

# THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF HORIZONTAL TRACK AND FIELD EVENTS

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**Abstract:** *Running, jumping and throwing, were, at the beginning, fundamental movements, and later on became basic exercises in athletics. A series of existing ethnographic data helps us to understand better the historical process of exercise, the position and evolution of track and field events of the most distant times.*

*The long jump was part of the „Pentathlon” event at the Olympics in Ancient Greece, in 708 B.C. The rest of the events of the pentathlon were fights, disk and spear throwing.*

*The competitors used weights called dumbbells made of stone.*

**Key words:** *history, horizontal jumps, long jump, athletics.*

## 1. History of horizontal jumps

The data provided by scientists from the fields of history, anthropology, ethnography, sociology and people of national and international sports science concluded that the origin of exercise resides in the work of people from ancient times.

Exercise emerged, as Constantin Kirişescu states in „*Palestrica*” „...in close connection with the conditions of material life of society in the process of productive labour” [2, p. 140-156].

Running, jumping and throwing, were, at the beginning, fundamental movements, and later on became basic exercises in athletics.

A series of existing ethnographic data helps us to understand better the historical process of exercise, the position and evolution of track and field events of the most distant times.

In Ancient Greece, it was practiced as a competition within the ancient pentathlon, the long jump without momentum, while the long jump with momentum era practiced only as a preparatory exercise.

During feudalism, horizontal jumps were the most important for hunting activities.

The long jump can be considered as one of the most natural track and field events, which should not lead us to think that the upgrading of this event’s technique is done without difficulty.

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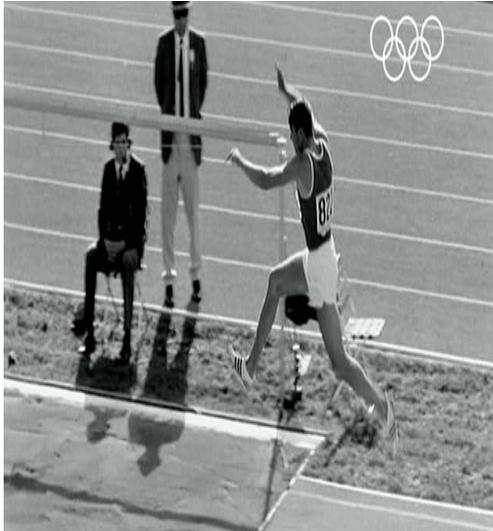


Fig. 1. *Beating of triple jump*

### 2.1. Origin

The long jump was part of the „Pentathlon” event at the Olympics in Ancient Greece, in 708 B.C., according to the website Olympic.org.

The rest of the events of the pentathlon were fights, disk and spear throwing.

The competitors used weights called dumbbells made of stone.

Long jumpers had dumbbells in their hands to ease their momentum, and on the flying part, close to the landing, they would throw them backwards.

The dumbbells were used to help them perform a jump as long as possible.

The long jump was part of the first Olympics in Ancient Greece and, also, was on the list of the track and field events at the first modern Olympics in 1896. Although the long jump has substantially changed during the last one thousand years, it is still part of the athletics competitions at local, regional, national and international level [3].

The athletics from the Olympic Games keep several of the events disputed in

Athens, in 1896, but, in time, these have underwent some changes. One of these is the emergence of jumps without momentum.

Since the Olympic Games in Paris, in 1900, in the Olympic program were included the jumps without momentum: the long jump, the high jump and the triple jump. The three events were copiously dominated by the legendary American athlete, *Ray Ewry*, who won them all in 1900 and 1904.



Fig. 2. *Running of triple jump*

Since 1906, the triple jump disappeared, but Ewry continues to win the remaining events of jumps without momentum. He repeated the performance in 1908, in London. In 1912, in Stockholm, without the American retired due to his age, the competition was open to all, but that would have been the last change to triumph.

Konstantinos Tsiklitis was the last champion of the long jump without momentum, he jumped 3,37 meters, beating the Americans Platt Adams and Benjamin Adams. The two got their revenge at the high jump, with its final appearance in 1912.

Fig.3. *Pentathlon*

### 3. Development

The long jump, in the Ancient Greece was practiced in festivals, fairs and games such as Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean. *Olympian kentiltä Rooman areenoille.-The Sports of Antiquity. From the Fields of Olympia to Roman Arenas* [3].

From the first Modern Olympic Games, in 1896 the dumbbells were removed, and ever since, the long jump was included in all editions, although women did not compete until 1928 at the OF in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Fig.4. *Shoes with nails in the past*

In 1912, was established the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) which tried the standardization of the long jump event, both for males and females, which could be achieved only in 1932.

The United States and Europe dominated the long jump for men during the history at the modern Olympic Games [1, p. 109-114].

The most famous American long jumper was Jesse Owens, who won the gold in Berlin, in 1936.

At the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1984, Carl Lewis won the Olympic gold and held it for another three editions of the OG (1988, 1992 and 1996) [5, p. 243-258].

The Soviet Union and Eastern Germany were the top countries in the long jump Olympic events for women until Jackie Joyner-Kersey who won the gold in 1988.

#### 3.1. The long jump nowadays ...

Nowadays, many African and Asian countries continue to dominate the Olympic Games in the long jump, both for male and female.

More than 62 countries competed in the final at the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, where the world Olympic record at the long jump was of 8.95 meters (29 feet) for male and 7.52 meters (24 feet) for female.

Fig.5. *Long jump nowadays ...*

The competition equipment, the shoes made increasingly better, easier and better, in most cases custom-made, as well as the advanced training techniques provided athletes, for centuries, with a major

competitive advantage compared to their predecessors [4].



Fig.6. Shoes with nails in '90 years



Fig.7. Shoes with nails nowadays

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