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Olympic Studies Centre

AQUATICS: History of Water Polo at the Olympic Games

Reference document

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

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Water polo

Introduction

Water polo was on the programme of the Games of the II Olympiad in [Paris in 1900](#). It was not organised in [St Louis in 1904](#), but it has been on the programme since the Games in [London in 1908](#). Women's water polo made its debut 100 years after the first introduction of this discipline at the Games, i.e. at the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in [Sydney in 2000](#).

Key stages

Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1912: At the 15th IOC Session held in July in Stockholm, it was decided to divide the sports on the programme into three categories: indispensable, desirable and eligible. Water polo (included under swimming) was among the first category.• 1924: At the 23rd IOC Session held in Paris in June and July, the IOC drew up a list of obligatory and optional sports. Water polo was on the second list.
Women's water polo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1997: At the IOC Executive Board meeting held in September, it was decided to add women's water polo to the programme of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney in 2000.



Evolution in the number of teams

- 1900: 7 teams (men's)
- 1908: 4 teams (men's)
- 1912: 6 teams (men's)
- 1920: 12 teams (men's)
- 1924: 13 teams (men's)
- 1928: 12 teams (men's)
- 1932: 5 teams (men's)
- 1936: 16 teams (men's)
- 1948: 18 teams (men's)
- 1952: 21 teams (men's)
- 1956: 10 teams (men's)
- 1960: 16 teams (men's)
- 1964: 13 teams (men's)
- 1968: 15 teams (men's)
- 1972-1996: 12 teams (men's)
- 2000: 18 teams (12 men's and 6 women's)
- 2004-2016: 20 teams (12 men's and 8 women's)

[Find out more](#)



Men's and women's events

Waterpolo	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																													26
Women																													5
Number of events	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	26	

Grey column total = number of times on the programme