



History of Athletics

Introduction

Track and Field, Road running, Race Walking, Cross Country running, Mountain running and Trail running are collectively known as athletics. Men have run, jumped, thrown things and walked fast in competitions with one another for thousands of years. From the earliest time, these activities have been a natural part of men's existence whether he was catching animals for food or escaping from predators. However, he also began to run, jump and threw things for pleasure, then competitively, leading to a desire to improve on his speed, endurance, jumping power and strength. In fact, athletics is the most important discipline in both the ancient and the modern Olympic Games.

Athletics in ancient time

Athletics events were depicted in the ancient Egyptian tombs in Sqqara with illustration of running at the Heb Sed Festival and High jump appearing in tombs from as early as of 2250 B.C.E. The Tailteann Games in Ireland are also thought to have been founded as far as 1893 B.C.E. Running events, long jump, high jump and spear throwing were the athletic events of the Games.

The Olympic Games were revived by the Spartan LYCURGUS and the Elean IPHITUS in 776 B.C.E. and the year was reckoned as the first Olympiad. The mythical institution of the Games was ascribed to Pelops or to Herracles (Hercules), and when the Elean usurped the presidency, the story gradually took shape that the celebration had been revived by the two heroes, Lycurgus and Iphitus.

The first Olympic champion was COROEBAS(KOROEBAS) an Elis cook who won the "Stadia", the 192'8 metres long race, which was the only event of the Olympic Games. A second event "DIAULUS" twice the length of Stadia was introduced after 52 years in 724 B.C.E. and in the next Games in 720 B.C.E. DULICHOS, the longest race in the Olympic Games was added, the length of the race was 4800 mtrs. (around 3 miles)

Pentathlon consisting of five events – Stadia, Long jump, Discus throw, Javelin throw and Wrestling had appeared for the first time in the Olympic Games in 708 B.C.E. Besides the Olympic Games, the Greek celebrated three more Panhellenic Games namely the Pythian Games, the Nemean Games and the Isthmian Games. The Pythian Games were a four years celebration, being held in the middle of each Olympic Games beginning in 582 B.C.E. at Delphi. Athletics, Cleisthenes, Gymnastics and Chariot race were in the programme. Much about the same time the other two Pan hellenic Games were instituted at Isthmus (586 or 582 B.C.E.) and Nemea (576 B.C.E.). Following the abolition of the Olympic Games in 393 A.D., athletics plunged into Dark Ages.

Athletics in modern time

In the middle age Track and Field developed in Europe where Stone put and Weight throw competition were very popular among Celtic societies, they were precursors to the modern Shot put and Discus. Pole vault was very popular in North European low land in the 8th century.

The world first athletic club, the Neeton Guild in the New fork in England was founded in 1817, but no trace can be found of it after 1826, by then regular competitions were already held at Royal Military Academy at SANDHURST. The 11 ½ miles Crick run at Rugby School was instituted in 1837 and soon afterward other public school started to introduce athletic into the sporting curriculum.

The Cotswold Olympic Games, a sports festival which emerged in England in the 17th Century England featured athletics and L' Olympiad de la Republique was held annually from 1796 to 1798 in the revolutionary France which some scholars claim as an early forerunner of the modern Summer Olympic.

Modern competition in athletics took place for the first time in the 19th century. They were organized by Educational Institutes, Military organisations and Sports clubs as competition between rival establishment.

Amateur Athletics Association (AAA) was established in England in 1880 and it was the first amateur body for the sports of Athletics and began holding its own annual Athletics competition, the AAA Championship on July 3rd 1880. However, New York Athletics Club had already organized U.S.A outdoor Track and Field Championship 1876.

An athletics competition was included in the first modern Olympic Games held at Athens in 1896. It has been one of the foremost competitions at the quadrennial multi sports event ever since. There were twelve athletics events in the first Olympic Games. They were 100m, 400m, 800m, 1500m, Marathon, 110m Hurdles, Long jump, High Jump, Triple Jump, Pole Vault, Shot put and Discus throw. It was in the 9th Olympic Games, 1928 held at Amsterdam that women were allowed to take part in athletics events. The revival of the Olympic Games at Athens in 1896 marked a new era for track and field. These Games gained more exposure at Rome in 1960 due to TV Coverage that shown the talent of gymnasts, athletes, and outstanding performance of the first black African ever to win an Olympic Gold, the bare footed marathon runner, Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia.

The first South America Track and Field championship was held in 1919 while European Athletics Championship was started in 1934.

International Governing Body (IAAF)

International Amateur Athletics Federation, the governing body of athletic in the world was founded in 1912 and adopted the current name International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) in 2001. In 2012 after 100 years of athletics excellence, the International Association of Athletics Federation embarked on its second century with drive and determination Athletics, a sport that was founded in antiquity has continued to adopt through the centuries, offering a dynamic life enhancing sport which is ready for the exciting challenges of the next 100 years. The IAAF was founded to fulfill the need for the world governing authority, for a competition programme for standardised equipment and for a list of officials world record. In an ever changing world, IAAF to be pro-active when trying to reach new audiences and find new hosts to their events. The federation fully understands that athletics is no longer for high performance but “Sports for all” and about ensuring that the maximum number of citizens are able to participate in athletics.

This means the thriving world road running, which is where the majority of people actually connect directly with the world of athletics, but it is also athletics in the school, where IAAF is keen to ensure that they (IAAF) reach the maximum number of children all over the world starting

at the age of seven but also including youngster in their teen where the drop off from Sport is most acute.

IAAF has total of 215 members Federations divided in 6 Area Association (1) Asian Athletics Association in Asia (2) Confederation of African Athletics in Africa (3) Confederation Sudamericana de Atletismo in South America (4) European Athletics Association (5) North American, Central and Caribbean Athletic Association of North America (6) Oceania Athletics Association in Oceania. Each area association conducts their own championship like in Asia, Asian Athletics Championship organized by Asian Athletics Association.

International Association of Athletic Federation recognizes 48 athletics events for women and 47 athletics events for men, but for world championship, Olympic Games, Continental Championships and others national championships 24 events are selected for men and 23 events for women.

The biennial IAAF world championship is the jewel of IAAF world series of events which also include indoor, junior, youth, relays, cross country, race walking, road running during a four year cycle of world championship and or cup event for each of these types of competition. As IAAF enters its second century of existence their aim is to further enhance their vibrant sports to offer new and exciting prospect for athletes and spectators alike. They are working hard to ensure that every area of the sport is reviewed, tested and encouraged to strive for athletics excellences.

Amateur status began to be displaced by professionalism at about 1970s' and IAAF abandoned amateurism in 1982. The Federation started World Athletics Championship at Helsinki in 1983. Since then the championship is being held for every two years and they are fully professional with prize money introduced in 1997. IAAF Golden Leagues was annual series of Track and Field meetings organized by IAAF till 2009, which was replaced by a new series, the IAAF Diamond League in 2010 with the aim to enhance the world wide appeal of athletics by going outside Europe for the first time. The series included events in China, Qatar, Morocco and the USA.

Athletics in India

Athletics in its present form was born in India sometimes in the last decades of nineteenth century. Nothing much is known of its early stages, till first known participation of Norman G. Pitchard in the 2nd Olympic Games in 1900 at Paris, where he won two Silver Medals in 200m and 200m Hurdles. History does not speak much of this Sport between 1900 and 1920. However, Athletics competition was held as Inter Provincial Athletic Competition every two years. With the formation of Indian Olympic Association in 1926, its affiliation with IOC in 1927 and taking over the reigns of IOA by late Maharaja Bhupinder Singh as President and Prof. G.D. Sondhi as Secretary in 1928, Athletic Championship became a part of Indian Olympic Games held every two years. India in the meantime participated (unofficially) in 1920 Olympic Games at Antwerp (Belgium) with 4 Athletes and 1924 Olympic Games at Paris with 8 athletes under the leadership of H.C. Buck of YMCA Madras. The official participation of Indian athletes started in the 1928 Olympic Games at Amsterdam with a seven member team. Since then the country is participating in the Olympic Games under the IOA banner till today. Amateur Athletic Federation of India was formed in 1946 at the initiative of Maharaja Yadindra Singh, the then President of Indian Olympic Association with Prof. G.D. Sondhi as its first President. The AAFI got affiliated to IAAF in the year 1946

As the word Amateur had been removed from the world body (IAAF), Amateur Athletic Federation of India was renamed as Athletic Federation of India. For smooth organization of athletics Meets, the federation organizes clinics for technical officials and organises courses for Judges and conducts examination for national technical officials and international technical officials.

Some of the prominent Indian athletes are Anju Bobby George who became the first Indian ever to win a medal in the World Athletics Championship when she won a bronze medal in Long jump at Paris in 2003, after two years she won a Gold in the World Athletics Final at Monte carlo in 2005. Milkha Singh (400m) and P.T. Usha (400m Hurdles) were Asian top athletes who missed Olympic medals by a fraction of a second and placed in fourth positions. T

Doping

The use of performance enhancing drugs (Doping) is prohibited within the sports of athletics. Athletes, who are found to have used such

banned substances, whether through positive drug test, the biological passport system, an investigation or public admission, may receive a competition ban for a length of time which reflects the severity of the infraction. Athletes who are found to have banned substances in their possession, or who tampered with or refuses to submit to drug testing can also receive ban from the sports. Competitive bans may also be given to athletes who test positive but prohibited recreational drugs or stimulants with little performance – enhancing effect for competitions in athletics.

Many high profile sports persons who have received doping ban have come from the sports of athletic with significant past cases few sportsperson are Ben Johnson, Marion Jones, Tim Montgomery. A number of athletes underwent state sponsored doping programme in East Germany between 1960s and 1980s. Following the allegation of state sponsored doping in Russia, the IAAF suspended the country's athletes from competition including 2016 summer Olympic.

Conclusion

Athletics, the oldest sports practiced by thousands of people all over the continents is the most popular discipline in Olympic Games. With the development of science and technology, there are evidence that new technique and training methods have been applied by sports scientist to improve the records of athletes. As mentioned above, the IAAF understands that athletics is no longer for high performance, it is "Sports for all" and ensuring that maximum number of citizen are able to participate in athletics.