

From the Publisher's Desk

An Olympics Story

The world is awash in Olympic fever, so this is a good time to look back. The Olympic games began in Olympia, Greece, in 776 B.C. and continued without disruption until 393 A.D. when it was abolished by Emperor Theodosius I. The first modern summer Olympic started in 1896, through the efforts of Baron Pierre De Coubertin, a French national. Since then, it has been held every four years except for 1916, 1940, and 1944. The most a single city has hosted this event is London – thrice. The winter games were added in 1924.

It is not possible to dwell on all the highlights and all the triumph and tragedies of the modern Olympics, so let us pick a few.

In 1896, the U.S. was represented by an unofficial group of 12 participants and won 9 of 12 events.

In 1912, Jim Thorpe, a Native American, won both the decathlon and pentathlon. His medals were restored to him, posthumously in 1982. In the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Jesse Owens won four gold medals. The first perfect ever awarded to a gymnast was to Nadia Comaneci of Romania, a perfect 10 –in 1976. She won three gold medals. In the 1972 Olympics, Mark Spitz, an American swimmer, won seven gold medals in Munich. But that year, terror also struck. A Palestinian terror group killed eleven members of the Israeli team. In 1976, about 30 African teams did not participate in protest of the New Zealand Rugby team tour of South Africa. About 60 countries did not participate in the 1980 Olympics in Moscow. The Russian team did not participate in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. In the Seoul Olympics of 1988, scandals of drug misuse came to light. Many

athletes, trainees, and judges were disqualified.

The centennial Olympic game took place in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1996. A former gold medalist from the 1960 Olympics and former world heavyweight champion lit the Olympic fire. There was not one pair of dry eyes in the stadium amongst the people who watched this occasion. A man larger than life in his prime, barely able to walk, lighting the fire with trembling hands. If this will not make a grown man cry, nothing will. And then there were heart warming moments – no doubt many – but some come to mind more clearly.

Derek Redmond, a British runner in the semi – final, he tore his right hamstring. His father helped him up and let him cross the finish line. This was a glorious moment of heroism and show of the bond between father and son.

Jesse Owens was the winner of four gold medals in 1936. It was he who raised the profile of African American athletes throughout the world first. Grandson of a sharecropper, raised in poverty in Ohio, he raised the American flag in Berlin, and in it's full glory.

When Nadia Cominici got the perfect score in the 1976 Montréal Olympics, the scoreboard was not geared to mark ten. She was 14.5 years old at that time, and as of now, no person below age 16 can participate in the Olympics. So her record will stand forever.

Shun Fujimoto broke his knee during his floor exercise but continued with his participation which helped his team win the gold medal.

The topic of the 21st century is saved for future reminiscence.

Sincerely, *Bala Prasad, MD*