



INTERNATIONAL
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Olympic Studies Centre

HANDBALL: History of Handball at the Olympic Games

Reference document

Introduction, key stages and evolution in the number of events from this sport's beginnings to the present time.

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Handball

Introduction

Handball made its Olympic debut at the Games of the XI Olympiad in [Berlin in 1936](#). This was a grass version with 11 players. The sport was then not included on the programme, except as a demonstration sport in [Helsinki in 1952](#). It reappeared in its indoor version with seven players at the Games of the XX Olympiad in [Munich in 1972](#). Women's handball made its appearance at the Games of the XXI Olympiad in [Montreal in 1976](#).

Key stages

Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1927: At the 26th IOC Session held in Monaco in April, the IOC member in Ireland, John Joseph Keane, proposed that handball be included on the programme of the Olympic Games in 1932 but this did not happen.• 1930: At the Olympic Congress held in Berlin, it was decided to add handball to the “athletic games” (including football, polo and lawn hockey), from among which the Games Organising Committee could choose.• 1949: At the 44th IOC Session held in Rome in April, it was proposed that handball be on the list of obligatory sports at the Games. This proposal was rejected.
Re-entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1965: At the 64th IOC Session held in Madrid October, it was decided to increase the number of sports on the programme to 21 for the Games of the XX Olympiad in Munich in 1972. Handball was featured on this new list.
Women's entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1972: At the 73rd IOC Session held in Munich in August and September, it was decided to introduce a women's tournament at the Games of the XXI Olympiad in Montreal in 1976.



Evolution in the number of teams

- 1936: 6 teams (men's)
- 1972: 16 teams (men's)
- 1976: 17 teams (11 men's and 6 women's)
- 1980-1984: 18 teams (12 men's and 6 women's)
- 1988-1996: 20 teams (12 men's and 8 women's)
- 2000-2004: 22 teams (12 men's and 10 women's)
- 2008-2016: 24 teams (12 men's and 12 women's)

[Find out more](#)



Men's and women's events

Handball	1896	1900	1904	1908	1912	1920	1924	1928	1932	1936	1948	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	Total
Men																													13
Women																													11
Number of events	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	13	

Grey column total = number of times on the programme