

History of equestrian events at the Games of the XI Olympiad



Games of the XI Olympiad Berlin (GER), 1 August – 16 August 1936

FIRST MONUMENTAL AND POLITICISED GAMES

The Games of the XI Olympiad were held in Berlin three years after the National-Socialist regime led by Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933 and three years before the outbreak of World War II in 1939. They are best remembered for Adolf Hitler's failed attempt to use sport to prove his theories of Aryan racial superiority. As it turned out, the most popular hero of the Games was the African-American sprinter and long-jumper Jesse Owens, who won four gold medals. During the long jump competition, Owens' German rival, Luz Long, publicly befriended him in front of the Nazis.

The equestrian events, held on the last five days of the 16-day programme, played an important part in the overall running of these first monumental and politically misused Olympic Games.

HUGE CROWDS

The tickets were quite moderately priced: on the three Dressage days they were from two marks standing to eight marks sitting. On endurance day everybody paid two marks. On closing day, with the Eventing jumping, the Nations Cup Jumping and the closing ceremony, the prices were between three and 15 marks. The response was huge: there were, at any given time, between **15,000 and 20,000 spectators for Dressage**. There were **60,000 during endurance day** and **120,000 in the Olympic stadium on closing day**.

Games facts & figures

- **49** nations
- **3,963** athletes (**331** women; **3,632** men)
- **19** sports
- 1936 saw the introduction of the **torch relay**, in which a lighted torch was carried from Olympia to the site of the Games through seven countries- Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany, a total journey of more than 3,000 km.
- The 1936 Olympics were also **the first to be broadcast on a form of television**. Twenty-five large screens were set up in theatres throughout the city, allowing the local people to follow the Games free of charge.

Equestrian facts & figures

- **21** nations (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USA).
- **7** countries had full representation (3x3 riders): Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the USA.
- **127** riders; among them were **two civilian riders**: a Dutch Eventer and Norwegian Jumping rider.
- **133** entries (54 in Jumping; 29 in Dressage; 50 in Eventing)
- Of the 133 horses which competed in Berlin, **24** were German-bred and **23** came from France. A total of **25** horses were Irish or British-bred – it was assumed that 17 of the 25 came from Ireland. The US-team rode eight US-bred horses and a thoroughbred from France. Japan used two Japanese and two Australian-bred horses and one each from Great Britain and France (Uranus).

JUMPING (54 riders from 18 nations)

The course, designed by August Andreae, who also designed the Cross Country, had 13 fences and 20 jumping efforts spread over 1050m. The one double and three triple combinations had to be jumped from both sides. The obstacles were between 130cm and 160cm in height. For the jump-off most obstacles were raised and some distances changed - the water was widened from 5m to 5.50m. For the first time in an Olympic course, the Course Designer had played with distances between fences and the line of the course.

Of the 54 riders representing 18 nations only 38 finished the one-round competition.

The competition was as dramatic as it could be. Individually there were two riders with one knock-down, three with two knocks-downs and five with three. This necessitated two sets of jump-offs; one for victory, the other for the bronze medal. Even more dramatic was the battle for the team medals. Germany won its fifth equestrian gold medal and the sixth was to follow soon after.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Kurt Hasse (GER)	Tora
2. Silver	Henri Rang (ROM)	Delfis
3. Bronze	Jozsef von Platthy (HUN)	Sellö

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Kurt HASSE (Tora), Marten VON BARNEKOW (Nordland), Heinz BRANDT (Alchemist)
2. Silver	Netherland	Johan J. GRETER (Ernica), Jan A. DE BRUINE (Trixie), Henri L.M. VAN SCHAİK (Santa Bell)
3. Bronze	Portugal	José BELTRAO (Biscuit), Marquez DE FUNCHAL (Merle Blanc), Luis MENA E SILVA (Faussette)

DRESSAGE (29 riders from 11 nations)

There were 22 movements to be executed in 17 minutes.

The Dressage competitions were probably the decisive battle between the German and French Dressage concepts, with Sweden in between. Germany won team gold as well as the individual gold and silver medals and France had to be satisfied with team silver ahead of Sweden.

At the age of 28, the Olympic champion, Heinz Pollay, was the youngest of the 29 participants. Kronos, the eight-year old gelding, had been brought up by Otto Lörke; and Absinth, the silver medal horse, was also a Lörke product. The oldest rider was the Austrian retired General Artur von Pongracz, 72 at the time of the Games, previously a participant at the CDI of Turin in 1902 and an Olympic rider in 1924. Of the horses, the youngest was the seven year old Revue, ridden by the Swiss Moser (in 1948 Olympic champion with Hummer). Five horses were eight years old. The four oldest horses were American Lady (16), Teresina (16), Gimpel (17), Csintalan (18).

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Heinz Pollay (GER)	Kronos
2. Silver	Friedrich Gerhard (GER)	Absinth
3. Bronze	Alois Podhajsky (AUT)	Nero xx

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Hermann VON OPPELN-BRONIKOWSKI (Gimpel), Heinz POLLAY (Kronos), Friedrich GERHARD (Absinth)
2. Silver	France	André JOUSSEAUME (Favorite), Gérard DE BALORRE (Débaucheur), Daniel GILLOIS (Nicolas)
3. Bronze	Sweden	Gregor ADLERCREUTZ (Teresina), Sven COLLIANDER (Kal), Folke SANDSTRÖM (Pergola)

EVENTING (50 riders from 19 nations)

Under today's criteria the Olympic three day event of 1936 would be condemned as a total disaster. There were three obstacles which would be unacceptable today especially since heavy rain had fallen the previous day.

Only four teams (of 14) finished the competition, two of them with ludicrously high scores because, at that time, there were no maximum times. Germany took team gold with 676 points. Poland won silver with 991 points, Great Britain won the bronze medal with 9,195 points, and the Czech team were fourth with 18,952 points.

The high scores of the British and the Czechs came about because a horse ran away after a fall and had to be caught. The penalty clock was running with no limit. For a time it even looked as if the second placed Poland would also be disqualified. Capt Kaweckki had broken two ribs on the Cross Country. In the Jumping he made a detour between obstacles 10 and 11 and was disqualified by the jury, thus eliminating the Polish team. Luckily the FEI reinstated them some months later.

In details, the Eventing competition ran as follow:

Dressage: 13 minutes

Endurance: total of 36 km

A: 7 km in 29 min, 10 sec.

B: 4 km in 6 min, 40 sec. 12 obstacles

C: 15 km in 62 min, 30 sec.

D: 8 km in 17 min, 46 sec. 35 obstacles

E: 2 km in 6 min

In the Jumping the obstacles were up to 1.15m. The oxers were up to 1.50m wide; the water jump was 3.50m wide.

Germany won both gold medals.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Ludwig Stubbendorff (GER)	Nurmi
2. Silver	Earl F. Thomson (USA)	Jenny Camp
3. Bronze	Hans Mathiesen Lunding (DEN)	Jason

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Ludwig STUBBENDORFF (Nurmi), Rudolf LIPPERT (Fasan), Konrad VON WANGENHEIM (Kurfürst)
2. Silver	Poland	Henryk ROJCEWICZ (Arlekin III), Stanislaw KAWECKI (Bambino), Severyn KULESZA (Toska)
3. Bronze	Great Britain	Alec V.J. SCOTT (Bob Clive), Edward HOWARD-VYSE (Blue Steel), Richard FANSHAWE (Bowie Knife)

Max von Holzing-Barstett, a Dressage judge at the 1928 Olympic Games, was the president of the equestrian organising committee. He died only three weeks after the closing ceremony.