

THE OLYMPIC GAMES (6)

The Intercalated (Olympic) Games of 1906 in Athens Greece



The partnership of World Expositions with the Olympic Games of 1900 and 1904 had been a disaster for the Olympic movement. Coubertin decided to support an "Intercalated Games" in Athens, Greece in 1906. Greece wanted the Olympics and the Olympic movement needed Greece and a successful Olympic competition. The concept was that Athens Greece would host an Intercalated Games two years preceding and following the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games would continue to be held every four years at different city sites throughout the five continents of the world. In 1906 twenty nations and close to nine hundred athletes participated in the Intercalated Games in Athens.

The thirty-five American athletes departing for Athens were funded for the first time by a special Olympic fund which was endorsed by President Teddy Roosevelt. On the second day of the Atlantic Ocean crossing, the *SS Barbarossa* endured a huge unpredicted sea wave which caused several deaths and seriously injured at least seven on-board American Olympians. Earth quakes and volcanic eruptions in Italy and along the Mediterranean Sea made it difficult to resupply the *SS Barbarossa* with the proper food supplies to feed athletes. In one Italian port, custom officials maintained that the US mineral water supplies were instead "gin" under a bottle label not seen before. The port officials seized the "mineral water" and then gallantly replaced the "gin" with a matching supply of light Italian wines! American Paul Pilgrim was not selected to the US Olympic team because of his inexperience but he was allowed to travel with the team by paying his own way. Pilgrim ended up winning the four hundred and eight hundred meter races. Peter O'Connor, an Irish man of American citizenship won the triple jump. After receiving his medal, he jumped from the award stand which was designed as a "Greek altar" and ran to climb a flag pole with a Union Jack hoisted atop. He replaced the Union Jack with an Irish flag. A few minutes later De Coubertin announced that the 1908 Olympics would be held in London, England. Had politics now become part of the Olympic Games?

The 1908 Olympic Games of London, England

The 1908 Olympic Games were scheduled for Rome, Italy. They were quickly moved to London, England because Mount Vesuvius had erupted and wreaked havoc on the Italian economy. The International Olympic Committee decided to use all British officials, referees and judges based on the premise that Great Britain was "the most accomplished sporting nation on earth." Constant rain marred the entire games. During the opening ceremonies at Shepherd's Bush stadium, the British failed to display the flags of Sweden and the United States. Numerous complaints about unfair officiating were lodged throughout the games and the British Olympic Committee eventually published a sixty page booklet called: "*Replies to Criticism of the Olympic Games.*" Irish athletes were disgruntled to be

competing under the Union Jack. The standard distance for the marathon race was officially established at twenty-six miles and three hundred and eighty-five yards inadvertently when the official course was lengthened so that the royal children of Edward VII and Queen Alexandria could watch the start of the marathon under their windows at Windsor Castle and the finish line of the marathon would be in front of the royal box in the stadium. Although the British won one hundred forty-five medals while the US won forty-seven, the US did not enter many events. Ray Ewry brought his total Olympic championships to ten in four Olympic Games including the Intercalated Games with victories in the standing broad jump, standing high jump and the standing triple jump. In the four hundred meter final, the British forcibly removed an American runner claiming he fouled a British runner. The finish tape was cut and a “no race” was declared even though US runners finished first and second. The British rescheduled a re-run in the four hundred meters. When the US refused to race again, the British runner ran by himself and “won” his medal. The IOC decided to use impartial officials for all future Olympic Games!

The 1912 Olympic Games of Stockholm, Sweden

The 1912 Olympics were a breath of fresh air for the Olympic movement. King Gustav V hosted a wonderful Olympics featuring over twenty-five hundred athletes from twenty-six nations. Electronic scoring was used for the first time. The competition featured three great athletes: Jim Thorpe of the US in Athletics (*Pentathlon and Decathlon*), Hannes Kolehmainen of Finland in distance running (*5,000 meters, 10,000 meters and cross country*) and Duke Kahanamoku of the US in swimming (*one hundred meters*). Other US Olympians of note include General George S. Patton Jr. (*“Old blood and Guts”*) who competed in the modern pentathlon finishing fifth and Avery Brundage, the future International Olympic Committee President, who competed in the modern pentathlon and decathlon. A well-planned stadium, great spectator attendance and marvelous displays of gymnastics exhibitions made the 1912 Olympic Games a huge success. During the final banquet for the officials and competitors, Coubertin made a speech hoping the next Olympiad in Berlin would be celebrated with concord. The next Olympic Games were canceled due to outbreak of World War I!

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