

History of equestrian events at the Games of the V Olympiad



JEUX OLYMPIQUES
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Games of the V Olympiad Stockholm (SWE), 5 May – 27 July 1912

A MODEL OF EFFICIENCY

The 1912 Olympic Games, held in Stockholm, were opened on Saturday 6 July 1912 by King Gustav V. They were a model of efficiency and set the standard for organisation for decades to come. For the first time new technology was used with **electronic timing devices** for the track and field events and the use of the **first public address system**. The success of these Games allowed the Olympic Movement to survive the interruption caused by World War I.

Games Facts & figures

- For the first time, competitors came from all five continents.
- **28** nations
- **2,407** athletes (48 women; 2,359 men)
- **14** sports
- **487** foreign officials
- **260** foreign journalists
- a total of **327,288** spectators in the Olympic Stadium

FINANCING THE GAMES

For the financing of the Games the Swedes found the unique formula that each sport had independent control of its economy. Allocations from the Swedish government or from general sports authorities were only granted to the various sport committees if a fixed budget was not exceeded. In the case of the equestrian competitions, the budget was set at Crowns 100,000 (=£5,550 or \$27,750). The final figures were: **income 123,539 Crowns; expenses 103,992 Crowns**.

It is interesting to note that in 1912 a franchising system was already in place. Swedish firms could buy sole rights in connection with the Games, such as the sale of postcards, the hiring-out of field-glasses, or the sale of fans. All in all the fifth Olympic Games had a total income of Crowns 2.5 million (=£136,082 or =\$680,410). The profit was Crowns 4,646.51.

FIRST OLYMPIC EQUESTRIAN EVENTS

The Games of the V Olympiad were awarded to Stockholm, whose bid contained a proposal to hold equestrian events. It is interesting to note that in the official Stockholm report on the equestrian events it is stated that, "It was first at the Olympic Games of Stockholm that horse riding competitions were placed on the programme of the modern Olympiads."

It was the Master of the Horse to the Swedish King and IOC member, Count Clarence von Rosen, who since 1906 had begun pushing for the inclusion of the horse in the Olympic Games. By the inclusion of military representatives, he argued, the Olympic Games would be strengthened and the various governments would show more interest. Baron de Coubertin and many IOC members were supportive and asked von Rosen to present a proposal for horse competitions. The programme included prize riding (dressage), a riding-pentathlon and jeu de rose.

The organisers of the 1908 Olympic Games in London were responsive and agreed to place horse-riding competitions on the programme of 1908. However, the British Olympic Council was not able to arrange the horse-riding competitions in the stadium.

Consequently the newly-created Olympia Horse Show was contacted and agreed to hold the competitions in the Olympia Hall if six nations would enter at least four representatives. When eight nations entered a total of 88 competitors, the Olympia board found itself unable to carry out the programme.

TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY ... PRIZE MONEY TO GENTLEMEN RIDERS?

After Stockholm was given the task of organising the 1912 Olympic Games, the inclusion of horse riding was undisputed. It was von Rosen's home country and as Royal Equerry he was a very influential personality. There was, however, one matter to be clarified: should prize money be paid out. The Swedish organising committee secured **50,000 crowns** for this purpose. Then, on 11 June 1910, the IOC meeting in Luxembourg determined that only medals and no money prizes were to be awarded at the Games, in all sports. Professionals were excluded from the Games and only **gentlemen riders** were allowed - the definition of a gentleman rider being left to the regulations of the participating countries.

NEW PROGRAMME

The Swedish Organising Committee realised that only a few international federations existed and, consequently, there were few universally accepted rules. They adopted the following procedure: if there were rules of an international sports federation or if there were rules adopted internationally, they would be used, such as for cycling, football, tennis, swimming or yachting. If such universally accepted rules did not exist, such as in horse riding, the Swedish organising committee would draw up the rules for the Games of 1912.

Consequently, Count Von Rosen re-thought the Olympic equestrian programme and came up with the **three discipline set-up still in force today**: Dressage, Eventing and Jumping. Von Rosen ignored driving, polo, vaulting and endurance riding. He also discarded the then very popular high-jump competition because it was mostly professional riders who were involved.

Equestrian facts & figures

- **10** nations (Belgium, Chile, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Norway, Russia, Sweden, USA)
- **62** riders / **70** horses
- **88** entries (40 in Jumping; 21 in Dressage; 27 in Eventing)
- The two days of equestrian sport in the Olympic Stadium (16 July 1912 - Jumping of Eventing and Individual Jumping; 17 July 1912 - Dressage of Eventing and Team Jumping) attracted **17,250** and **9,881** spectators respectively.
- It took two years - 1910 and 1911 - to construct the new brick-built Olympic Stadium, which, 44 years and 78 years later, served for the 1956 Olympic Equestrian Games and the 1990 FEI World Equestrian Games respectively.
- Sweden and Germany fielded full teams in all disciplines. Six other countries - Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Norway and the USA - sent a limited number of riders and horses, who were often used in two or even all three disciplines. Russia had a six-man jumping team and one dressage rider, while Chile delegated two officers who were at that time at the German cavalry school in Hannover.

JUMPING (40 riders from eight nations)

There were separate competitions for the individual and team medals, although both were over the same course of 15 obstacles, four of which had to be jumped twice. There were 29 jumping efforts. The maximum height was 1.40m, maximum width 4.00m, and speed 400 m/min.

Six riders per country were allowed in the individual competition.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Jean Cariou (FRA)	Mignon
2. Silver	Rabod W. von Kröcher (GER)	Dohna
3. Bronze	Emmanuel de Blommaert (BEL)	Clonmore

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Sweden	Gustaf KILMAN (Gätan), Frederik ROSENCRANTZ (Drabant), Carl Gustaf LEWENHAUPT (Medusa), Hans VON ROSEN (Lord Iron)
2. Silver	France	DUFOURT D'ASTAFORT (Amazone), Jean CARIOU (Mignon), V.MEYER (Allons-Y), G. SEIGNER (Cocotte)
3. Bronze	Germany	Sigismund FREYER (Ultimus), Willi VON HOHENAU (Pretty Girl), Ernst DELOCH (Hubertus), Friedrich Karl VON PREUSSEN (Gibson Boy)

DRESSAGE (21 riders from eight nations)

The 1912 Dressage test did not contain piaffe and passage, but five jumps up to 1.10m. At the end of the programme the horses had to jump a painted cylinder rolling towards them. There were bonus points to be won when the rider held the reins in one hand.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Carl Bonde (SWE)	Emperor
2. Silver	Gustaf A. Boltenstern (SWE)	Neptun
3. Bronze	Hans von Blixen-Finecke (SWE)	Maggie

Medallists – Team

In 1912, 1920, 1924 no team medals were distributed

EVENTING (27 riders from seven nations)

Only 10 years after a *Championnat du Cheval d'Armes* was held for the first time in France, the Olympic "Military" was organised in Stockholm. Only teams of three or four riders were allowed and they had to be officers on their own horses belonging to their army. The competition was held over five days (with one rest day), as follow:

1st day: A: Endurance ride over 55km in 4 hours

Including:

B: Cross-country over 5 km in 15 minutes (12 obstacles)

3rd day: C: Steeplechase over 3500m. in 5 minutes and 50 seconds (10 obstacles)

4th day: D: Jumping over 15 obstacles, up to 1.30m high and 3.00m wide

5th day: E: Dressage

In each of the five phases a maximum of 10 points could be won.

Sweden took the team gold medal ahead of Germany and the United States. Member of the latter was Capt. Guy Henry on Chiswell. In the early thirties General Henry was chief of the US Cavalry and, during the 1932 Olympic Games, president of the FEI.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Axel Nordlander (SWE)	Lady Artist
2. Silver	Harry von Rochow (GER)	Idealist
3. Bronze	Jean Cariou (FRA)	Cocotte

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Sweden	Axel NORDLANDER (Lady Artist), Nils ADLERCREUTZ (Atout), Ernst CASPARSSON (Irmelin), Henric HORN AF AMINNE (Omen)
2. Silver	Germany	Harry VON ROCHOW (Idealist), Eduard VON LUTCKEN (Blue Boy), Richard VON SCHAESBERG (Grundsee), Carl VON MOERS (May Queen)
3. Bronze	USA	Benjamin LEAR (Poppy), John C. MONTGOMERY (Deceive), Guy V. HENRY (Chiswell), Ephraim F. GRAHAM (Connie)

World War I prevented the organisation of the 1916 Olympic Games. When at short notice in 1919, Antwerp, Belgium, accepted to stage the Games of the VII Olympiad in 1920, the 1912 programme, with some alternations, was used.