



Encyclopedia of the Modern Olympic Movement

Edited by John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE MODERN OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

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PREFACE

John E. Findling and
Kimberly D. Pelle

The *Encyclopedia of the Modern Olympic Movement* is a revised and expanded edition of our 1996 book, *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*. In this new edition, we have made a number of changes and additions to make it an even more useful reference book for students and general readers with an interest in the Olympic movement. We have updated most of the articles, both textually and bibliographically, and have asked a number of additional specialists to write new entries on some of the Summer and Winter Games. In addition, we have added new essays on the forerunners of both the Summer and Winter Games, on the Olympics and television, and on electronic sources for Olympic Games research. Finally, we have brought the history of the Olympic movement forward to include essays on the completed Nagano, Sydney, and Salt Lake City Games, and on the planned Games in Athens, Torino, Beijing, and Vancouver.

Many reference books have been published about the Olympic Games, but virtually all of them emphasize the athletic achievements of top performers at the Games: the medal winners, the world record times, distances, and weights, and the nations whose athletes have performed the best. Like the earlier edition, this book deals instead with the historical context in which the modern Olympic Games have taken place. The entries emphasize such matters as site selection and development, political questions or controversies, collateral events, programmatic changes, and political and/or economic consequences, while keeping discussions of winners and losers to a minimum. Each entry also includes a substantial bibliographical essay for readers interested in the best primary and secondary sources on each Game, and the book concludes with an extensive general bibliography, which covers works of a topical or biographical nature and works that touch on several different Games. A number of appendixes include essays covering the International Olympic Committee and its eight presidents, the U.S. Olympic Committee, and Olympic feature films.

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We are also grateful to many individuals who helped us find much of the information that is in this book. Maynard Brichford and his staff at the University of Illinois archives facilitated our trip into the massive Avery Brundage collection. Gisela Terrell introduced us to the Olympic material at the National Track and Field Hall of Fame Historical Research Library at Butler University in Indianapolis. Cindy Slater of the U.S. Olympic Committee provided a careful description of that organization's archival holdings, as did Wayne Wilson of the Amateur Athletic Foundation in Los Angeles. Max Howell of the University of Queensland put us in touch with various Australian sport history archives and libraries, and Greg Blood and Melissa Petherbridge graciously responded to our requests for information. We are grateful to the staffs of the Centre for Olympic Studies and the main library at the University of Western Ontario in London for making sure we saw all of their holdings.

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Finally, we wish to thank the staffs of the Office of Admissions and the School of Social Sciences at Indiana University Southeast, our coworkers, who were always sympathetic, and all of our authors, who collectively made this book possible.

*John E. Findling
Kimberly D. Pelle*

INTRODUCTION

John A. Daly

Within the Olympic idea there inevitably develops [a] . . . conflict of the past with the future and of reality with the ideal.

—Carl Diem

The Olympic Games are the foremost sporting event in the world, attracting young men and women to compete together in a spirit of honor and fellowship. Athletes consider the Games to be special because of the idealism attached to them and the moral code that is demanded of them as competitors. These qualities make them different from world championships, though both events seek to discover and acclaim the best in their field of endeavor. The claim of Pierre de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympic Games, that it is as important to take part as it is to win and that the athletes should compete in an honorable gathering respecting the rules of sport and the efforts of others, is more than a popular cliché; it is a heroic ideal accepted by most Olympians. Indeed it is this specialness of the event that provides much of its public appeal and has guaranteed its growth from a quaint idea of the 1890s to a major world event every four years. John MacAloon, writing of Coubertin and the origins of the modern Olympic Games, suggested that the Games “have grown from a fin-de-siècle curiosity of regional interest to an international cultural [and sporting] performance of global proportion.”

The first “Games of the modern era,” those held in Athens in 1896, were contested by only 300 athletes from 11 countries. In contrast, the Olympic Games in Sydney in the year 2000 attracted 10,000 athletes from nearly 200 countries. Some 15,000 media representatives went to Australia to cover the Games, which were viewed on television by well over half the world’s population. Television rights to the Sydney Olympics cost more than \$1 billion, and the estimated cost of the Games was more than \$3 billion. The Olympic Games have become, in a century, “the Mount Everest of sport,” as Olympic historian John Lucas describes them.

THE IDEAL VERSUS THE REALITY

Coubertin believed that the Games would encourage a community among athletes that would overshadow their national differences:

To ask the peoples of the world to love one another . . . is childishness. [But] to ask them to respect one another is not in the least utopian. [However] in order to respect one another it is first necessary to know one another . . . through sport.

The Games, he argued, would also be a display of physical and moral excellence that would be an inspiration to the young and aspiring. The fact that the Olympic Games are of such importance would indicate that Coubertin was successful.

The twentieth-century growth and conduct of the Olympic Games, however, has not been without criticism. Indeed the Games have been criticized from the very beginning. A colleague (but later antagonist) of Coubertin, Georges Herbert, suggested in a letter in 1911 to the *renovateur* of the Games that he was “deluding” himself “as to their importance.” They are, he asserted, “exclusively . . . [an] exhibition of international athletes”—nothing more, that is, than another international contest. Herbert argued that there was nothing educational about them, nothing of a higher moral order that would appeal to the general populace, as Coubertin had claimed. John Lucas quite rightly adjudges that by 1911, the Games had “ceased to be ‘games’ or an ideal place in which to ‘play.’” Nevertheless, they were seen still as “arenas of honor”; Herbert was incorrect in his assessment that they would not appeal to the general public. He wrote his letter to Coubertin on the eve of the 1912 Games in Stockholm, where more than 2,500 athletes representing 28 countries competed. If any further evidence of their appeal was needed, the resumption of the Olympics after the Great War (1914–18) attested to their resilience and perceived significance.

Their significance, of course, was viewed differently depending on whether one was an athlete or a politician. The 1936 Games in Berlin confirmed the political value of the Olympics, but they were not the first to be used in this way. Excellence in both organization and athletic performance had become a measure of national status in the Olympic Games conducted in Amsterdam (1928) and Los Angeles (1932), as well as Berlin. R. M. Goodhue is correct in his assertion that “one cannot detach 1936 from the previous Olympic Games. [These Games] were not an aberration. The conditions that made 1936 possible were apparent in the development of the Games from 1900 to 1932.”

Despite the significance of the Games, however, to those who would use them to confirm their identity or indicate their development, athletes have persisted in viewing them in the idealistic light of their founder. They were arenas of honor, contests with dignity. Without really being aware of it, the athletes of the twentieth century endorsed the values of the classical era. The Greeks called their games *agones*, from which our word *agony* stems. It is the anguish of the struggle that reveals the essence of the person in the sporting contest.

Still, despite the value of the Games to contemporary athletes and their appeal to those who would witness the human struggle in the world’s greatest arena, criticism of the Games continues, especially when an incident creates controversy and calls into question the idealism that is meant to suffuse the Olympic contests. This is the contradiction of the Games—their agony and ecstasy. The popularity and growth

of the modern Olympic Games, with their espoused idealism, have been both their strength and their weakness. There is no doubting the appeal of the Games and the words of Coubertin. The language of the Olympic philosophy grips the heart and stirs the soul—certainly of those who believe in the heroic nature of sport. Olympic words and phrases suggest a value for sport contests beyond simple exercise, and this sentiment is the source of the power of the idealistic Olympic message. Coubertin explained Olympism thus:

The Olympic idea... is a strong culture based in part on the spirit of chivalry... [which we call] "fair play"... a love of sport for itself, for its high educational value, for the pursuit of human perfection.

The problem for the Olympic movement has been that any controversial incidents that occur are counterpoised against the idealistic words of Coubertin and the keepers of the flame who followed him. Ideological differences, racism, gender issues, illicit behavior including the use of drugs, commercial and political exploitation: at various times, all of those have focused attention on the relevance of the heroic ideals in the face of apparent discountenance. Indeed, when the incidents are significant enough to cause general unease, the question of continuing the Games is raised. Coubertin was aware of the problems and the criticism. He knew that his "Olympic idea" was considered "utopian and impractical." In a letter in 1931, to Liselott Diem, the wife of Carl Diem, and a longtime German Olympic leader, he declared that "at every Olympiad I have read that it was going to be the last." It has been so since his death in 1937 despite the incredible growth of his idea.

CONTINUE THE GAMES?

The continuance of the Games is still questioned. "The Games must end!" was the headline in a world press appalled at the use of a sporting arena for political terrorism when 11 Israeli athletes were murdered at the athletes' village in Munich in 1972. *Time* magazine reported a cynic as saying, "The only time people get into uniform is for war or the Olympics." A "Five-Ring Circus" was the phrase used to describe the Olympics and the U.S.-led political boycott of the Moscow Games in 1980. Retaliation by the Eastern bloc countries four years later in 1984 and the unease felt by many about the commercialization of the Games in Los Angeles did little to stem the tide of criticism. British journalist Ian Wooldridge declared in a radio interview in 1984 that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) had "all but handed over the games to Walt Disney" and commercial interests. They were called the "MacDonald Games" or the "Coca Cola Games" depending on where the television images were coming from—the swimming pool or the athletic arena.

At least those Games made a profit. In 1976, Montreal went into long-term debt to pay for its Olympic facilities. It is no wonder that the first arrivals to the Olympic city were treated to the disconcerting spectacle of local citizens' driving in a motorcade around the fence of the village urging, "Olympian, go home! We don't want you here!"

In Seoul in 1988, the poor and their shantytown were displaced to make way for the Olympic facilities on the Han River. Where did they go? Critics of the Games vehemently argue that the Olympic flame is kept alight often at the expense of

pressing social issues that should take precedence in host cities. Jean-Marie Brohm criticizes the modern Olympics for being a gross commercial spectacle and asserts:

If a balance sheet is drawn up of the last four or five Olympic Games the sorry conclusion must be that they form part of an economic system of waste, uncontrolled affluence and the large display of luxury, while the rest of the planet is sunk in famine and ignorance.

The debate about whether to hold the Games while there is social unrest or to spend valuable resources on sport where there are blatant inequities still to be addressed causes much soul searching during an Olympic festival by both critics and supporters of Coubertin's idea. It is inappropriate to discuss it here but it must be acknowledged as a cause of concern and disquiet as the Games grow in size and presentation.

The idea that the growth of the modern Games into a Hollywood spectacle would please their founder is at odds with a plea that Coubertin made in the 1930s: "My friends, I have not laboured to restore the Olympic Games for you to make a spectacle of them . . . to use them for business or political ends." He was quite clear about their moral and educational value and is on record as saying, "Sport must decide whether it is to be a market or a temple!"

In some circumstances there is no division between those who admire the Olympic philosophy and the critics—for example, no disagreement between antagonists or protagonists about condemning the use of ergogenic aids in a "chivalrous" Olympian contest that advocates "a freely exercised morality" as an inspiration to the young. The incidence of drug taking to boost athletic performance is deplored by both Olympic proponents and critics alike. The fact that the Olympic ideals stress fair play and promote the contest as an illustration of "an ever more highly aspiring, bolder and purer humanity" means that whenever there is a breach of Olympic morality, there is appropriate condemnation of the athlete (Carl Diem, *The Olympic Idea: Discourses and Essays*, 1970, p. 22). When the incidence of drug taking seems to be widespread, then cynicism about the honesty of all Olympic athletes is openly expressed, along with justifiable concern that if the high ideals expected of Olympians cannot be ensured, then the Games themselves lose the special moral value that sets them apart from other sporting events. Carl Diem, Coubertin's German disciple, argued that "the true sportsman finds his standard of behavior within himself . . . and the Games are a reminder of sporting ideals" to be honored. This is one of the appealing aspects of the Games for athlete and spectator alike, the quality that sets the Games apart—that makes them special.

When the Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson was disqualified for drug use after winning the 100-meter sprint in Seoul in 1988 and his coach, Charlie Francis, declared at the inquiry in Canada that "as many as 80 percent of the world's leading athletes may be using steroids to improve their . . . performances," many expressed the opinion that the Olympic Games could no longer be considered a special illustration of human excellence in honorable competition. Kevin Doyle, editor of *Macleans*, Canada's weekly newsmagazine, writing of the "national disgrace," concluded, "And the Olympics, once the grandest spectacle in international sports, have now been reduced to the status of mud-wrestling."

Supporters of the Olympic philosophy share the concern of the critics about the apparent decline in sporting morality and the suggestions of widespread drug use.

They feel let down by athletes like Johnson, but not enough to give in to the cry to abolish the Games. They argue that because a few athletes cannot uphold the ideals of fair competition in an Olympic arena, others should not suffer the implied assertions of immorality and lose their opportunity for “noble competition.” They should not be denied their quest for excellence in the world’s greatest sporting event. Indeed, fellow athletes in Seoul felt so enraged and betrayed by Johnson and his apparent cheating that they affixed a notice to the door of his room in the Olympic Village that declared he had gone from “Hero to Zero!”

Carl Diem was right when he suggested that the morality inherent in Olympic competition “finds a deep place in the soul” of the genuine Olympian. He was also astute enough though to observe that “within the Olympic idea there inevitably develops . . . a conflict . . . between reality and the ideal.”

The attachment to the philosophy of Olympism and the effort to preserve what are thought to be worthwhile sporting ideals are the reasons that supporters of the Games refuse to be swayed by the social arguments of the critics of the modern Olympic athlete and sports administrator. It is an example of those who, aware of the problems of contemporary Games, still advocate their continuance, and indeed believe that the Games are “one of the greatest leavening forces for good” in an imperfect world. As Roger Bannister, the British Olympic athlete, put it:

It may seem paradoxical that, despite all the problems, I believe in the Olympic Games . . . as one of the great causes in the world which are capable of engaging the most serious determination of our young people and harnessing much of that . . . idealism which is latent in human beings . . . We should not give up an ideal because it has not been attained. (J. Segrave and D. Chu, *Olympism*, 1981, p. 145)

No doubt the Games and their professional philosophy and idealism are seriously questioned and sometimes threatened (some would argue compromised) by the contemporary realities of commercialism, technology, and political events that seem to affect them. But the threats to the Olympic ideals are in no way due to the differences in time between Coubertin’s era and the present. Sport philosopher Robert Osterhoudt reminds us that

Coubertin was by inclination and by influence very much more fully swayed by the idealistic optimism and purposive certainty of the nineteenth century than he was by the contrary sentiment that governs the current epoch. . . . Olympism is trapped in the conjunction between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

This is not to suggest though that the idealistic philosophy of Coubertin and the Olympic movement have no contemporary relevance. They do. Despite those who would argue the irrelevance of the Olympic Games and erosion of Coubertin’s ideals or suggest that these nineteenth-century ideals have been overtaken by and are at odds with modern values and attitudes, countless others point to the Games as a constant reminder of the heroic possibilities of sport. The fact that the Olympic ideals appear to conflict with reality does not negate the ideals themselves.

Robert Osterhoudt contends that Olympism embodies the highest principles of sport’s promised odyssey and as such is unique among modern sporting institutions. No other institution has “stood so steadfastly” against the dehumanizing abuses of contemporary elite competition or been so insistent on combining sport-

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ing excellence with “good and virtuous conduct.” He concludes that because “Olympism has brought sport nearer its fully human possibilities than any other modern event,” the Games should, indeed must, be preserved.

The Olympic ideal encourages chivalrous contest. Humanity needs such heroic illustrations in the education of its youth as a counterpoint to the negative and sometimes degenerative effects of contemporary sport spectacles. Olympic contests with their Coubertin philosophy present a heroic view of humanity that our young and aspiring can identify with. Heroes and heroines renew the faith of these youngsters in the quality of the human spirit. American poet Wallace Stevens warned that

Unless we believe in the hero,
What is there to believe?
Indecisive what, the fellow
Of what good?

Carl Diem, explaining the apparent disparity between Olympic ideals and contemporary reality, suggested that the Olympic Games were “a regulative force in sport. Like a gyroscope they keep it pointing toward its true [humanizing] goal. This gyroscope, too, may be buffeted by the gale. . . . but there is the test. . . . Sport teaches us that no victory can be won without a battle and the Olympic idea will have to go on battling” to combat the critics—those who would discontinue the Olympic Games because the sporting ideals inherent in the philosophy are too difficult to live (or play) by or are sometimes broken in a world that seems to be less concerned with honor (Diem, *Olympic Idea*, p. 22).

The fact that the Olympics have moved into another century after the 2000 Games in Sydney bears eloquent testimony to their resilience and ability to counter contemporary criticism. They are valued for their idealism and for the moral code they demonstrate in heroic sporting contests.

PROLOGUE: THE ANCIENT GAMES

Robert K. Barney

Throughout the modern world, sport is a cultural value etched indelibly into the lives of most people. Concern for personal health and fitness, dispositions towards particular sports, participation in international competitions, and collective pride in athletic accomplishment are all embodiments of this fact. Deeply ingrained into this worldwide fascination with sports, of course, is an intense interest in the Modern Olympic Games, whether witnessing them as spectators in Olympic venues or from thousands of miles away as television viewers. Of the world's approximately 6 billion people, for instance, well over half were "touched" in some way by the occurrence of the Games of the XXV Olympiad in Barcelona in 1992. And, of some 200 countries in the world today, 170 of them were represented in Barcelona.

The beginning of the historical explanation of this global cultural phenomenon evolves from the experience of the ancient Greek world, the birthplace of much of Western culture. None of the great civilizations that preceded Greece in chronological time served as a model for its development. With the Greeks, something new evolved in the world: an evolution of spirit and initiative that the modern world has come to recognize and respect as having had no equal in the long path of human progress. History has yet to find a greater historian than Thucydides, greater philosophers than Plato and Aristotle, or greater poets than Homer and Pindar. Greece promoted a new world from one that issued dark confusions. The Greece of antiquity, of course, is assigned its place in the ancient world by chronology. In truth, though, it was modern; different from any of its contemporaries. What other culture in its time placed so much value on sport and glorification of the human body, a place and glorification that has taken over two thousand years for contemporary humans to approach once again. The record demonstrates that the Greeks enjoyed sport on a grand scale. They played with a sense of joy, commitment and, above all, a feeling of celebration. And, nowhere in antiquity was such celebration more evident than at Olympia.

Crucial for an understanding of sport and the Olympic Games in antiquity is the ancient Greek context in which they evolved. Early Greek culture was markedly

military in character. Keen rivalries and competition for commercial dominance and protection of self-interests often led to confrontation between various factions. War was often the final arbiter of disputes. Beyond doubt, there was a striking connection between military training and sporting competition. The description of one such connection has provided the Western world with two of its earliest and most enduring sport literature commentaries—passages from Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. A brief discussion of Homer's works, particularly his descriptions of funeral contests, gives us a good idea of sport festival preludes leading to the establishment of the Olympic Games.

According to Greek tradition, sometime near the middle of the thirteenth century a major military episode occurred. Events leading to the war between a confederation of Achaean states and Troy, episodes surrounding the war's ten year struggle, its final outcome, and adventures encountered by warriors returning to their homelands afterwards, all provided grist for enduring oral legend. For some five centuries the tales of the war were transmitted orally. Somewhere around the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. the Greek poet Homer set the tales to recited verse. Homer's grand epic, probably recorded in written form after 700, is read by us today in the form of two poems. One of them, the *Iliad*, focuses on the war itself: its causes, preparations, battles, sieges, and conclusion. The *Odyssey* narrates a great warrior's ten-year, adventure-laden return journey to his island home of Ithaca in the Ionian Sea. In antiquity the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* became the reading and recitation standard for every Greek lad. Almost three thousand years after their composition they are read in various languages by millions of people the world over. They provide the basis for our understanding how athletic competition in great festival context rose in the ancient world.

The events Homer described probably occurred somewhere around 1250 B.C.E. Since Homer composed the poems some five hundred years after the fact, the modern world looked upon them as pure fiction, unsupported as his descriptions were by corroborating archaeological evidence. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, the dilettante German archaeologist, Heinrich Schliemann, carried out extensive excavations in Anatolian Turkey near the south shore of the Dardanelles. Not only did Schliemann locate and uncover ruins and priceless artifacts dated to Troy's time, but he also found ample evidence of cultures existing on the site well before and after the demise of Troy itself. The scientific and literary world greeted his finds with elaborate acclaim. Thus, the historical value of Homer's epic poems gained some veracity, enhanced even further by later archaeological discoveries at other early Greek sites.

The twenty-third book of the *Iliad* provides a glorious example of military physical skills transferred to competitive sport. What we really have with Homer is the first description of what correctly can be termed a type of sport tournament, a precursor to the Olympic Games, in which athletes competed for prestige and prizes, where rules governed various events, competitive strategies were pondered, exhortations and argument among spectators noted, the aid of divine spirits cultivated, and both sportsmanlike and unsportsmanlike conduct witnessed. These qualities are all facets of modern sport competition, and yet, they were all present some three thousand years ago. Homer versified the latter stages of the Achaean siege of Troy. The Achaean prince, Patroclus, is slain in battle by the Trojan warrior, Hector. Patroclus's friend and military comrade, the renowned Achilles, seeks revenge against Hector. After slaying Hector, Patroclus's funeral celebration is organized.

One dimension of the funeral celebration is a series of sporting contests. Achilles does not compete; instead, he is the organizer of the contests as well as their patron. He provides valuable prizes to the victors. Most competitors are of noble birth, the sons of kings. They are well trained in military skill, and transfer that skill to the various athletic events. We are told of a chariot race (in great detail), contests in boxing, archery, weight-throwing (discus), javelin, wrestling, running, and, most dangerous of all, a fight in full armor with spears.

In the *Iliad* Homer tells us that a great crowd of spectators gathers on a plain near the sea to witness the funeral games. Diomedes wins the two-horse chariot race, besting four other competitors. Each gains a prize for his efforts, with Diomedes winning the most coveted, a young maiden and an ornate tripod, spoils of war from Achaean victories over Trojan forces. Homer's account of the chariot race, in particular, suggests all sorts of modern sporting parallels. Before the race gets underway, Antilochus of Pylos receives sage strategy and counsel from his father, King Nestor, once a great athlete himself at funeral games held many years earlier. We are told also of an official stationed at the racecourse's turning post to report any attempts at turning short of the mark. Angry verbal confrontations, nearly resulting in blows, occur among the spectators. King Idomeneus of Crete and Aias of Locris are such spectatorial antagonists. Nor were the athletes above devious attempts to achieve victory. Antilochus, displaying rough and unsportsmanlike tactics, forces Menelaus's chariot off the course near the turning point.

The drama and excitement generated by the chariot race extended to the other subsequent events. A brash young prince, Epeios, won at boxing, making good his threat to all rivals "that he would tear their bodies into pieces and break their bones." Epeios decisively whipped the only individual who dared to oppose him—Euryalus of Thebes. In the wrestling match, Odysseus, of whom we shall hear more, drew with Aias of Salamis. They agreed to share the prize, a large tripod cauldron and a girl skilled in handicraft. Aias of Locris, the bellicose spectator previously noted, joined Odysseus and Antilochus in the running race. Aias looked like a sure winner, but he slipped in oxen dung short of the finish post. He recovered to finish second, gaining the runner-up prize—a large bull. Odysseus, the winner, won a much coveted silver bowl from Phoenicia. Antilochus, earlier berated for his unsportsmanlike conduct in the chariot race, finished third and last. This time, he was a model of decorum, complimenting Odysseus on his victory and at the same time pocketing a half talent of gold as a reward for his conduct. The weight throwing contest (it has been called a discus throw by many interpreters) resulted in Polypoites besting Aias of Salamis with a throw of such distance that onlookers were held in a spell of amazement. The iron ingot thrown by Polypoites was given to him as his victory prize. It was touted by Achilles as sufficient enough to provide its owner with enough first-class iron for five years. For the archery contest Achilles ordered a ship's mast planted in the sandy soil with a pigeon tied to its upright end by one foot. For sheer drama the ensuing contest surpassed all. There were two entrants: Teucus and Meriones. Teucus shot first. His arrow was near the mark; in fact, it severed the cord that secured the pigeon. The freed pigeon flew away. Meriones snatched the bow from his fellow competitor, hastily strung an arrow, and shot the flying target through the chest. The mortally wounded bird landed at the slayer's feet. In the javelin, or spear throwing contest, Agamemnon, King of Mycenae and commander in chief of the Achaean forces, was matched against Meriones of Crete. Fresh from his dramatic victory in the archery contest,

Meriones was clearly keen for still another triumph. However, Achilles cancelled the contest and accorded the first prize of a flower-decorated cauldron to Agamemnon, it being well known to all that he had no equal in the skill. The disappointed Meriones received a bronze lance. Aias and Diomedes squared off against each other in the armed spear duel, the aim being to penetrate the opponent's defense and draw blood from a lance "touch." Each attacked three times, Aias jabbing at his opponent's shield and Diomedes trying to get above the shield to Aias's throat. Not wishing to see a warrior's death as the outcome of the contest, the onlookers requested Achilles to end the event. Achilles agreed, dividing the prizes between Aias and Diomedes; but Diomedes gained the most cherished article—a large silver-adorned sword of Thracian origin.

Aside from the *Iliad's* description of athletic sport in Achaean times, Homer's second poem, the *Odyssey*, also contributes insights. In essence, the *Odyssey* is a tale of Odysseus's adventures on the long journey home to his island of Ithaca. Near the latter part of the ordeal Odysseus is shipwrecked and cast up on the shores of a land called Phaeacia. No one is certain exactly where Phaeacia was in the greater Greek world—if it was a real place. Odysseus was taken in by the Phaeacians, provided with food and accommodations, indeed, treated like an honored guest. At a banquet in his honor Odysseus's host arranged for entertainment featuring music, dance and athletic activities, including throwing the discus. The Phaeacians perceived that Odysseus had an athletic body despite the privations encountered at sea for a lengthy period of time. He was invited to try his hand at besting the Phaeacian locals in throwing the weight (discus). Odysseus, having witnessed the Phaeacians throwing and knowing that they were far inferior to his own skill, politely refused the invitation, claiming that his long sea voyage home had robbed him of any chance to train. Heckled and ridiculed by one Phaeacian athlete in particular, he took up a discus heavier than any yet thrown in the contest and proceeded to heave it further than all marks. His startling athletic achievement established his noble status among the Phaeacians. Such is the prestige that attends athletic achievement then and now.

Homer's descriptions of early Greek sport deserve further commentary and analysis. How much may the status and context of sport during Homer's actual lifetime have influenced his verse? We shall probably never know the definitive answer to this question. We can only base our judgment on that evidence before us—Greek archaeological recovery wedded to Homer's literary works based on several centuries-old oral tradition. During Homer's lifetime in Greek history, however, sport and athletics were in their infancy when compared to a century or two later. The record of what in time became known as the ancient Olympic festival had barely evolved by Homer's time. This gives us the idea that perhaps oral tradition was of greater consequence in shaping Homer's narrative than was the actual world about him in the eighth century B.C.E. Most certainly, we know that a Greek world existed during the time about which Homer wrote, a world in which people were bonded by strong cultural commonalities. Among the most evident of these were a common religious worship of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses, an early Greek language, and an appreciation for and practice of sport in ceremonial, celebration, recreation, and competition context. Competitive sporting activities were largely associated with contests featuring basic military expertise of the times—running, throwing, hand-to-hand combat, chariot driving, and archery.

We shall probably never know whether or not the common Greek man sported. Homer's tales involve mostly aristocratic warriors—kings and the sons of kings.

Such a privileged individual was described in the Greek language as *agathos*, a man trained for war and therefore brave. *Agathos* contrasted to *kakos*, an ordinary man, untrained and therefore cowardly and bad. A stronger derivative of the term *agathos* was *agathos ex agathon*, brave among the brave. A further extension was *aristos*, high-born. The qualities of *agathos* and *aristos* can be summed up in the word *arete*, a term Homer used for qualities inherent in a warrior—strength, skill, bravery, and heroism. It was the responsibility of a father to see to it that his sons developed in such a way as to strive for *arete*, to become heroic and godlike and, in time, to assume a leadership role in society. Although we have no exact counterpart of the word *arete*, we can be satisfied with “excellence.” Thus, a quest for excellence in ancient times was the responsibility of all leaders in society. Several of Homer’s warriors were personifications: Achilles and Odysseus, for example. Many fell far short of the ideal. But it is the pursuit of the ideal that translates into progress and achievement, not particularly one’s attainment of the goal. The quest for excellence in all things military, of course, overlapped into other areas of human endeavor—wisdom, intelligence, eloquence. The quest for athletic excellence in competition against others is seeded in the ideology of *arete*.

THE ANCIENT OLYMPIC GAMES

A legitimate place from which to commence an investigation of Greek athletics and the evolution of the ancient Olympic Games is the religious sanctuary called Olympia. The ancient site of Olympia was located in the northwest Peloponnese in the district presided over by the town of Elis. Archaeological evidence demonstrates that Olympia was inhabited during Achaean times. Achaean cult objects devoted to nature, fertility, and vegetation gods have been found there. When the Achaeans’ successors (later Greeks, sometimes called Dorians) settled on the Peloponnese, the site of Olympia claimed their attention as a religious sanctuary where both old Achaean gods and new Dorian deities were worshipped. In time, with the ascendance of the Olympian family in Greek religion, Zeus became the chief figure worshipped at Olympia. We simply will never know for sure what type of athletic activities, if any, might have been celebrated at Olympia as part of early Dorian religious sacrifice and ceremony.

History, however, has assigned the date 776 B.C.E. as the first record of athletic activity at Olympia. The date is etched into the record because the ancient Olympic victor list commences from that year. Surely athletic activities in keeping with older traditions were carried out at the site long before 776, indeed, just as archaeological evidence tells us that religious activity definitely occurred at Olympia well before 776. Based on ancient theories, various points of view exist that attempt to explain the rejuvenation of athletics as part of the religious festival at Olympia. In consistent fashion, they point to athletics being closely connected with religious events. For instance, Pindar (518–446 B.C.E.) stated that the Olympic Games originated during the late Achaean period honoring the victory of the god Heracles over King Augeas of Elis. Thus, the sanctuary of Olympia originally may have been a celebration site for Heracles, with Zeus later evolving in influence following the rise of Dorian prominence. Pindar’s view was supported in later times by the noted Greek scholars Lysias and Aristotle. The Roman poet Strabo (63 B.C.F.–21 C.E.) stated that the original Olympic religious festival evolved from the initiative of the Elean citizen, Oxylyus, in celebration of his peoples’ return to Elis after being forced by severe drought con-