

The Olympic Oath: A Century of History



In 1906, after the festival of the French sports organisation, Fédération des Patronages, IOC founder Pierre de Coubertin proposed to its general secretary, Charles Simon, that an athlete's oath be established as part of the Olympic Games (*Revue Olympique*, 1906, no. 7, 107–108), with the aim of making opening more ceremonious and "to appeal to the competitors' honour".

This was not implemented until 1920 in Antwerp, where the Belgian fencer Victor Boin (photo) first

uttered the solemn pledge that had been formulated by Coubertin – his right hand raised in oath, his left hand holding of his country's flag.

Over the decades, the Olympic Oath has been modified several times. In 1962, the oath that was previously "sworn" became a "promise", in which there was no longer talk of the "honour of our country", but of "the honour of our teams". The applicable national flag was replaced by the Olympic flag in 1984.

In Munich 1972, the oath was spoken for the first time by a woman, the German long jumper Heidi Schüller. The Winter Games in Sapporo marked the first time it was taken by an official. And the Coaches' Oath was introduced in London in 2012.

The wording through the ages:

Nous jurons de prendre part aux Jeux olympiques en compétiteurs loyaux, d'observer scrupuleusement les règlements et de faire preuve d'un esprit chevaleresque pour l'honneur de nos pays et pour la gloire du Sport. (1920)

Nous jurons, dit-il, que nous nous présentons aux Jeux Olympiques en concurrents loyaux, respectueux des règlements qui les régissent et désireux d'y participer dans un esprit

chevaleresque pour l'honneur de nos pays et la gloire du sport. (1924)

We swear that we will take part in the Olympic Games in loyal competition, respecting the regulations which govern them and desirous of participating in them in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the honour of our country and for the glory of sport. (1930)

We swear that we will take part in these Olympic Games in the true spirit of sportsmanship and that we will respect and abide by the rules which govern them, for the glory of sport and the honour of our country. (1956)

In the name of all the competitors I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams. (1962)

In the name of all the competitors I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, committing ourselves to a sport without doping and without drugs, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams. (1999)

The 138th IOC Session decided on yet another update for Tokyo 2020. The number of people speaking the oath was increased from three to six with a view to gender equality: two athletes, two coaches, and two judges. The harmonised text for each group begins with the words: "In the name of..."

We promise to take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules and in the spirit of fair play, inclusion and equality. Together we stand in solidarity and commit ourselves to sport without doping, without cheating, without any form of discrimination. We do this for the honour of our teams, in respect for the Fundamental Principles of Olympism, and to make the world a better place through sport."



Six representative athletes, officials, and coaches took the Olympic Oath during the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Photos: Sportimonium Hofstade, picture-alliance