I

The first Winter Olympics weren’t Winter Olympics. They were called the “International Winter Sports Week” and were a compromise of desires. Held in Chamonix, France they were supposed to be the overdue Winter sibling to the Summer Olympics. However it was only a year later that they were retrospectively knighted as Olympic Games.

Shortly after the first Summer Olympic Games were held in 1894, General Viktor Gustav Balck (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Viktor\_Balck) tried to add Winter sports to the schedule. Balck was aptly called the “father of Swedish sports” and although he was a charter member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and a good friend of Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games it took until the 1908 London games for some winter sports (mainly figure skating) to be added to the schedule.

However, Balck realized early on, that it would take a while for some proper Winter Olympics and hence went on to launch the “Nordic Games” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nordic\_Games) which were held from 1901 every 2-4 years until 1926. Ironically the Nordic Games verhinderten the introduction of Winter Olympics as proposals for stand-alone Winter Games were being rejected to maintain the integrity of the Nordic Games.

Then eventually, 1924 saw the IOC stage the “International Winter Sports Week” in Chamonix. Shy to actually call the 11 days “Olympics”, it was a test which was passed with flying flags. With 98 events staged in Sochi 2014, the 16 events of 1924 in just 5 sports sounds modest – but it certainly got the interest flowing at the time. The IOC renamed the “Week” to “Winter Olympics” in 1925 retroactively and the baby had its name.

Norway which was to rule the Winter Olympics a few more times in history made it home with the most medals – a total of 17. Great Britain came third before Austria and Switzerland. Yep.

II

St. Moritz in Switzerland hosted the 2nd Winter Games. Now officially called Olympics from the start. The weather god welcomed the whopping number of 464 athletes with a blizzard during the opening ceremony and send uninvited warm weather up to a sizzling 25 degrees Celsius during the following days of competition. Understandably disgruntled, the host Switzerland stayed home with only a single bronze medal – the lowest output ever generated by a host nation.

But the main elephant in the room of these early Olympics is the gender ratio. 26 women competed in St. Moritz – a number dwarfed by the 438 men. Let’s have a look at this ratio when moving up to the latest installment in Sochi 2014…

III

In 1932 the Winter Olympics travelled to the US for the first of four times. Lake Placid in the state of New York hosted the smallest Winter Olympics ever organized with only 252 athletes (just over 8% women, grumble…). 2 participants less than the first games in 1924. Most athletes just couldn’t afford the long trip to the US amidst the Great Depression and stayed at home – which was mainly Europe at the time (85% Europeans in 1928).

The games were supposed to be held in Wrightwood and Big Pines in California, which built the largest ski jump ever constructed, but warm weather conditions forced the whole show to travel east, which wasn’t exactly snowed under but offered enough snow and ice to stage the 3rd Winter Olympics.

A total of 14 events (we shall have 102 in Pyongchang 2018) were staged with a total of 7 Skating and 4 skiing events as well as 1 bobsleigh competition and one ice hockey tournament won by Canada after over time in an apparently rather tasty game.