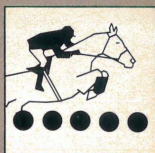
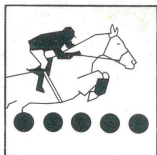


# Modern Pentathlon



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## *An Eclectic Discipline*

The modern pentathlon is one of the most demanding Olympic disciplines of all. Unlike the decathlon, which consists of ten related athletics events, the modern pentathlon consists of five utterly different disciplines which are competed for over a period of five days. The event originated as a competition with peaceful aims between members of the different branches of the armed forces.

Modern pentathlon was first introduced into the Olympic programme in 1912. Since then, the Hungarians and the Russians have generally won the team events, although a number of Swedes have won the individual awards. Great Britain won the 1976 team gold medal in Montreal.

On the first day, competitors ride a course which includes 23 obstacles. Horses are allocated by draw to individual competitors only twenty minutes before the start of the event, so that the rider has no opportunity to familiarize himself with his mount. On the second day, the fencing event takes place; all fencers meet each

other, and each bout lasts three minutes. In some big competitions, such as the Olympics or the world championships, the fencing may last up to ten hours. Shooting takes place on the third day and competitors are expected to shoot four rounds of five bullets from a distance of 25 m. Pistols are used and each target has a maximum score of 10 points. For a long time, a few drinks were usual before this event, but nowadays competitors are tested for alcohol the day of the shooting. The fourth day is given over to the swimming race, a 300 m freestyle event, and on the final day the competition ends with a 4,000 m cross-country run. Performances are converted into points following an official table. Strength, stamina, concentration—such are the principal qualities necessary for success in these events. The final classification is arrived at by adding up the points scored in each event by each competitor. The “ideal” mark would be 1,000 points. Extra marks can be awarded only in exceptional cases.

*The cross-country event is rarely unmarked by spectacular falls*