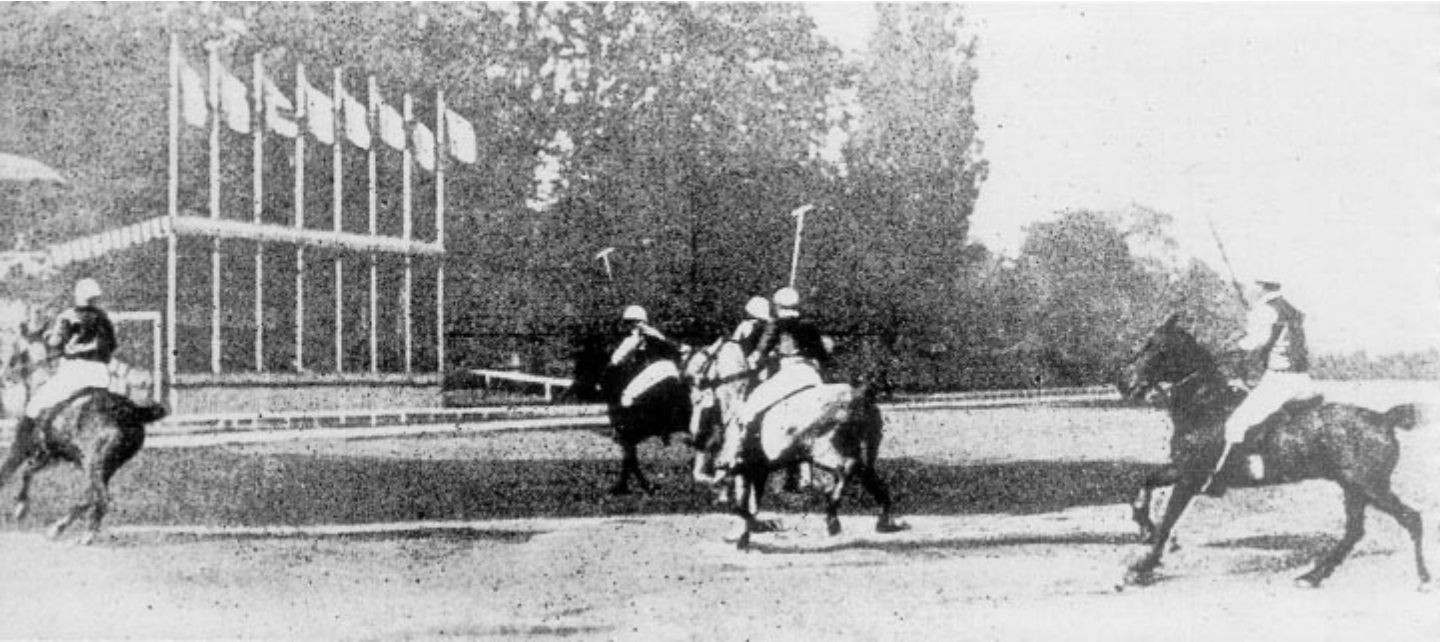


# ADMISSION TO THE PROGRAMME: A PRIVILEGE EARNED, NOT GIVEN



*Polo was on the programme of the Games in 1900; it was finally eliminated after the Games in 1936.*

**By Paula Welch**

University of Florida (USA)

The conduct and the admission of new sports to the Olympic Games have been influenced by eleven sports that formerly gained Olympic status but were subsequently eliminated from the programme. Most of those sports withdrawn appeared during the 1900, 1904 and 1908 Olympic Games during the fledgling years of world wide sports participation. Six of the former Olympic sports made just one appearance in the Games and included : cricket, croquet, jeu de paume, or tennis using the English Amateur Championship rules, motor boating, racquets, and roque - similar to croquet but played on a hard surface court surrounded by a border. Golf and lacrosse were in the Games on two occasions, rugby four times and polo and tug-of-war five.

Olympic Organizing Committees (OCOGs) admitted sports for one occasion in an attempt to promote those that were popular in host nations. Limited participation was clearly evident as athletes from just one country were the sole participants. These one-time Olympic sports appeared during the Second, Third and Fourth Olympiads when Universal Exhibitions were held and during the formative years of the Olympic movement when members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) did not wield the power they do today. Among the most controversial Games were those in London in 1908 when disputes were rife between Americans and the British organizers. These Games demonstrated that the Organizing Committee had lost its control and used poor judgment in assigning to local sports officials the responsibility for conducting competitions. Golf and lacrosse, which had already been twice on the programme, were also included during the Second, Third and Fourth Olympiads but attracted little interest. Rugby and polo were both discontinued as a result of limited participation. Tug-of-war had a record of controversy as it failed to attract more than five nations at the Games. Currently, Rule 44 of the IOC Charter outlines specific requirements for the admission of sports to the Olympic Games.

## STRICT RULES

The IOC Charter stipulates that sports incorporated in the Games of the Olympiad must be widely practised by men in at least 50 countries and by women in at least 35 countries. Both men and women must demonstrate participation on three continents. Furthermore, evidence of national championships and international competition in regional and/or world championships in the respective sports must be in evidence. Sports in the Olympic Winter Games must involve men and/or women in at least 25 countries and three continents.

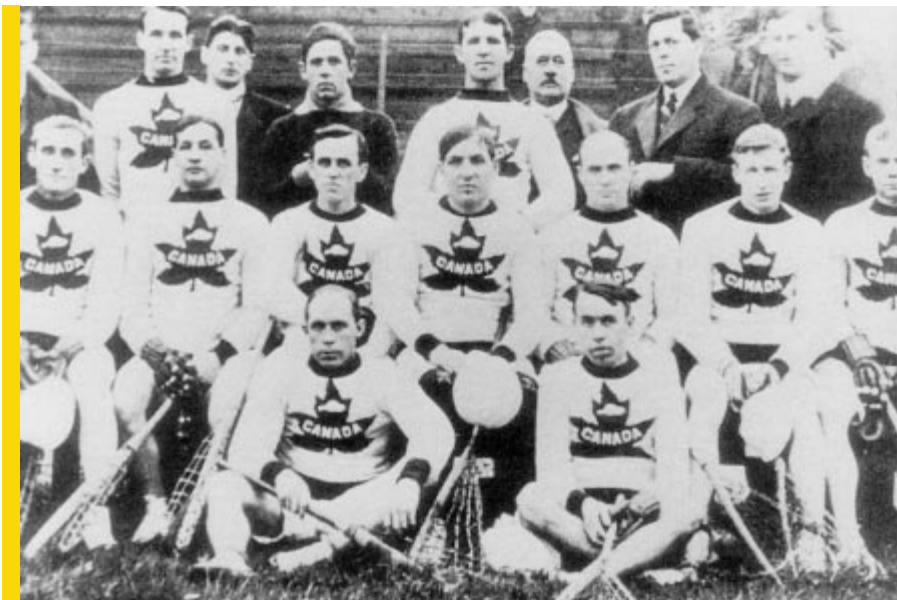
Cricket and croquet, although not widely played, were in the 1900 Games in Paris. M.D. Merillon, editor of a report of these Games, revealed that just two teams had taken part in the cricket competition.

The Standard Athletic Club, which had won the championship of France in 1900, and an English team comprised of long-time team members from Devon County were the Olympic entries. The English team won both tournaments by a total of 157 points. Croquet was viewed as an activity that attracted, "more society types than sportsmen", that had "scarcely the pretensions of athleticism," in the report edited by Merillon. Apparently, croquet, which drew only French participants, was in the 1900 Games because it was promoted by a French athletic federation. The Paris Games, overshadowed by the World Fair, were organized by Fair officials who were not aware of sports that were widely played.

Golf's two appearances in the 1900 and 1904 Games attracted few participants. Because of golf's popularity in France, it was included in the Games of the Second Olympiad. In 1900, three countries were represented in the men's tournament while competitors from two nations entered the women's tournament. Local influence was exerted in the 1904 Games as George McGrew, President of the Glen Echo Country Club in St. Louis, was instrumental in adding golf to the St. Louis Games in 1904.



*Croquet made its sole appearance in the Games in 1900 in Paris, proving insufficiently popular. Lacrosse has made only two Olympic appearances.*



***At the beginning of the century, golf was a much-prized sport. As the photograph shows, the 1900 Olympic tournament was open to women. But the American Margaret Abbott won the only women's Olympic gold medal in golf four years later as there was no women's competition in St Louis.***

The 1904 Games in St. Louis involved American players and one Canadian, George Lyon, who won the championship. In December 1907, opposition to future Olympic golf was expressed by Garden G. Smith in *'Golf Illustrated'*. Smith was sceptical of another Olympic golf championship because of the limited number of countries that had participated in St. Louis. Golf was planned for the 1908 Games by the London Olympic Organizing Committee but was eventually dropped from the programme. Disputes involving London Olympic officials and members of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews were chronicled in *'The Times'* of London. In late January 1908, a correspondent of *'The Times'* accurately predicted the demise of Olympic golf. Opposition to golf in the Games was expressed by leading British golfers and was partly based on the grounds that the sport was not in the ancient Games. While *'The Times'* corre-

spondent admitted that this argument was not sound, other challenges to the suitability of Olympic golf focused on the proposed date of the Olympic competition which conflicted with other tournaments and the abundance of existing golf tournaments.

The jeu de paume competition, a version of tennis using complex rules, featured two countries and involved two contestants from the United States and nine players from the host country, England. According to the official report of the 1908 Games, jeu de paume was viewed "as too expensive and complicated ever to become popular, and therefore confined practically to France, the United Kingdom and America". The elimination of jeu de paume from the Games was obvious from the report, which cited the limited scope of competition and the paucity of top level players, concluding that jeu de paume was not an appropriate



Olympic sport. Canada and the United States were the only countries fielding lacrosse teams at the 1904 Games. Interest in the sport had not increased by the 1908 Games when lacrosse made its final appearance. However, the 1908 Olympic meeting of the Canadian and British lacrosse players marked the first time two national lacrosse teams had ever met. The Canadians won by a score of 14 to 10. Although the lacrosse tournament involved only two nations, the selection of national teams revealed attempts to send the best athletes during the early Olympic movement.

## MOTOR BOAT RACING AND POLO

Motor boating was in the Olympic programme because London Olympic officials promoted the sport. The British Olympic Council issued the rules for the motor boat races in April 1908. The first day of the motor boat competition was impaired by strong winds and torrential rain. Rough seas and the failure of some competitors to show up resulted in the cancellation of six of the nine races. Inclement weather on the second day reduced the number of entries and again caused some competitors to drop out of races. Olympic motor boat competition, which had attracted racers from two nations, was reported in 'The Times'. However, adverse weather conditions and limited viewing accommodation for spectators produced little interest for motor boat racing.

No more than five countries had ever competed in Olympic polo when it was discontinued from the Games following the 1936 Games. The German Olympic Organizing Committee was responsible for admitting polo to the programme of the 1936 Games in Berlin. German polo had been confined to limited competition as just one club, the Hamburg Polo Club, was active and had not competed against foreign teams for several years. Polo was popular in Argentina, as evidenced by 130 active polo clubs located throughout the country. When teams from Argentina and Great Britain met in the gold medal match, over 50,000 spectators watched the Argentinians crush the British 11-0.



The British Olympic Council issued the laws and conditions for racquets and scheduled singles and doubles tournaments. No players from outside Great Britain entered players. Additional evidence to support the elimination of racquets occurred when some of the British players failed to appear for their matches. The British Olympic report offered two reasons for excluding racquets from the Games. In addition to noting the expense of the sport, which restricted involvement to wealthy individuals, it was also pointed out that the game was played in just three parts of the world: the United Kingdom, India and the United States.

## ROQUE AND RUGBY

Roque, developed by Americans, was derived from croquet by dropping the 'C' and the 'T.' Roque, a combination of croquet and billiards, was played on a clay court

*The last Olympic polo final took place in 1936 between Great Britain and Argentina, which won in front of more than 50,000 spectators. Since then polo has no longer been an Olympic sport.*

**Rugby made its final appearance as an Olympic discipline in 1924. A fight broke out during the match between France and America.**

and thought to be faster than croquet. Four Americans took part in the sole Olympic roque competition. A photograph in the *'History of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition'*, edited by Mark Bennett, depicts the obscurity of roque. One competitor is shown on the court and is framed by 11 individuals who are presumably officials, competitors and spectators. Roque was not covered by *'St. Louis Post Dispatch'* reporters and is another example of a little-known sport promoted by an OCOG. The 1904 Games, much like the 1900 Games, were overshadowed by the St. Louis World Fair.

Amid controversies and disputes among athletes and officials, rugby made a final appearance in the 1924 Games. A fight broke out during the French-American rugby match and temporarily disrupted competition. Before the conclusion of the Games in Paris, the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF) and the IOC voted to remove the sport because it attracted "limited interest and entries." According to *'The New York Times'*, the IAAF and the IOC, in addition to eliminating "events of lesser importance..." were aiming to reduce "expenses which (were) making the Olympic Games a serious burden to many nations."

Tug-of-war made five consecutive appearances from 1900 onwards, with the exception of 1916 when the Sixth Olympiad was not celebrated because of World War I. The highest number of entries occurred in 1920 when five countries were represented. Tug-of-war was frequently the subject of controversy. Following the 1904 Games Charles J.P. Lucas, author of *'The Olympic Games 1904'* recommended the elimination of tug-of-war from the Olympic programme. Lucas objected to an apparent lack of regard on the part of the American athletic club presidents who were indifferent as to whether or not the competitors were amateurs or professionals. Lucas contended that the club presidents grabbed "any talent that they (could) get in order to have a winning team...." Another controversy arose in 1908 when the Americans protested at the shoes worn by competitors from the United Kingdom. The rule governing footwear stipulated that, "no competi-



tor shall wear prepared boots or shoes, or boots or shoes with any projecting nails, tips, sprigs, points, hollows, or projections of any kind." The Americans upon observing the boots worn by the British, declared that their heavy, huge footwear should not be considered "ordinary shoes." Matthew P. Halpin, manager of the American team, issued a protest to Olympic officials but was informed that the shoes were ordinarily worn by the Liverpool police. Halpin's protest was disallowed and the American team withdrew.

Five National Olympic Committees (NOCs) had announced their intentions of sending tug-of-war teams to the 1912 Stockholm Games, but only Sweden and Great Britain took part. Five nations entered the 1920 Games and the elimination of tug-of-war caused little stir.

In June 1921, the IOC assembled in Lausanne along with members of NOCs and IFs to review changes in the Games. The meeting resulted in the IOC's adoption of guidelines for the number of entries allowed in events, the organization of competitions and sweeping changes involving sports and events. While some events, such as the women's 100 m backstroke and 200 m breaststroke were added, seven events and sports were eliminated: tug-of-war, the 3,000 m walk, throwing the 56 pound weight, rugby football, field hockey, archery and golf.

Procedural changes in the management and conduct of Olympic competition offered testimony that the IOC had taken important measures to rectify the lack of uniformity in competition. Each international sports federation appointed a committee comprised of five members whose responsibility was to control competition in assigned sports. These five-member committees were established to avoid problems caused by Olympic Organizing Committees who were uninformed about sports that were not played in their respective countries.

While some of the sports were later readmitted to the Games, the IOC demonstrated the necessity to exert more control regarding the conduct of the Olympic

Games. Most of the discontinued sports made their debut in the absence of meticulous planning while the Games shared the limelight with World's Fairs.

The early Olympic movement survived a shaky foundation when either national teams nor the best athletes were consistently present at the Olympic Games. Furthermore, sports of limited participation did not advance the Olympic movement but their presence influenced the IOC and produced specific rules that have avoided the inclusion of sports not representative of widespread involvement. Experiences gained from discontinued sports have laid the foundation for improved competition and for the participation of more highly skilled athletes.

*Tug-of-war attracted a maximum of five national teams at the Olympic Games.*

