

# A HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC SHOOTING PROGRAM

By Gary Anderson

## INTRODUCTION:

*The Olympic Games are the biggest, most important, and most watched sports competitions in the world. More people watch the Olympic Games Opening Ceremony than any other human event. Billions of people all over the world follow the Olympic sports competitions as aspiring athletes, spectators, TV viewers and via the Internet. The sport of Shooting, with competitive events for rifle, pistol, and shotgun, is one of 45 sports and sports disciplines on the program of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games in Paris. The 2024 Games will be the 29<sup>th</sup> Summer Olympic Games; Shooting has been on the program of every one of those Games except two, 1904 and 1928. This **“History of the Olympic Shooting Events and Program”** chronicles the development of the Olympic Shooting Program and how the sport has changed through its 128 years as an Olympic sport.*

### **Shooting Becomes an Olympic Sport**

In 1896, shooters from all over the world were given their first opportunity to participate in target events that were recognized by an international sports body when a French nobleman, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, took the lead in forming the International Olympic Committee<sup>1</sup> and in creating the Modern Olympic Games. de Coubertin’s dream was that by bringing young men together in sports competition they would become better persons through improved fitness, health, and sportsmanship. More importantly, he believed that a revived Olympiad could inspire greater human understanding and friendship that would support the cause of world peace. When the first Modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896, Shooting was one of nine sports on the program, perhaps because de Coubertin himself had been a seven-time national pistol champion in France.

In the first Olympic Games, 39 shooters

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*The founder of the Modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin was an accomplished pistol competitor. This Gastinne-Renette, cal. .44 Russian, target pistol is one of a pair of pistols from de Coubertin’s private collection that are now on display at the Deutsches Schützenmuseum near Coburg, Germany.*

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the remainder of this chronicle, the International Olympic Committee will be identified by its acronym, IOC.

from seven nations competed in three pistol and two highpower rifle events. Shooting also was included in the program of the second Olympic Games in Paris, where 139 shooters from 13 nations competed in three pistol, five rifle, two clay target and one running target events. Included among the 1900 events were a 300-meter free rifle event and a 60-shot free pistol event. These events were essentially the same as today's 300-meter 3x40 rifle<sup>2</sup> and 50-meter pistol events. The 1900 Shooting Program also included a live pigeon event that was contested only in the Paris Games.

When the Olympics were organized four years later in St. Louis, Shooting was not on the program, but it returned to the Games in 1908 in London. The inclusion of Shooting in three of the first four Olympic Games did not immediately lead to the formation of an international shooting federation or directly influence the leaders who organized the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF)<sup>3</sup> in 1907. Nor was the Olympic Shooting Program firmly established during those early Olympiads. Decisions to include or exclude Shooting events were largely determined by Olympic host cities and sports practices in their countries.

The 300-meter 3x40 rifle and 50-meter pistol events, which were the two initial events in the first ISSF World Championships, were being contested in popular international competitions in Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These two events, however, were not the only Shooting events being conducted on a national or international basis at that time. Shooters in the Mediterranean countries were conducting shotgun (trap) events with international participation. There was, in fact, a shotgun (trap) event on the 1900 Paris Olympic program. German and Austrian club shooting traditions continued to focus on standing position prize shooting that was contested in popular shooting festivals, but not initially in the Olympic Games. Shooters in the British Commonwealth countries and North America promoted

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<sup>2</sup> 2021 ISSF rule changes have now reduced 3x40 rifle events to 3x20 events.

<sup>3</sup> The ISSF was founded in 1907 as the *L'Union Internationale des Fédérations et Associations nationales de Tir*. The Federation's present name, the International Shooting Sport Federation, was adopted in 1998. Throughout this chronicle, the Federation will be identified as the ISSF.

long-range highpower rifle competitions at 800, 900 and 1000 yards by conducting international team competitions, which began in 1871, at Creedmoor, New York; Bisley, England; and Dollymount, Ireland. There was an individual 1000-yard rifle event as well as a team event with firing at distances from 200 to 1000 yards on the 1908 London Olympic Program.

### **The IOC-ISSF Relationship**

Shooters who participated in the 1896, 1900 or 1908 Olympic Shooting competitions represented 13 nations that were not among the seven ISSF founding federations. The leaders who founded the ISSF represented only one segment of the target shooting world of the time, but it was their zeal for promoting their two events that became the foundation of an international sports federation that ultimately assimilated most of these other diverse types of shooting.

Shooting returned to the Olympic program when the Games took place in London in 1908. There were 15 total events, two pistol, eight rifle, two shotgun and three running target. Shooting was also on the program during the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm where there were 18 events. 14 nations and 247 athletes participated in 1908. 16 countries and 284 athletes competed in 1912. The higher number of Olympic events during this period was due in part to the addition of several team events. Team events, however, remained on the Olympic Shooting program only through the 1924 Olympics.<sup>4</sup> The official bulletins of the ISSF and the minutes from its General Assemblies during this period made no reference to Shooting in the Olympic Games although many ISSF member federations were represented by athletes who participated in those Games. The fact that this era's most successful marksman, Konrad Stäheli of Switzerland,<sup>5</sup> never participated in any Shooting events in the Olympic Games illustrates how Shooting participants of this period were not part of a unified sport program. No link between the IOC, Olympic Shooting and the ISSF had been established at this point, but ISSF President Mérillon was

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<sup>4</sup> Team events remained off of the Olympic Shooting Program until three Mixed Team events were added to the Program for the 2020 Tokyo Games.

<sup>5</sup> Between 1898 and 1914, Konrad Stäheli won 21 World Shooting Championships gold medals in rifle events and one World Championship pistol gold medal.

The 1920 Olympic Games took place at Antwerp, once again without the ISSF being involved. There were 21 Shooting events on the Antwerp Olympic program, the highest number of events in Olympic history, although ten were team events. 18 nations participated with 233 athletes. The IOC decided in 1921, however, that ISSF regulations would govern the Shooting events in the 1924 Games. This was the first concrete step in forging a union between the ISSF and the IOC that was to have such a profound impact on the Federation's future.

A crisis in the ISSF's relationship with the IOC unfolded during this period when the practice of awarding money prizes in ISSF World Championships clashed with strict IOC amateur standards. As a result, the IOC excluded Shooting from the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam. At its 1928 General Assembly, ISSF delegates approved an appeal to the IOC to reinstate Shooting to the 1932 Olympic Games Program. When the Games took place in Los Angeles, Shooting was included, but the program was greatly reduced. There were only two Shooting events, one rifle and one pistol. 41 athletes from 10 countries took part, but many of the world's best marksmen were not there because their acceptance of money prizes in other competitions made them ineligible. In order to bring itself back into solidarity with the Olympic movement, the 1932 ISSF General Assembly adopted an amateur regulation that precluded participation by anyone who

[illegible]

Berlin 1936:  
Torsten Ullman,  
Sweden and his 559  
points in the Free  
Pistol event

Torsten Ullmann, Sweden, was the world's best pistol shooter from the 1930s through the 1950s. The illustration shows Ullmann and his scorecard from the 1936 Berlin free pistol event.

had been “*a professional in Shooting or any other sport*” or “*who has received reimbursement or compensation for loss of salary.*” It was not until the IOC began relaxing its amateur code in the 1980s that the ISSF was able to change its Eligibility Rules to permit Shooting athletes to accept money prizes again.

### ***Olympic Sport Becomes a National Political Goal***

Two significant developments during the latter part of the 1930s foreshadowed major changes that were to occur during the ISSF’s post-World War II era. Strict IOC and ISSF amateur regulations led to limitations in the number of Shooting events on the Olympic Program as well as in the number of athletes who were eligible to compete. Shooting was on the Olympic Program in Berlin in 1936, but there were just three events, a smallbore rifle 50-meter 30-shot prone event and two pistol events, the traditional 50-meter pistol event and 25-meter rapid-fire pistol.

Since amateur athletes could not earn prize money through sport or receive financial support as professionals, government programs became an alternative means of supporting outstanding athletes who wanted to compete in amateur competitions like the Olympics. The desire governments embraced to use sport to support nationalistic aspirations also encouraged them to support promising Olympic athletes. In preparation for the 1936 Berlin Olympics, Germany established a special Shooting training group. Members of this group were successful in winning one gold and two silver medals in the 1936 Games.<sup>6</sup> During the post-war era, after 1950, several countries, most notably the USSR and its Eastern Bloc satellite nations, developed state-sponsored Shooting training groups that had a tremendous impact on raising winning scores in World and Olympic Shooting competitions.



The world’s best rifle shooter during the 1950s was Anatoli Bogdanov, USSR. Bogdanov, who was a product of the USSR’s state sponsored sports system, won six Individual World Championships and two Olympic gold medals.

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<sup>6</sup> One member of this German training group was Ernst Zimmermann, who was to serve as the ISSF Secretary General from 1960 through 1979.



## Post-War Olympic Games

After World War II, the Olympic Games were revived in 1948. The newly elected ISSF President and Secretary General were able to reestablish a cooperative relationship with the IOC and four Shooting events were on the Olympic Program when they took place in London. The 300-meter rifle event, which was one of the ISSF's foundation events, had not been on the Olympic program since 1924, but 300-meter rifle was included in 1948. 300-meter rifle 3x40 remained in the Olympics until it was dropped again before the 1976 Montreal Olympics. The decision to drop the ISSF's esteemed 300-meter event was forced upon the IOC and ISSF because more and more countries, including the 1976 Canadian Olympic hosts, found it too difficult and costly to build 300-meter rifle ranges. As a result, participation in this event lagged behind that of other Olympic Shooting events.

The Shooting Program from the 1948 through the 1980 Games remained relatively stable, with the numbers of events varying from four in 1948 to a high of eight in Munich in 1976. 50-meter three-position rifle was added in 1952 and has been an Olympic event ever since. Trap and 100-meter running deer also were returned to the Program in 1952. Trap has been an Olympic event since then, but running deer was deleted after two Olympiads. There were no running target events during the next three Olympiads, but running target returned as a 50-meter running boar event in 1972.

## The Struggle to Include Women in Olympic Shooting

All Olympic Shooting events were regarded as men's events through the 1964 Olympics, but when the ISSF, in 1966, agreed that all of its so-called men's events were really "mixed" events where women could participate with men, the IOC also agreed to apply this standard to Olympic Shooting. For four Olympiads, from 1968 through 1980, Olympic Shooting events were mixed, with opportunities for women and men to participate regardless of gender. However, only

### Examples of the Impacts of Politics and National Policies on Olympic Shooting

- **1930s.** Nazi Germany established a special Shooting training group whose goal was to win medals in the 1936 Games.
- **1950s.** The USSR instituted high performance training programs for Shooting and other sports to produce athletes whose mission was to demonstrate the superiority of the communist system.
- **1956.** A Presidential order approved by President Dwight Eisenhower established the U. S. Army Marksmanship Unit with a mission to train USA athletes who could win medals in international Shooting competitions.
- **1968.** Student demonstrations before the Mexico City Olympics were brutally suppressed with many killed.
- **1972.** Eight Palestinian terrorists infiltrated the Munich Olympic Village, killed two Israelis, and took nine others as hostages who were later killed in an abortive rescue attempt. One Israeli Shooting coach was among those killed.
- **1970-1992.** South Africa was excluded from the 1964 and 1968 Olympics due to its apartheid racial policies. It was officially banned from 1970 until 1992, when it returned to the Summer Games.
- **1980.** 65 Western nations, including the USA, boycotted the Moscow Olympics due to the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan.
- **1984.** 14 Eastern bloc nations, led by the USSR, boycotted the Los Angeles Olympics in retaliation for the 1980 Moscow boycott.
- **21<sup>st</sup> Century.** Many nations have established government support programs to foster excellence in Olympic sports, including Shooting, with programs in schools, military, police, and other organizations. Leading countries in these endeavors include China, India, Korea, and Russia.

a few women qualified to represent their nations in the Olympics. The fact that women could compete in Shooting on a relatively equal basis did not succeed in encouraging large scale women's participation within any national federation. It was becoming more and more obvious that massive women's participation would only happen if women had their own Olympic Shooting events. Conversations between the IOC and ISSF leaders about adding women's events began in the late 1970s, but the first separate women's events were not added to the Olympic program until 1984, after Olegario Vázquez Raña of Mexico became ISSF President.

Shooting faced a major challenge because it could never become a true world sport until both women and men had equal access to participation. One of the ISSF's most dramatic changes occurred after separate women's Shooting events were added to the Olympic program. These changes were the product of a movement that began when the first women's event in an ISSF championship, a 50-meter rifle event, was on the program of the 1924 Paris World Championship. The ISSF added separate women's events to its World Championship Program starting in 1958. Pioneering efforts by competitors like Catherine Woodring, USA, who competed on a medal winning team in the 1937 World Championship and Margaret Thompson-Murdock, USA, who successfully competed in the 1966 World Championship in what previously were considered men's events, led to a half-way measure being taken. With a few women beginning to successfully compete in what were officially regarded as men's events, the IOC decided that beginning in 1968, men's Shooting events would officially become "mixed" events. Even with this significant change, the number of women athletes who competed in international mixed events remained unacceptably low. Three women had participated in 1968 and in 1980, in Moscow, after 14 years of mixed competitions, there were still only three women out of 239 total athletes who qualified to represent their NOCs in Olympic Shooting. Before mixed events were totally replaced by separate men's and women's events, one woman, Shan Zhang of China, did succeed in winning the Olympic Mixed Skeet gold medal in 1992.

#### **CHANGES IN THE OLYMPIC SHOOTING PROGRAM SINCE 1968**

- 1968. First women's participation in mixed Shooting event; with 3 women.
- 1968. First Skeet event.
- 1972. The last 300m rifle event.
- 1976. Margaret Murdock, USA, became the first Woman to win an Olympic medal (silver).
- 1984. First separate women's events (10m Air Rifle, 50m Rifle 3x20, 25m Pistol).
- 1984. First air rifle events (AR Men, AR Women).
- 1988. First Shooting finals in Olympics.
- 1988. First air pistol events (AP Men, AP Women).
- 1992. First electronic targets (10m, 50m).
- 1996. First Double Trap events (DT Men, DT Women).
- 2000. First Skeet Women & Trap Women events.
- 2016. First Start-from-Zero finals in Olympics.
- 2021. First Gender-Equal Shooting Events
- 2021. First Mixed Team Events

The turning point for women's participation in Shooting came when the IOC agreed to add three women's events, 10-meter air rifle, 50-meter rifle 3x20, and 25-meter pistol, to the 1984 Olympic Games program. Four years later, a 10-meter air pistol event for women was added. In 1996, a women's shotgun event, double trap women, was added. Two additional women's shotgun events, trap and skeet, were added in 2000. After the 2004 Olympics, women's double trap was deleted when the overall Olympic Shooting program was reduced from 17 to 15 events. In the years following the addition of separate women's events to the Olympic program, almost all ISSF member federations reported dramatic increases in women's participation; a few even reported that more new athletes were female than male.

### ***Securing Shooting's Position In The Games***

A recurring concern during most of the ISSF's history has been the desire for security as an Olympic sport. The 1984 Olympic Games were a watershed occurrence in this quest. After the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) began its preparations, the ISSF became aware that the organizing committee's initial venue proposals were unworkable. One year before the Games, Shooting still did not have either a venue or a competition organization. Shooting faced the possibility of being eliminated from the Games because LAOOC leaders were actively scheming to force its elimination as an Olympic sport. The decisive moment in correcting this dangerous situation came when President Vázquez Raña convinced the IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch, to intervene. Samaranch's position was unequivocal—if LAOOC did not take the necessary steps to secure a Shooting venue and organize Shooting, the IOC would withdraw the Games from Los Angeles. On 15 June 1983, IOC President Samaranch, ISSF President Vázquez Raña, and LAOOC President Peter Uberroth met in Mexico City to conclude an agreement that



*Olegario Vázquez Raña, a Mexican businessman and former air rifle World Record holder, served as ISSF President from 1980 through 2018. His vision and leadership had a giant impact on the development of the Olympic Shooting Program through those years. This photo of Vázquez Raña and his wife Géla was taken during the 2016 ISSF General Assembly.*



assured Shooting would be organized. LAOOC quickly announced the selection of a Shooting venue, agreed to host a pre-Olympic test event and took steps to underwrite the cost of the Olympic Shooting organization. Shooting's position in the 1984 Olympic program was secured. Shooting has been fully supported by all subsequent Olympic organizing committees.

### ***Expanding the Olympic Shooting Program—and Responding to New Shooting Constituencies***

The Mexico City agreement that kept Shooting in the 1984 Olympic Games demonstrated how the IOC recognized the ISSF and Shooting as an essential part of the Olympic Program. Equally important for Shooting's future, the IOC also approved an ISSF application for four new events that were especially critical to ISSF efforts to adapt the Olympic Shooting Program to a modern world. The first separate women's Olympic events made it possible to attract women to Shooting in large numbers. The addition of men's and women's air rifle events and the potential that air gun events offer to develop Shooting in all countries of the world have had a profound impact on expanding the sport in many more countries that previously could not develop Shooting programs.

The process of adapting Shooting's Olympic program to the demands of an expanded national federation membership in all parts of the world necessitated both losses and gains while the ISSF worked with the IOC to modernizing Shooting's Olympic program. Losing the 300-meter rifle event after the 1972 Olympics was painful, but necessary because there were too many countries where 300-meter rifle simply could not be practiced. Efforts to adapt running target events to IOC participation requirements ultimately were unsuccessful. The 100-meter running deer event was back on the program for two Olympiads in 1952 and 1956, when it was deleted again. A 50-meter running boar smallbore rifle event was added in 1972 and remained through 1988. Low participation almost caused the IOC to delete running target after 1988, but the ISSF appealed to the IOC to allow a new 10-meter air rifle running target event to replace it. Unfortunately, even this event could not win sufficient world-wide participation and it was deleted after the 2004 Olympics. Women's double trap also was deleted after the 2004 Games, but this was done because the newer women's skeet and trap events had proven to be more popular. Out

of respect for its traditions, the ISSF continues to include each of these events in its World Championship Program.

Even as some Olympic Shooting events had to be deleted, more events were added so that the number of Olympic events increased from seven in 1980 to 17 in 2000 and 2004 before dropping back to 15 in 2008. New events added in 1984, 1988, 1996 and 2000 made it possible for Shooting to respond to important new constituencies that included air rifle and air pistol athletes, clay target competitors and especially, female athletes in all three disciplines.

### ***Olympic Participation Quotas***

In the period leading up to the 1988 Olympics, the IOC found it necessary to begin controlling the size of the Olympic Games by limiting the number of athletes that could participate. Until then, and subject only to limits on the numbers of athletes nations could enter in an event,<sup>7</sup> NOCs were free to enter as many events and as many athletes in the Games as they wished. President Vázquez Raña envisioned that the IOC would ultimately require all Olympic sports to accept quotas, so he urged the ISSF to take the lead and become the first international federation to adopt an Olympic quota system. As a result, Shooting received 430 quotas for the 1988 Olympics and has been favorably treated in the quota distributions for each Olympic Games since.

A part of the Olympic quota agreement was that Shooting had to develop an Olympic qualification system to determine the countries that would receive quotas entitling them to enter athletes in Olympic Shooting events. New ***ISSF Special Regulations for Participation in the Shooting Sport Events of the Olympic Games*** allocated quotas that could only be won by athletes in ISSF Championships that initially included World and Continental Championships. To increase the number of opportunities athletes had to compete for and earn Olympic Quotas for their countries, the ISSF established a new series of World Cups and included them in the Olympic qualifying system. Initial opposition to Shooting's Olympic qualifying system argued that requiring nations to earn Olympic quota places in advance would penalize "the little countries." The reality was that with multiple

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<sup>7</sup> Nations were always limited to two entries per event in Shooting.

qualifying competitions, national federation participation in those competitions and the Games increased.

### **Finals and Electronic Targets**

An incident that occurred during the 1984 Games highlighted a major shortcoming in how Shooting events were conducted, but it prophesied momentous advances that Shooting would realize in two Olympiads that followed. The first event on the 1984 Shooting Program was the 50-meter pistol men event. One of the favorites in that event was the Swedish champion Ragnar Skanåker. The King and Queen of Sweden came to the Shooting venue because they wanted to watch their national hero compete. President Vázquez Raña met them and acted as their host. When they asked when they would know how Skanåker had finished, the President explained that the competition would take 90 minutes, that scoring the targets and a subsequent protest time would take another hour and that rechecking scores after that could take another hour before results would be final. In his Memoir,<sup>8</sup> President Vázquez Raña quoted the King as saying, *“This isn’t a very interesting sport. Could you please show us to the exit?”* President Vázquez Raña was embarrassed and vowed then that Shooting had to have finals like other Olympic sports and adapt modern technology to produce instantaneous scores. The ISSF had finals ready for its 1986 World Championship; finals debuted in the Seoul Olympics in 1988. Electronic targets that could support Olympic rifle and pistol events took longer to develop, but they were ready for the 1992 Games.

In the finals first used in 1986 and 1988, the top eight athletes (top six in shotgun, running target, and rapid-fire pistol) in the regular event (which became known as the qualification) fired ten additional shots (25 targets in shotgun) to determine medal winners. The concept behind finals was to have the top athletes in each event complete that event together and to use instant scoring so medal winners could be recognized as soon as the last shots were scored. In these first Shooting finals, the eight (or six) finalists carried their qualification scores forward



*This 50-meter target installation in Barcelona 1992 was part of the first use of electronic targets in Olympic Shooting.*

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<sup>8</sup> Vázquez Rana, Olegario; *My Life in Sports*, Oceano, p. 173.

into the final and their final round scores were added to them.

Trap and skeet events with hit-miss scoring allowed instant rankings. However, in the 1980s, rifle and pistol events were still fired on paper targets. For the first Olympic finals in 1988, electronic targets were not yet available. A combination of manual and electronic scoring of paper targets had to be used to determine the tenth-ring scores that finals rules required. This led to several moments of drama as ISSF Judges struggled to quickly determine final round scores while hundreds of spectators anxiously awaited definitive results.

The full implementation of finals in Olympic Shooting was achieved during the 1990 World Championship and 1992 Barcelona Games after electronic targets for rifle and pistol events became available. The ISSF had worked with the Sius Company from Switzerland to introduce acoustical-sensing targets for ISSF events that produced instant scores, which were displayed on athletes' monitors and scoreboards mounted above each athlete. 10-meter and 50-meter electronic targets were ready by 1992, together with the first vestiges of a rifle-pistol finals hall.

#### *Atlanta 1996 Became a Model for the Future*

The 1996 Atlanta Olympic Shooting events were conducted on a newly constructed Wolf Creek Olympic Complex, which had a full electronic target installation, including 25m pistol and 10m running target systems. The Atlanta Shooting Venue also had a convertible finals range centered in its 50m range. The Shooting organization in Atlanta featured innovations that included a sports presentation system with music and announcer commentary, spectator education programs, athlete introductions supported by graphics for every athlete, event final march-ins, and start to finish TV productions for every final. These TV productions actually received an IOC Golden Ring Award as the Games' most outstanding television production. 49,000 spectator tickets were sold for the eight days of



*49,000 spectator tickets were sold for the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Shooting events. This is one-half of the 5,000-seat spectator stand behind the shotgun finals range. A similar structure with 2,500 seats was erected at the rear of the 50m range where the convertible rifle-pistol finals range could be erected.*



Shooting. This remains as Shooting's highest spectator total for any Olympic Games, before or after.

The Olympic Shooting Programs that followed in 2000 in Sydney, 2004 in Athens, 2008 in Beijing and 2012 in London largely followed plans and procedures that were established in Barcelona and Atlanta. The event list expanded to 17 for Sydney and Athens, with the addition of Skeet Women and Trap Women events. The IOC decided to cut Shooting back to 15 total events prior to the Beijing Olympics; the ISSF agreed to drop 10m Running Target Men and Double Trap Women, based largely on low international participation in those events.

A noteworthy development that began with the Atlanta Olympics and continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century was the growth in the number of nations that qualified athletes to compete in Shooting. 100 nations were represented in Atlanta. In successive Games, national participation totals were 103, 106, 103 and 108. Those totals ranked Shooting either third or fourth among all Olympic sports. Shooting had grown to become one of the world's most popular Olympic sports.

### *High Shooting Venue Costs Became a Concern*

The 2004 Athens Shooting events called disconcerting attention to two significant challenges faced by Shooting. The Olympic Organizing Committee in Athens allegedly spent 65 million euros (69 million USD) to construct its Shooting venue. The IOC has criticized Shooting for its high venue costs that are caused by Shooting's traditional requirements for five separate range facilities (Shooting wants sub-venues for shotgun, 50m rifle and pistol, 25m pistol, 10m rifle and pistol, and a rifle-pistol finals hall). Regrettably, the Athens Shooting venue never hosted



*The most successful Olympic Shooting athlete since WWII has been JIN Jongoh of Korea. Jin won four Olympic gold medals in the 2012 and 2016 Games. These photos were taken just before and just after Jin won his fourth Olympic gold medal in 2016.*



another international competition after the 2004 Games as it became an egregious example of wasteful Olympic spending. In subsequent Olympics, the ISSF has made modest attempts to reduce venue costs. For London 2012, the 10m and 50m ranges were combined into one single range. The London venue itself was constructed as a temporary venue that was removed after the Games. For Tokyo 2020, another temporary venue with a combined Finals Hall and 25m range was used. The Paris 2024 Shooting events will be conducted on an existing facility, the French federation's Centre National de Tir Sportif at Châteauroux-Deols, even though it is 150 miles from Paris.

### ***Controlling Performance-Enhancing Rifle Clothing***

Another issue that reached a crisis stage in Athens 2004 was the role performance-enhancing clothing plays in determining results in the 10- and 50-meter rifle events. This is a problem that has been brewing for five or six decades. Padded leather rifle jackets that proved to be advantageous were introduced in the 1960s. ISSF attempts to limit jacket thickness in the 1970s led to the introduction of stiffer materials to enhance stability. Shooting trousers made of supportive material were introduced in the 1980s and immediately became required equipment for any rifle athlete who wanted to be competitive. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the relationship between stiffer clothing and higher scores was firmly established. The ISSF instituted stiffness testing in an attempt to keep playing fields level. This incentivized rifle athletes and coaches to employ elaborate means to manipulate clothing before testing. An ISSF attempt to ban special shooting trousers narrowly failed in 2004, but the spectacle of athletes using blow torches or other extreme means to soften clothing before testing finally led to the implementation of no-tolerance rifle clothing stiffness and thickness testing after the Athens Games. This was reasonably successful in keeping this problem under control for several years. Unfortunately, recent advances in clothing materials appear to have reinvigorated this concern. Rifle events' future on the Olympic Program may well depend upon how successful ISSF rule makers are in implementing rules and testing requirements that give all athletes reasonable and relatively equal access to performance-enhancing rifle clothing.

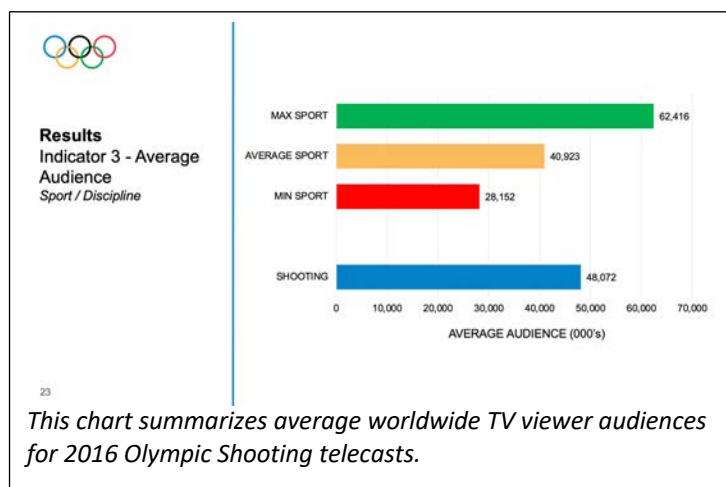
### **The Adoption of True “Start-from-Zero” Finals**

The finals rules adopted by Shooting in 1986, which were followed in the 1988 through 2012 Olympics, were not true finals. In those rules, finalists retained their qualification scores and fired 10 or 25 additional shots, with qualification plus final round totals deciding the medal winners. ISSF President Vázquez Raña, who was also an IOC member, reported receiving multiple challenges from his IOC colleagues who pointed out how athletes who qualify for finals in other Olympic sports end their competitions with final round events where the finalists start-from-zero. The ISSF responded by developing a new 25m rapid-fire pistol men final where six finalists started from zero and went through progressive eliminations until the two remaining finalists shot one additional series to determine the gold and silver medals. This new start-from-zero final was successfully introduced in the 2012 Olympics. That led to a 2013 ISSF decision to adopt start-from-zero, progressive elimination finals for all Olympic events. The new finals were thoroughly tested in the 2014 World Championship and subsequent World Cups and were remarkably successful during the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. The ISSF Technical Delegate’s report summarized the impact of this change:

***The New (2013) Shooting Finals Were Great!*** *With the new 2013 Finals format, the Qualification competitions became even more important than before. Every athlete who qualified for the Final had an opportunity to win a medal and every finalist had to shoot great to get into the Final. In fact, two gold medalists got into Finals via shoot-offs, two qualified 8<sup>th</sup> and another was 7<sup>th</sup>. Three others were first in their qualifications. The new Finals elimination system worked very well and television/OBS was able to give excellent visibility to all athletes who were eliminated. There were many dramatic moments when eliminations were decided. The concluding duels that decided the gold and silver medals were always dramatic and were often decided by the last shot. The new Finals helped to give Shooting its most exciting competitions ever.*

One of the positive outcomes of Shooting’s development of its Olympic Program has been the impact of the live telecasting of Shooting finals. This actually began in 1988 and 1992. Since 2008, the IOC’s Olympic

Broadcast System (OBS) has handled Shooting telecasts that have achieved worldwide visibility. Olympic Shooting telecasts proved to be remarkably popular. In 2016, Shooting telecasts attracted a total worldwide audience of 160 million viewers. The 15 Shooting finals had an average viewer audience of 48.1 million, compared with an audience of 40.9 million for the average Olympic sport and 62.4 million for the highest ranked sport (see chart). In addition, Shooting fans in 2016 made 60 million searches for Olympic Shooting information on the IOC, Olympic Organizing Committee and other websites or mobile apps. Shooting has established a massive worldwide audience of participants and fans.



### **Achieving Gender Equality**

The most contentious Olympic Shooting Program changes were worked out in 2017 and 2018 in order to achieve gender equality in the 2020 Program. The IOC released a new policy statement titled *Agenda 2020* in 2015. Its “*Recommendation 11*” called for “*the IOC to work with the International Federations to achieve 50% female participation in the Olympic Games.*” Even after the adoption of separate women’s events that began in 1984, Shooting still had to make major changes to achieve gender equality. Shooting had nine men’s events and six women’s events. 62% of its Olympic participation quotas were allocated to men. After four years of study, dozens of heated discussions and one extra-ordinary General Assembly, the ISSF decided to delete three men’s events, 50m rifle prone, 50m pistol and double trap, and to adopt three new mixed team events, 10m air rifle, 10m air pistol and trap or skeet (to alternate between Olympics). Rules also were changed to equalize the number of shots in women’s and men’s Shooting events. Deleting the three men’s events proved to be especially contentious. The 50-meter rifle prone event was very popular, because it was easy, but it was an equipment-dependent event where success was limited to a small number of athletes who could obtain the most accurate rifle and ammunition. The deletion of the double trap men event was vigorously fought by several federations with strong shotgun constituencies.



*The most successful shotgun athlete in Olympic Shooting history is Kim Rhode of the USA. Her successes were only possible because separate women's shotgun events were added to the Program in 1996 and 2004. Rhode made history by winning medals in six successive Olympics. She won gold medals in double trap women in 1996 and 2004 plus a bronze medal in that event in 2000. She won gold, silver, and bronze medals respectively in the skeet women event in 2012, 2008 and 2016. This photo shows Rhode breaking her last target in winning the 2012 skeet women gold medal.*

The new gender equal Olympic Shooting Program was successfully implemented during the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, which were conducted in 2021 after the covid 19 pandemic forced postponement of those Games. Shooting's 360 participation quotas were evenly divided between men and women competitors who represented 100 different nations. The finals formats used in Tokyo were the same as those used during the 2016 Games. The three mixed team events became the first team events on the Olympic Shooting Program since 1924.

### ***New Leadership in the ISSF—and More Change***

The most recent changes in Shooting's Olympic Program took place following 2018 when Olegario Vazquez Rana retired after serving as ISSF President for 38 years. In the 2018 ISSF General Assembly, a new ISSF President, Vladimir Lisin from Russia, was elected by just

four votes in a contest where the other candidate was Luciano Rossi of Italy. Lisin and his Secretary General, who was also from Russia, subsequently made further changes in the finals format by introducing intermediate ranking matches and gold medal duels for the last two finalists. These dubious changes are scheduled to be used in Paris 2024 but may not survive long after that. The changes were controversial and even raised concerns within the IOC. Concerns over changes like these contributed to a leadership change during the 2022 ISSF General Assembly. Rossi was elected President over Lisin by a margin of seven votes. The new ISSF leadership will be challenged to stabilize the Olympic Shooting Program and its finals and to preserve Shooting's status as an Olympic sport for Los Angeles 2028 and the Olympic Games that follow after that.

## **RESULTS OF THE OLYMPIC COMPETITIONS**

The purpose of this document has been to present the history of the Olympic Shooting Program and the rifle, pistol, shotgun and running target events that have achieved places on the program, some temporarily, and some more enduring. This document has strived to analyze Shooting's endeavors to become a true world sport for men and women, by adapting to new Shooting constituencies, accommodating spectators and television and ultimately by becoming a gender equal sport.

An equally important part of any Olympic Shooting chronicle would be to present the voluminous record of athletes' performances during the 29 Summer Olympic Games when Shooting events were on the Olympic Program. These are the athletes who won the Games' gold, silver, and bronze medals. Compiling and presenting that history would be a separate endeavor that was not the objective of this history. For Olympic Shooting followers who want to study the results of the Olympic competitions and athletes, the starting point is the ISSF website at: <https://www.issf-sports.org>. Under "*Competitions*" – "*Historical Results*," a comprehensive list of Olympic and World Championship medal winners is available.



Obtaining results for all athletes in the Olympic Games events will be more challenging. Final results lists from recent Games can be downloaded from the ISSF website. Detailed results going back to 1960 can be found in the *ISSF Journal* magazines that were published between 1960 and 2018.

Another well-organized and comprehensive source of data about individual athlete performances going all the way back to the first Olympic Games is available on the ISSF website at <https://www.issf-sports.org/athletes.ashx>. Enter the name of the athlete whose record you want to check. It's all there.

OLYMPIC SHOOTING PARTICIPATION STATISTICS						
Year	City	# of Events	Men	Women	Total	Nations
1896	Athens	5M	39	0	39	7
1900	Paris	8M	139	0	139	13
1908	London	15M	247	0	247	14
1912	Stockholm	18M	284	0	284	16
1920	Antwerp	21M	233	0	233	18
1924	Paris	10M	267	0	267	27
1932	Los Angeles	2M	41	0	41	10
1936	Berlin	3M	141	0	141	29
1948	London	4M	188	0	188	28
1952	Helsinki	7M	218	0	218	41
1956	Melbourne	7M	156	0	156	37
1960	Rome	6M	313	0	313	59
1964	Tokyo	6M	262	0	262	51
1968	Mexico City	7 Mixed	348	3	351	62
1972	Munich	8 Mixed	396	3	397	71
1976	Montreal	7 Mixed	338	6	344	60
1980	Moscow	7 Mixed	236	3	239	38
1984	Los Angeles	6M, 3W, 2Mx	296	125	421	68
1988	Seoul	6m, 4W, 2Mx	285	111	396	66
1992	Barcelona	7M, 4W, 2Mx	290	117	407	83
1996	Atlanta	10M, 5W	296	125	421	100
2000	Sydney	10M, 7W	262	146	408	103
2004	Athens	10M, 7W	253	137	390	106
2008	Beijing	9M, 6W	245	145	390	103
2012	London	9M, 6W	231	159	390	108
2016	Rio de Janeiro	9M, 6W	239	151	390	97
2020/21	Tokyo	6M, 6W, 3Mx	180	180	360	100
2024	Paris	6M, 6W, 3Mx	170	170	340	