

History of equestrian events at the Games of the XXIX Olympiad



Beijing 2008



同一个世界 同一个梦想
One World One Dream

2008.8.8 - 2008.8.24
第29届奥林匹克运动会组织委员会
Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad

Games of the XXIX Olympiad Beijing (CH), 8 August – 24 August 2008

On 13 July 2001, Beijing won the right to hold the 2008 Olympic Games when the IOC voted in favour of the Chinese capital at the expense of four other cities (Toronto, Istanbul, Paris and Osaka) bidding to host the Games. The thought that China should get the Olympic Games was barely imaginable at the time of the 2001 Moscow IOC Congress, due to a variety of factors, but hope that the Games would result in improvements dispelled possible reservations.

The construction of all 31 Olympic venues in Beijing was well underway by 2007, with six venues also built outside the capital and 59 training centres. Approximately 40 billion US dollars were spent on the Games.

As the number eight is considered lucky in China, the opening ceremony took place on 08.08.2008 at eight minutes past eight in the evening in the spectacular "Bird's Nest" Olympic stadium. The breathtaking spectacle, which showcased unbelievable precision and stunning special effects, was watched by a global television audience of four billion people.

Hong Kong

An integral part of the Chinese bid had been the proposal to hold the equestrian events in a centre to be constructed outside the capital city. But, three years later, the Organising Committee (BOCOG) declared that they could not guarantee a disease-free zone for the horses near Beijing and proposed that the equestrian events be held in Hong Kong.

There was considerable debate on this issue at the FEI General Assembly in April 2005, but the Chinese proposal to use Hong Kong, with its in-depth knowledge of importing equine superstars – albeit racehorses not sport horses – was recognised as a valid alternative and it was agreed that it would be the headquarters for equestrian sports at the 2008 Olympic Games. The Hong Kong Jockey Club's Sha Tin racecourse was earmarked as the main venue and the Beas River Country Club golf course, some 23km away, selected as the site for the cross country. There were downsides however, most notably the higher temperature and humidity compared to Beijing and also that the Games would take place in the Typhoon season.

Quarantine and bio-security measures included a 60-day pre-export residency in an approved country, compulsory veterinary supervision for 30 days prior to export, 7-day pre-export quarantine and 10-day post-arrival isolation with no permitted contact between Olympic and local horses.

Approximately 300 horses from more than 40 nations accompanied by 140 attendants and 96,000 kgs of equipment travelled to Hong Kong on an estimated 56 flights. The airports of Amsterdam, London Stanstead, New York, Los Angeles and Sydney were designated by BOCOG as hub airports. In Hong Kong the horses stayed in specially constructed state-of-the-art air-conditioned boxes, 3.6 x 3.6 metres, with the temperature set at 23°C.

There were, in the rules for the three equestrian disciplines, one major and several smaller changes:

- **Jumping:** The team competition was now held over two days, over two different courses. Only 35 riders were allowed to ride in the individual final-as compared to 45 in Athens.
- **Dressage:** Only three starters were permitted per country, all to count, allowing more countries to participate. This was certainly the major change, approved by the FEI

General Assembly of 2005. For the individual rankings only the percentages of the Grand Prix Special and the Kür to Music were added together.

- Eventing: The same format was used as that employed for the first time in 2004. The first fall (of rider or horse) incurred elimination – as compared to two falls of the rider previously.

Games facts & figures

- 204 nations
- 10,942 athletes (4,637 women; 6,305 men)
- 28 Sports - 302 events
- 100,000 volunteers (70,000 Olympic Games, 30,000 Paralympic Games)
- 24,562 media (representing 159 countries)

Equestrian facts & figures

- 42 nations (Antigua, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bermuda, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Great Britain, Germany, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Mexico, Norway, New Zealand, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, USA, Venezuela)
- 194 entries (77 in Jumping; 47 in Dressage; 70 in Eventing)

JUMPING

As in Athens, three qualification rounds decided the 35 riders allowed into the individual final. After round one, the USA and Switzerland shared the team lead with 12 penalties each, followed by Sweden (13), Great Britain and Canada (16), the Netherlands and Norway (17) and Germany and Australia (20). Those nine countries qualified for the second round, while Brazil, Ukraine, Hong Kong and China were knocked out.

Things changed over the shorter course in round two. In addition to the nine teams, there were 15 individuals, including those from eliminated teams. Australia and Canada had only three riders. Of the two leaders, the United States added only eight faults to the 12 from the first round. Their 20 faults were equalled by Canada's three-rider team with two clear rounds. So for the first time in the history of the equestrian Olympic Games, there was a head-to-head for team gold. In the jump-off between the two North American neighbours, Canada was clearly at a disadvantage with just three riders and it was Will Simpson who clinched the title for the USA, with their third clear round. Norway took third place.

In the race for individual honours, Norway's Tony Andre Hansen was in the lead with three faults, ahead of Jos Lansink (BEL), McLain Ward (USA), Edwina Alexander (AUS) and Eric Lamaze (CAN) with four faults each.

However, four positives for the prohibited substance Capsaicin were reported just before the final Jumping competition and the following four riders/horses were not allowed to compete in the individual final.

They were (in brackets their placing after the three qualifying competitions):

- Tony Andre Hansen NOR Camiro (1st)
- Denis Lynch IRL Lantinus (8th)
- Bernardo Alves BRA Chupa Chup (27th)
- Christian Ahlmann GER Coster (31st)

The B samples were tested after the final and the results were confirmed at the end of August. All were positive which also meant that Norway would lose their bronze medal. Due to arbitration and appeals as a result of these cases, there was a major delay in redistributing the bronze medal, which was awarded to Switzerland in 2010. A fifth case concerning Rodrigo Pessoa with the horse Rufus who had finished 5th in the individual Jumping final, also became known following the detection of traces of Nonivamide (a synthetic version of Capsaicin).

After the suspension of the four riders, substitutions went down to 47th place, but there were still only 34 starters. Of the seven trying for bronze, Beezie Madden (USA) claimed the medal with the fastest time with a clear round, 12 hundredths of a second ahead of Meredith Michaels-Beerbaum (GER). In the two-way jump-off for gold, Rolf-Göran Bengtsson (SWE) on Ninja and Eric Lamaze (CAN) on Hickstead stopped the clock on exactly the same time, 38.39 seconds, but the Swedish combination hit the final wall to hand gold to Lamaze.

For the first time two designers were responsible for the Olympic courses at Sha Tin: Leopoldo Palacios (who had previously built in 2000) and Steve Stephens.

Medallists - Individual

1. Gold	Eric Lamaze (CAN)	Hickstead
2. Silver	Rolf-Göran Bengtsson (SWE)	Ninja
3. Bronze	Beezie Madden (USA)	Authentic

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	USA	McLain Ward (Sapphire), Laura Kraut (Cedric), Will Simpson (Carlsson vom Dach), Beezie Madden (Authentic)
2. Silver	Canada	Jill Henselwood (Special Ed), Eric Lamaze (Hickstead), Ian Millar (In Style), Mac Cone (Ole)
3. Bronze	Switzerland	Christina Liebherr (No Mercy), Pius Schwizer (Nobless M), Niklaus Schurtenberger (Cantus), Steve Guerdat (Jalisca Solier)

DRESSAGE

Germany and the Netherlands were always going to be the most likely contenders for team gold and many observers of the Dressage scene expected the Dutch to be ahead of the Germans in Hong Kong, but it was not to be, with the Germans taking their 12th team gold by a comfortable margin from the Dutch. Denmark was third, ahead of the United States.

The long-term rivalry between Anky van Grunsven (NED) and Isabell Werth (GER) continued in Hong Kong with victory going to Anky van Grunsven on Salinero, leaving Isabell Werth on Satchmo in second. It was Salinero's superior performance in the Kür to Music that clinched the title for Van Grunsven, who became the first rider to win three individual Olympic titles in any of the three equestrian disciplines.

Twenty-five of the 47 Grand Prix starters qualified for the Grand Prix Special, the first of two competitions to count towards the individual placings. Isabell Werth and Satchmo took the lead ahead of Anky van Grunsven and a much improved Heike Kemmer. Steffen Peters (USA), was fourth on Ravel, ahead of a surprising Alexandra Korelova of Russia and Bernadette Pujals of Mexico. Fifteen made it to the Kür to Music. Here the defending champions, Anky van Grunsven and Salinero were four percentage points ahead of Isabell Werth, enough to offset their deficit from the Special and claim the gold. Heike Kemmer was only fourth in the Kür but that was good enough for the bronze ahead of Steffen

Peters, who finished third in the Kür. Interestingly, all three German and two of the Dutch horses were Hannoverians.

Medallists - Individual

1. Gold	Anky van Grunsven (NED)	Salinero
2. Silver	Isabell Werth (GER)	Satchmo
3. Bronze	Heike Kemmer (GER)	Bonaparte

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Heike Kemmer (Bonaparte), Nadine Capellmann (Elvis Va), Isabell Werth (Satchmo)
2. Silver	Netherlands	Hans Peter Minderhoud (Nadine), Imke Schellekens-Bartels (Sunrise), Anky van Grunsven (Salinero)
3. Bronze	Denmark	Anne van Olst (Clearwater), Princess Nathalie zu Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berlburg (Digby), Andreas Helgstrand (Don Schufro)

EVENTING

In February 2008 the technical delegate, Giuseppe Della Chiesa and the course designer, Michael Etherington-Smith reduced the length of the cross-country course at Beas River, from 5,700m to 4,560 meters (with 39 jumping efforts and an optimum time of 8min), but the teams only learned of the matter at the first briefing in Hong Kong.

Of the 24 nations competing, nine had full teams of five, Brazil fielded four, while the defending Olympic champions, France, were reduced to three when they lost Jean Teulere's Espoir de la Mare and Nicolas Touzaint's Galan de Sauvagere due to lameness. On the cross country, a third French rider, Jean-Renaud Adde was eliminated after a first fall - a rule introduced only two months before.

Of the starters, 44 finished the cross country without obstacle-penalties and 15 more had time penalties. Of those 59, one was eliminated in the jumping and three did not go. Among the starters, there was for the first time, a Chinese rider and a Jamaican rider.

In the team competition, Australia took the lead after dressage, ahead of Germany, the United States and Great Britain. After the cross-country, Australia and Germany had switched places. Great Britain had moved in to third while the USA, after the elimination of Amy Tryon and disappointing rides for Karen O'Connor and Rebecca Holder, were down to seventh. Nothing changed in the medal placings during the jumping, which meant that Germany finally won team gold after missing out in 2004 due to the Bettina Hoy incident.

The individual champion Hinrich Romeike (GER) was seventh after dressage, while the other two individual medal winners, Gina Miles (USA) and Kristina Cook (GBR), were 10th and 13th at this early stage. Romeike had the third fastest time across country to take the lead after the second day. In the team jumping, Romeike and Marius had one knockdown, but were clear second time around to clinch individual gold. Both Gina Miles and Kristina Cook, slightly slower on the cross country than Romeike, were clear in the two jumping rounds to claim silver and bronze. Ingrid Klimke on Abraxxas, in an individual medal position after cross-country, fell back to fifth place after 4 + 5 faults in the two jumping rounds. Mark Todd (NZL), in his come-back after an absence of eight years, finished 17th.

Hinrich Romeike's double gold was all the more impressive because of his amateur status, fitting in his training around his full time job as a dentist in Rendsburg, Germany.

Medallists – Individual

1. Gold	Hinrich Romeike (GER)	Marius
2. Silver	Gina Miles (AUS)	McKinlaigh
3. Bronze	Kristina Cook (GBR)	Miners Frolic

Medallists – Team

1. Gold	Germany	Peter Thomsen (The Ghost of Hamish), Frank Ostholt (Mr Medicott), Andreas Dibowski (Butts Leon), Ingrid Klimke (Abraxxas), Hinrich Romeike (Marius)
2. Silver	Australia	Shane Rose (All Luck), Sonja Johnson (Ringwoud Jaguar), Lucinda Fredericks (Headley Britannia), Clayton Fredericks (Ben Along Time), Megan Jones (Irish Jester)
3. Bronze	Great Britain	Sharon Hunt (Tankers Town), Daisy Dick (Spring Along), William Fox-Pitt (Parkmore Ed), Kristina Cook (Miners Frolic), Mary King (Call Again Cavalier)