

# History of equestrian events at the Games of the XXVI Olympiad



CENTENNIAL OLYMPIC GAMES LES JEUX OLYMPIQUES DU CENTENAIRE



Official poster of the Olympic Games of Atlanta 1996

## Games of the XXVI Olympiad Atlanta (USA), 19 July – 4 August 1996

The 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta, the Centennial Olympic Games, got off to a moving start when the cauldron was lit by boxing legend Muhammad Ali. A record-setting 79 nations won medals and 53 won gold.

### THE WELFARE OF THE HORSE COMES FIRST

The heat and humidity expected in Atlanta had led to extensive research and measures to ensure the best possible conditions for the equine athletes were taken. It was found that horses needed three weeks of acclimatisation – seven days to recover from the effects of transport and 14 days of passive acclimatisation to the new climatic conditions. The most significant measure was the installation of 85 misting fans all over the venue, 60 of which were set at the halt boxes on endurance day.

### FORMAT CHANGES

The years leading up to the Atlanta Games saw extensive changes made to the Dressage and Eventing competition formats as well as the creation of an elaborate qualification system in all three disciplines.

Following the IOC's reasoning whereby two medals could not be awarded for the same effort which would have seen Eventing barred from the Olympic Games, in 1994 the FEI proposed to split Eventing at the Olympics into two competitions: team and individual. The IOC accepted.

### QUALIFICATION PROCEDURES

For the first time quotas were established in the three Olympic equestrian disciplines. A maximum of 75 riders with 105 horses could qualify in Jumping; 50 riders with 50 horses in Dressage; and 100 riders with as many horses in Eventing. The defending team champions and the host country were pre-qualified in all three disciplines. The remaining starting places had to be earned at the FEI World Equestrian Games™ 1994, the FEI European Championships 1995, and the Pan American Games 1995. For the countries of Africa, Asia and Oceania special qualification procedures were established.

### Games facts & figures

- **197** nations
- **10,318** athletes (3,512 women; 6,806 men)
- **26** sports
- **47,466** volunteers
- **15,108** media (5,695 written press, 9,413 broadcasters)
- For the first time in Olympic history, all 197 recognised National Olympic Committees were represented at the Games.
- **Sailor Hubert Raudaschl (AUT) became the first person ever to compete in nine Olympics.**

### Equestrian facts & figures

- **30** nations (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherland, New Zealand, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA)
- **228** entries (82 in Jumping; 49 in Dressage; 97 in Eventing)
- For the first time the **Olympic Jumping courses were designed by a woman**, Linda Allen.

- The **Grand Prix Freestyle to Music (Kür)** was used as the final competition in Dressage for the first time.

## JUMPING (82 riders from 24 nations)

Linda Allen was the first woman to design an Olympic Jumping course. Inspired by the beautiful obstacles used in Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988 and the FEI World Equestrian Games™ 1990, she chose different themes for the three competitions. The theme of the first qualifying competition was "Natural beauty of the Deep South" and of the second competition "Go West". For the individual final, Allen combined the best features from the first two competitions along with fences symbolising the Olympic spirit.

Nineteen countries took part in the team competition and all continued to the second round. Germany was in the lead from the very beginning. The German riders added only time penalties to their score in the second competition finishing in first place ahead of the USA and Brazil.

Germany's Ulrich Kirchhoff won a second gold medal in the individual competition. Seven riders, with four points each, had to jump off for silver and bronze. Alexandra Ledermann, first to go, went clear in 41.46 sec. The next three riders, Simon, Billington and Miranda, all had knock-downs before Willi Melliger on Calvaro went faster than Ledermann scoring a clear round in 38.07 sec. The remaining two riders, Fäh and Tops, had knock-downs. Thus, it was silver for Melliger and bronze for Ledermann.

### Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Ulrich Kirchhoff (GER)	Jus de Pommes
2. Silver	Willi Melliger (SUI)	Calvaro
3. Bronze	Alexandra Ledermann (FRA)	Rochet M

### Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Lars NIEBERG (For Pleasure), Franke SLOOTHAAK (Joly), Ulrich KIRCHHOFF (Jus de Pomme), Ludger BEERBAUM (Ratina)
2. Silver	USA	Anne KURSINSKI (Eros), Leslie BURR-HOWARD (Extreme), Peter LEONE (Legato), Michael MATZ (Rhum)
3. Bronze	Brazil	Alvaro MIRANDA NETO (Aspen), André JOHANNPETER (Calei), Luiz Felipe AZEVEDO (Cassiana), Rodrigo PESSOA (Tomboy)

## DRESSAGE (49 riders from 18 nations)

In the Grand Prix Isabell Werth and Gigolo took an early lead over Anky van Grusven on Bonfire. In the Grand Prix Special, featuring 25 starters, the Dutch rider reversed the order winning with 48 points ahead of Werth. After been used with great success in the

newly created FEI World Cup™ Dressage, the Grand Prix Freestyle to Music (Kür) made its Olympic debut and was used as the ultimate decider. Isabell Werth scored 83.01% clearly outshining van Grunsven on 79.60%. The bronze medal went to German-born Sven Rothenberger who, after marrying a Dutch woman, Gonnellen Gordijn, who finished 16<sup>th</sup> in Atlanta, had changed nationality. Husband and wife were both members of the Dutch silver medal team, behind Germany, but ahead of the United States.

### Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Isabell Werth (GER)	Gigolo
2. Silver	Anky van Grunsven (NED)	Bonfire
3. Bronze	Sven Rothenberger (NED)	Weyden

### Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Isabell WERTH (Gigolo), Klaus BALKENHOL (Goldstern), Monica THEODORESCU (Grunox), Martin SCHAUDT (Durgo)
2. Silver	Netherlands	Tineke BARTELS (Barbria), Sven ROTHENBERGER (Weyden), Anky VAN GRUNSVEN (Bonfire), Gonnellen ROTHENBERGER (Dondolo)
3. Bronze	USA	Robert DOVER (Metallic), Michelle GIBSON (Peron), Steffen PETERS (Udon), Guenter SEIDEL (Graf George)

### EVENTING (97 riders from 19 nations)

The strict IOC policy of not allowing two medals for the same effort, forced the FEI to change the format of Olympic Eventing, as follows:

	Team competitions	Individual competition
<b>Dressage</b>	21 July	23 July
<b>Dressage</b>	22 July	24 July
<b>Endurance</b>	23 July	25 July
A Roads and tracks	3,520 m	Same
B Steeplechase	2,760 m	Same
C Roads and tracks	7,700 m	Same
D Cross-country	5,715 m	5,757 m (different course)
<b>Jumping</b>	24 July	26 July

Because of the heat and humidity, the distances were greatly reduced. Instead of the usual total of 26.950m the overall distance in Atlanta was 19,695m. Among the competitors were three children of riders who had competed in the same discipline in Munich 24 years earlier: Alfie, son of Bill Buller (IRL), Virginia McGrath, daughter of Patrick Conolly-Carew (IRL) and Fredirik, son of Jan Jönsson (SWE).

Sixteen countries, all with four riders, took part in the team competition. After Dressage the USA were in the lead, ahead of Great Britain and New Zealand. At the end, it was Australia who took gold for the second time in a row, ahead of the United States and New Zealand.

Thirty-four riders took part in the individual competition on different horses than the ones ridden in the team competition. Blyth Tait on Ready Teddy had been 15<sup>th</sup> after Dressage but with only 5.2 time penalties in the cross-country and a clear Jumping round, they won gold, ahead of fellow countrywoman Sally Clark and Kerry Millikin of USA.

Many riders questioned the two-competition format introduced in Atlanta which was used again in 2000. In 2004, the solution of having two Jumping rounds in use today was set up.

### Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Blyth Tait (NZL)	Ready Teddy
2. Silver	Sally Clark (NZL)	Squirrel Hill
3. Bronze	Kerry Millikin (USA)	Out and About

### Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Australia	Wendy SCHAEFFER (Sunburst), Phillip DUTTON (True Blue Girdwood), Andrew HOY (Darien Power), Gillian ROLTON (Peppermint Grove)
2. Silver	USA	David O'CONNOR (Giltedge), Bruce DAVIDSON (Heyday), Karen O'CONNOR (Biko), Jill HENNEBERG (Nirvana)
3. Bronze	New Zealand	Blyth TAIT (Chesterfield), Vaughn JEFFERIS (Bounce), Andrew NICHOLSON (Jagermeister II), Vicky LATTA (Broadcast News)