the congress turned their attention to the selection of a host city . It remains a mystery how Athens was finally chosen to host the inaugural Games . In the following years both Coubertin and Demetrius Vikelas would offer recollections of the selection process that contradicted the official minutes of the congress . Most accounts hold that several congressmen first proposed London as the location , but Coubertin dissented . After a brief discussion with Vikelas , who represented Greece , Coubertin suggested

Athens . Vikelas made the Athens proposal official on 23 June , and since Greece had been the original home of the Olympics , the congress unanimously approved the decision . Vikelas was then elected the first president of the newly established International Olympic Committee (IOC) .

= = Organization = =

News that the Olympic Games would return to Greece was well received by the Greek public , media , and royal family . According to Coubertin , " the Crown Prince Constantine learned with great pleasure that the Games will be inaugurated in Athens . " Coubertin went on to confirm that , " the King and the Crown Prince will confer their patronage on the holding of these games . " Constantine later conferred more than that ; he eagerly assumed the presidency of the 1896 organising committee .

However , the country had financial troubles and was in political turmoil . The job of prime minister alternated between Charilaos Trikoupis and Theodoros Deligiannis frequently during the last years of the 19th century . Because of this financial and political instability , both prime minister Trikoupis and Stephanos Dragoumis , the president of the Zappas Olympic Committee , which had attempted to organise a series of national Olympiads , believed that Greece could not host the event . In late 1894 , the organising committee under Stephanos Skouloudis presented a report that the cost of the Games would be three times higher than originally estimated by Coubertin . They concluded the Games could not be held , and offered their resignation . The total cost of the Games was 3 @, @ 740 @, @ 000 gold drachmas .

With the prospect of reviving the Olympic games very much in doubt , Coubertin and Vikelas commenced a campaign to keep the Olympic movement alive . Their efforts culminated on 7 January 1895 when Vikelas announced that crown prince Constantine would assume the presidency of the organising committee . His first responsibility was to raise the funds necessary to host the Games . He relied on the patriotism of the Greek people to motivate them to provide the required finances . Constantine 's enthusiasm sparked a wave of contributions from the Greek public . This grassroots effort raised 330 @, @ 000 drachmas . A special set of postage stamps were commissioned ; the sale of which raised 400 @, @ 000 drachmas . Ticket sales added 200 @, @ 000 drachmas . At the request of Constantine , businessman George Averoff agreed to pay for the restoration of the Panathenaic Stadium . Averoff would donate 920 @, @ 000 drachmas to this project . As a tribute to his generosity , a statue of Averoff was constructed and unveiled on 5 April 1896 outside the stadium . It stands there to this day .

Some of the athletes would take part in the Games because they happened to be in Athens at the time the Games were held , either on holiday or for work (e.g. , some of the British competitors worked for the British embassy) . A designated Olympic Village for the athletes did not appear until the 1932 Summer Olympics . Consequently , the athletes had to provide their own lodging .

The first regulation voted on by the new IOC in 1894 was to allow only amateur athletes to participate in the Olympic Games . The various contests were thus held under amateur regulations with the exception of fencing matches . The rules and regulations were not uniform , so the Organising Committee had to choose among the codes of the various national athletic associations . The jury , the referees and the game director bore the same names as in antiquity (Ephor , Helanodic and Alitarc) . Prince George acted as final referee ; according to Coubertin , " his presence gave weight and authority to the decisions of the ephors . "

= = Venues = =

= = Calendar = =

= = Opening ceremony = =

On 6 April (25 March according to the Julian calendar then in use in Greece) , the games of the First Olympiad were officially opened ; it was Easter Monday for both the Western and Eastern Christian Churches and the anniversary of Greece 's independence . The Panathenaic Stadium was filled with an estimated 80 @, @ 000 spectators , including King George I of Greece , his wife Olga , and their sons . Most of the competing athletes were aligned on the infield , grouped by nation . After a speech by the president of the organising committee , Crown Prince Constantine , his father officially opened the Games :

" I declare the opening of the first international Olympic Games in Athens . Long live the Nation . Long live the Greek people . "

Afterwards , nine bands and 150 choir singers performed an Olympic Hymn , composed by Spyridon Samaras , with words by poet Kostis Palamas . Thereafter , a variety of musical offerings provided the backgrounds to the Opening Ceremonies until 1960 , since which time the Samaras / Palamas composition has become the official Olympic Anthem (decision taken by the IOC Session in 1958) . Other elements of current Olympic opening ceremonies were initiated later : the Olympic flame was first lit in 1928 , the first athletes ' oath was sworn at the 1920 Summer Olympics , and the first officials ' oath was taken at the 1972 Olympic Games .

= = Events = =

At the 1894 Sorbonne congress , a large roster of sports were suggested for the program in Athens . The first official announcements regarding the sporting events to be held featured sports such as football and cricket , but these plans were never finalised , and these sports did not make the final list for the Games . Rowing and yachting were scheduled , but had to be cancelled due to poor weather on the planned day of competition . As a result , the 1896 Summer Olympics programme featured 9 sports encompassing 10 disciplines and 43 events . The number of events in each discipline is noted in parentheses .

= = = Athletics = = =

The athletics events had the most international field of any of the sports . The major highlight was the marathon , held for the first time in international competition . Spyridon Louis , a previously unrecognised water carrier , won the event to become the only Greek athletics champion and a national hero . Although Greece had been favoured to win the discus and the shot put , the best Greek athletes finished just behind the American Robert Garrett in both events .

No world records were set , as few top international competitors had elected to compete . In addition , the curves of the track were very tight , making fast times in the running events virtually impossible . Despite this , Thomas Burke , of the United States , won the 100 @-@ meter race in 12 @.@ 0 seconds and the 400 @-@ meter race in 54 @.@ 2 seconds . Burke was the only one who used the " crouch start " (putting his knee on soil) , confusing the jury . Eventually , he was allowed to start from this " uncomfortable position " .

Australian competitor Edwin Flack came to Athens to watch the games , but decided to compete in the athletics events . He won two races ? the 800 @-@ meter and the 1500 @-@ meter .

Chile claims one athlete , Luis Subercaseaux , competed for the nation at the 1896 Summer Olympics . This makes Chile one of the 14 nations to appear at the inaugural Summer Olympic Games . Subercaseaux 's results are not listed in the Official Report , though that Report typically includes only winners and Subercaseaux won no medals . Recently , a study commissioned to Chilean forensic police (PDI) decided (by studies of facial recognition) , that Subercaseaux would be the participant in a famous photo of 100 meter 's second series .

= = = Cycling = = =

The rules of the International Cycling Association were used for the cycling competitions . The track cycling events were held at the newly built Neo Phaliron Velodrome . Only one road event was held ,

a race from Athens to Marathon and back (87 kilometres) .

In the track events , the best cyclist was Frenchman Paul Masson , who won the one lap time trial , the sprint event , and the 10 @,@ 000 meters . In the 100 kilometres event , Masson entered as a pacemaker for his compatriot Léon Flameng . Flameng won the event , after a fall , and after stopping to wait for his Greek opponent Georgios Kolettis to fix a mechanical problem . The Austrian fencer Adolf Schmal won the 12 @-@ hour race , which was completed by only two cyclists , while the road race event was won by Aristidis Konstantinidis .

= = = Fencing = = =

The fencing events were held in the Zappeion , which , built with money Evangelis Zappas had given to revive the ancient Olympic Games , had never seen any athletic contests before . Unlike other sports (in which only amateurs were allowed to take part at the Olympics) , professionals were allowed to compete in fencing , though in a separate event . These professionals were considered gentlemen athletes , just as the amateurs .

Four events were scheduled , but the épée event was cancelled for unknown reasons . The foil event was won by a Frenchman , Eugène @-@ Henri Gravelotte , who beat his countryman , Henri Callot , in the final . The other two events , the sabre and the masters foil , were won by Greek fencers . Leonidas Pyrgos , who won the latter event , became the first Greek Olympic champion in the modern era .

= = = Gymnastics = = =

The gymnastics competition was carried out on the infield of the Panathinaiko Stadium . Germany had sent an 11 @-@ man team , which won five of the eight events , including both team events . In the team event on the horizontal bar , the German team was unopposed . Three Germans added individual titles : Hermann Weingärtner won the horizontal bar event , Alfred Flatow won the parallel bars ; and Carl Schuhmann , who also competed successfully in wrestling , won the vault . Louis Zutter , a Swiss gymnast , won the pommel horse , while Greeks Ioannis Mitropoulos and Nikolaos Andriakopoulos were victorious in the rings and rope climbing events , respectively .

= = = Sailing = = =

A regatta of sailing boats was on the program of the Games of the First Olympiad for 31 March 1896 . However this event had to be given up .

The Official English report states :

The Regatta could not take place because some special boats embarkation had not been provided for .

The German version gives a bit more clues :

Die Wettkämpfe im Segeln wurden vereitelt , da man weder bei uns die besonderen Boote dafür besass , noch fremde Bewerber sich gemeldet hatten .

So no boats available from Greece and no foreign entries . Thus that ends the first edition of Sailing at the Summer Olympics !

= = = Shooting = = =

Held at a range at Kallithea , the shooting competition consisted of five events ? two using a rifle and three with the pistol . The first event , the military rifle , was won by Pantelis Karasevdas , the only competitor to hit the target with all of his shots . The second event , for military pistols , was dominated by two American brothers : John and Sumner Paine became the first siblings to finish first and second in the same event . To avoid embarrassing their hosts , the brothers decided that only one of them would compete in the next pistol event , the free pistol . Sumner Paine won that event , thereby becoming the first relative of an Olympic champion to become Olympic champion

himself .

The Paine brothers did not compete in the 25 @-@ meter pistol event , as the event judges determined that their weapons were not of the required calibre . In their absence , Ioannis Phrangoudis won . The final event , the free rifle , began on the same day . However , the event could not be completed due to darkness and was finalised the next morning , when Georgios Orphanidis was crowned the champion .

= = = Swimming = = =

The swimming competition was held in the open sea because the organizers had refused to spend the money necessary for a specially constructed stadium . Nearly 20 @,@ 000 spectators lined the Bay of Zea off the Piraeus coast to watch the events . The water in the bay was cold , and the competitors suffered during their races . There were three open events (men 's 100 @-@ metre freestyle , men 's 500 @-@ metre freestyle , and men 's 1200 metre freestyle) , in addition to a special event open only to Greek sailors , all of which were held on the same day (11 April) .

For Alfréd Hajós of Hungary , this meant he could only compete in two of the events , as they were held too close together , which made it impossible for him to adequately recuperate . Nevertheless , he won the two events in which he swam , the 100 and 1200 meter freestyle . Hajós later became one of only two Olympians to win a medal in both the athletic and artistic competitions , when he won a silver medal for architecture in 1924 . The 500 @-@ meter freestyle was won by Austrian swimmer Paul Neumann , who defeated his opponents by more than a minute and a half .

= = = Tennis = = =

Although tennis was already a major sport by the end of the 19th century , none of the top players turned up for the tournament in Athens . The competition was held at the courts of the Athens Lawn Tennis Club , and the infield of the velodrome used for the cycling events . John Pius Boland , who won the event , had been entered in the competition by a fellow @-@ student of his at Oxford ; the Greek , Konstantinos Manos . As a member of the Athens Lawn Tennis sub @-@ committee , Manos had been trying , with the assistance of Boland , to recruit competitors for the Athens Games from among the sporting circles of Oxford University . In the first round , Boland defeated Friedrich Traun , a promising tennis player from Hamburg , who had been eliminated in the 100 @-@ meter sprint competition . Boland and Traun decided to team up for the doubles event , in which they reached the final and defeated their Greek and Egyptian opponents after losing the first set .

= = = Weightlifting = = =

The sport of weightlifting was still young in 1896 , and the rules differed from those in use today . Competitions were held outdoors , in the infield of the main stadium , and there were no weight limits . The first event was held in a style now known as the " clean and jerk " . Two competitors stood out : Scotsman Launceston Elliot and Viggo Jensen of Denmark . Both of them lifted the same weight ; but the jury , with Prince George as the chairman , ruled that Jensen had done so in a better style . The British delegation , unfamiliar with this tie @-@ breaking rule , lodged a protest . The lifters were eventually allowed to make further attempts , but neither lifter improved , and Jensen was declared the champion .

Elliot got his revenge in the one hand lift event , which was held immediately after the two @-@ handed one . Jensen had been slightly injured during his last two @-@ handed attempt , and was no match for Elliot , who won the competition easily . The Greek audience was charmed by the Scottish victor , whom they considered very attractive . A curious incident occurred during the weightlifting event : a servant was ordered to remove the weights , which appeared to be a difficult task for him . Prince George came to his assistance ; he picked up the weight and threw it a considerable distance with ease , to the delight of the crowd .

== Wrestling ==

No weight classes existed for the wrestling competition, held in the Panathenaic Stadium, which meant that there would only be one winner among competitors of all sizes. The rules used were similar to modern Greco-Roman wrestling, although there was no time limit, and not all leg holds were forbidden (in contrast to current rules).

Apart from the two Greek contestants, all the competitors had previously been active in other sports. Weightlifting champion Launceston Elliot faced gymnastics champion Carl Schuhmann. The latter won and advanced into the final, where he met Georgios Tsitas, who had previously defeated Stephanos Christopoulos. Darkness forced the final match to be suspended after 40 minutes; it was continued the following day, when Schuhmann needed only fifteen minutes to finish the bout.

== Closing ceremony ==

On the morning of Sunday 12 April (3 April, according to Julian calendar then used in Greece) King George the Great organised a banquet for officials and athletes (even though some competitions had not yet been held). During his speech, he made clear that, as far as he was concerned, the Olympics should be held in Athens permanently. The official closing ceremony was held the following Wednesday, after being postponed from Tuesday due to rain. Again the royal family attended the ceremony, which was opened by the national anthem of Greece and an ode composed in ancient Greek by George S. Robertson, a British athlete and scholar.

Afterwards, the king awarded prizes to the winners. Unlike today, the first-place winners received silver medals, an olive branch and a diploma. Athletes who placed second received copper medals, a branch of laurel and a diploma. Third-place winners did not receive a medal. Some winners also received additional prizes, such as Spyridon Louis, who received a cup from Michel Bréal, a friend of Coubertin, who had conceived the marathon event. Louis then led the medalists on a lap of honour around the stadium, while the Olympic Hymn was played again. The King then formally announced that the first Olympiad was at an end, and left the Stadium, while the band played the Greek national hymn and the crowd cheered.

Like the Greek king, many others supported the idea of holding the next Games in Athens; most of the American competitors signed a letter to the Crown Prince expressing this wish. Coubertin, however, was heavily opposed to this idea, as he envisioned international rotation as one of the cornerstones of the modern Olympics. According to his wish, the next Games were held in Paris, although they would be somewhat overshadowed by the concurrently held Universal Exposition.

== Participating nations ==

The concept of national teams was not a major part of the Olympic movement until the Intercalated Games 10 years later, though many sources list the nationality of competitors in 1896 and give medal counts. There are significant conflicts with regard to which nations competed. The International Olympic Committee gives a figure of 14, but does not list them. The following 14 are most likely the ones recognised by the IOC. Some sources list 12, excluding Chile and Bulgaria; others list 13, including those two but excluding Italy. Egypt is also sometimes included because of Dionysios Kasdaglis' participation. Belgium and Russia had entered the names of competitors, but withdrew.

== Medal count ==

Ten of the 14 participating nations earned medals, in addition to three medals won by mixed teams, i.e. teams made up of athletes from multiple nations. The United States won the most gold medals* (11), while host nation Greece won the most medals overall (46) as well as the most silver* (17) and bronze* (19) medals, finishing with one fewer gold medal than the United States.

During these inaugural Olympics, winners were given a silver medal, an olive branch, and a

diploma , while runners @-@ up received a copper medal , laurel branch , and diploma . The IOC has retroactively assigned gold , silver and bronze medals to the three best placed athletes in each event to comport with more recent traditions .

* As stated in the previous paragraph , it should be noted that the use of ' Gold medals ' did not occur until the 1904 St. Louis , Missouri Olympic Games to represent a First place finish . The ' Silver medal ' did not represent Second place until the 1904 Games . In 1896 , Silver was given to the winner . ' Bronze medals ' were not given for Third place initially . In 1896 , they were given to the Second place (" runner @-@ up ") finisher . In 1904 , they were first given as Third place medals (" second runner @-@ up ") .

To sort this table by nation , total medal count , or any other column , click on the icon next to the column title .

Key Host nation (Greece)

= = Female competitors = =

Women were not allowed to compete at the 1896 Summer Olympics , because de Coubertin felt that their inclusion would be " impractical , uninteresting , unaesthetic and incorrect " . However , one woman , Stamata Revithi , ran the marathon course on 11 April , the day after the men had run the official race . Although she was not allowed to enter the stadium at the end of her race , Revithi finished the marathon in about five hours and 30 minutes , and found witnesses to sign their names and verify the starting and finishing times . Revithi intended to present this documentation to the Hellenic Olympic Committee , hoping that they would recognise her achievement . Neither her reports nor documents from the Hellenic Olympic Committee have been discovered to provide corroboration .