

## The Winter Games: Their Contributions to Worldwide Olympic Consciousness

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**I**n its history the Olympic Movement has confronted many problem/issues: amateurism and professionalism, racial discrimination, political interference, and boycotts. Then, too, the movement continues to face doping, gigantism, and various forms of nationalism. All this aside, one of the more controversial changes has been the addition of winter sports and the Winter (Olympic) Games. Without any doubt, their addition was troublesome to many, but in which sense? In this paper I will try to answer this question. It is quite a difficult task.

Historians, scholars, journalists, and others have studied the problems of the winter sports and the Winter Olympics. Unfortunately, the founder of the modern Olympic Movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, except for some short asides, did not leave much evidence of his opinion. We have no background to make a conclusion as to what he really thought about Winter Olympics. Popular opinion and speculation were that he opposed winter sports in general, but this is not the truth.

The most valuable investigations in the past of the problems of winter sports and the Winter Games were made by: Arnold Lunn, Carl Diem, John MacAloon, Norbert Muller, Joseph Recla, Marc Hodler, Jan Staubo, Raymond Flower, John Rodda, John Samule, and Monique Berlioux. Investigations have continued. Today such people as: Arnd Kruger, Olav Bo, Kristian Mo, Mark Onigman, Volker Kluge and others address the problem.

In my research I used various data and references, as well as the results of a survey conducted among the participants of the Centennial Olympic Congress, Paris, 1994. (See Appendix I).

The Avery Brundage Collection also contains valid and useful data, especially of the Brundage attitude towards winter sports and their role in the Olympic Movement.

### In Front of the Door

We have no evidence that sport activities on snow or ice existed in ancient Greece. So, a Greek heritage paradigm to include winter sports in the reborn Games did not exist. But, many sports which also did not exist in ancient times, for instance, some track and field events, cycling, shooting, gymnastic, and rowing, were included in the modern Olympic Games from the beginning. Coubertin, who practiced ice skating himself, had the opinion that it was a universal exercise, so he would not necessarily be against it as a part of the Olympic program.

The program of the First Olympic Games of the modern era was a reflection of development and popularity of sports of the time. Therefore, the inclusion of winter sports, also existing at the time, was only a technological problem (sports on artificial ice) or a climatic problem (skiing, luge, bob, sledding). It is difficult to say what would have happened if an artificial ice rink had existed in Athens in 1896? Maybe a competition in figure skating would have been organized. Two artificial ice rinks were constructed in Paris in 1900 at the time of the 2nd Olympic Games, but skating wasn't organized. Victor Balck, the I.O.C. member from Sweden, and President of the International Skating Union, did not insist on inclusion of skating as part of the program. In fact, he was opposed to it. We know, in London in 1908, figure skating was included in the program of the Summer Games.

### The Struggle for Independence

On the road to inclusion and independence from the Summer Olympics there were hurdles to overcome. The so-called "Scandinavian opposition" to the inclusion of winter sports in the Olympic program was a reflective action from the Nordic Games which had been organized between 1901 and 1926 - normally in four year intervals and in a similar manner to the Olympic Games. The Nordic Games program included: cross country skiing, ski jumping and bandy, but not ice hockey, skating or so called "alpine events."

Henry Lunn created downhill ski racing in the beginning of the Century,<sup>1</sup> but when the Comte *Brunetta d'Usseaux* (the I.O.C. member from Italy) proposed at the I.O.C session in 1911 (Budapest)... "that Winter Games should be held following the

Summer Games, this proposal was rejected by Colonel Balck...<sup>2</sup> At the Stockholm Olympic Games in 1912 no winter sport was organized. That was ..” a clear step backwards from the previous Games.”<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the climatic conditions required for the overwhelming majority of winter sports events (cross country skiing, ski jumping, skeleton, bob) made it impossible to organize them during the Summer Games, at the same time as the summer sports. Contrary to the Scandinavian countries’ opinion that they had an exclusive right to the winter sports, in Central Europe a variety of winter sports were developing, especially as a result of innovations by Mathias Zdarsky in downhill skiing. Ski Mountaineering and “Ski Parties” of the nobles became very popular in Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The use of skiing for military purposes was also developing rapidly.<sup>4</sup> The development of all sports at the turn of the century was the result of the Industrial Revolution, as well as a reflection of all we know under the terms: “La belle époque,” “Victorian Style” or “Jungedstle.” The winter sports were no exception, although their development was more rapid than other sports, such as those in the summer. The logical consequence was argument for their place in the Olympic Games.

The next attempt for consideration of winter sports in the Olympic program was the written proposal of the Organizing Committee of the 6th Olympic Games, Berlin 1916, to include into the program “skating and skiing, both to be held in February 1916 on the Feldberg in the Black Forest.”<sup>5</sup> This proposal was not the first request to put two winter sports in the summer program; it had already happened in 1908 and had also been proposed for 1912. But it was the first attempt to **separate** the time period for their organization.

At the Paris Olympic Congress in 1914, it was decided that “ice hockey, figure skating and skiing”<sup>6</sup> could be in a group of optional sports. But, the 6th Olympic Games in Berlin did not take place. Five days after the Congress the assassination in Sarajevo of the Arch Duke Ferdinand was the reason for the beginning World War I and delayed the introduction of the optional sports idea.<sup>7</sup> After the War, at the Games of the 7th Olympiad in Antwerp (1920) two winter sports were organized as part of the program: figure skating, and a new sport, ice hockey.<sup>8</sup> The requests for a separate organization of Winter games and the

satisfaction and needs of increasingly developed winter sports was postponed yet again. The struggle for the independence of the Olympic Winter Games continued.

### Independence

After World War I, in spite of poverty, winter sports did not stop their development.

Many young people who practiced skiing during military service continued it in postwar civilian life. For instance, in Bosnia and Hercegovina, after the war “..the Austro-Hungarian military stores were amply supplied with skis that could be used free of charge by the youth of Sarajevo; these youth were trained by “coaches” who practiced skiing in the Austro-Hungarian army.”<sup>9</sup>

According to Mark Hodler, “The growing popularity of other winter sports depending on snow, such as skiing and bobsleighbing, raised the question of staging a separate section of the Olympic Games in the winter months.”<sup>10</sup> A special consulting conference relating to the problems of winter sports and the Olympic Games, under the Presidency of the I.O.C. President Baron Pierre de Coubertin was held in Lausanne on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1921. The delegates discussed the necessity to organize a separate winter competition in the same year, before the Summer Games. The opposition of the Scandinavian delegates made it very hard. However, a week later, at the Olympic Congress of June 2-7, in Lausanne, the problems were discussed.”

In the Congress, in spite of the opposition of Sweden, Norway and Finland, delegates voted in favor of the proposition by Marquise de Polignac:

The Congress suggests to the International Olympic Committee that in all countries where Olympic Games are held and where it is possible to organize winter sports competitions, such competitions should be put under the patronage of the IOC and arranged in accordance with the rules of the international sport associations concerned.<sup>11</sup>

Three years later, the separate competitions in winter sport were held. Patronized by the International Olympic Committee, an International Winter Sport Week at Chamonix, from January 24<sup>th</sup> to February

5<sup>th</sup>, 1924, . . . “did a great deal to make winter sports popular with everyone.”<sup>12</sup> In his closing speech Coubertin said: “Winter sports are among the most beautiful and purest of all sports. That is why I, for my part, would like to include them definitely into the Olympic manifestations.”<sup>13</sup> Coubertin had never been against winter sports, but the problem was the fact that the Winter Olympics, because they must be organized separately, meant that they could be a danger to the most important principle of the Olympic Movement - spirit of unity. Marie Therese Eyquem quoted Coubertin: “In these twenty-five years, winter sports have been not only taken up in a number of other countries (other than Sweden), but they have demonstrated a quality of amateurism, of sporting dignity, so frank and pure that their total exclusion from the Olympic program would take away much of strength and value (*Memoire Olympique*).” Further, Eyquem stated that “Coubertin supported the Winter Games for reasons which seem ironic today.”<sup>14</sup> She was right in her point of view in what was happening later when the Winter Olympics became the black sheep of the Olympic Movement.

In the Olympic Congress in Prague on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1925 the IOC the following was recorded:

The IOC approved unanimously, less one vote, that, by reason of their success and especially of their consequences, the Winter Sports, which took place at Chamonix in 1924, on the occasion of the VIII Olympiad, be called: First Olympic Winter Sports.”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, at the 25<sup>th</sup> IOC Session in Lisbon in 1926 the International Winter Sport Week of Chamonix was officially proclaimed as the First Olympic Winter Games.

**The Reality of the Contributions**

The contribution of the Olympic Winter Games to the development of winter sports is without any doubt great, but there are different opinions about the growth of the Olympic Winter Games in comparison with the Summer Games. In 1965 Jan Staubo, I.O.C. member for Norway said:

Since 1924, however, the popularity of the Winter Games has grown

steadily. In fact, according to statistics, the Winter Games have increased in size - as far as participants are concerned - faster than the Summer Games. The ratio of increase is approximately five times for Winter Games and two and half times for Summer Games, in the same number of years.<sup>16</sup>

Mark Hodler, President of the ISF, and I.O.C. member for Switzerland, however, had a different opinion: “. . . they have not grown as much as Summer Games.”

The comparison of the growth between 1924 - 1976 is captured in *Table 1* below.

In any case, the ratio expressed in %, compared with 1924 (100%) shows a bigger advantage to the Olympic Winter Games, and Jan Staubo was right in his evaluation of the growth of the Winter Olympics. The ratio of the number of women participants between 1924 - 1976 shows an advantage to Olympic Winter Games as well.

**Table 1**

YEAR	SUMMER	WINTER
1924 :	136 <b>100%</b>	13 <b>100%</b>
1936 :	328 <b>241%</b>	27 <b>207%</b>
1976 :	1274 <b>936%</b>	218 <b>1282%</b>

I do not want to speak about the sport results in the Winter Olympics or about many other aspects of their contribution to the Olympic Movement. Instead, I want to emphasize some other specifics.

The separate Winter Games multiplied the possibilities of spreading the Olympic idea and Spirit to more parts of the World. The idea of “both games in one country” was fortunately abandoned. Austria (Innsbruck two times), Switzerland, and Norway (Oslo and Lillehammer), and Yugoslavia (Sarajevo) were countries where the Summer Games were never organized. There were, and continue to be, a great number of countries bidding for the Winter Games: 1964 - 6, 1968 - 6, 1972 - 4, 1976 - 5, 1984 - 3, 1988 - 3, 1992 - 8, 1994 - 5 and 2002 - 8.

In his speech at the Opening of the 80<sup>th</sup> Session of the I.O.C, in Athens, in 1978, I.O.C. President Lord

Killian said:

In regard to the Winter Games, the members will have three choices: the city of Gothenburg, where the Games will be spread over a large area; the city of Sarajevo, which has never yet had the Olympic Games; and lastly the city of Sapporo, which hosted the Winter Games 1972 and which is making a bid again for the Games. We therefore have three alternatives which may determine the future policy of the Games; spread over an area, or continually searching for new areas, or revolving the Games around certain key cities on different continents. The decision that you take will therefore be fundamental for the future of the Games.<sup>18</sup>

In the field of the culture the Olympic Winter Games have not had less of a role than the Summer Games. In some cases the opening ceremonies and the proclamation of the winners were the highest cultural entertainment. The spiritual opening ceremony in Squaw Valley in 1960, directed by Walt Disney, is unforgettable, but the magic story woven during the opening and closing of the Lillhammer Games was the dream of Pierre de Coubertin: promotion of ethical, cultural and educational values of Olympism.

Winter Olympic Games are a linchpin for the development of the economy and tourism in many countries. For instance, the Organizing Committee of the 14<sup>th</sup> Winter Games in Sarajevo in 1984, "helped in building 23 new ski resorts in Bosnia and Hercegovina, as a basis for mass sport and tourism development... and ....9000 new jobs were established."<sup>19</sup> That has not happened only in Yugoslavia, it has happened in each country which was the organizer of the Winter Olympics.

From the political point of view the Olympic Winter Games have not been subjected to the political influences exacted on the Summer Games. Olympic Winter Games in Lake Placid 1980 and Sarajevo 1984 have not been exposed to boycotts like the Summer Games in Moscow and Los Angeles in those same years. When the boycott of the Summer Games harmed the Olympic Spirit, the unity of the Winter Games

mitigated the damages.

Winter sports and the Olympic Winter Games have often been accused as being a destroying influence on the fundamental principles of the Olympic Movement. There were many discussions of the problems of amateurism in winter sports and in the Olympic Winter Games. They commenced in 1935 over the exclusion from the Games of the ski teachers and the athletes (German team) who had been training together for a long period of time. Austria and Switzerland withdrew their teams from the Games in Garmisch Partenkirchen in 1936. As a result, the International Ski Federation planned to organize a separate Championship in Oslo in 1940, and withdraw skiing sports from the Olympic Winter Games.

The attitude of Avery Brundage, President of I.O.C. from 1925 to 1972, toward the Olympic Winter Games was the subject of many comments and criticism. Brundage was a representative of the idea of pure amateurism in the Olympic Movement. He was extremely consistent in his opinion and principles, and attacked the winter sports and the Winter Games as a most dangerous practice in the destruction of Olympic Principles. Before Grenoble, on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1968, Brundage said: "The Games have become big business and the Olympic atmosphere has departed."<sup>20</sup> After the Olympic Winter Games in Grenoble in 1968, Brundage sent a letter to the IOC members in which he wrote: "Winter sports can never be universal as Olympics should be, and it is even doubtful that they are widely practiced in 25 countries as required by Olympic rules."<sup>21</sup>

Avery Brundage often railed against the forces of commercialism and professionalism, more rampant in winter sports, he thought, than in the others sports. With regard to the principles of amateurism, however, there were no differences between athletes from the American colleges and universities, Soviet "master of sports" or Yugoslavian "nonamateurs", and Jean-Claude Killy, Katarina Witt or Karl Schranz. In this respect winter sports and the Olympic Winter games were the predecessor of the today's situation, because they were more open than the others.

I have not mentioned many other aspects such as the extreme increase in income from the Winter Games TV rights, the role of the Olympic flame, advancements of Sport Medicine, etc., but enough to make the conclusion that the role of Olympic Winter

Games in the Olympic Movement was, and is, very large and very important.

### **The Opinions of the Participants of the Centennial Olympic Congress about the Winter Olympic Games**

During the Centennial Olympic Congress, with the special questionnaire (see Appendix II) participants were asked for their opinion of the contribution of the Olympic Winter Games (and other various questions). Some 306 individuals responded (18 IOC members; representatives of 137 NOCs; 36 ISFs ; 3 COJO; 6 of the candidate cities bidding for OWG; 31 athletes; 27 journalists; and 48 others).

Without detailed analyses I present some very short comments drawn from the data presented in *Table 2* (Appendix I).

With respect to question #1, as you can see by the tabulated results of the survey, a far greater percentage of respondents felt that the Winter Games of the future will be a much stronger factor in spreading the Olympic idea than has been the case in the past, and, in fact, might well come to rival the Summer Games as purveyors of Olympic consciousness.

With respect to question #2, again supported by the data a far larger number of respondents felt that the big winner in a host country's agenda for putting on the Winter Games is the development of winter sports in that country, rather than cultural or political considerations.

With respect to question #3, as the data shows, the survey respondents predict that the Winter Games will grow in size, that is, in terms of numbers of sports, as well as in terms of a greater number of countries participating in them.

With respect to question #4, the data seems to predict that "things will go on about as they have in the past, with very little change in devastation of the environment, increasing enlargement of the Games, or in the incidence of doping."

With respect to question #5, the factor which stands out in the data is that a goodly percentage of the respondents were against the limitation of participants from each country as a measure of cutting down on the size of the Games.

With respect to question #6, the data strongly supports the idea that events for disabled athletes should become a part of the Winter Games.

### **Conclusions**

The fact that the Olympic Winter Games have their own four year cycles, occurring **between** the Summer Olympic cycle, increases their possibility to contribute to the development of the Olympic Movement. Before Lillehammer, the Winter Olympics were a kind of prelude to the Summer Games. Now, they are something different, something that appears as a separate factor contributing to the Olympic Movement in the whole. With their sports and cultural program, with their atmosphere before, during and after, Olympic Winter Games, in general, are not less important than Summer Games.

In the future it should be expected that the contribution of Olympic Winter Games in overall spreading of Olympic spirit in all countries will be great. Modern technology makes it possible to build facilities for the sports on ice everywhere, so, in the near future, it should be expected that the participation of athletes from countries reflecting various climates will increase.

Which new winter sports or disciplines will be included in the program depends about their development in contemporary society. Maybe skeleton, single bobsled, snowcycle, skiflying or.....?

Finally, in London in 1908 when figure skating was included in the Olympic program, who could have dreamt about snowboard as an event which will be held in 2002?

### **Endnotes**

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2. Recla, J., "The Winter Games: An essential part of the Olympic Games," in Report of The International Olympic Academy-Ninth Session, 1969. Athens-Lausanne, 1970, p. 138.
3. Kruger, A., "The History of the Olympic Winter Games," in: Proceedings of the ISHPES Seminar, Lillehammer, 1994, p. 107.
4. Flower, R., The History of skiing and other winter sports, Methuen: Toronto-New York, 1977, pp. 68-75.
5. Kruger, 101-122.
6. Kruger, p. 107.

7. Muller, N., One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses 1894-1994, Lausanne, 1994, p. 98.
8. Renson, R., "Why winter sports at the Antwerp Olympic Games 1920," Lillehammer, pp. 141-153.
9. Zecevic, L., "The Beginning of Modern Winter Sports in Sarajevo," in: Breuer, H., Naul, R., (eds.): Fests für Hans-Geore Jöhn zum 65. Geburtstag. Academia Verlag: Sankt Augustin, 1995, p. 298.
10. Hodler, M., "The Winter Olympic Games," in: Report of the International Olympic Academy, Fifteenth Session, 1975. Athens-Lausanne, 1976, p. 190.
11. Cited in Kruger, p. 108.
12. Recla, p. 139.
13. Cited in Kruger, p. 109.
14. Eyquem, M.T., "The founder of the Modern Games," in: Lord Killian & Rodda, J. (Eds.), The Olympic Games, MacMillan: New York, 1976, pp. 139-140.
15. Avery Brundage Collection, Box 41. Norbert Muller in One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses has not made comments about the winter sports which was the subject of the Technical Olympic Congress. In Reglements des Congres Olympiques, Comite Olympique Bulgare: Sofia, 1970, pp. 73-74.
16. Staubo, J., "Winter Olympic Games," in Report of the International Olympic Academy-Ninth Session, 1969. pp. 131-132.
17. Hodler, M., "The Winter Olympic Games," in Report of the International Olympic Academy-Fifteenth Session, 1975, p. 194.
18. Lord Killian's Speeches. Lausanne: IOC., 1985, pp. 82-83.
19. Organizing Committee of the XIVth Winter Olympics: Final Report, Sarajevo, 1984, p. 192.
20. Avery Brundage Collection, Box 41.
21. Ibid.

## Appendix I

Table 2

NUMBER OF THE CHOICES												
Q #	A			B			C			D		
1	147	149	10	234	50	28						
2	230	71	5	101	148	55						
3	201	44	61	235	50	21	250	111	23			
4	72	103	131	138	104	64	112	132	62			
5	23	119	164	64	139	103	118	75	113	33	78	195
6	164	76	66									