



Bigger & Brighter

Placing The World Games In The Competitive Multi-Sport Market

Over four hundred types of international multi-sport games have been established since the revival of the Olympic Games. The vast majority of these games are for certain groups and not for elite athletes. The World Games are unique in that they offer elite global competition in sports that are generally not in the Olympics. Few other international games have ever offered elite global competition in common World Games sports such as korfbal, faustball, speed roller skating, fin swimming, and field archery.

How have the World Games fared in comparison to the myriad of other games that have been established? What can be learned from the successes and failures of some of these games that can help The World Games increase their stature as multi-sport event?

The global elite competitions that have been established in the same era as The World Games can be divided into two groups: games established by and for television (and pay prize money), and games established by the sports federations.

The first group includes the Turner Broadcasting System's Goodwill Games, ESPN's X-Games, Great Outdoor Games, and NBC's Gravity Games.

The second group includes the World

World Equestrian Games, World Military Games and World Air Games.

These games have similarities with The World Games in that many of the sports included in these games are not "standard" Olympic sports.

In general, the games created by television entities have been more successful, held on a more consistent schedule, and are more well known than the games not supported by television. As we have seen with the Olympic Games, in this day and age, television is crucial the success of a Games.

The World Games have been held on a consistent schedule, every four years since 1981. They have never been postponed and have only moved locations once, in 1997, from South Africa to Finland.



The Goodwill Games, supported by the passion and finances of media executive Ted Turner, were held on five occasions from 1986 until 2001. Though relatively successful as a competition, the games were produced in such a way that they lost substantial amounts of money and ceased to exist after the 2001 edition. The events in these games were mostly the "standard" sports with the participation of the most well known international federations. However, a surprise hit of the 1986 games was "motoball", motorcycle polo that was not included after 1986.

The X-Games debuted in 1995 as the Extreme Games and have been phenomenally successful for ESPN, the games' TV parent. The games were supposed to have begun as a biennial competition, but the first edition was so successful that ESPN quickly made the competition an annual one.

On this schedule, and with enormous television coverage, the X-Games have become very well known in the United States, the only nation to host them to date. The games do attract elite athletes from all around the

world, but differ from the World Games in that they have a relatively small field of athletes, about 400 earning the right to compete annually in several non-Olympic events.

ESPN expanded its X Games creation with regional variations, particularly in Asia, and with the emerging ESPN Great Outdoor Games, which feature "outdoor sports": logging skills, log rolling, fishing, dog events, and some archery and shooting events.



NBC followed the X-Games example with the Gravity Games, with essentially the same sports as the X-Games.

The group of games not created by television has had many more difficulties with organization.

The World Air Games have competitions in aerobatics, ballooning, gliding, skydiving, and more. The games have been held on two occasions, 1997 in Turkey and 2001 in Spain, after first being proposed in 1995. The event was shown on Eurosport in 1997, but the World Air Sports Federation is looking for more television revenue to sustain the event, and for venues for upcoming editions.

The World Military Games have had similar issues. They were first held in Rome in 1995. The second edition, supposed to be held in 1999 in Mar Del Plata, Argentina, was moved to Zagreb, Croatia. The edition to be held in August 2003 has been postponed to December.

The World Equestrian Games (dressage, driving, endurance riding, show jumping, and the 3-day event) have been held every four years since 1990, and are for world-class equestrian event riders. The 1994

games in The Hague were renowned for their disorganization. The 1998 edition was to be held in Ireland, but it moved - partially over lack of a television contract - to Rome, Italy, and was held on very short notice.

The World Nature Games, sponsored by the Government of Brazil, were first held in 1997 and were somewhat successful with some 809 athletes from 55 nations competing in rafting, canoeing, endurance horse riding, orienteering with archery, fishing, ballooning, and skydiving, to name but a few. Despite the efforts of the Government to hold the event on a regular four-year schedule, a second edition has not been held.

What can The World Games learn from both the successes and failures of these events?

An early theme of The First World Games was to gain exposure for some of the lesser-known sports, with the possibility of having some of those sports make it onto the Olympic Games program. Some World Games sports, like taekwondo and triathlon, did make it into the Olympics.

However, the IOC's current restrictions on growth mean that the only way a new sport will be added to the program is if a current sport is dropped. Now, instead of new sports fighting to get onto the Olympic program, some current sports are fighting hard to justify their remaining in the Olympic Games, which changes tremendously the dynamic of the question of inclusion for new sports. While this might seem to pose a dilemma for World Games sports, it could also present a tremendous opportunity.

The World Games, with the right strategy, could be positioned to be a peer of the Olympic Games, rather than being known as the "Olympic Games For Non-Olympic Sports." Open up The World Games to many of the events that are clamoring to be in the Olympic Games, and that have worldwide spectator appeal for television audiences such as skateboarding, BMX stunt and the likes. A powerful International Federation such as the IAAF could be added to The World Games with the inclusion of cross country running. This would take a change in philosophy for The World Games, as limits placed on the number of athletes at the games would have to be raised.

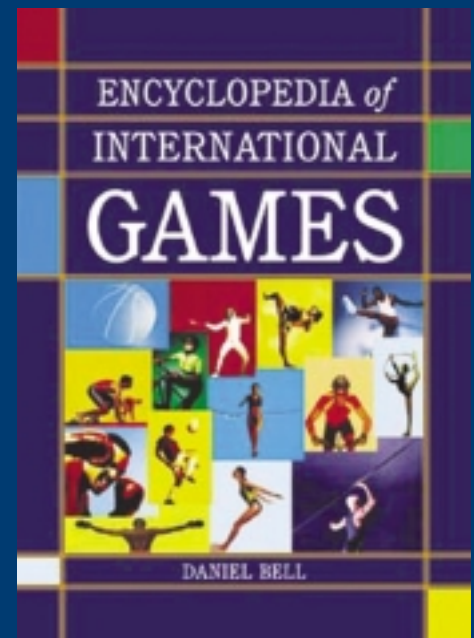
The debate goes on as to whether or not to include these events in the Olympic Games. The World Games could be well positioned to open up to these events, which have proven popular, and use them as a catalyst for televising the entire games, in a sense, before the Olympic Games votes to include them. The World Games could also be opened up to events that are in the World Nature Games, World Equestrian Games and World Air Games, and events such as Sepak Takraw that are not yet in either the World Games or Olympic Games.

This might seem to overshadow current World Games events, but even the Olympic Games broadcasts are dominated by the "major sports" such as athletics and swimming, while judo, table tennis and shooting are rarely shown. This coverage varies from country to country but the general rule holds true. Many sports feel they get less attention than they deserve when it comes to Olympic television coverage. With the inclusion of "marquee" events, all of the World Games sports would gain more exposure.

The World Games have always taken the very sensible approach of limiting the number of athletes in the games, and requiring that host cities already have all of the necessary infrastructure in place, so they do not have to build facilities for the games.

Now that the games are established, there may be reasons to lift these limits. One parameter of well-known multi-sport events is that they are "big" or perceived to be big. Whether this is unfairly placing quantity over quality is open to debate. However, in general, the more sports, the more nations, and the more athletes participate in games, the more well-known the games will become. The World Games, for very good reasons, mostly financial and organizational, have placed limits on themselves. This model has worked so far, but, in order to create an event that would bring television revenue, it may be time to let the event grow to two or three times its present size by including more sports, and allowing more athletes to participate.

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The Olympic Games, revived in 1896, are the most well-known international multi-sport event of our times. Ever since then, hundreds of other multi-sport games based on the model of the Olympics have been established. But their histories have not been quite as well documented until now.

The *Encyclopedia of International Games* captures the histories of these games, many of them for the very first time. Dozens of games are now held each year, and this work preserves the histories of both current games and many games that have come and gone. Included in the work are major regional games such as the African, Asian, Arab, South Pacific, and Pan-American Games, and lesser-known competitions such as the Indian Ocean Island Games, Arctic Winter Games, Island Games, and Games of the Small Countries of Europe. Games for specific populations or professions such as the North American Indigenous Games, Maccabiah Games, World Military Games, World Police and Fire Games, and World Medical and Health Games are featured.

Dozens of entries cover the histories of games such as the Special Olympics, the Paralympics, games for the blind, and other games for the disabled. Entries on these games are complemented by factual information including the host city, nation and dates of the games, the number of athletes, number and list of sports, number and list of nations, and medals tables. McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers ISBN 0-7864-1026-4