



The Olympic Games

Overview

The Olympic Games are yet another great idea that we owe to the ancient Greeks. Today, thanks to the wonderful television coverage of the games every four years, millions of people are able to witness the never-ending pursuit of athletic excellence. Olympic athletes, at least the successful ones, become popular celebrities. Certain events, such as figure skating, gymnastics, hockey, and basketball, have a particular appeal. We watch as world records are challenged and broken, usually by fractions of a second or an inch. As exciting and pleasing as it is to watch a great Olympic performance, it is also easy to forget the original intent and design of the games. To recapture that, we need to go back to Greece.

The Olympic Games, as originally envisioned and conducted by the Greeks, were not a spectator sport! Rather, the games were open to all citizens and everyone was encouraged to participate at whatever level of ability they had developed. Awards and recognitions were passed out frequently and generously, not being limited to the top three finishers in an event.

This is *not* the model that is used in the modern games. The reason for the difference in philosophy has to do with a difference in intent. The modern games are essentially intended to provide a platform of participation for “professional” athletes, people who invest years of their lives in a single-minded pursuit of excellence in a given activity. The Greeks, on the other hand, had come to understand, as we are now slowly beginning to rediscover, that effective living and good citizenship requires a healthy and developed state of mind *and* body. This is an aspect of the “Greek Model” that is often lost or overlooked, because of the power and influence the Greek culture had on the intellectual development of Western Civilization.

This comment, however, is not meant to disparage the modern model. There is something in it that is quite instructive, and it contains some valuable lessons for us that extend beyond athletic training and performance. The training and development model of Olympic athletes, and of professional athletes in general, gives us some valuable insight into the process whereby we attain mastery.

Professions and Trades

The preparation, implementation, and broadcast of the Olympic Games involve a myriad of professions and trades. They include:

- Artists
- Athletes
- Athletic Coaches
- Cameramen and women
- Carpenters
- Choreographers
- Computer Animators
- Health Care Specialists
- Materials Engineers
- Musicians
- Photographers
- Public Relations Specialists
- Statisticians
- Set Designers
- Systems Engineers
- TV Announcers
- TV Producers