

THE OLYMPIC MEDALS

Among athletes' cherished dreams, that of obtaining an Olympic Medal is surely the most fascinating.

What are these medals? What is their history?

We thought it would be interesting to do some research into this and let you know the results.

Two kinds of medals were struck for the Games: the medals given to the winners and the commemorative medals distributed among the distinguished hosts and the sports officials.

Let us look at it Games by Games. On the left of the text you will see a reproduction of both sides of the medals.



1896 - Athens

The medals were engraved with the design of Jules CHAPLAIN artist engraver, (French) (1839-1909). Their diameter was 50 mm.

To the winner a silver medal was given, to the second a bronze medal. Further, the winner received a crown of olive branches and his runner-up a crown of laurel branches. Diplomas, designed by Nicolas GUIZIS (Greek) were awarded to the winners in blue and white cases.

The commemorative Games medal was struck by Mr. HONTOPOULUS, after the design of painter Mr. LUTRA. 20.000 examples were distributed. The following official prizes - this was the only time - were given to certain of the laureates:



to the Greek Spiridyon LOUYS, marathon winner, a silver cup, gift from Michel BREAL, member of the "Institut de France" and friend of Pierre de COUBERTIN, as well as an antique vase, gift from Mr. LAMBROS

to Emile GRAVELOTTE (France) winner of the foil event, a silver vase, gift from the Athienien Club

to Pantelis KARASEVDAS (Greece) winner of the shooting event: the war gun, a gun, whilst to his compatriot Jean PHRANGUDIS, winner of the duelling pistol, a pistol.



We know that these Games were held during the Universal Exhibition. The Official Programme simply announced an international amateur meeting, organised by the "Union des Sociétés Françaises de Sports Athlétiques", the President of which was Baron Pierre de COUBERTIN, also president of the International Olympic Games Committee from the end of the Games of the 1st Olympiad.

1900 - Paris



There were no official medals distributed to the winners as stated in the following text which figured at the bottom of the Programme of the Paris Games.

"Prizes will consist of objects d'art", exclusively".

Nevertheless a commemorative plaque, reproduced opposite, of which the width is 40 mm and the height is 60 mm struck by the Mint and extolling the physical exercise of sport.



1904 - St. Louis

Once more it is an International Exhibition which serves as background for the Games. The numerous competitions - nearly four hundred - occasioned the distribution of medals as numerous and varied in their form, dimensions, engravings, and ribbons on which they were hung.



Let us add that these ribbons were identical for all events and that the metallic plaques to which they were attached carried the inscription: 1904 - International Exposition Olympic Games-Saint-Louis.

The medals bestowed on the Olympians were 35 mm in diameter. Gold for the first, silver for the second, bronze for the third.

The discipline is shown on the reverse side of the medal (here the 800 m plate).