

This Day in History... July 19, 1996

OLYMPHILEX '96

On July 19, 1996, the OLYMPHILEX stamp show opened in Atlanta, Georgia.

The 1996 Olympic Games marked an important anniversary – 100 years since the start of the modern Olympic Games. The Ancient Olympic Games were held between 776 BC and 394 AD, when Theodosius I abolished them.

More than 1,500 years later, Pierre de Coubertin arranged for the first modern Olympics to be held in 1896. He believed that friendly athletic competition could promote world peace. Those first games consisted of 285 athletes, representing 13 nations, competing in 42 events. The games were a success and became an international tradition.

One hundred years later, the world excitedly prepared for the 1996 Olympic Games. Some 11,000 athletes from 197 nations would compete in hundreds of events.

The games opened on July 19, 1996, in Atlanta, Georgia. That same day, OLYMPHILEX, an Olympic-themed stamp show, also opened in Atlanta. Held at the Atlanta International Museum of Art & Design, the event brought together stamp collectors, dealers, and Olympic fans from around the world. It was part of the official cultural program of the Olympic Games, making it especially exciting for visitors.

The opening ceremonies for the show included speeches, musical performances, and appearances by Olympic athletes and dignitaries. More than 60,000 people attended the exhibition over its 10-day run. Visitors could view rare Olympic stamps and memorabilia from past Games, and there were special presentations about the history of Olympic philately.

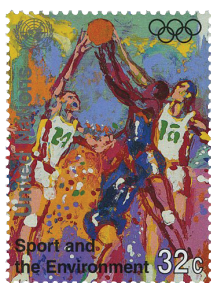
Several nations attended the show and issued their own stamps. Some stamps pictured modern athletes similar to what would be seen at the games, while others honored the centennial of the modern Olympics with ancient-Greek style artwork.

The US issued two items for the occasion. One was a sheet of 20 stamps in May that depicted modern athletes. The other was issued on the opening day of the show and honored the games' centennial. This stamp pictures the "Discus Thrower" – the king of athletes among ancient Greeks – whose purposeful action is captured in Myron's 5th-century BC statue *Discobolus*.

The UN also issued stamps at OLYMPHILEX '96 that were designed by sports artist Leroy Neiman.



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*New York office OLYMPHILEX '96
United Nations stamps*



*Geneva office OLYMPHILEX '96
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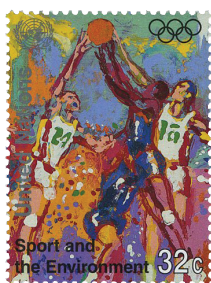
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