

# The history of the Olympic Games depicted on medals

On the occasion of Olympic year 1976 the IOC had had a series of commemorative medals entitled "Official history of the Olympic Games" minted. It appointed the American company Franklin Mint Corporation official minter, seller and world-wide distributor of this series of fifty medals manufactured in 24-carat gold (1,000 collections), silver (10,000 collections) or bronze.

The collection commemorates the greatest moments of Olympic history since the first modern Games at Athens in 1896. The obverse of the first medal depicts the memorable occasion when Spiridon Louis (Greece), winner of the marathon race, received the olive branch from H.R.H. King George I of Greece, while the reverse of each medal bears a laurel wreath combined with the Olympic rings and an inscription explaining the design on the obverse.



The series of medals continues from one Olympiad to the next and is comprised of the following illustrations:

- 1900 Ray Ewry (USA), master of the standing jumps, holder of ten gold medals in three Olympiads.
- 1908 Dorando Pietri (Italy) and Johnny Hayes (USA), heroes of a dramatic marathon race.
- 1912 The Olympic debut of the swimmer Duke Kahanamoku (USA), who was still to be present in 1932.
- 1920 The Olympic flag officially flying for the first time at the Olympic Games.
- 1924 Chamonix, site of the first Winter Games.
- 1924 The indefatigable Finnish long distance runner Paavo Nurmi who took seven gold medals during his career.
- 1924 The talented swimmer Johnny Weissmüller (USA).
- 1928 Sonia Henie (Norway) upon her sparkling performance at the St. Moritz Winter Games.
- 1932 Mildred "Babe" Didrikson (USA), the greatest woman athlete of her time, breaking the world record in the javelin throw on the opening day of the Games.
- 1932 Ivar Johansson and Carl Westergren (Sweden) who dominated the wrestling competition.
- 1932 The first Olympic village, an innovation promoting fraternity among athletes.
- 1936 The speed skater Ivar Ballangrud (Norway), the "Jesse Owens of the ice".
- 1936 Jesse Owens (USA), achieving a marvellous feat by winning four gold medals in Berlin and setting up four Olympic records.
- 1936 Hendrika Mastenbroek (Netherlands) who dominated the women's freestyle swimming events.
- 1936 The Olympic torch passed from hand to hand between Olympia and the organising city of the Olympic Games.

### Olympic winners' medals

We should like to point out that this collection is in no way related to the Olympic medals awarded to the winning competitors as defined and described in Rule 45 of the Olympic rules, which we have already presented in the following numbers of the "Olympic Review".

#### *For the Olympic Games*

- No. 29 for 1896, 1900, 1904
- No. 31 for 1908
- No. 52 for 1912, 1920
- No. 55 for 1924, 1928
- No. 56 for 1932, 1936, 1948, 1952
- No. 58 for 1956 to 1972

#### *For the Winter Games*

- No. 66 for 1924 to 1932
- No. 70 for 1936 to 1956
- No. 74 for 1960 to 1964
- No. 76 for 1968 to 1972

- 1948 Dick Button (USA), the figure skater.
- 1948 The athlete Fanny Blankers-Koen (Netherlands), holder of four Olympic titles (100 m., 200 m., 80 m. hurdles and 4 x 100 m.).
- 1948 Bob Mathias (USA), upon his amazing victory in the decathlon—the most demanding of all Olympic events—at the age of 17 in the 1948 Olympic Games in London.
- 1952 The Canadian ice hockey team, masters of this game, winning six Olympic tournaments out of seven.
- 1952 Emil Zatopek (Czechoslovakia), already first in the Olympic 10,000 m. at London, achieved the remarkable triple feat at Helsinki of the 5,000 m., 10,000 m. and the marathon.
- 1952 The Brazilian triple jumper Adhemar Ferreira da Silva, taking a title which he was to retain in 1956.
- 1952 The British riders Harry Llewellyn, Douglas Stewart and Wilfred White, winners of the team Grand Prix jumping event.

- 1952 The brilliant pole vaulter Bob Richards (USA), who was third in 1948 and first in 1952 and 1956.
- 1956 Toni Sailer (Austria), winning the three Alpine skiing events—downhill, slalom and giant slalom—at the Cortina d'Ampezzo Winter Games.
- 1956 The Hungarian boxer Laszlo Papp, taking the Olympic title for the third time running.
- 1956 The diver Joaquim Capilla (Mexico), whose career covered three Olympiads—first in 1956, second in 1952 and third in 1948 in highboard diving, third in 1956 in springboard diving.
- 1956 The Czech Olga Filatova, becoming Olympic discus champion before marrying the American Harold Connolly, Olympic shot put champion.
- 1956 The Indian field hockey team, winning its seventh Olympic title.
- 1960 Barbara Wagner and Bob Paul (Canada), an unforgettable figure skating pair.
- 1960 Abebe Bikila (Ethiopia), becoming the first African Olympic athletics champion by winning the marathon.
- 1960 Rafer Johnson (USA), winner of the decathlon after an incredible duel with his college friend, C. K. Yang (Republic of China).
- 1964 The British bob pair Tony Nash and Robin Dixon.
- 1964 Dawn Fraser (Australia) who appears on the Olympic honours list for the 100 m. freestyle in 1956, 1960 and 1964.
- 1964 The Soviet Valery Brumel, for years master of the high jump.
- 1964 The athlete Peter Snell (New Zealand), achieving the double feat of the 800 m. and the 1,500 m.
- 1968 Peggy Fleming (USA), the graceful and unforgettable figure skater.
- 1968 Jean-Claude Killy (France), winning the three Olympic Alpine skiing events in Grenoble.
- 1968 The Italian Eugenio Monti, the most talented bobber.
- 1968 Bob Beamon (USA), setting up the most fantastic world record of 8.90 m. in the long jump.
- 1968 Kip Keino (Kenya), who won the 1,500 m. race, came second in the 5,000 m., then winning four years later the 3,000 m. steeplechase and coming second in the 1,500 m.
- 1968 José Pedraza (Mexico), who came second in the 20 km. walk, finishing a hair's breadth behind the winner, the Soviet veteran Golubnichy.
- 1968 The triumph of Al Oerter (USA), in the discus throw competition—his fourth consecutive gold medal in this event.
- 1972 Yukio Kasahara (Japan), first in the 70 m. ski jump, thus winning Japan's first gold medal at the Winter Games in front of his compatriots.
- 1972 The Dutch speed skater Ard Schenk, holder of three gold medals (1,500 m., 5,000 m. and 10,000 m.).
- 1972 The American swimmer Mark Spitz's incredible success, winning seven gold medals and setting up seven world records.
- 1972 The grace and charm of seventeen-year-old Olga Korbut (USSR), who won the hearts of the world as she took three gold medals in gymnastics.
- 1976 The harmonious agility of Rosi Mittermaier (Germany) who dominated the women's Alpine skiing events at the 1976 Winter Games.
- 1976 The extraordinary strength of the Soviet weightlifter Vassili Alexeyev, confirming his 1972 Olympic title.
- 1976 Young Nadia Comaneci (Rumania), judged perfect by all the gymnastics judges at the last Olympic Games.

A complete collection in all three metals will remain with the IOC to enrich the Olympic Museum.

