

# SCHOTT'S OLYMPIC MISCELLANY

## THE BARON



Baron Pierre de Coubertin is credited with creating the modern Olympics. Born in 1863 to an affluent, artistic Parisian family, de Coubertin shunned a military career to become instead an educationalist. He was passionate about harnessing education and sport to improve society, and believed that reviving the ancient Greek tradition of Olympic games would bring about such an improvement. (More cynical commentators have suggested that his real aim was more militaristic: to drag the levels of fitness in France to something approaching

those in Germany.) In 1894 he founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and began organising the first Games in Athens. From the outset, de Coubertin's vision of the Games was grand, if not grandiose. He was in the business of "making men"; to "adhere to an ideal of a higher life, to strive for perfection"; to create "a four-yearly festival of the springtime of mankind". Sadly, this vision of meritocratic excellence did not extend to the fairer sex. De Coubertin declared that "the Olympics with women would be incorrect, unpractical, uninteresting and unaesthetic". After the first successful Olympics in 1896, de Coubertin became president of the IOC, a post he held until 1925. Strangely, after his retirement he did not attend a single summer or winter Olympics (and there were six of them) before he died of a stroke in 1937. In accordance with his last wishes, the Baron was buried in Lausanne but his heart was interred in a monument at the ruins of Olympia.

## SUMMER SPORTS

Aquatics	Canoeing	Hockey	Table tennis
Archery	Cycling	Judo	Taekwando
Athletics	Equestrian	Pentathlon	Tennis
Badminton	Fencing	Rowing	Triathlon
Baseball	Football	Sailing	Volleyball
Basketball	Gymnastics	Shooting	Weightlifting
Boxing	Handball	Softball	Wrestling

## MEDAL SPECIFICATION

The IOC maintains strict guidelines on the manufacture of medals. They must be at least 60mm across and 3mm thick. The gold and silver medals must contain at least 92.5% silver, and at least 6g of 24-carat gold must coat each gold medal. Bronze medals are made of copper, zinc, tin and a small amount of silver. Since 1928, the front side of every medal has featured a picture of Nike, the Greek goddess of victory, sitting in a horse-drawn chariot and holding a laurel wreath above her head. A Roman amphitheatre is also pictured. For Athens 2004, a new design has been agreed that echoes the Greek origins of the Games. Now, instead of a Roman amphitheatre, the Greek panathenic stadium used in the first Olympics in Athens 1896 will be depicted. The illustration of Nike will also be altered, based now on a sculpture by Greek artist Paionios of Chalkidiki from 421BC. The reverse of every medal is unique to each Olympic Games and is designed by the host city.

Conceived, written, and designed by

BEN SCHOTT

## THE OLYMPIC FLAG



According to de Coubertin, the Olympic flag, with its five interlaced rings "represents the five continents of the world, united by Olympism, while the six colours are those that appear on all the national flags of the world at the present time." (Although it is an error to assume that any one colour stands for a particular continent.) The flag was first flown at an Olympic stadium in 1920.

## CONSTANT SPORTS

Only five sports have been contested at every Olympics since 1896:  
*athletics · cycling · fencing · gymnastics · swimming*

## THE MASCOTS

year	name	description
1968	Schuss	little red-faced man on skis
1972	Waldi	blue, yellow and orange dachshund
1976	Amik	a beaver
1976	Schneemann	snowman with big hands & carrot nose
1980	Misha	Russian bear
1980	Roni	sporty blue racoon
1984	Sam	eagle dressed in American regalia
1984	Vucko	a cross-looking wolf
1988	Hodori	tiger wearing a traditional Korean hat
1988	Hidy & Howdy	brother & sister polar bears
1992	Cobi	a weird-looking cartoon dog
1992	Magique	blue star-shaped "snow-imp"
1994	Haakon & Kristin	children from Norwegian folklore
1996	Izzy (Whatizit)	a random, freakish blue creature*
1998	Sukki, Nokki, Lekki & Tsukki	multi-coloured snow-owls
2000	Ollie, Syd & Millie	kookaburra, platypus & echidna
2002	Powder, Coal & Copper	hare, coyote & black bear
2004	Phevos & Athena	cartoon brother & sister



Sam



Powder



Izzy\*

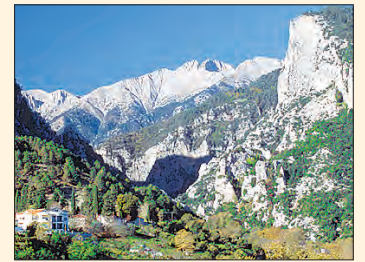
\* "A little mutant monstrosity that was born in the toxic dump of somebody's imagination" - the analysis of the *Los Angeles Times*.

## OLYMPIC ART

Between 1906-1948 an artistic competition ran alongside the Olympic Games. Prizes were awarded for architecture, sculpture, painting, music and literature. The entries had to be related to or inspired by sport. In 1912 the literature prize went to a poem entitled *Ode to Sport*, by Georg Hohrod & Martin Eschbach. It was later revealed that the poem had actually been written by Baron de Coubertin himself. He claimed to have entered the work under a pseudonym so the prize could be awarded purely on merit, though reading the poem ("O Sport, you are Fecundity!") one doubts this.

## MOUNT OLYMPUS

Mount Olympus (40 05N 22 21E) is the highest peak in a range of Greek mountains which lie on the border of Macedonia and Thessaly. In Greek mythology, Olympus was the home of the gods, and the location of Zeus's elaborate mansion. It was atop Olympus that the gods assembled to partake of nectar and ambrosia.



## ASTERIX & THE OLYMPICS

During his adventures at the Olympic games, Asterix the Gaul won the 24 *stade* race after all of the dastardly Roman athletes were disqualified for taking a magic potion. Asterix had foresworn any of Getafix's elixir of invincibility in order to follow Olympic rules.

## PARALYMPICS

The idea for the Paralympic Games developed from the work of Sir Ludwig Guttman who, in 1948, organised a competition in Stoke Mandeville for Second World War veterans with spinal injuries. He believed that sport was good for both morale and rehabilitation. The success of this competition meant that by 1960 an Olympic-style Games with international participation had evolved. The aim of the Paralympics is to emphasise athletic achievement over disability and, to this end, only the elite may participate. Nowadays, athletes compete in one of six categories: spinal cord injury; amputee; visually impaired; cerebral palsy; mentally handicapped; and *les autres* (athletes with motor disability). Disabilities are graded by severity, and individuals compete against those with a similar degree of impairment. In 1952, only two countries and 130 athletes took part; by Sydney 2000, 123 countries and 3,843 athletes participated. Although there have always been close ties between the Olympics and Paralympics, in 2001 an agreement between IOC and International Paralympic Committee (IPC) ensured that from 2012 onwards the city chosen to host the Olympic Games will also be obliged to host the Paralympics. Although the IPC asserts that *Paralympic* means "beside the Olympics", this may be a modern reinterpretation of the word. (The *Oxford English Dictionary* dates the word's use to 1954 and suggests its derivation might come from paraplegia - "paralysis of the lower limbs and a part or the whole of the trunk".)