



## GOLD MEDAL DREAMS

By Patti Hutchison

Have you ever dreamed of competing in the Olympic Games? Many athletes do. The Olympics are the highest points of many athletes' careers. Some of us just prefer to watch, because we are not very athletic. Throughout the years since the first Olympic competition, many sports have come and gone. Perhaps, even if you are not gifted at sports, you might have been able to compete in some of these very interesting games.

Do you like to swim? Perhaps you could have joined the plunge for distance. In the 1904 Olympics, divers completed a standing dive, and then remained motionless in the water. They were timed for one minute, or until their heads came up above the surface, whichever came first. The distance in which they moved was measured; the winner was the diver who had gone the longest distance.

Is diving not your thing? How about underwater swimming? This sport occurred at the 1900 Olympics. However, spectators didn't think it was very interesting. They couldn't see what was happening, so the sport was dropped.

Also, in the Paris games of 1900, a 200 meter swimming obstacle course was introduced. Swimmers had to climb over a pole, climb through a row of boats, and swim under another row of boats while fighting the current of the River Seine.

If that doesn't appeal to you, how about the 100 meter freestyle for sailors? Oh, wait, are you a member of the Greek Royal Navy? If not, you are not eligible. This sport took place only during the 1896 Olympics. Guess which country hosted these games? If you guessed Greece, you're right. Guess which country the winner was from? If you guessed Greece, you're right!

Power boating is another Olympic water sport that has come and gone. During the London games of 1908, men raced motor boats that were 60 feet long, five laps around a course. The committee decided that boating with a motor did not represent the true spirit of the Olympics, so the sport was cancelled.

What could be more exciting than a game of croquet? In 1900, participants used a mallet to drive balls through a course of wickets (wire hoops that are stuck in the grass). However, this is the only Olympics in which this game was played. In 1904, the game of roque was

introduced, which is similar to croquet, but played on a hard surface. For some reason, this one didn't catch on, either.

Perhaps the most interesting sports that are no longer included in the Olympic Games are the pistol shooting events. In 1900, there was a live pigeon shooting contest. Pigeons were released in front of each contestant. The object was to kill as many birds as possible. This was the only time live animals were killed in the Olympic Games. Maybe it was protests from the clean up committee who spoiled this sport. They were probably not very happy when they had to deal with the mess and feathers of over 300 dead birds.

Dueling pistols is another sport that is no longer played in the Olympics. In 1906 and again in 1912, competitors shot at mannequins dressed in coats, which had bull's eyes on their throats, from a distance of either 20 or 30 meters.

Here's one almost everyone can do. Put your right foot in front of your left. Shift your weight onto your right foot. Now put your left foot in front of your right—great you are walking! Walking was a track and field event in various games between 1906 and 1920. Walkers competed at distances of 1500, 3000, and 3500 meters, as well as 10 miles!

Other track and field events that did not become popular were the standing high jump and the standing broad jump. These events were very much like the ones played today, except that athletes were not allowed to run up to the spots they jumped from. Interestingly, Ray Ewry set two world records in these short-lived events. Why is that interesting? Ray had spent most of his childhood in a wheelchair. He had been partially paralyzed by polio!

Events in gymnastics have also come and gone. No one participates in club-swinging any longer. Though this sounds like a combat sport, it actually was not. Athletes swung clubs that looked like bowling pins around their heads in a fast and complicated routine. Judges awarded points based on their impressions.

Tug of war is also on the list of extinct Olympic sports. This game was played in some Olympic games from 1900 to 1920. Tug of war was actually an ancient sport played in Greece since about 500 B.C. Think about this friendly game played at picnics over a mud pit, or a rambling creek. Does it really belong in the Olympics? Apparently the committee didn't think so either.

There have been other, more serious and more popular sports that have been dropped from the Olympics over the years. Polo, lacrosse, cricket, and golf are among them. These sports are played all over the world by millions of people. Many of these athletes are waiting and hoping that these sports will be brought back to the Olympic Games.

What will the next sport be that is tried and dropped from the Olympic Games? How about Frisbee, or It Tag? Maybe someone will introduce Hide and Seek for sailors or videogame endurance. You never know, you may be the next gold medal winner!