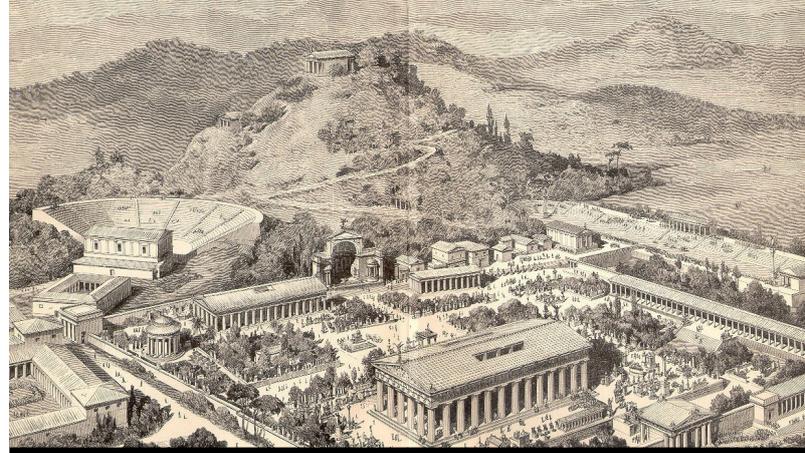


# ANCIENT GREEK OLYMPICS

The ancient Greeks loved sport and the Olympic Games were the biggest sporting event in the ancient calendar.

The Olympic Games began over 2,700 years ago, in south west Greece in the year 776 BCE. Every four years, around 50,000 people came from all over the Greek world to the city of Olympia to watch and take part. The ancient games

were also a religious festival, held in honour of Zeus, the King of the Gods. The Games took place in the Sanctuary of Olympia a whole area dedicated to Zeus, the temple there contained the huge (12.5m) statue of Zeus. The statue was so impressive it was one on the seven wonders of the world.



An artist's impression of the Sanctuary of Olympia

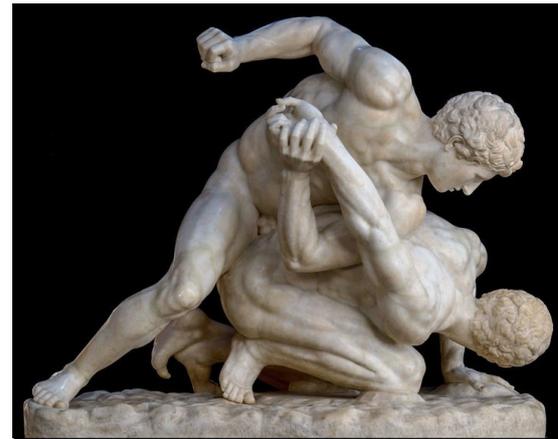
The main event at the Olympics was not a sporting event, but a sacrifice. On the third day of the games, 100 oxen were sacrificed and burnt on the Altar of Zeus. This altar was made from the leftover ash of all the sacrificed oxen & by around 200AD, the mound of ash stood six meters high!



After the sacrifices, they put on competitions, which became known as the Olympic Games.

The ancient Olympic Games were initially a one day event until 684 BCE, when they were extended to three days. In the 5th century BCE, the Games were extended again to cover five days. The ancient Games

included running, long jump, shotput, javelin, boxing, pankration and equestrian events like chariot racing!



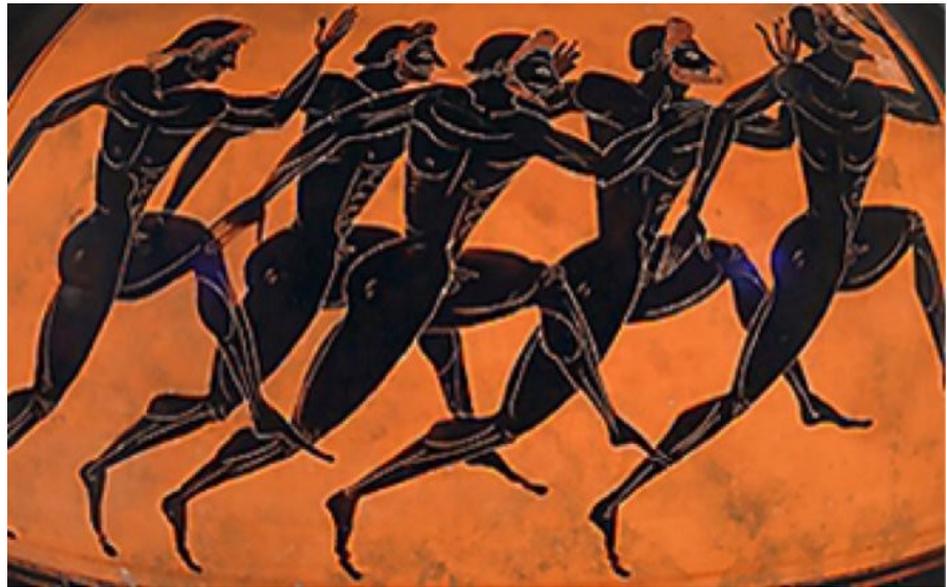
Pankration was an empty-hand submission sport with scarcely any rules. The athletes used boxing and wrestling techniques, but also others, such as kicking and holds, locks and chokes on the ground.

The Discobolus: a statue of an athlete stooping to throw the discus made in the 5th century BC by sculptor Myron.

# ANCIENT GREEK OLYMPICS

Greeks travelled from all over the Mediterranean basin to attend the Games. It is estimated that more than 50,000 travelled to the city of Olympia for a single Games during the height of their popularity in the second century AD!

Not everyone in ancient Greece was eligible to compete in the Olympics though. Only Greek and boys, who were free citizens, not criminals, and whose city states agreed to participate in the Olympic truce of the games, were allowed to compete.



Leonidas of Rhodes was one of the most famous ancient Olympic runners. For four consecutive Olympiads (164-152 BCE), he was champion of three foot races. He was celebrated with the title "Triastes" meaning "tripler".

Ancient Olympians did not receive medals like modern athletes. Winners were given a wreath of leaves and a hero's welcome back home. Athletes competed for the glory of their city and winners were seen as being touched by the gods!



The modern Olympic Games began in 1896 with the first games taking place in Athens. It brought 14 nations and 241 athletes together, who competed in 43 events.

Although this years Olympic Games have been postponed until next year, due to Covid-19, they will take place in Tokyo in summer 2021. It will bring 206 nations and over 11,000 athletes together competing in 339 events!