

= 1948 Winter Olympics =

The 1948 Winter Olympics , officially known as the V Olympic Winter Games (French : Les V^es Jeux olympiques d'hiver) (German : Olympische Winterspiele 1948) (Italian : V Giochi olimpici invernali) (Romansh : Gieus olimpics d'enviern 1948) , was a winter multi @-@ sport event celebrated in 1948 in St. Moritz , Switzerland . The Games were the first to be celebrated after World War II ; it had been 12 years since the last Winter Games in 1936 . From the selection of a host city in a neutral country to the exclusion of Japan and Germany , the political atmosphere of the post @-@ war world was inescapable during the Games . The organizing committee faced several challenges due to the lack of financial and human resources consumed by the war . These were the first of two winter Olympic Games under the IOC presidency of Sigfrid Edström .

There were 28 nations that marched in the opening ceremonies on January 30 , 1948 . Nearly 670 athletes competed in 22 events in four sports . The Games also featured two demonstration sports : military patrol , which later became the biathlon , and winter pentathlon , which was discontinued after these Games . Notable performances were turned in by figure skaters Dick Button and Barbara Ann Scott and skier Henri Oreiller . Most of the athletic venues were already in existence from the first time St. Moritz hosted the Winter Games in 1928 . All of the venues were outdoors , which meant the Games were heavily dependent on favorable weather conditions .

= = Host city selection = =

The IOC selected St. Moritz to host the 1948 Games at the 39th general session in Lausanne , Switzerland , in September 1946 . The selection process consisted of two bids , and saw St. Moritz be selected ahead of Lake Placid , United States . St. Moritz was selected because it was located in Switzerland , which had remained neutral during the war , and also because it had already hosted a Winter Games in 1928 . This made the organization of the Games simpler and more economical . Despite the existence of many of the venues , it was still a difficult task to organize a Winter Olympic Games in less than 18 months .

= = Organizing = =

The Comité Olympique (CO) was composed of local dignitaries and members of the Swiss National Olympic Committee (COS) . They decided to separate into several sub @-@ committees responsible for various aspects of the Games . These committees included housing and maintenance , venue construction , finances , and media and advertising . The local committees worked very closely with the Swiss federal government and the IOC to ensure that the organization of the Games proceeded without hindrance . Since no athletes ' village existed from the previous Games , the athletes and officials were housed in hotels around the city . It was very important for the committees to draw upon their experiences from the 1928 Olympics . Their selection of locations for the various events was contingent on the weather conditions as all the events were held outdoors .

Over 800 people were involved in reporting the news of the Games to the world . Nearly 500 press credentials were issued by the Press Commission for the Games . Television would not make its Olympic debut until 1956 . The coverage of the 1948 Games was split between newspapers and radio broadcasts . The organizing committee had to provide technology , such as long distance telephone lines and telegraph services , to assist the press in communicating with their constituents .

Over 2 @, @ 200 people were needed to provide all the services for the press , officials and athletes at the Games . These services included sanitation , security , and care of the venues . Accommodating the influx of people into St. Moritz was a difficult task for the organizing committee . It was complicated by the mountainous region in which the community was situated . A massive project to improve the village 's transportation infrastructure had to be completed prior to the Games . This included building and widening roads for vehicular traffic . Several train stations were built to

accommodate the increased demands for public transit . They also had to increase the capacity of the city 's sewers . All of the projects had to be approved by the Swiss government , and justified by its impact on the success of the Games . To aid the organizing committee the IOC demanded that all participating nations provide lists of their athletes several months prior to the Games . Consequently , the Swiss knew exactly how many athletes and officials to plan for .

= = Politics = =

Since these Games were the first since World War II they were given the name " The Games of Renewal . " Japan and Germany were not invited to these Games because they were still ostracized by the international community for their role in World War II . Their absence was short @-@ lived though , as they returned to Olympic competition in 1952 . The Soviet Union did not send athletes to the St. Moritz Games of 1948 , but they did send ten delegates as observers of the Games to determine how successful the Soviet athletes would have been had they competed .

= = = Impact of World War II = = =

Sapporo , Japan had been the choice for the 1940 Winter Games . In 1938 the Japanese decided to decline the invitation to host the Games claiming that preparations for the Olympic Games were draining the country 's resources . The IOC turned to the host of the 1936 Games , Garmisch @-@ Partenkirchen , which would make it the only city to host consecutive Games . This became impractical when Germany invaded Poland on September 1 , 1939 ; subsequently Germany withdrew its bid to host the Games . Finland believed it could host the Games and extended an invitation to the IOC , but the Soviet Union 's invasion of Finland ended all hope of an Olympic Games in 1940 . The 1944 Winter Olympics had been awarded to Cortina d 'Ampezzo , Italy in 1939 . As the war continued , this proved to be impractical and the second consecutive olympiad passed without a celebration of the Games . The IOC was presented with two possible host cities for the first post @-@ war Games : Lake Placid , United States and St. Moritz , Switzerland . The IOC decided to award the Games to Switzerland , a neutral country , immediately following World War II , in order to avoid political posturing on the part of former combatants .

The impact of World War II was still being felt in 1948 . The lack of financial resources and human energy made the organization of the Games challenging . Athletes were also affected by a lack of resources . Many competitors arrived with little or no equipment . In one notable case , Norwegian skiers had to borrow skis from the American team in order to compete . There was also a lack of spectators due to travel restrictions and a shortage of finances in a European economy that was still recovering under the Marshall Plan .

= = Events = =

Medals were awarded in 22 events contested in 4 sports (9 disciplines) .

Bobsleigh

Bobsleigh (2) ()

Skeleton (1) ()

Ice hockey (1) ()

Skating

Figure skating (3) ()

Speed skating (4) ()

Skiing

Alpine skiing (6) ()

Nordic skiing ()

Cross @-@ country skiing (3) ()

Nordic combined (1) ()

Ski jumping (1) ()

There were also two demonstration sports , military patrol and the winter pentathlon .

== = Bobsled == =

Two sliding sports were contested at the 1948 Winter Games , the first was bobsled . A controversy erupted when it was alleged that the sleds of the United States team had been sabotaged . It was discovered that the steering wheels had been damaged . After news broke of the apparent improprieties a truck driver stepped forward and admitted to having accidentally backed into the shed housing the bobsleds . The accident however did not hinder the United States teams who won a bronze in the two @-@ man event and a gold and a bronze in the four @-@ man event . The Swiss two @-@ man teams placed first and second , which is the best possible results for the event since only two teams were allowed to enter . The driver of the first place team , Felix Endrich , beat his coach , the driver of the second place team , Fritz Feierabend .

== = Ice Hockey == =

The ice hockey tournament was won by Canada , with Czechoslovakia second and Switzerland third . This was the fifth Olympic gold medal for Canada in hockey . The only team to beat Canada since hockey was introduced at the 1920 Summer Olympics was Great Britain at the 1936 Winter Olympics . The tournament was almost cancelled when rival teams representing the United States arrived . An Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) team was supported by the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) , and an Amateur Hockey Association (AHA) team was supported by the Ligue Internationale de Hockey sur Glace (LIHG) . The International Olympic Committee ruled that neither team could compete , but the Swiss organizing committee allowed the AAU team to march in the opening ceremony , and the AHA team to play unofficially , without being eligible for medals .

== = Figure skating == =

Barbara Ann Scott became the first and only Canadian woman to win an Olympic gold medal in figure skating , when she won the competition at St. Moritz . Despite the distraction caused by a low @-@ flying airplane during her compulsory routine , she was able to muster the focus to place first entering the free skate . The ice had been shredded the night before the free skate by two ice hockey games (the ice resurfacer had not yet been invented) ; nonetheless she was able to adjust her routine to avoid the potholes and emerge victorious .

Eighteen @-@ year @-@ old American Dick Button completed the unprecedented North American sweep of the figure skating gold medals . He led the field after the compulsory skate and then won the gold medal by becoming the first person to ever complete a double axel in competition . Later in the 1952 Olympics , Dick Button would win gold a second time . His victory came at the expense of Swiss world champion Hans Gerschwiler who fell during the free skate . Despite the mishap Gershwiler would win the silver medal .

== = Speed skating == =

The speed skating competition was held on the same rink that had hosted the events in 1928 . At 1 @,@ 856 metres (6 @,@ 089 ft) above sea level , the speed skating competition was held at the second highest altitude in Olympic history , only Squaw Valley in 1960 was higher . The competition was dominated by the Scandinavian countries of Norway and Sweden who won nine out of the twelve possible medals . Scandinavians had done poor in speed skating events up until the 1948 Games . The reason for their success was that speed skating in Europe had come to a stand still during World War II . Only countries that were ancillary to the conflict had the resources to keep their speed skating programs intact . The 500 meter race was won by Finn Helgesen of Norway . There was a three @-@ way tie for second place between Norwegian Thomas Byberg and Americans Robert Fitzgerald and Kenneth Bartholomew . All three had finished in exactly 43 @.@ 2 seconds .

Swede Åke Seyffarth won a gold medal in the 10 @, @ 000 meter race and a silver medal in the 1 @, @ 500 meter race . The 5 @, @ 000 meter event was affected by weather . The twenty racers encountered both wind , sun , and snow in the course of the day 's competition . Finally long @-@ distance specialist Reidar Liaklev from Norway prevailed .

= = = Alpine skiing = = =

Alpine skiing made its Olympic debut at these Games . A few events had been held at the 1936 Games but the St. Moritz Games featured a full slate of three men 's and three women 's alpine events . Frenchman Henri Oreiller won a medal in all three Alpine events ; gold in the downhill and combined , and bronze in the slalom . He was one of only two athletes to win two gold medals at the 1948 Games , and he was also the only athlete to win three or more medals .

Austria dominated the women 's alpine events , winning five out of a possible nine medals . Trude Beiser was a double @-@ medal winner , earning gold in the combined event and silver in the downhill . She was not the only female skier to win two medals though , United States skier Gretchen Fraser won gold in the slalom and took silver behind Beiser in the combined . Austrian Erika Mahringer earned two medals by winning bronze medals in both the slalom and the combined .

= = = Cross @-@ country skiing = = =

In cross @-@ country skiing a total of 106 skiers from 15 nations competed in three events . The events were the 50 kilometer race , the 18 kilometer race and the 4 x 10 kilometer relay . There were no women 's events at the 1948 Games . Martin Lundström of Sweden was the other athlete to win two gold medals when he won the 18 kilometer race and participated on the winning cross @-@ country relay team . Overall Sweden won seven out of a possible fifteen medals in the Nordic events , including all three gold medals and a sweep of the 18 kilometer race . All fifteen medals were won by either Sweden , Norway , or Finland .

= = = Skeleton = = =

Skeleton made its second appearance at the Olympics during these Games . It debuted at the 1928 Winter Olympics also held in St. Moritz . Skeleton was a form of luge , which had originally appeared in the St. Moritz region at the end of the 19th century . American John Heaton won his second Olympic medal in the skeleton , he won his first 20 years earlier when he was 19 years old . Italian slider Nino Bibbia won the gold medal . It was the first of his 231 career wins on the Cresta Bobslid track . One of the curves at Cesana Pariol , where the bobsled , luge , and skeleton events took place at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin , was named after Bibbia .

= = = Nordic combined = = =

The Nordic combined event had been contested at each Winter Olympics since 1924 . Nordic combined required athletes to first compete in the open 18 kilometer cross @-@ country ski race alongside the other cross @-@ country competitors . Their times would be assigned a point value . Two days later the athletes would take two jumps off the ski jump hill . The jumps would be given a point value and the longest jump would be combined with their cross @-@ country time to create a score . Traditional Nordic combined power Norway was stunned at the 1948 Games when Finland 's Heikki Hasu became the first non @-@ Norwegian to win the event . In fact Norway did not even make the podium . Hasu 's teammate Martti Huhtala took the silver and Sven Israelsson from Sweden won the bronze .

= = = Ski jumping = = =

The Norwegians swept the ski jumping event . Birger Ruud had won the gold medal in the ski jumping event at both the 1932 and 1936 Winter Games . The twelve @-@ year hiatus due to World War II meant that Ruud was 36 years old in 1948 . He had retired from competition and was coaching the Norwegian team . However , when he arrived at the Games he decided to come out of retirement and compete one last time . Despite not having competed for several years he earned a silver medal . Norwegian Petter Hugsted won the gold and teammate Thorleif Schjelderup won the bronze .

= = = Demonstration sports = = =

Two demonstration sports were held at the 1948 Games . Military patrol had been a demonstration sport at the 1924 , 1928 , and 1936 Winter Olympic Games . It entailed a combination of cross @-@ country skiing and shooting at targets . Eventually the competition would be renamed Biathlon and was made an official Olympic medal sport at the 1960 Games in Squaw Valley , United States . Winter pentathlon involved five competitions : 10 kilometer cross @-@ country ski race , shooting , downhill skiing , fencing and horseback riding . This was the first and last time the event was held . Fourteen competitors took part in the event .

= = Calendar = =

All dates are in Central European Time (UTC + 1)

The opening ceremonies were held at 10 : 00 am on January 30 along with the initial hockey games and the first two runs of the two @-@ man bobsled . The closing ceremonies were held at 4 : 00 pm on February 8 . All of the medals were awarded at the closing ceremonies rather than immediately after the event as current tradition dictates .

= = Venues = =

The Stad Olympique (Olympic Stadium) hosted the opening and closing ceremonies . The stadium was also used for speed skating , the figure skating competition and the medal games for ice hockey . Most of the ice hockey games were held at the Suvretta and Kulm stadiums in St. Moritz . Bobsled was held at the St. Moritz @-@ Celerina Olympic Bobrun . Skeleton was contested on the Cresta Run track . Olympia Bob Run was built in 1897 and modernized for the 1948 Games while the Cresta Run was first constructed in 1885 . The ski jump competitions were held at Olympiaschanze ski jump hill in St. Moritz . It was built in 1927 for the 1928 Games , and remained in use until 2006 . The alpine events were held on ski @-@ runs in and around Piz Nair .

= = Participating nations = =

28 nations competed in St. Moritz , the same number as the previous Winter Games in 1936 . Chile , Denmark , Iceland , Korea , and Lebanon all made their Winter Olympic debut at these Games . Germany and Japan were not invited because of their involvement in World War II . Italy , despite being an Axis power originally , was allowed to send athletes after their defection to the Allies in 1943 . Estonia , Latvia and Lithuania had been annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 , and would not compete again as independent nations until 1992 . Argentina returned to the Winter Games after missing the 1932 and 1936 Games , and Australia and Luxembourg did not compete in 1948 , even though they had participated in 1936 .

= = Medal count = =

These are the top ten nations that won medals at the 1948 Winter Games .