

A REVIEW OF OLYMPIC GAMES RESULTS ON THE INTERNET

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INTRODUCTION

This is the age when the computer screen is competing with the printed word as a tool for communication. The potential for being able to store, retrieve and analyse vast quantities of data exists as never before. It would therefore seem logical that this medium could be of use in storing the vast amounts of data that comprise results of all Olympic competitions to date.

The recent Winter Olympics in Nagano have seen the potential of the Internet as a means of such electronic storage and presentation of competition results. It is therefore quite feasible that somewhere on the Internet people have produced results of Olympic events which are now accessible for others to browse.

Unfortunately, rather like "junk mail" associated with the printed word, the Internet tantalises the browser and fails to meet expectations when the contents of a particular site are visited. In an Olympic results context, too often the phrase "complete results" whets the appetite only to discover this means a list of medal or contest winners. However amongst ever expanding number of Internet sites there are a few gems that stand out.

For the reader I have endeavoured to list and comment on the ones which provide more details than just the medalists, although I acknowledge that even as this article is read it may be out of date, such is the pace of change in the electronic era.

RECENT OLYMPIC GAMES

1) Nagano Olympics

A number of Internet sites have shown the potential in producing statistical data associated with these Games. The Official Winter Games site, which existed until recently {www.nagano.olympic.org}, can be described as a statisti-

cian's paradise. Not only were there full results of each event, but figures such as split times in skiing and speed skating events, the individual judging marks for each element of figure skating and scorers in each ice hockey match give a flavour of the depth of coverage.

In addition the site included short biographies of each contestant, event reports and medal details. To the statistician the main complaint is that similar sites do not appear to exist for each of the previous 17 Winter Games and indeed the critic may argue that the historical section of the Official Games site was weak compared with other sections. It seems a great loss that the site is no longer available, and those trying to access it are now directed to the IOC's Official Site {www.olympic.org}.

At the time of writing there are still some sites providing a wealth of data on the Nagano Games - two examples being SLAM! Sport {www.canoe.ca/SlamNagano/home.html} and CBS Sportsline {www.sportsline.com/u/olympics/nagano98/} who have produced sites with their own independent but comprehensive results service.

Again, though, these sites are poor in terms of historical content from previous Games, and there must be a question mark over future availability.

2) Atlanta Olympics

Again the Official site for these games no longer exists, and those trying to access the site are again forwarded to the IOC's web site. An exhaustive search has revealed a few sites which hold a number of complete or near complete records (heats, times, scores, etc.) for a many of events, notably within the Australian Sports Commission site (www.ausport.gov.au/olym96/home.html), the USA Today site (www.usatoday.com/olympics/orest.htm) and at the Nando Sports Server site {www.sportserver.com/SportServer/olympics/sportfronts.html}. However no site was found containing a complete and exhaustive record of all the events at Atlanta.

OLYMPIC GAMES PRIOR TO NAGANO

1) Winter Games

Looking from a more historical perspective, a more recent welcome addition to the Internet is the {www.winter-games.net} site, produced by an information science student, Kyle Whelliston, at Drexel University in Philadelphia. It is the only site of which I am aware that attempts to offer a comprehensive picture of the Winter Games since 1924 and includes:

- 1) Comprehensive lists of results for each official event at each Games;
- 2) Linkage of many athletes across events and years;
- 3) Medal counts;
- 4) Miscellaneous items (numbers of athletes by nation, attendance summaries); and
- 5) Some limited search facilities.

Arguably this is one of the most useful sites available and one can only imagine the amount of effort that has been put into this production. Given this achievement it feels uncomfortable to be critical, but to the keen statistician a number of errors, both typographical and factual, become apparent on closer inspection - a simple example being the number of competitors quoted as participating for each nation not equalling the stated overall total! Additionally other features are disappointing. For example, in most cases only the athlete's initials are provided. Nevertheless, the value of the site is noted.

Apart from this, Internet sites offering complete results of previous Winter Games appear to be rare. The site {briskeby.sn.no/OL/} details a set of results for the Lillehammer Games of 1994 (all participants, all events) and, although the suggestion is this will develop into a site offering other Winter Games results, none appears to be forthcoming at the time of writing. Again the critical eye can observe a number of typographical errors and mis-sions.

A variation on the usual style of Internet sites can be found on the Amateur Athletics Foundation of Los Angeles site {www.aafla.org}, from which it is possible to view and download a copy of the Official Report of both the 1928 St. Moritz and the 1932 Lake Placid Games. The reader is advised that special software (Acrobat Reader Version 3 - details of how to obtain a free copy are available via this internet site) is required to view the Official Report and downloading the various pages can be slow.

Other sites suggest they offer "complete" results, but only {qaf.interspeed.net/olympic/} has been found which systematically offers more than the medal winners at each games - this site generally lists the top 8 or so in each event,

although some of the results for more recent years are not yet available.

2) Summer Games

Via the same Internet site discussed previously {www.aafla.org} it is possible to view and download a copy of the Official Report of the 1932 Los Angeles Summer Games and, at the time of writing, work is progressing on making available the reports of the Games at Athens in 1896 and Los Angeles of 1984. The way the site has developed in recent months gives rise to the prospect that further Official Reports will be made available via this site, and as such it is certainly worth watching developments.

Otherwise Summer Games sites offering more than medallists are limited. The site {www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Loge/1236/index.html} attempts to place the full results of the 1928 Amsterdam games on the internet, but at the time of writing the site consists mainly of a list of medallists with more detailed results limited to a small number of events. The author of the site, Jeroen Heijmans, does suggest further detail will be added over time!

The site {www.orama.com/athens1896/index2.html} contains a largely descriptive account of the 1896 Athens Games and, whilst interesting to read and get a flavour of the events which took place does not go into great details in terms of results.

INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

1) Winter Games

It was with some hope that by referring to individual sports rather than Winter Games in general that more detailed sets of results could be found, albeit within that sport. A useful way into the Internet sites of the various governing bodies is through the site {www.worldsport.com} - this provides basic information about governing bodies and links through to their Internet sites. However searches were, by and large, unsuccessful. It is noted that there are some sites offering a reasonable collection of results for particular sports, but often it appears these have been developed by keen individuals or groups of people rather than via the governing bodies.

Until recently the International Ice Hockey Federation's Internet site {www.iihf.com} had a section listing the scores of each match at each Olympics going back to 1920, along with the (generally) full names of those in each nation's squad. Frustratingly there were no details of scorers, penalties, etc. in the matches. At the time of writing, however, the site is being redesigned, so whether the historical section will improve or disappear altogether is to be seen.

The site {www.zip.com.au/~birdman/OL.html} holds quite detailed results of the Freestyle Skiing events, including the demonstration events, since 1988. It includes most of the preliminary round marks as well as finals, but scores are not broken down into the individual elements.

Some Figure Skating results can be found on the site {www.digiweb.com/~ellenbe/skating/olympics/}. This is essentially a variation on the figure skating events found in the winter-games.net site described previously. Curiously, quite detailed results by individual judge for all elements from the 1976 figure skating contests at Innsbruck are included! The site (www.ionline.net/~jdw/olympic.htm) is a variation on this which gives the top 8 or so finishers in each games, including the early games of 1908 and 1920, but arguably it adds little to results which can be found on other sites previously described.

2) Summer Games

A similar search looking at the various sports of the summer games was largely fruitless, although it is noted that a few sites hold some quite detailed statistics on the 1996 games, these mainly being team sports, examples being Football at the FIFA site {www.fifa.com/}, Volleyball {www.fivb.ch/Olympics/} and {www.volleyball.org/olympics/index.html}, Hockey {www.fihockey.org/}, Yachting {www.sailing.org/olympics/} and Wrestling {www.iat.uni-leipzig.de/wrestling.htm}. However none of these sites hold much in the way of detailed results prior to events in 1996, although the Wrestling site looks as though it has the potential to develop into a more comprehensive source.

The International Basketball Federation site {www.fiba.com} has a section that lists the scores of each match at each Olympics going back to 1936, but unfortunately lacks further detail (e.g. squad members, scorers, tables, etc.) and says nothing about any of the pre-qualifying tournaments held in this sport. Having said this it was the only well-established Olympic sport found with a reasonable amount of detail over time.

Other than this few sites were found which offer much of note. A site whose author is Harry Wedemeijer {utopia.knoware.nl/users/hwede/index.html} contains a range of results on Baseball from 1984 onwards (the sport was a demonstration in 1984 and 1988) and the 1996 Softball

event. Given that the site contains player statistics in other arguably lesser tournaments presented on the site it is somewhat bewildering that such figures are not offered for the Olympic events. A few sites have been identified which give Olympic results for very specific events, examples being Walking events at each Olympics {www.home.ch/~spaw1786/olympics.htm} and Badminton from the 1992 and 1996 Games at {www.stud.uni-goettingen.de/~bbrahms/olymp.html} but these have been found more by chance! It is likely that other "one-off" sites exist somewhere on the Internet.

A few of the National Olympic Committees have sites (which can be accessed via the Australian Sports Commission site previously mentioned) which contain varying details about competitors from that country which have competed in various Games, but there appears to be little in the way of event results.

THE OFFICIAL SITE
FOR THESE GAMES
[1996 ATLANTA GAMES]
NO LONGER EXISTS,
AND THOSE TRYING
TO ACCESS THE SITE
ARE AGAIN FORWARDED
TO THE
IOC'S WEB SITE.

CONCLUSIONS

Searches to date have revealed but a few choice sources amongst those claiming to offer complete results and more. By and large searching the Internet for complete results was both time consuming and frustrating. Maybe it is too early in the life of the Internet to expect anything other than this! What is likely is that more sites will come along with the label

"Olympic" attached and the effort in separating out the sites of interest (use?) will become more arduous.

From a statisticians point of view a database which marries together the best features of many of these sites, particularly the Official Nagano and the Winter-Games net site, is a dream which, one day, is hoped (anticipated?) will materialise (whether or not via the Internet.) At least in the electronic age the tools exist to make this dream come true!

FOOTNOTE

The web sites, and factual details described above, are correct at the time of writing this article (October, 1998), but it is acknowledged that such is the pace of change that some of these details may have changed by the time this article is published. A few sites may no longer exist or the content within them may have changed (with the hope that these are for the better!)
