

# *The Development and Evolution of the Olympic Games from the Perspective of Sports History*

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**Abstract:** This study explores the development and evolution of the Olympic Games from the perspective of sports history. Firstly, it introduces the origin of the Olympic Games and the development of the ancient Greek Olympic Games, including their organization, events, influence, and decline. This article reviews the reconstruction and development of the modern Olympics, focusing on Pierre de Coubertin's reconstruction of the modern Olympics and the hosting of the first modern Olympics, and explores the development and reform of the modern Olympics. Then it analyzed the global impact and economic development of the Olympics, including its impact on international exchanges and cooperation, the host country's economy, and the impact of urban and infrastructure construction. Next, we will explore the role of the Olympics in social impact and cultural exchange, including its promotion of sports, world peace and cultural exchange, and its impact on international sports organizations and rules.

## 1. Introduction

The Olympics, as one of the most important sports events in the world, has a long history and profound influence. From the Olympic Games of ancient Greece to the modern International Olympic Games, the Olympic Games have undergone thousands of years of development and evolution. By studying the Olympic Games, we can better understand the inheritance and development of human sports culture<sup>[1]</sup>.

## 2. The Origin and Development of the Ancient Olympic Games

### 2.1 The Origin of the Ancient Greek Olympic Games

The origin of the ancient Greek Olympic Games can be traced back to the 8th century BC, with the earliest Olympic Games being held in the Holy Land of Olympia, ancient Greece. At first, the Olympics were just an ancestor worship event held between the two city-states of Elis and Pisa on the Peloponnese Peninsula, with only sprints and only males allowed to participate.

As time passed, other city-states gradually joined the Olympics, and competition events gradually increased, including long-distance running, armed running, wrestling, boxing, horse racing, chariot racing, and grid skills. The Olympics became a grand event to celebrate victory, showcase courage and competitive spirit. Participants work hard to train and participate in

competitions for glory and reward.

The hosting of the Olympic Games is closely related to the wars and systems of ancient Greece. In terms of war, ancient Greece was a city-state state, with frequent conflicts and wars between various city-states. In order to prepare troops and cultivate soldiers, various city-states began to attach importance to sports training and made sports competitions an important means of cultivating troops. This also stimulated the enthusiasm of the ancient Greek people to participate in sports activities<sup>[2]</sup>.

In addition, the slavery system of ancient Greece also promoted the emergence of the Olympic Games. In ancient Greek society, there was a clear division of labor, with slaves responsible for most of society's labor, while slave owners had more time to engage in sports, technology, art, and cultural activities. The slavery system created vast wealth for ancient Greece and also promoted the development of sports<sup>[3]</sup>.

## **2.2 Organization and Events of the Ancient Greek Olympic Games**

The ancient Greek Olympic Games were the earliest form of Olympic history, and their organization and events were different from those of the modern Olympics. The ancient Olympic Games originated in 776 BC and were held every 4 years, with a shorter duration of only 1 day. With the increase of competition events, starting from the 22nd edition, the competition time has been extended to 3 days. With the addition of the opening ceremony, closing ceremony, and celebration activities, the total duration of the competition is 5 days.

The events of the ancient Olympic Games were mainly divided into athletics, wrestling, pentathlon, boxing, horse racing, and wrestling. Athletics has always been the core event of the Olympic Games, with only track running at the beginning, and later added middle and long distance running. The competition rules are relatively simple, with no requirements for time or scoring, just comparing the order of the contestants. The ancient Greeks were very enthusiastic about running, believing that running could increase wisdom, strength, and health<sup>[4]</sup>.

Pentathlon is a comprehensive event of the ancient Olympic Games, different from modern athletics. In ancient pentathlon competitions, athletes were accompanied by flute music and held dumbbells. The discus was actually a stone cake, and the javelin was a practical weapon of the time. Wrestling competitions are held next to the temple, and participants must be the winners of the first four events and must win first place to become the champion of the pentathlon. In the ancient Olympics, Spartans had always had an advantage in this event.

## **2.3 The influence and decline of the ancient Olympic Games**

The ancient Olympic Games had a wide impact on ancient Greek society. Firstly, it shaped the ancient Greeks' love for sports and emphasized their reverence for human physical and spiritual power. The Olympics gathered people from different Greek city states, promoting communication and interaction between them, and helping to enhance mutual understanding and friendship. Secondly, the ancient Olympic Games were a stage for competition and display of strength among city-states. Participating city-states competed for the glory and honor of the Olympics, showcasing their strength and dignity through the performance of athletes, bringing great honor to the city-states. In addition, the ancient Olympics had a profound impact on Greek culture, reflecting the values of perfect physical and spiritual strength. The athletes participating in the Olympics were regarded as heroes and role models, and their courage, perseverance, and discipline became an important part of culture.

However, the ancient Olympics ultimately declined and disappeared. Political, economic, social, and cultural factors all contribute to its decline. Wars and conflicts between city states, political

instability, reduced financial support, changes in religion and belief, as well as changes in social structure and identity, all had an impact on the rise and fall of the ancient Olympic Games. The lessons of the decline of the ancient Olympic Games are profound, highlighting the fragility of sports events in society and culture, while also providing important historical experience for the development of today's Olympic movement and other sports activities<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **3. Reconstruction and Development of the Modern Olympic Games**

#### **3.1 Pierre de Coubertin and the Reconstruction of the Modern Olympics**

Pierre de Coubertin is considered one of the founders of the modern Olympic movement. He devoted himself to rebuilding and developing the Olympic Movement from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, making it one of the most important sports events in the world today.

Coubertin's vision is to recreate the ancient Greek Olympic spirit and integrate it into modern society. He successfully organized the first Modern Olympic Games in 1896, marking the reconstruction of the modern Olympics. This historic event attracted athletes from different countries to participate and promoted the spirit of friendship, unity, and competition<sup>[6]</sup>.

Coubertin proposed the core principles of the Olympic movement, including the motto of "faster, higher, stronger", as well as symbolic ceremonies such as the Olympic flag, oath, and medal. He also advocates for Olympic education, emphasizing the positive impact of sports on personal character and social values.

Over time, the modern Olympic Games have continued to grow and attract more countries and sports to participate, while also promoting gender equality, multiculturalism, and sustainability. The legacy of Coubertin still holds an important position in today's Olympic movement, and the Olympic concept continues to set an example for the global sports community, promoting peace, friendship, and unity.

#### **3.2 Hosting of the First Modern Olympic Games**

The first Modern Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece in 1896, marking the great restart of the modern Olympic movement. This historic event was achieved through the vision and efforts of one of the founders of the Olympic movement, Pierre de Coubertin. The first modern Olympic Games attracted nearly 300 athletes from 14 countries, who participated in 9 different competitive events. The athletes demonstrated their talents and perseverance on the consolidated arena of the ancient Greek Olympic site. The successful hosting of this event not only reflects the combination of classical and modern sports, but also opens the door to a new era of international sports competitions. In the first modern Olympic Games, traditional sports such as athletics, weightlifting, and horse racing were warmly welcomed, and these events remain the core of the Olympics to this day. In addition, the cultural elements of Greece have also deeply influenced this event, including the solemn ceremonies of the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as the athletes' oaths. The first modern Olympic Games set an example for the international sports community and laid the foundation for the Olympic movement. This historic event promoted the core values of the Olympic movement, including friendship, unity, and competitive spirit, becoming the starting point of modern Olympic movement and laying a solid foundation for the future Olympic Games<sup>[7]</sup>.

#### **3.3 Development and Reform of the Modern Olympic Games**

Since its establishment in 1894, the modern Olympic Games have undergone continuous development and reform to adapt to the constantly changing global sports and social environment.

These reforms have promoted the prosperity and increasing influence of the Olympic Games. An important reform is the expansion of the Olympic Games. New competitive events have been introduced to reflect the diversity and inclusiveness of modern society, including women's sports, Paralympics, cricket, skateboarding, surfing, and more. This makes the Olympics more representative and can attract athletes and spectators from different cultures and backgrounds. In addition, the Olympic Games also focused on sustainability and environmental protection, adopting a series of measures to reduce negative impacts on the environment. The host city pays more attention to sustainable venue construction and energy utilization to reduce carbon emissions. The reform also includes anti-doping policies to ensure fairness in competitions and the health of athletes. At the same time, the application of modern technology has also enhanced the fairness and entertainment of competitions<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **4. The Global Impact and Economic Development of the Olympic Games**

### **4.1 The impact of the Olympic Games on communication and cooperation among countries**

The Olympic Games have a profound impact on a global scale and play a positive role in communication and cooperation among countries. Firstly, the Olympics provide a common platform for countries to gather athletes, officials, and spectators from different countries, establish connections, and promote cultural exchange. This helps to eliminate cultural differences, promote friendship and mutual understanding. In addition, the Olympics also provide opportunities for governments of various countries to work together to solve global problems. The International Olympic Committee, Olympic host cities, and governments of various countries usually cooperate to ensure the smooth conduct of competitions, including safety, infrastructure construction, and environmental protection. This cooperation helps to strengthen the coordination and unity of the international community to jointly address global challenges such as climate change and epidemic outbreaks. The Olympics also inspire countries to strengthen sports diplomacy and improve international relations through sports cooperation and exchanges.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **4.2 The impact of the Olympic Games on the host country's economy**

The impact of the Olympics on the host country's economy is usually twofold. On the one hand, the Olympics can bring economic benefits because it attracts a large number of international tourists, media, and investment. This has promoted the growth of multiple sectors such as tourism, catering, and hotels, created job opportunities, and increased the city's visibility, attracting foreign investment. On the other hand, the hosting of the Olympics usually requires large-scale infrastructure investment, such as sports venues, transportation systems, and housing. These expenditures may put pressure on the country's financial situation, especially during the preparation and hosting period. In addition, some host countries may face the cost of maintaining these facilities in the later stages.

### **4.3 The impact of the Olympic Games on urban and infrastructure construction**

The Olympic Games have a profound impact on cities and infrastructure construction. As the host city of the Olympic Games, hosting this huge international event usually requires large-scale infrastructure construction and modernization, including sports venues, residential areas, transportation networks, communication systems, etc. This infrastructure construction can provide the following impacts for cities:

**Infrastructure improvement:** The Olympics forced cities to invest in upgrading and improving their infrastructure. Newly built sports venues and transportation facilities typically enhance the

modernity and convenience of cities, benefiting both residents and businesses.

**Tourism and Economy:** The Olympics have attracted a large number of tourists and media, increased the city's visibility, and promoted tourism and commercial activities. This helps to enhance the economic vitality and attractiveness of the city.

**Heritage benefits:** The sports facilities and infrastructure left behind by the Olympics are usually used for other sports and cultural activities after the competition, creating long-term heritage benefits for the city.

## **5. The Social Impact and Cultural Exchange of the Olympic Games**

### **5.1 The role of the Olympic Games in promoting sports**

The Olympic Games have a huge driving force on sports. Firstly, the Olympics provide a unique opportunity for athletes from around the world to pursue excellence and train hard to compete for Olympic medals. The incentive effect of this competition has driven many countries to increase investment in sports training and development, improving the level of athletes. Secondly, the Olympics provide a platform for showcasing and promoting emerging sports, bringing some less well-known sports to the international stage. This helps to attract more people to participate in various sports activities, promoting sports diversity and development worldwide. In addition, the Olympics emphasized Olympic values such as friendship, unity, and fair competition, and emphasized the importance of these values through sports. This has a positive impact on the moral and ethical development of sports, encouraging athletes and spectators to maintain a positive attitude both on and off the field.

### **5.2 The role of the Olympic Games in promoting world peace and cultural exchange**

The Olympic Games play an important role in promoting world peace and cultural exchange. Firstly, the Olympics provide an important platform for cross-border communication, attracting athletes, officials, and spectators from all over the world to gather together. This international exchange helps to promote mutual understanding, friendship, and respect, and helps to reduce international tensions. Secondly, the Olympics encourage the celebration and expression of cultural diversity. At the opening and closing ceremonies, different countries showcased their cultures, traditions, and values, which helps to deepen cultural exchanges between countries and promote mutual understanding and respect among cultures around the world. In addition, the Olympics promote Olympic values, including friendship, unity, and fair competition. The emphasis on these values helps to reduce conflicts and differences, and promotes global peace and cooperation<sup>[10]</sup>.

### **5.3 The impact of the Olympic Games on international sports organizations and rules**

The Olympic Games have had a profound impact on international sports organizations and rules. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), as the highest governing body of the Olympic movement, not only promoted the development of the Olympics, but also had a profound impact on the operation and governance of international sports. The leadership position of the IOC and the Olympic Charter stipulate the code of conduct and values of international sports organizations. The competition events and rules of the Olympic Games also greatly affect the standardization of various sports events. The uniformity of rules enables athletes from various countries to compete globally, promoting fair competition and the development of sports skills. In addition, the successful hosting of the Olympics has also sparked more attention and improvement from international sports organizations in areas such as anti-doping policies, sports safety, event preparation, and media

coverage. These reforms contribute to improving the quality and fairness of international sports activities.

The Olympic Games have had a broad impact on international sports organizations and rules, promoting the globalization and standardization of sports, while also emphasizing the popularization and dissemination of Olympic values. These impacts make international sports healthier, fairer, and more organized, providing better opportunities for athletes and sports enthusiasts worldwide.

## 6. Conclusion

The evolution of the Olympic Games holds an important position in the history of sports. From the origin of ancient Greece to modern reconstruction, the Olympic Games have become one of the world's largest sports events, promoting world peace, friendship, and the development of sports. Over time, the Olympics have continued to expand, reform, and diversify, reflecting the constantly changing needs of sports and society. In the future, the Olympics will continue to leverage its unique global influence to promote sports development, cultural exchange, and international cooperation, while also focusing on sustainability, anti-doping policies, and sports ethics to ensure that it maintains its important position in a constantly changing world.

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