

Track and Field



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The Oldest Sport of All

Certain sports never had to be invented; they arose quite naturally out of men's instincts and men's needs. Together with swimming, athletics shares the distinction of being the noblest sport of all. As well as this, athletics is one of the oldest of sports. Homer in his *Iliad* speaks of competitions between the ancient Greeks during the 15th century B.C. And after this came the original Olympic Games.

Like so many other modern sports, athletics as we know it today was first practised in England during the nineteenth century. Around 1810, the first official meetings took place and the first track was built in 1850. Competitions of this kind spread first to the United States then to Europe until the time when Baron Pierre de Coubertin reintroduced the Olympic Games. But it was not until 1912 that the International Amateur Athletics Association (IAAF), which supervises the sport and registers performances, was created. Athletics soon split into three distinct categories: running, jumping and throwing events. During the winter, each national federation organizes cross-

country runs (these are increasingly used as preparation for the summer season) and indoor meetings. World records which are broken indoors cannot be officially accepted because conditions are so different from outside, and the tracks are not the same as those used in open air stadia, which must measure 400 m in length.

The olympic athletics program has undergone many changes over the years. The 1976 Montreal program was made up as follows: 23 men's events consisting of 13 running races (100, 200, 400, 800, 1,500, 5,000, 10,000 m; 110 m hurdles, 400 m hurdles, 3,000 m steeplechase, marathon, 4 x 100 m and 4 x 400 m relays), 4 jumping events (high jump, long jump, triple jump and pole vault), 4 throwing events (shot put, discus, javelin and hammer) the decathlon and 20 km walk: and 13 women's events – eight running races (100, 200, 400, 800, 1,500 m, 4 x 100 m and 4 x 400 m relays, 100 m hurdles), two jumping events (high jump and long jump), two throwing events (discus and javelin) plus the pentathlon.

Queen of competition, the 100-m dash, with Borzov, Williams and other Riddick at the start