

YOUR PARKS AND RECREATION FORUM

Olympic Reflections

Eighty-six years ago, the first winter Olympics was held in the small mountain resort town of Chamonix, France. Billed as “The International Week of Winter Sport,” it was the first time the Summer and Winter Olympics were separated, providing the opportunity to hold the Winter Games in colder climates.

The 1924 Olympics were a tiny event by today’s standards: 258 athletes competed in 16 events, compared with 2,622 athletes competing in 86 events in Vancouver this year. On the other hand, while we tend to think of younger athletes as a modern development, Sonja Henie competed in the ladies figure skating event as an 11-year-old. Although she did not receive a medal that year, she won the gold medal in the next three Olympics.

Vancouver, Canada

Coverage of the 2010 Winter Games, from the opening ceremonies through the extinguishing of the flame, provided the opportunity for children and their families to see competition at its best. Hundredths of a second and fractions of an inch determined the results in skiing, bobsledding and speed skating events. Amazing acrobatics were witnessed in snowboarding and aerial skiing, and new Olympic events offered a unique blend of athleticism and artistry.

We also saw many moments of courage, particularly in the face of dangerous weather conditions. And we will always remember the tragic loss of Nodar Kumaritashvili, the young Georgian athlete who died in a 90-mile-an-hour practice run on the luge track, for his love of competition and his sport.

Does the Medal Count Really Count?

In 1924, 16 teams competed for 49 medals. In 2010, 82 nations competed for 258 medals. Of those 82 countries, only 24 received a medal—gold, silver or bronze. The top 10 countries won 194 medals, or 75% of the total. The United States, Canada, Germany and Norway captured 116, or 44%.

The majority of the 2,622 athletes did not leave with a medal. For those individuals, what counted was the honor of making an Olympic team and representing their country—just having the chance to ski, skate and play the game at an elite level with peers from across the globe. All competitors and teams do their best to win, yet it is the preparation, the dedication and the journey that makes every Olympian a winner.

An Olympic Message

Two weeks of exciting sport and education ended in March after the Paralympic Games—with an inspiring closing ceremony.

True to their Olympic motto, “With Glowing Hearts,” the Canadians proudly shared their rich heritage and culture and their passion for winter sports.

In the spectacular closing ceremony, John Furlong from the Olympic Committee delivered a wonderful tribute to the athletes, volunteers, organizers and Canadian hosts. He reinforced the Olympic ideals for sports and children.



Franklin Park girls hockey team prepares to take the ice.

“And finally to those who have watched us all over the globe, we hope you enjoyed these Games and the telling of our humble Canadian story. The young men and women you sent here are coming home—you can be very proud of them. The Games will have many wonderful legacies. I wish but for one. That every child... will have the chance to grow up to experience the pleasure of sport... no one left out. And that we of the global Olympic family will not rest until the right of every child to play across this planet is secured.”

» John Furlong

That Olympic goal should indeed be our community goal. “The right of each child to play...” Our Park District, schools, sports organizations and, most important, our families must work to make this possible in Franklin Park.

Please feel free to contact your Park District regarding play and sports for children. This year, we are renewing our efforts to communicate with residents to ensure we are providing the best parks and recreation services for your children and families.

Joseph D. Modrich
Director of Parks and Recreation, Park District of Franklin Park
847-455-2852 • jmodrich@fpparks.org



Recommended Resource: Official Olympic Website, www.vancouver2010.com

