

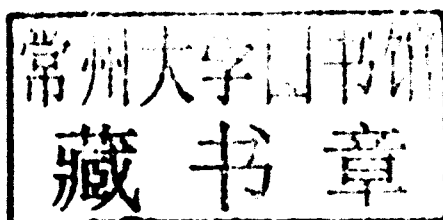
# UNDERSTANDING THE **OLYMPICS**



JOHN HORNE AND GARRY WHANNEL

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JOHN HORNE AND GARRY WHANNEL



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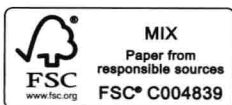
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# UNDERSTANDING THE OLYMPICS

The Olympic Games are unquestionably the greatest sporting event on earth, with television audiences measured in billions of viewers. By what process did the Olympics evolve into this multi-national phenomenon? How can an understanding of the Olympic Games help us to better understand international sport and society? And what will be the true impact and legacy of the London Olympics in 2012?

*Understanding the Olympics* answers all of these questions, and more, by exploring the full social, cultural, political, historical and economic context to the Olympic Games. It traces the history of the Olympic movement from its origins in ancient Greece, through its revival in the nineteenth century, to the modern mega-event of today. The book introduces the reader to all of the key themes in contemporary Olympic Studies, including:

- Olympic politics
- nationalism and internationalism
- access and equity
- festival and spectacle
- urban development
- political economy
- processes of commercialisation
- the Olympics and the media
- Olympic futures.

Written to engage and inform, the book includes illustrations, information boxes, chronologies and glossaries. No other book offers such a comprehensive and thoughtful introduction to the Olympic Games and therefore this is essential reading for anyone with an interest in the Olympics or the wider relationship between sport and society.

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### **Also by the authors**

By both authors with Alan Tomlinson

*Understanding Sport: An Introduction to the Sociological and Cultural Analysis of Sport*, London: E&FN Spon, 1999

By John Horne

*Sport in Consumer Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006

Edited by John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter

*Sports Mega-Events: Social Scientific Analyses of a Global Phenomenon*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2006

*Football Goes East: The People's Game in China, Japan and Korea*, London: Routledge, 2004

*Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup*, London: Routledge, 2002

By Garry Whannel

*Culture, Politics and Sport: Blowing the Whistle Revisited*, London: Routledge, 2008

*Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities*, London: Routledge, 2002

*Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation*, London: Routledge, 1992

## PREFACE

Most books on the Olympics will feature accounts of the great moments and stars, repeating oft-told tales of Olympic mythology. Our book offers an understanding of the Olympic movement in its broader social and historical context. It provides ways of understanding the politics, the economics and the cultures within which the Olympic Games was forged and within which it grew to become the pre-eminent mega-event. We hope it will answer the questions that someone who wants to understand the Olympic Games will ask. That we are both from London and that the next Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games are to be held there is one reason, but not the only one, why we have collaborated in writing this book. As social and cultural analysts we have been observing and commenting on sporting cultures for around 30 years, and we wanted to explore the continuing fascination with the Olympic Games – neither as a celebration nor as a condemnation, but as a critical reflection. In particular we wanted to examine aspects of the Games that, we suspect, many other books will neglect.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part, 'The Olympics and London', provides answers to three broad questions. What are the main elements in the story behind London winning the right to host the 2012 Olympics? What is the International Olympics Committee (IOC), the organization that owns and protects the contemporary Olympic 'brand'? What are the main economic forces that have led to the television- and sponsor-driven commercialisation of sport, including the Olympic Games, in the past 30 years?

Chapter 1 examines the development of the London bid since 2002 and events since the Olympic Games were awarded to London in 2005. It outlines current political tensions around costs, security and legacy. It analyses the structure of the bid, and the relationship between the Games, urban development and commerce. It examines the London Olympic Games in the context of the three previous failed bids by Britain to stage the Games since 1980. It places the successful London bid in the context of the complex political relations between the government, the London Mayor's Office, the bidding committee and subsequently the organising committee.

Chapter 2 examines the nature of the IOC, and its relationship to the other components of international sport; the nature of the bidding process; and the political economy of the Olympic movement and the sports business. It places London's Games in relation to the structure of the Olympic movement, and the ways in which it relates to the various institutions of international sport. It provides a schematic economic overview of the finances of the Olympic movement. And it analyses the peculiarly contradictory nature of the IOC in terms

of its historical formation, its awkward adjustments to modernity and enterprise, and its extraordinary commercial success with one of the world's strongest brands.

Chapter 3 takes a closer look at the ways in which television has transformed the Olympics and how sponsorship became organised on a global scale. It outlines the processes by which sport's governing bodies were forced to adapt to survive. It analyses the place sport occupies within the world of television, and the significance of the role television played in creating global audiences for the Olympic Games. It traces the development of a more entrepreneurial exploitation of sponsorship by the Olympic movement. And it examines the ways in which the IOC is now attempting to cope with the challenges posed by new media.

The second part of the book, 'From out of the past', provides a look back into the past to examine the historical context of the emergence and establishment of the modern Olympic Games. The two chapters in this part seek to explain where the Olympic Games came from and how they developed during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century.

Chapter 4 discusses the ways in which the ancient games were mythologized, in forms that provided the underpinnings of modern Olympism. It reviews attempts to establish modern multi-sport events (e.g. Penny Brookes's Much Wenlock Olympics, the Cotswold games) of which De Coubertin's was only one. It traces the ways in which mythologies of ancient Greece, the English public school system of the mid-nineteenth century, the post-1870 crisis of France, and utopian internationalism all contributed to the formation of modern Olympism. It examines the various religious underpinnings of the modern Olympic 'faith'.

Chapter 5 examines the way the early Olympic Games as a cultural form were closely linked to world's fairs and how only in the television era was the Olympics able to become a fully fledged mega-event. This chapter traces that development, examining how the Olympic Games retained elements of their origins whilst they altered in relation to other significant political and economic and cultural processes.

The third part of the book, 'The spectacle of modernity: towards a postmodern world?', is the longest. It outlines the political, economic and cultural processes that have shaped the current state of the Olympic Games. Although the Games were conceived partly as an internationalist meeting ground, from the start the tensions and rivalries between nations disrupted the aspirations of Olympism. The 1936 Games became notorious as the 'Nazi' Olympics and in the Cold War era the Games became a symbolic battleground between East and West, communism and capitalism. Chapter 6 examines the inherent contradictions of national organisation, the Cold War era, and the rise of individualism as impacting on the Olympic Games. It outlines the development and management of political tensions by the Olympic movement and the relation between the Olympic movement and great power diplomacy.

In the period between 1968 and 1984 the Games became the site of more focused symbolic political contestation in which the boycott became a significant political weapon. Chapter 7 examines the mythologising of key moments, such as the 'Black Power' salutes in the 1968 Games in Mexico, and raises questions about the process whereby symbolic politics have been marginalised in more recent Games. It examines the extent to which the Beijing Olympics marked a break with this more recent depoliticisation and assesses the future political terrain that the Olympic movement will be negotiating. And it outlines the ways in which, within the

politics of bidding and hosting the games, boosters and sceptics have to articulate and negotiate issues of risk and global geopolitics.

Chapter 8 interrogates 'Olympism' in terms of concepts of festivity, spectacle and the carnivalesque, returning to a question posed by one of the authors in the 1980s: Can an event succeed in being both a spectacle and a festival (Whannel 1984)? It examines the rather problematic relation of the needs of festivity and security, the patchy history of the Cultural Olympiad, and the tendency for the noble aspirations of bidding cities to fade before the Games arrive. It concludes with a detailed examination of a striking feature of the 2012 Olympics – the vast shopping mall that occupies the space between the two stations and the Olympic Park itself. This chapter raises questions about public space, popular cultural pleasures, and Olympic legacies.

Chapter 9, the penultimate chapter, examines issues of access and equity – social class and the exclusion of professionals, the treatment of women, the composition of the IOC, race and racism, and disability sport. It examines the contrast between the rhetoric and the practice of Olympism. Women were excluded entirely from early Games, and only since the 1980s has the full programme of events begun to be opened to women. The commitment to amateurism, only abandoned since the early 1980s, gave the Games a distinct class character. The Paralympic Games, even after a long struggle for inclusion, are still staged as a separate event. The governance of the Olympics is still dominated by the European aristocracy. Major corporations, most notably NBC and its parent General Electric, are in a position to exercise a shaping influence on the development of the Games. This chapter asks the question 'Who are the games for?'

The final chapter, Chapter 10, examines urban development, tourism and the growth of concerns for establishing a sustainable legacy from hosting an Olympic Games. The escalation in the costs of staging the Games requires justification. Since Barcelona in 1992, bids have emphasised the marketing of a city as a tourist destination. But cities like London and Paris do not need the Games to attract tourists; so urban development and legacy have also become familiar terms in the bidding context. Winning the Games functions to enable a whole range of giant infrastructural projects that would otherwise struggle to win support. The Games stimulate the dreams of architects and mayors, builders and planners, leaders and entrepreneurs. 'Legacy' has become justification in the rhetoric of sports mega-event speak.

John Horne and Garry Whannel  
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Conversations, interviews and chance encounters with many people over many years have fed Garry's continuing fascination with the Olympic Games. The list includes such diverse figures as Seb Coe, Sam Ramsamy, Ron Pickering, Adrian Metcalfe, John Rodda, Alec Gilady, Bruce Kidd, Keith Connor, Fanny Blankers-Koen, Wojciech Liponski, Nicos Filaretos, Michele Verdier and David Bedford. His own work on sport, culture and politics would not have been possible without fellow founders of the Centre for Sport Development Research, Jennifer Hargreaves and Ian McDonald. The work of Alina Bernstein in establishing the Media and Sport Section of the IAMCR (International Association for Media and Communication Research) has greatly strengthened our various networks. He owes thanks also to others with whom he has discussed sport, culture and politics – Joe Maguire, Toby Miller, Larry Wenner, Belinda Wheaton and Tony Veal.

In a list like this there are inevitably omissions – apologies to those people we should have included. Hopefully see you in the second edition!

## ABBREVIATIONS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| AAA   | Amateur Athletic Association  |
| AAC   | Amateur Athletic Club   |
| AIOWF | Association of the International Olympic Winter Sports Federations    |
| ANOC  | Association of National Olympic Committees                            |
| ANOCA | Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa                  |
| ASOIF | Association of Summer Olympic International Federations               |
| BOA   | British Olympic Association   |
| CAS   | Court of Arbitration for Sport  |
| CCTV  | China Central Television  |
| cctv  | closed circuit television   |
| CSL   | Commission for a Sustainable London 2012                              |
| DCMS  | Department of Culture, Media and Sport                                |
| DEFRA | Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs                |
| EBU   | European Broadcasting Union   |
| EOC   | The European Olympic Committees                                       |
| FIFA  | Fédération Internationale de Football Association                     |
| GFP   | Games Foundation Place  |
| GGs   | German Gymnastic Society  |
| GLA   | Greater London Authority  |
| GLC   | Greater London Council  |
| GOE   | Government Olympic Executive (within DCMS)                            |
| IAAF  | International Amateur Athletic Federation                             |
| IF    | International Federation  |
| ILTF  | International Lawn Tennis Federation                                  |
| IOA   | International Olympic Academy   |
| IOC   | International Olympic Committee                                       |
| IPC   | International Paralympic Committee                                    |
| LDA   | London Development Agency   |
| LEST  | London Employment and Skills Taskforce                                |
| LOCOG | London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games |
| NEF   | New Economics Foundation  |
| NOC   | National Olympic Committee  |
| OB    | Olympic Board   |
| OBsg  | Olympic Board Steering Group  |

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| OC     | Olympic Charter                                     |
| OCA    | Olympic Council of Asia                             |
| OCOG   | Organising Committee of the Olympic Games           |
| ODA    | Olympic Delivery Authority                          |
| OGKS   | Olympic Games Knowledge Services                    |
| OLMF   | Olympic Legacy Masterplan Framework                 |
| ONOC   | Oceania National Olympic Committees                 |
| OPSU   | Olympic Programme Support Unit                      |
| PASO   | Pan-American Sports Organisation                    |
| PRC    | People's Republic of China                          |
| PSA    | Public Service Agreement                            |
| RSI    | Red Sports International                            |
| SANOC  | South African National Olympic Committee            |
| SANROC | South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee          |
| SCSA   | Supreme Council for Sport in Africa                 |
| TCC    | transnational capitalist class                      |
| TOP    | The Olympic Programme                               |
| USFSA  | Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques |
| USSR   | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics                 |
| WADA   | World Anti-Doping Agency                            |

## TIMELINE

A selective timeline of the modern Summer and Winter Olympic Games

| <i>Year</i>       | <i>Number</i> | <i>Host cities for Summer and Winter (W) Olympics</i> | <i>Continent</i>     | <i>Olympic President</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|---|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1896              | I             | Athens  | Europe               | Demetrias Vikelas        |
| 1900              | II            | Paris   | Europe               | Pierre De Coubertin      |
| 1904              | III           | St Louis  | N. America           | Coubertin                |
| 1906 <sup>1</sup> |               | Athens  | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1908              | IV            | London  | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1912              | V             | Stockholm   | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1916 <sup>2</sup> | VI            | Berlin  | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1920              | VII           | Antwerp   | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1924              | VIII          | Paris / Chamonix (W)                                  | Europe               | Coubertin                |
| 1928              | IX            | Amsterdam / St Moritz (W)                             | Europe               | Henri de Baillet-Latour  |
| 1932              | X             | Los Angeles / Lake Placid (W)                         | N. America           | Baillet-Latour           |
| 1936              | XI            | Berlin / Garmisch-Partenkirchen (W)                   | Europe               | Baillet-Latour           |
| 1940 <sup>3</sup> | XII           | Tokyo; Helsinki / Sapporo; Garmisch-Partenkirchen (W) | E. Asia / Europe     | Baillet-Latour           |
| 1944 <sup>3</sup> | XIII          | London / Cortina d'Ampezzo (W)                        | Europe               | J. Sigfrid Edstrom       |
| 1948              | XIV           | London / St Moritz (W)                                | Europe               | Edstrom                  |
| 1952              | XV            | Helsinki / Oslo (W)                                   | Europe               | Edstrom                  |
| 1956              | XVI           | Melbourne <sup>4</sup> / Cortina d'Ampezzo (W)        | Australasia / Europe | Avery Brundage           |
| 1960              | XVII          | Rome / Squaw Valley (W)                               | Europe / N. America  | Brundage                 |
| 1964              | XVIII         | Tokyo / Innsbruck (W)                                 | E. Asia / Europe     | Brundage                 |
| 1968              | XIX           | Mexico City / Grenoble (W)                            | N. America / Europe  | Brundage                 |

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Number</i> | <i>Host cities for Summer and Winter (W) Olympics</i>  | <i>Continent</i>     | <i>Olympic President</i> |
|-------------|---------------|--|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1972        | XX            | Munich / Sapporo (W)   | Europe / E. Asia     | Brundage                 |
| 1976        | XXI           | Montreal / Denver; Innsbruck (W) <sup>5</sup>  | N. America / Europe  | Lord Killanin            |
| 1980        | XXII          | Moscow / Lake Placid (W)   | Europe / N. America  | Killanin                 |
| 1984        | XXIII         | Los Angeles / Sarajevo (W)   | N. America / Europe  | Juan Antonio Samaranch   |
| 1988        | XXIV          | Seoul / Calgary (W)  | E. Asia / N. America | Samaranch                |
| 1992        | XXV           | Barcelona / Albertville (W)  | Europe               | Samaranch                |
| 1994        |               | Lillehammer <sup>6</sup> (W)   | Europe               | Samaranch                |
| 1996        | XXVI          | Atlanta  | N. America           | Samaranch                |
| 1998        |               | Nagano (W)   | E. Asia              | Samaranch                |
| 2000        | XXVII         | Sydney   | Australasia          | Samaranch                |
| 2002        |               | Salt Lake City (W)   | N. America           | Samaranch                |
| 2004        | XXVIII        | Athens   | Europe               | Jacques Rogge            |
| 2006        |               | Torino (W)   | Europe               | Rogge                    |
| 2008        | XXIX          | Beijing  | E. Asia              | Rogge                    |
| 2010        |               | Vancouver-Whistler (W)   | N. America           | Rogge                    |
| 2012        | XXX           | London   | Europe               | Rogge <sup>7</sup>       |
| 2014        |               | Sochi (W)  | Europe               | ?                        |
| 2016        | XXXI          | Rio de Janeiro   | S. America           | ?                        |
| 2018        |               | Annecy, Munich or Pyeongchang (W).<br>To be decided at the IOC Session in Durban, July 2011. | Europe or E. Asia    | ?                        |
| 2020        | XXXII         | To be decided at the IOC Session in Buenos Aires, July 2013.                                 | ?                    | ?                        |

1 This event celebrated the tenth anniversary of the first modern Games; whilst officially intercalated by the IOC, it is not numbered as an Olympic Games.

2 The VI Games (scheduled for Berlin) was not held due to the First World War, but the IOC officially counts it.

3 The XII and XIII Summer Olympic Games (scheduled respectively for Tokyo, then Helsinki before finally being called off in May 1940, and London) were not held due to the Second World War, but are officially counted by the IOC. The Winter Olympics in 1940 scheduled for Sapporo were relocated to Garmisch-Partenkirchen even after the German invasion of Poland in September 1939 before finally being called off.

4 Because of Australian quarantine laws, the equestrian events were held in Stockholm, Sweden.

5 Awarded to Denver in Colorado, the Winter Olympics were transferred to Innsbruck when Colorado residents rejected the hosting decision.

6 The IOC decided in 1986 to reschedule the Summer and Winter Games, so a new four-year cycle for the Winter Games began in 1994 with the Summer and Winter Olympics staggered two years apart.

7 Re-elected for a third four-year term, Rogge will have to stand down in 2013.

Source: adapted from Chappelet and Kubler-Mabbott (2008: 23); Greenberg (1987: 9); Hampton (2008: 20–22); Toohey and Veal (2007: 49, 199); IOC (2010).

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