



# ZOOM

in on america

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*"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."*

The Olympic Creed expressed by the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin.

## BEIJING 2008 OLYMPIC GAMES



Fireworks explode during the opening ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympics over the National Stadium in Beijing, Friday, Aug. 8, 2008. (AP Photo/Robert F. Bukaty) . Photo © AP Images

About 10,500 athletes of more than 200 nations will take part in the 29th Olympic Games that opened on August 8 in Beijing. There will be winners in over 300 events of the 28 different types of sports, and from August 9-24, 2008 they will stand on the Olympic podium as they listen to their national anthem being

The Olympic Games always impress us with their numbers: thousands of athletes take part in them, thousands of spectators watch them live, and still millions more watch them on TV. And yet, despite the millions of people involved in the Olympics, it is important to remember that each athlete has his or her own very unique and personal story. Each story reveals much about the athlete and what they represent. A good place to check-out some of these stories is on the website [America.gov](http://America.gov) where you can find an article on foreign-born athletes who will represent the United States in the upcoming Olympics. For example, the site relates the story of Lopez Lomong:

"A native of Sudan, Lomong was 6 in 1991 when he was abducted by a militia faction that wanted to turn young boys into soldiers. He escaped the militia and ended up in a refugee camp in Kenya. One of the so-called "Lost Boys of Sudan," Lomong lived in the refugee camp for 10 years before being resettled with a foster family in New York and blossoming into a track star. (...)

"I came to this country without expecting anything," he told the newspaper USA Today. "Now I want to return the favor by being a good runner."

# OLYMPIC SYMBOLS

The beginnings of the Olympic Games take us back to the Greek town of Olympia and the year 776 BC. It seems that sports rivalry is part of human nature. A revival of the Olympic Games in more recent history is the accomplishment of a French nobleman, Pierre de Frédy, Baron de Coubertin, who founded the Olympic Committee in 1894. The Olympiad held in 1896 in Athens, Greece is considered the first modern Olympic Games. The way in which the Olympic Games are planned and organized, complete with the carrying of the Olympic Flame, opening ceremony and special symbols, was designed at that time and has been further developed ever since.



A prayer for the success of the Atlanta Games at a special ceremony marking the centennial anniversary of the Olympic Games at Athens Panathenian stadium on April 6, 1996. Photo © AP Images



The lighting of the Olympic Flame at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. Photo: Wikipedia



**The Olympic rings** are perhaps the most recognizable symbol of the Olympic Games. There are 5 intertwined colored rings that represent the unity of 5 continents: Africa, America (North and South together), Asia, Australia and Europe. Each national flag has at least one of the colors that have been chosen for the rings: red, blue, green, yellow and black.

**The opening ceremony** is usually a big artistic event. Thousands of dancers as well as renowned musicians and actors entertain the audience for sometimes as long as five hours. High ranking officials of the Olympic Movement and host country leaders deliver speeches. The official Olympic Anthem is sung.

**Olympic stadiums** that are often built especially for the Games are the main venue of the opening ceremony and the major sports events. However, there are also co-host stadiums and even cities where

events can be held simultaneously. This year such co-host cities are: Qingdao, Hong Kong, Tianjin, Shanghai, Shenyang and Qinhuangdao.

**The Olympic mascot** is a relatively new Olympic addition. Introduced in 1968, it plays an important role as it not only brings luck to competitors but is also a recognizable sign of the Games. In the photos you can see three mascots: Sam, the Eagle, from the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, Cobi, the mascot for the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona, and Izzy of the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.



**The Olympic flame** is lit in Olympia, Greece and brought to the host city by runners who carry the torch in a relay. During the opening ceremony the torch is used to light the cauldron that burns throughout the Olympic Games.

## Useful links:

- E-Journal "The Olympic Experience": <http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0408.html>
- Official website of the Olympic movement: [http://www.olympic.org/uk/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/index_uk.asp)
- Here, at: [http://www.olympic.org/uk/sports/flash/summer/index\\_uk.asp](http://www.olympic.org/uk/sports/flash/summer/index_uk.asp) you can learn about the rules, venues and equipment needed to do each of the 28 Olympic sports.
- Official website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games: <http://en.beijing2008.cn/>

# OLYMPICS THEY REMEMBER

## She Did It For Her Team

An Olympic moment that stands out in my memory is the vault of a young woman gymnast named Kerri Strug at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. The U.S women's team was competing for the all-around gold medal, something they had never won before against the traditionally



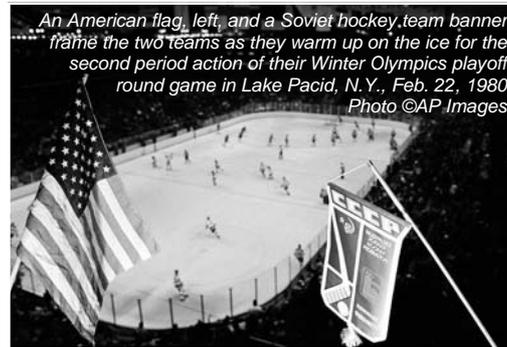
Kerri Strug during the Summer Olympics Games in Atlanta, July 30, 1996  
Photos ©AP Images

strong Russian and Romanian teams. By the team's calculations, Kerri Strug had to get at least a 9.6 score on the vault to clinch the gold medal for the American team. She fell on her first vault, injuring her ankle and getting a low score. In the vault event, an athlete gets two tries, so she knew she had to do well in the second vault. Even though she heard something snap in her ankle in the first fault, she limped to the start and executed an outstanding second vault, landing solidly. She collapsed after her landing was complete and had to be carried off by her coach. Strug's vault received a 9.71, enough for the Americans to win the gold. Winning the gold earned the U.S. women's team the nickname "The Magnificent Seven". Kerri Strug sprained her ankle and injured two ligaments during her winning vault, which meant that she was unable to compete in the individual medal events that were held after the team competition. The famous image that many Americans remember is this tiny athlete gritting her teeth and leading her team to win despite tremendous pain. Kerri Strug did this knowing that her sacrifice in completing the vault would cost her a chance at an individual medal. That vault for me embodies the spirits of the Olympics - putting the team before the individual and pushing through pain. Kerri Strug was only 18 years old while competing at the Olympics, and it is difficult for me to imagine how such a young woman had the mental toughness to compete at that level. Kerri Strug and the rest of the "Magnificent Seven" women's gymnastic team from 1996 were inducted into the U.S. Olympics Hall of Fame in Chicago on June 19, 2008.

Susan Parker-Burns

## First Memories of the Olympics

My first memory of the Olympics is 1972 in Munich carried by ABC television in the United States and announced by Jim McKay. My first memory of a particular event is the men's basketball finals, where a mendacious Soviet Union stole the gold medal from an American team with the connivance of game offi-



cial and three communist members of the subsequent jury of appeal.

Just like that. I saw it all with my father, from our green velvet sofa, while across our shag carpet to the television screen Howard Cossell was striding to the scorers table in search of an explanation from the referee.

But shocked as I was, I confess nostalgia for those games today. Oh, not for the Cold War - there is little enough reason to be nostalgic about the Cold War these days. But I do miss the Cold War's Olympic Games. I missed them for what they meant, for what they revealed, for the passions they released that have only the palest imitation today.

## Best Memories of the Olympics

Like most Americans I didn't follow Olympic hockey at the start of the Lake Placid winter games in 1980. The Americans weren't very good, the Soviets were, and our men's team was likely to finish out of the medals. Until they kept winning.

I had forgotten most of that Olympiad until I saw *Miracle on Ice* with Kurt Russell playing the U.S. coach Herb Brooks. I had forgotten how badly our team was beaten in New York by the Soviets in an exhibition earlier that year; forgotten what sad shape the country seemed to be in; in some ways forgotten the semi-final game itself.

Until the movie brought it all back. The game deep in the third period, the clock running down, the crowd as one, "USA, USA." I was on that sofa, in that den, living it for the first time all over, Al Michaels on the television, "DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?!"

Yes I do.

Duncan Walker



# ACTIVITY PAGE

## Win a Prize!

### Summer 2008 CONTEST

Where were the 2004 summer Olympic Games held?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: [madridIRC@state.gov](mailto:madridIRC@state.gov)

Deadline:  
September 30, 2008

## Win a Prize!

The answer in the June 2008 Contest was:

Route 66 was not the oldest American highway

Thank you for participating

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## About ZOOM

Zoom is online at [www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html](http://www.embusa.es/irc/zoom.html)

Contact us at [madridIRC@state.gov](mailto:madridIRC@state.gov)

### US Information Resource Centers

#### Madrid

Embajada de EE. UU.  
C/ Serrano, 75  
28006 Madrid

#### Barcelona

Consulado General de EE. UU.  
199 Reina Elisenda de Montcada, 23  
08034 Barcelona

## Exercise 1 Comprehension

Can you answer the following questions without referring back to the text?

1. Where is the Olympic Flame lit?
2. Who was the founder of the modern Olympics?
3. People didn't know what this mascot was and they kept asking "What is it?" It was named Izzy. For which Olympics was it made?
4. Why are red, blue, green, yellow and black the colors of the Olympic rings ?
5. What official piece of music is sung at each Olympic Games opening ceremony?

Exercise 2 Below there is a list of some Olympic sports. What do you call the person who participates in each sport? Example: archery - archer

1. Athletics
2. Baseball
3. Basketball
4. Boxing
5. Cycling
6. Diving
7. Equestrian
8. Fencing
9. Soccer
10. Gymnastics
11. Handball
12. Hockey
13. Judo
14. Rowing
15. Sailing
16. Shooting
17. Softball
18. Swimming
19. Table Tennis
20. Taekwondo
21. Tennis
22. Triathlon
23. Volleyball
24. Water Polo
25. Weightlifting
26. Wrestling



United States' Michael Phelps (23 years old), after winning his 11th gold medal has overtaken Carl Lewis, Mark Spitz, the Finnish runner Paavo Nurmi and the Soviet gymnast Larysa Latynina. Phelps is probably the greatest Olympian in History. Aug. 10, 2008. (AP Photo/David J. Phillip)

## Exercise 3

The Olympic motto is: "Citius, Altius, Fortius", which means: "Swifter, Higher, Stronger". Discuss the meaning and goals of sports rivalry with reference to the above motto.

## Exercise 4

The United States has hosted the Olympic Games eight times. Find out which Olympic Games they were. Example: 1904 - St. Louis - 3rd Olympic Games.

**Summer Games:** a. 1904 - St. Louis; b. 1932 - Los Angeles; c. 1984 - Los Angeles; d. 1996 - Atlanta. **Winter Games:** e. 1932 - Lake Placid; f. 1960 - Squaw Valley; g. 1980 - Lake Placid; h. 2002 - Salt Lake City.

Exercise 5 Here is a list of some of the countries and the first letter of some of the cities which have hosted the Olympic Games in the past. Your task is to write the full name of the city:

- 1896: A- - - - s (Greece)  
 1900: P- - - - (France)  
 1904: St. L- - - - (USA)  
 1908: L- - d - - (United Kingdom)  
 1912: S- - - - h - - - (Sweden)  
 1920: A- - - - - p (Belgium)  
 1928: A- s - - - - - (Netherlands)  
 1932: L- - A- - - - - (USA)  
 1936: B- - - i - (Germany)  
 1952: H- - s - - - - (Finland)  
 1960 : R- - - (Italy)  
 1964: T- - y - (Japan)  
 1968: M- - - - - C- - - - (Mexico)  
 1972: M- - - c - (West Germany)  
 1976: M- - - r - - - (Canada)  
 1980: M- - - - - (Soviet Union)  
 1984: L- - A- - - - - (USA)  
 1988: S- - - - (South Korea)  
 1992: B- - - - - - a (Spain)  
 1996: At- - - - (USA)  
 2000: S- - - - - (Australia)

## Glossary - (in the order of appearance)

cauldron - large metal pot used for cooking over fire

limp - walk with difficulty because of a damaged leg or foot

ligament - a short band of tough, flexible tissue that connects two bones

induct - admit a person to a position or organization

mendacious - not telling the truth, lying

connivance - willingness to secretly allow wrongdoing

shag - a carpet or rug with a long rough pile

stride - walk with long steps