

**OLYMPIC GAMES PARIS 1900**  
**2<sup>ND</sup> OLYMPIAD PARIS -May 20<sup>th</sup> – Oct 28<sup>th</sup>, 1900**  
**MICHEL CONSTANT**

No official opening but official ceremony on July 14<sup>th</sup>.

Assigned by *baron Pierre de Coubertin*.

No other candidate city.

No Olympic Flame, the first was lit in 1928 in Amsterdam.

No Olympic Oath, the first was sworn in 1920 in Antwerp.

No medals, but gifts for the winners.

Dreaming of a huge festival in his own country, baron Pierre de Coubertin appeared disappointed in 1900 by the second Games, of which he had taken over the responsibility in Paris in spite of Greece's insistence for a permanent site in. Coubertin was resented by many French sports officials because of his international outlook and because of what was seen as his desire to import English ideas about education into the country. As a result, the 1900 Games almost didn't happen and, when they did happen, they were very poorly organized, There was no Olympic village. The German athletes were forgotten and had no hotel when they arrived. There was no swimming pool. The race basin took place on Seine River, in the town of Asnières, in the North of Paris.

**OLYMPIC GAMES WERE ENTERTAINMENTS INSIDE THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION**

The Olympics were held in conjunction with the Universal Paris Exhibition of 1900. For example, the fencing competition was held as a sort of sideshow in the exhibition's cutlery area.

Paris was preoccupied with the International Exhibition, of which the Eiffel Tower, that was only eleven years old, had been the showpiece. Whilst the baron wanted to use this event as a springboard, it proved more of a hindrance. With no opening or closing ceremonies the Games were spread out between May 20 and October 28, in indifference and confusion, to the four corners of the capital. De Coubertin would say later: "It's a miracle the Olympic movement survived these Games". There were games of confusion, with low number of spectators. The people came for the Exhibition. Nevertheless the sportive result was very good, with a lot of athletes.

### GAMES OF CONFUSION

Swimming, wrestling, and weightlifting were dropped from the program and gymnastics was reduced to a single event, the all-around competition, while shooting was replaced by archery. Cricket, croquet, equestrian events, golf, rowing, rugby, soccer, tennis, and water polo were added, though several of those sports disappeared from the Olympics almost immediately.

Because there were other sporting events held in connection with the exposition, there was a great deal of confusion about which were Olympic contests and which weren't. Some athletes didn't even know they were taking part in the Olympics, while others thought they were in the Olympics when they really weren't.

Example of the confusion, Margaret Abbott of the United States won a nine-hole golf tournament. She is now on record as the first woman ever to win a gold medal but she died in 1955 without knowing it.

The rules were very soft. The Dutch coxed pair suddenly needed a replacement coxswain. A French boy was chosen and the Dutch pair rowed to a close victory. The French boy joined in the victory ceremony and has his photograph taken. Then he disappeared. Years of research have failed to know his name and his age. The photograph shows he could be anywhere 7 to 12.

Another problem was that the French staged some events on Sunday, when a number of American athletes refused to compete because they believed in honoring the Lord's Day, including both entrants in the 1500-meter run and the country's Prix des Nations equestrian team.

### SPORT WAS THE WINNER

Despite those problems 1,225 athletes (491 French), including 19 women for their first appearance, competed in 1900, representing 24 countries, according to the new official IOC numbers, which have been revised several times. Competing in makeshift venues, they took part in 20 different sports. Some of these were open to women, notably tennis and golf. England's Charlotte Cooper became the first woman champion when winning both singles and doubles in the tennis tournament. France discovered golf and built her first green in Compiègne, a town on the North East of Paris.

The star of these Games was America's Alvin Kraenzlein, who excelled on the athletics track. In winning four individual titles in the course of one Game he was to set an unprecedented Olympic standard. Kraenzlein collected gold in the long jump, 60m, and both the 110m and 200m hurdles. Ray Ewry of the U. S. won three now-obsolete events, the standing high jump, standing broad jump, and standing triple jump. Irving Baxter won an unusual double, in the high jump and pole vault, and Walter Tewksbury won gold medals in the 200-meter dash and the 400-meter

hurdles. All told, the United States won 17 of the 23 athletic track and field events, France only one.

Yet, as in Athens, the locals laid down the law, walking away with 96 titles, (26 gold medals, 3 in croquet, 5 in fencing and 4 in shooting). But, with help from athletes such as Kraenzlein, it was the Americans who dominated the athletics events.

In spite of the French Republic's President, M Loubet, being present at a number of events, these Games were neither grand nor striking, and there was not important consequences in architecture and in Parisian's life. They wound up as they had started, with little panache and the hope that St Louis would stage them in. But the 1904 St. Louis Olympics organizers repeated all of the mistakes of Paris, four month and half of duration, lost in the chaos of a World's Fair. France was absent for financial reasons. The first modern and well-organized Olympics Games were held in London in 1908.