

Critical moment



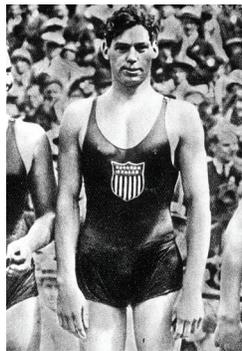
PARIS OLYMPICS, 1924

FOR CENTURIES, EUROPEAN LEADERS TRIED reviving the Ancient Olympic Games of Greece, which had petered out eons earlier. Success finally came with the 1896 Games, thanks largely to Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator now known as the founder of the modern Olympic Games. From 1896 to 1925, de Coubertin served as President of the International Olympic Committee, which he helped create. His heart is interred near the town of Olympia in Greece.

De Coubertin may be the Frenchman most associated with the Olympics, but the entire nation has helped sustain a movement that could easily have died. After all, the Games took years-long breaks during both World Wars, early on attracting minimal participation and even less attention, some of it embarrassing, as when the 1904 marathon winner was found to have ridden 11 miles in a car.

Next summer, the IOC—an international organization decades older than the United Nations or World Bank—will hold the 2024 Games in Paris, marking the sixth French Olympics, more than any other country except the US (eight).

Track at the '24 Games was dominated by the "Flying Finns," Paavo Nurmi, above right, and Ville Ritola, winners of nine gold medals. Below, Johnny Weissmuller, future Tarzan.



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These Games come a century after the 1924 Paris Olympics—the first Games to grab and keep global attention. *Chariots of Fire*, a 1981 movie about the 1924 Games, won four Oscars. One American star—swimming's first superstar and gold medalist Johnny Weissmuller—gained later fame playing Tarzan. As one of the world's best-known actors in the '40s, Weissmuller contributed to the decision to resume the Games following a 12-year war-induced break.

Since Paris 1924, the number of competing nations has grown fivefold, to more than 200. Medal events have nearly tripled to 329. The number of athletes has more than tripled to about 10,500—half of them women, up from 135 female athletes a century ago. Long gone from the Games is a sport called Savate. New in 2024: competitive breakdancing.

The 2024 Paris Olympics will bring similarly durable benefits, predicts Guillaume Maujean, Head of Brunswick's Paris office. "The Games will visibly and lastingly transform the Île-de-France region, one of the most diverse in France," he says. "The Games will affect changes in social habits, spur economic growth and enhance the environment." ♦