

This Day in History... July 30, 1932

Opening of the 1932 Summer Olympics

On July 30, 1932, the Games of the X Olympiad opened in Los Angeles, California.

Los Angeles was the only city to submit a bid to host the 1932 Olympics, so they were selected by default in 1923. The start of the Great Depression in 1929 led to many cost-saving measures. Most of the facilities used during the games were existing structures, with the Swimming Stadium being the only new construction.

The games officially opened on July 30, 1932. The opening ceremony was the largest of any Olympics up to that time. They broke the attendance record of 1896 (80,000) with a total 105,000 attendees.



This stamp was in high demand and only on sale for a short time.



This stamp paid the international letter rate and was used by athletes from other countries.

The ceremony began with a mechanical scoreboard reading a quote from the founder of the modern games: “The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning, but taking part. The essential thing is not conquering, but fighting well.” Then US Vice President Charles Curtis and other dignitaries entered the stadium to “The Stars and Stripes Forever.” A 3,500-person group then performed “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This was followed by the parade of nations, a speech by the vice president, the lighting of the Olympic Cauldron, and the raising of the flag. These were the last games without a torch relay.

Because of the Depression, many countries couldn’t afford to send athletes to the games, but a total of 37 countries did participate. In all, 1,332 athletes competed in 117 events. The United States, represented by more than a third of all the participating athletes, dominated the events and won 103 medals. Italy placed second with 36, followed by Finland with 25 medals.

The Games were notable for a number of “firsts.” An Olympic Village was erected for the first time to accommodate athletes participating in the 1932 Summer Olympic Games. The US president didn’t attend the Games, becoming the first sitting head of government to not appear at an Olympics hosted in their country. And it was the first time a victory podium was used.

Interestingly, the 1932 Summer Games were the only time Japan won a gold medal in the equestrian show jumping individual event. Takeichi Nishi – now known to history as Baron Nishi – was the gold medalist with his horse Uranus. Nishi died in 1945 as an officer defending the island of Iwo Jima and is the main character in the Clint Eastwood film, *Letters from Iwo Jima*.

The games also included art competitions with medals awarded in five categories: architecture, literature, music, painting, and sculpture. Art competitions were part of the Olympics between 1912 and 1948 but were removed over concerns about amateurism and professionalism.

The organizing committee of the games didn’t keep accurate financial records, but newspapers from the time claimed the games made a profit of \$1 million.



Publicity label produced for the games

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