

The History of Sports and Competition

Before you read

Match the words on the left with their definitions on the right:

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|-------------------|--|
| 1. To chase | to train an animal to live with humans |
| 2. Tool | to follow sb. or sth. in order to catch them |
| 3. To bring about | an instrument held in hand |
| 4. To domesticate | to make sth. happen, to cause a change |
| 5. Patient | an unusual and impressive event or sight |
| 6. Keen on | able to wait for a long time |
| 7. Spectacle | wanting to do sth., very interested |

The Origins of Sports

It is possible to search for the origins of sports in primitive matters of survival. Some sports and disciplines such as running and throwing can be associated with chasing and killing animals. Tools that were once used for killing have been transformed into symbolic instruments like bats, rackets and clubs.

The coming of farming brought about a revolutionary change in the human way of living – hunting skills were no longer needed. Instead, farmers had to develop the skills of domesticating and feeding animals, they had to be patient and responsible. Nevertheless, people still went hunting for pleasure and excitement.

Greek civilisation is probably the first culture to integrate sports and competition into civic life. Athletic excellence was a heroic, mythical success. The Greek ambition was to win and little attention was paid to such things as “fairness”. Greeks were also very keen on physical perfection and part of the competition was to show the muscular bodies of men, but not women. One of the ideals of Greek games was *kalos kai agathos*.

The games were probably less important as a spectacle than they were as a point around which to organize training. Fitness and strength were important qualities of warriors as much as sports performers.

After you read

Decide whether these statements are true or false:

1. Many sports are similar to the methods people once used for getting food.
2. When people started farming and domesticating animals, they did not want to hunt any more.
3. The best Greek athletes were considered to be chosen by gods.
4. Women were allowed to take part in the Games.
5. The Games in ancient Greece were held primarily to entertain the crowds.

THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Complete the text:

The ancient Olympic Games were held in _____, Greece, every four year from at least _____ BC, until they were banned by Emperor _____ in 389 AD.

Originally, there was only one race, a _____ event, and the prize for the winner was an olive wreath. As time went on, other races and sports were added. A unique feature of the Games was that at the time of the staging, countries which were at _____ laid down their weapons, competed and returned to the war after the event.

The Modern Olympics as we know it was the brain-child of a Frenchman _____. He first proposed the idea of restaging the festivals of ancient Greece. In 1894 an Olympic Congress met in _____ and decided to stage its first Modern Games in Athens in _____.

The Games were not held in the years 1916, _____ and 1944 due to the First and Second World Wars.

TASK

Do you know any interesting facts from the history of the Games? Prepare a few quiz questions for your colleagues.