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# **The Icy Slope: The Road towards the First Winter Olympic Games**

Pedro Pérez-Aragón<sup>a</sup> and Alejandro Viuda-Serrano<sup>b</sup>

*<sup>a</sup>Department of Physical Education, Education Centre 'Emperatriz María de Austria' Madrid, Spain; <sup>b</sup>Department of Education Sciences, Universidad de Alcalá, Alcalá de Henares, Spain*

Corresponding author: Alex Viuda-Serrano, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universidad de Alcalá, Campus Científico-Tecnológico UAH, C/ 19, 28871 Alcalá de Henares (Spain). E-mail: [alejandro.viuda@uah.es](mailto:alejandro.viuda@uah.es); Twitter: [@aviudaserrano](https://twitter.com/aviudaserrano); ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4951-0656>

Pedro Pérez Aragón is Physical Education teacher at the Secondary Education Centre 'Emperatriz María de Austria' in Madrid, Spain. His research interests are related to Olympism, Pierre de Coubertin and his educational, pedagogical, political, sporting and cultural heritage. His PhD dissertation (2017) was about the basis of Coubertin's sporting pedagogy and the influence on the Anglo-Saxon culture.

Alejandro Viuda-Serrano is the Secretary General of the European Committee for Sports History (CESH) and Lecturer at the Universidad de Alcalá, Spain. His research is centred on Spanish contemporary sports history, especially during the Francoism, war, press and gender and their relation to sport and Olympism.

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## **The Icy Slope: The Road towards the First Winter Olympic Games**

2021 is the centenary of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) meeting in Lausanne which, almost three decades after its founding, decided to initiate what was later accepted as the first winter Olympic Games. This paper examines the reasons behind this puzzling much delayed start to winter competition, further clarifying earlier research. It draws inter alia on IOC correspondence, publications and minutes to contextualise and analyse the complex earlier processes lying behind this key decision by the international body and its subsequent organisation of the ‘Winter Sports Week’ in Chamonix, in 1924. It begins by exploration of the relation of the earlier Nordic Games to the Winter Olympics, as both forerunner and initial obstacle. It shows that in the period before 1920 there was only limited inclusion of ‘winter’ sports such as skating in the summer programme, and their status was unclear. Amongst influential members of the IOC, there was disagreement about their possible place in the programme, while Coubertin’s own thoughts evolved only slowly, and he very much disliked some winter sports such as skiing. 1921 was the key year with the decision in Lausanne of supporting a ‘Winter Sports Week’ in 1924, lately considered the first winter Olympics.

Keywords: Winter Olympic Games, origins, winter sports, Lausanne 1921, Chamonix 1924.

### **Introduction**

2021 marks the centenary of the IOC meeting in Lausanne where the most important decision in history for winter sports and of course for the Olympic movement in its winter aspect was made: to hold the ‘Winter Sports Week’ in Chamonix in 1924, which would ultimately be considered the first edition of the winter Olympic Games.<sup>1</sup> Despite their increased relevance, even today the winter Olympic Games do not have the prominent position of the summer Games on the global sporting calendar. The historic research does not measure up either, and even less so regarding their origins,<sup>2</sup> with most papers paying attention to specific issues and more recent winter Olympic Games. The earlier research about the origins<sup>3</sup> focuses on the connection to the 1924 Paris Games, or on the consideration of the winter Olympics as an invented tradition. This article aims to provide a new critical and historical analysis of the beginnings of the winter Olympic

Games. The journey towards that start experienced many difficulties because of (1) Scandinavian obstructions due to open competition with the Nordic Games; (2) the consideration of winter sports as non-essential; (3) discrepancies between IOC members about its suitability; and (4) the weak will of Pierre de Coubertin, first engaged in the incorporation of the art competitions and the modern pentathlon, and later the Paris Games in 1924. In this study all these obstacles are analysed.

The main objective of this research centres on analysing the process which led to the beginning of the winter Olympic Games in 1924. Additionally, the relationship between the Nordic Games and the winter Olympic Games and the influence of the IOC protagonists (Coubertin, Balck, Edström, Merrick, Blonay, Polignac, Clary and Reichel) will be determined, as well as establishing the reasons for the delay of almost three decades in the start of the winter Olympic competitions, compared to its summer namesake. The intention is to further clarify earlier research on the subject as well as to bring to light new documentation (correspondence between IOC members, newspapers from the period) which allows us to make a critical analysis and appropriate contextualisation of the subject.

The archives at the IOC Olympic Studies Centre in Lausanne have been consulted. In this research it was very important to have the original correspondence between the most relevant members of the IOC for the years which are the object of study, especially between Coubertin and the rest of the members of the Olympic body, but also between the most relevant Swedish, French, Canadian and Swiss members. The study's primary source, a large amount of documentation from the period, has been analysed: the IOC's *Olympic Review*, that is to say, the *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques* (1894-95), the *Olympic Review* (1901-1914) and the *Bulletin du Comité International Olympique* (1915); the publication of the organising committee of the 1928 Olympic Games (*De Olympiade. Bulletin du Bureau Permanent des Fédérations Internationales Sportives*); the official minutes of IOC meetings between 1894 and 1927 (Lausanne Olympic Studies Centre); the official reports of the Olympic Games until 1928 (Digital archive of the *LA84 Foundation*); the publications by Coubertin, including books, articles, booklets, leaflets and writing in other formats (Lausanne Olympic Studies Centre). Sport historians have often turned to newspaper sources, especially in the contemporary age. In this research, the French press (Gallica), with titles such as *L'Auto* or *Le Figaro* has mainly been used to confirm events

collected from other sources. Finally, verified secondary sources on the winter Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee, Coubertin and the Nordic Games have been used to carry out an appropriate contextualisation.

After the first part of the article, which performs historical analysis of the Nordic Games, greatly relevant as the main obstacle to the winter Olympic Games, Coubertin's thinking regarding winter sports, as well as the difficulties for its inclusion within the IOC sports programme from its foundation until the beginning of the 1920s is analysed. This leads to the fundamental analysis of the study, centred on the creation process of the winter Olympic Games, which was not without great difficulties. All this in an attempt to offer a chronologically coherent historical narrative, moving away from the simple listing of data.

### **The Nordic Games: Forerunner or obstacle for the winter Olympic Games?**

Between the first modern Olympic Games held in Athens in 1896 and the Paris Games in 1900, Coubertin received various proposals to incorporate winter Games<sup>4</sup> into the recently emerged Olympic event. In 1899, the Czechs Joseph Rössler-Orovský and Jiri Guth-Jarkovský (IOC member) suggested to him 'a ski competition which could be based in the *Monts des Géants* (Bohemia). Two years earlier, the Swede Viktor Balck had already proposed to Coubertin the idea of organising winter Olympic Games in Sweden in 1900'.<sup>5</sup> In both cases, Coubertin rejected the idea because he did not feel that winter sports justified the investment and because the Olympic Games were awarded to a single city.<sup>6</sup> But Balck's disappointment soon resulted in a new project, restricted to Scandinavia: the Nordic Games.

The initiative arose from the main figures in *Sweden's Central Association for the Promotion of Sports (Sveriges Centralförening för Idrottens Främjande)*, founded on 7 May 1897 in Stockholm's Royal Palace.<sup>7</sup> With 'the father of Swedish competition sports', Balck, at the head, member of the IOC and close to Pierre de Coubertin, the *Central Association* committed itself to organising the Nordic Games.<sup>8</sup> They began their activity in 1901, with the first edition in Stockholm. In 1899, already in their conception, they will take interest in the Olympic idea, mentioning the 'belauded ancient sports and competition games'.<sup>9</sup> These Nordic Games must have been 'a sports and cultural celebration up to then unmatched in the world'.<sup>10</sup> A substantial number of

cultural, social and, simply, touristic events were added to a large sporting programme with a very important national element.<sup>11</sup> Undoubtedly, they formed the first important winter sports competition in the modern age.

Indeed, ‘the Nordic Games quickly prevailed as the worldwide reference with regard to winter sports competitions’.<sup>12</sup> Coubertin dedicated a whole issue of the *Olympic Review* in April 1901 to the first Nordic Games.<sup>13</sup> In the *Olympic Review* in October 1903, Coubertin reported very favourably on the Nordic Games and reached the conclusion that ‘their success has been important; the institution can be considered durable and in such a short time they have become one of the biggest hotbeds of Scandinavian sport’.<sup>14</sup> In this way, ‘for Coubertin there was initially no need to have winter Games at all’,<sup>15</sup> given that their function and frequency were covered by the Nordic Games. In 1905, the third edition of the Nordic Games took place, with a quadrennial rhythm from then on which reminds us of the Olympic cycle: 1909, 1913, 1917, 1922, 1926.<sup>16</sup>

By the time of the Nordic Games in 1905, ‘Norwegian aspirations for independence became even more obvious’.<sup>17</sup> Only some days before the opening, the Norwegian sporting authorities withdrew from the Games due to the national conflict. Politics ‘had found its way into the Nordic Games’.<sup>18</sup> Remember that Norway had a dynastic union with Sweden from 1814, which was dissolved in 1905.<sup>19</sup> For the Nordic Games in 1909, the Swedes took advantage of the occasion to retaliate in kind: ‘Norwegian sports men were simply not invited. However, the Norwegians had to be allowed in the skating events, as they also were World Champions’.<sup>20</sup>

When the IOC convened to choose the city which would host the 5th Olympic Games in 1912,<sup>21</sup> Coubertin highlighted the model of the Nordic Games.<sup>22</sup> According to some observers, the Games were awarded to Stockholm ‘due to the success of the Nordic Games, which had demonstrated the Swedes’ capacity for organising large international sporting events’.<sup>23</sup> In the June 1912 issue of the *Olympic Review*, Coubertin praises the Nordic Games (as had already happened in 1901 and 1903), on this occasion describing them as *Olympiades hivernales* (‘winter Olympics’): ‘[...] the Nordic Games, these winter Games, which have been held with such success since their foundation in 1901, bring the majority of Scandinavian competitors together’.<sup>24</sup>

Krüger claims that in the IOC meeting in Budapest, 1911, Count Eugène Brunetta d'Usseaux, the Italian member of the IOC, proposed including the Nordic Games in the Stockholm Games in some way. He was particularly in favour of skiing and pointed out its military importance.<sup>25</sup> But Balck, markedly nationalistic, did not want to internationalise his Nordic Games nor bring forward their celebration to 1912 from their planned date in February 1913. Jönsson sustains that Coubertin intervened in Budapest in favour of Balck when the Swede seemed to feel cornered by the insistence of some IOC members to include winter sports in the 1912 Games.<sup>26</sup> According to Krüger, in the end, mountaineering was included in the Stockholm Games as a summer mountain sport, but not artistic skating as a winter sport, 'a clear step backwards from the previous Games'.<sup>27</sup> Terret asserts that the issue of winter sports is repeatedly debated in the IOC in 1910 and 1911, finishing with a victory for Balck, who defended 'the reduction of the Olympic programme, in particular with the removal of skating'.<sup>28</sup> The Olympic Games which took place 'in the country of winter sports in winter 1912 did not involve any winter sport, due to competition with the Nordic Games',<sup>29</sup> 'which already occupy to a certain extent the place of the Olympic athletics festival regarding winter sports'.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, the explanation is explicit in the Games' report,<sup>31</sup> although, according to Coubertin, it is the absence of a skating rink which made them make this decision.<sup>32</sup>

Balck is the main advocate of the decision that the Stockholm Olympic Games in 1912 do not include winter sports. A passionate nationalist, he seems extremist 'in the fight against the integration of winter sports in the Olympic programme, in the interest of conducting the Nordic Games'.<sup>33</sup> Balck, born in 1844, passed away in May 1928. He had a very close relationship with Coubertin. According to Boulongne,<sup>34</sup> abundant correspondence was exchanged between Balck and Coubertin. The IOC archives collect 17 handwritten letters and 2 telegrams from Balck to Coubertin between 1894 and 1921. It is known that Coubertin sent Balck 32 letters and 1 telegram in the 1894-1919 period, which are found in the national archives in Stockholm. They met in Paris in 1889 due to the Universal Exhibition and their friendship was quickly strengthened,<sup>35</sup> with Balck being one of the first friends Coubertin contacted to help him organise the founding conference of the IOC in 1894.<sup>36</sup>

In 1920, despite Balck's opposition, the Antwerp Olympic Games included skating events and for the first time ice hockey during a prologue which took place four

months before the start of the Games.<sup>37</sup> There was no interest in organising ski events due to the lack of sufficiently high mountains in Belgium and due to there being no Belgian ski Federation.<sup>38</sup> It had very limited success. On one hand, in the name of the *International Skating Union* (ISU), Balck planned to threaten to suspend all competitors participating in those Games.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, the hockey events were in reality the world championships for the discipline'.<sup>40</sup> However, at the time of the Antwerp Games, the IOC took up the question of winter sports again, whilst the Swedes, 'who had enjoyed the tacit support of Coubertin until then, from then on had to face stronger pressure from the French, declared candidates for the organisation of the VIII Olympic Games'.<sup>41</sup>

Balck stopped being a member of the IOC on 12 March 1921 and reported this to Coubertin in a personal letter.<sup>42</sup> He did not attend the Consultative Conference about winter sports in May or the IOC meeting (and the key vote of 5 June) due to no longer being a member. Despite this, he tried to influence discussions about the inclusion of winter sports in the Olympic programme which were conducted in the Consultative Conference, trying to protect his Nordic Games, as implied in a letter of his dated 16 May 1921, which reports a Scandinavian meeting held in Stockholm, where it was decided that the delegates of Scandinavian countries had an order to vote against this inclusion.<sup>43</sup> Without knowing it, he experienced the last edition of these Games, his great work, a model in winter sports for decades. At the same time, he experienced the dawn, the beginnings of the winter Olympic Games with the editions of Chamonix in 1924 and Saint Moritz in 1928. Held in 1926, this last edition took place between the two first editions of the winter Olympic Games.

At the time when the IOC found itself definitively established in the terrain of winter sports and the International Skiing Federation had decided to introduce separate World Championships, 'the Nordic Games evidently lost some of its justification'.<sup>44</sup> In his closing speech at the Winter Sports Week in Chamonix, Coubertin stated, according to Terret not without a certain irony,<sup>45</sup> that 'one of the most qualified Scandinavian leaders said yesterday that, in certain aspects, what they have seen could serve as a model even for the very well reputed organisation of the Nordic Games'.<sup>46</sup>

Without a doubt, the disappearance of Balck was a serious setback for the continuity of the Nordic Games. We will never know if the Nordic Games and winter



Olympic Games could have coexisted, alternating the events every two years as happened at the beginning. Possibly, one would have absorbed the other. In the event of coexistence, perhaps the event organised by the IOC would have survived, due to its international nature, compared to the Nordic Games which were more restricted to Scandinavia, although they did invite participants from other nations.<sup>47</sup>

In 1926 the Nordic Games were called ‘the Swedish Winter Olympics’ by the most important Swedish sports newspaper *Idrottsbladet*, which also wrote that the Games had ‘carried Sweden’s name as the world’s broadest centre of winter sports’.<sup>48</sup> The mediocre results of the host country ‘and severe cold meant few spectators at most venues’<sup>49</sup> and, after the Games, Torsten Tegnér, a Swedish sporting journalist, stated: ‘[The Nordic Games] have a taste of an epoch that has become out of date’.<sup>50</sup> The Swedes did not consider interrupting the Games, but they had to be cancelled in 1930 due to lack of snow and low temperatures. Almost no international sporting events were carried out during the Second World War, and various proposals circulated to relaunch the Nordic Games. However, the Games planned for 1942 were never held.<sup>51</sup>

Jönsson maintains that the Games in Sweden, the Nordic Games, ‘paved the way for the Olympic Winter Games’.<sup>52</sup> However, Yttergren<sup>53</sup> presents at least four factors which prevent the two events being associated: (1) ideology, as a hallmark of the Nordic Games, opposed to the internationalist vocation of the Olympic movement; (2) the aforementioned Swedish opposition to the inclusion of winter sports in the Olympic programme; (3) chronology, which shows there was no continuity between one event and another; and (4) the Games’ programme which, despite having a set of similar basic sports, was much more extensive in the Nordic Games. In light of the documentation handled in this research, and in agreement with Yttergren,<sup>54</sup> we establish that not only were the Nordic Games not the precursor to the winter Olympic Games, but they also represented a clear obstacle for the winter Olympic Games<sup>55</sup> which, in addition, most certainly delayed their beginnings for more than a decade.

### **Evolution of Coubertin’s thoughts about winter sports**

It is of great interest for the subject of our research to find out how the thinking of the founder of the modern Olympic Games evolved regarding winter sports and their fit and relevance in the Olympic movement. During the years following the first winter Games

in Chamonix, Coubertin spoke on repeated occasions of his devotion to winter sports, as well as his efforts to make their inclusion a reality.

In the closing ceremony of the 'Winter Sports Week' in Chamonix itself, on 5 February 1924, Coubertin called it the 'first winter sports Olympic tournament'<sup>56</sup> and expressed in the same speech having wanted for a long time 'to see them definitively occupy a place at the Olympic events'.<sup>57</sup> In 1926, in *De Olympiade*, Coubertin wrote that

winter sports were included in the fundamental charter of the Olympic Games in 1894 with the same treatment as other types and, since then, I've tirelessly pursued their practical introduction into the programme, not without recognising the material difficulties which would have to be overcome to achieve this.<sup>58</sup>

In the official report of the Games of St. Moritz 1928, paid tribute to Coubertin for his continued effort 'for many years to introduce winter sports into the programme for the modern Olympic Games or to establish a special cycle of winter Olympic Games'.<sup>59</sup>

However, upon analysing in depth the writing of the Baron, as well as his attitude towards this subject at the Olympic movement foundation, we find profound indifference and, in general, clear inaction. Krüger even states that 'neither Coubertin nor the traditionalists approved of Winter Games' which were just 'an invented tradition, having nothing to do with the classical Greek example'.<sup>60</sup>

At the founding conference of the International Olympic Committee in Paris in 1894, Coubertin included skating among the sports which should be present at the Olympic Games. In issue 1 (July 1894) of the *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques*, skating is mentioned in order to be represented among the Olympic sports 'wherever possible',<sup>61</sup> together with sports such as fencing, boxing, combat, shooting, gymnastics, cycling, football, tennis, equestrian sports, athletics and nautical sports. In this list of sports, it is understood that no one sport prevails over another. It does not specify that there are some essential sports and other dispensable ones. It would seem that skating is on the same level as athletics or cycling. However, in his *Olympic Memoirs* Coubertin writes that in 1894 skating 'has been included on the list of desirable events',<sup>62</sup> which implies an inferior status regarding other sports which are considered dispensable.

For Krüger, not all winter sports pleased Coubertin in the same measure.<sup>63</sup> From the little he wrote about this we can even conclude that ‘he did not like the idea of Winter Games at all’.<sup>64</sup> He even did not seem to like winter sports at all.<sup>65</sup> He was not very interested in team sports such as football or ice hockey, although he did show particular interest in individual masculine sports with a certain military utility. Having ice skated himself at the Parisian *Bois-de-Boulogne*, skating became for him ‘the “poetry of movement” [...] the essential sport of balance’.<sup>66</sup>

In short, Coubertin had little interest in winter sports, at least in Alpine skiing. He saw the Alps skiers interested just in tourism, money and snobbism due to commercialisation, what made winter sports unworthy of Olympic recognition. On the other hand, ‘the Nordic snowfields, idealized and undefiled’.<sup>67</sup> As has been seen, he had already rejected proposals to incorporate them in the Olympic programme in 1897 from Balck and in 1899 on the initiative of Rössler-Orovský and Jiri Guth-Jarkovský. Terret states that Coubertin remained exceedingly sceptical regarding the universal and truly sporting nature of winter activities, where he saw profitable practises at a time when winter activities were gaining momentum in the form of winter tourism, and the Baron ‘never encouraged the organisers of the Olympic Games to include winter sports in their programme’.<sup>68</sup>

In Athens, seat of the I Olympic Games, skating competitions were not held because the Greek capital did not have a rink for that purpose. Athens did not have facilities for ice skating and the Greeks were traditional in terms of winter sports, so the idea of organising ice skating competitions was ruled out. Skating was not included in Paris in 1900 either, despite there already being ten artificial ice rinks across the world, including two in Paris.<sup>69</sup> Nor was it included in Saint-Louis in 1904.

January’s *Olympic Review* in 1908 is one of the few times Coubertin explicitly talks about winter sports. The Baron affirms that skating has become ‘an almost universal exercise; it is engaged in anywhere where ice can be obtained’.<sup>70</sup> However, he does not have the same concept about winter sports such as luge, toboggan or the bobsleigh since, in his opinion, ‘they are completely useless, not being susceptible to any utilitarian application whatsoever’.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, skiing enters in the ‘terrain of suitable sports to be used in the most favourable and valuable way for the good of humanity’.<sup>72</sup>

The *Winter Games* took place in the London Games of 1908, where skating joined boxing, football, hockey and lacrosse which are, ‘for most people, winter sports’.<sup>73</sup> The first artificial skating rink in London dates back to 1876.<sup>74</sup>

According to Messerli, a friend of Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games had been considering the viability of a winter Games separated from the summer Games since 1910, especially after Sweden did not invite Norway to the Nordic Games in 1909, ‘which reduced the function of the Games from a truly international event [...] to a national political vehicle’.<sup>75</sup> However, Coubertin encouraged ‘the nationalism that surrounded the Olympic Games from the very beginning’,<sup>76</sup> believing himself sport stood for virility and the readiness to fight for honor and the nation, but also an instrument to serve the cause of peace.<sup>77</sup> As seen in the previous section, Coubertin positioned himself on Balck’s side in Budapest when he encountered difficulties in justifying his position.<sup>78</sup> In the June 1911 issue of *Olympic Review*, which reports on the Budapest meeting in 1911, the only comment Coubertin makes is the following: ‘After examining the issue, the impossibility of including winter sports from the subsequent Nordic Games (February 1913) in the Olympic Games has been recognised’.<sup>79</sup> As has already been seen, even in June 1912 he called the Nordic Games the ‘winter Olympics’.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, the Baron did not see the need to include winter sports.

When their role in the Olympic Games was under debate, around 1910-11, Coubertin had other interests which meant his efforts were focussed on including his creation, the modern pentathlon, and art competitions. Not including the latter would mean ‘the failure of the Olympics’ for the Baron<sup>81</sup> and would mean losing his interest in the Games, as he writes to Blonay and Balck in 1911.<sup>82</sup> In addition, he did not want to open a front with Balck on winter sports, a personal friend and in charge of organising the Stockholm games where he finally achieved the inclusion of both events.

Once the First World War was over, one of the most animated discussions between members of the Olympic body regarding the sports which should make up the Olympic programme took place in the Antwerp IOC meeting in 1920. In this exchange of opinions between IOC members, Coubertin participated very actively, even defining and cataloguing winter sports. In conclusion, president Coubertin considered that the winter sports were questionable, debatable.<sup>83</sup>

It therefore seems clear that although there was never a firm opposition from Coubertin to the inclusion of winter sports in the Games' programme, there was also never a clear intention of including them.<sup>84</sup> Rather, his interests at the beginnings of the 1910s were centred on the inclusion of the modern pentathlon and the art competitions and at the beginning of the 1920s on choosing Paris as the seat of the 1924 Games. This, together with his deep friendship with Balck,<sup>85</sup> an open enemy of the hypothetical winter Olympic Games due to the possible damage to his Nordic Games, meant that inaction, if not direct interference, was the general tendency of Coubertin's actions regarding the subject of the winter sports. This attitude undoubtedly delayed the beginning of the Games' winter cycle by at least a decade.

### **Evolution of winter sports in the Olympic programme to 1920**

One of the main concerns of IOC members since its foundation had been deciding which sports should be part of the Olympic Games. Understanding the evolution of the stance on winter sports, as well as the opinions of the heart of the IOC, is a central issue for our object of study.

On the first list of sports which should be represented in the Olympic Games, which came out of the first Olympic Conference, Krüger<sup>86</sup> argued that as ice skating already had international championships before the invention of the modern Olympic Games (the first European championships took place in Hamburg in 1891, the first World speed skating championships in Amsterdam in 1893 and artistic skating in Saint Petersburg in 1896), in 1894 it was decided to include them in the Olympic programme.

For various reasons which have already been noted, essentially Coubertin's indifference and his opinion that the Nordic Games already covered the gap of the winter Games, as well as lack of suitable equipment and facilities, winter sports were not included in the Games' programme until London 1908, where skating was present, although the events took place in the last week of October,<sup>87</sup> that is, three months after the most 'important' sports. The events were 'artistic skating, with compulsory figures (men and women), free figures (men and women), special figures and pairs events'.<sup>88</sup>

However, the presence of skating was anecdotal, since in the 1912 Games there was no winter activity at all. It would be precisely in the 1910s when the issue of winter sports would be debated with the greatest intensity. Two IOC meetings took place at the

beginning of this decade, in Luxembourg in June 1910 and in Budapest in May 1911, which showed the disagreements and different points of view of IOC members about winter sports. There was a clash between IOC members who wanted to see them represented in the Olympic Games and other members who did not see a place for them. Among other issues, both meetings dealt with the 1912 Olympic Games programme to be held in Stockholm.

At the Luxemburg IOC meeting on Monday 13 June 1910, an intense exchange of opinions took place<sup>89</sup> between Reverend Courcy-Laffan, Colonel Balck and Count Brunetta d'Usseaux on winter sports in view of the Stockholm 1912 Olympic Games. Asked about the lack of winter sports in the programme by Courcy-Laffan, Balck responded that they were not present because the Nordic Games would take place at the beginning of 1913. Faced with the disappointment of various IOC members, Balck said that he would organise a programme which he would present in Budapest.

At the Budapest meeting in 1911, on 23 May Balck responded to Brunetta's request that it was not possible to include the winter sports, again for their proximity to the Nordic Games. Brunetta then asked that the Nordic Games be turned into the Olympic Games. The vote in this regard was postponed to the following day.<sup>90</sup> On 24 May, after speeches by Reverend Courcy-Laffan, Dr. Jiri Guth, Count Sierstorpf, Prince Ouroussoff and Colonel Balck, the latter imposed his wish not to include winter sports in 1912,<sup>91</sup> thus becoming evident that he had no intention of proposing their inclusion in Luxembourg the previous year.

At the Stockholm 1912 IOC meeting, ice skating was catalogued as a 'desirable' sport. In this meeting, Courcy-Laffan proposed the necessity of choosing the essential sports and on this proposal, the commission divided sports into three categories: essential, desirable and admissible:

Athletics, gymnastics, fencing, boxing, combat, rowing, swimming, shooting, equestrian sports, road cycling, and the modern pentathlon must be part of every Olympics.

The art competitions are equally essential: architecture, painting, sculpture, music, literature.

Desirable sports: football, rugby, hockey, tennis, sailing, ice skating, track cycling.

Admissible: other sports of an international character may be admitted, according to the wishes of the organising committee. A sport will be considered to have an international nature if it is practised in at least six different countries represented in the International Committee.<sup>92</sup>

The Berlin Olympic Games, planned for 1916, were the background for the debates and the resolutions of the 1914 Paris Conference.<sup>93</sup> Sports represented in future Olympic Games ‘should be split into two groups: a group of compulsory sports and a group of optional sports’.<sup>94</sup> Regarding winter sports, skating, skiing and ice hockey were placed among the optional sports, in accordance with the 1914 Paris Conference Minutes<sup>95</sup> published after the First World War in ‘a short and distorted version’.<sup>96</sup>

There are some discrepancies concerning winter sports between that written in the 1914 Paris Conference Minutes and that published by Frantz Reichel in *Le Figaro*, a newspaper which covered the events in this conference. According to the French daily, ‘Winter sports have been accepted as optional; skiing has been rejected; only skating, in figure competitions, has been accepted’.<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, in the Minutes skiing, ice hockey and skating appear as accepted as optional sports.<sup>98</sup> At the 24 of June issue of *Le Figaro*, hockey is mentioned as accepted in the 23 of June session, without specifying which type of hockey,<sup>99</sup> with field hockey and ice hockey as sports approved in the 1914 Paris Conference Minutes.<sup>100</sup> In addition, in *Le Figaro* it is mentioned that hockey, archery and rugby, sports which had been defeated in the first conference meetings, were accepted as optional sports. However, given that in the 1914 conference the IOC only established a classification by sport and not by countries,<sup>101</sup> that a sport would be compulsory or optional, according to Reichel, it no longer has any kind of importance.<sup>102</sup>

For the Berlin Olympic Games in 1916, ‘a surprisingly complete programme of winter sports was planned in the form of a *Wintersport-Woche* in February’.<sup>103</sup> The programme of the organising committee of 11 November 1913 included skating and skiing, both programmed in February 1916 at Feldberg in the German Black Forest. Given that the Games were not held due to the First World War, the winter sports week could not take place.

After the war, there was abundant participation from IOC members at the 1920 meeting in Antwerp. Addressing the minutes of this meeting and at the request of Marquis de Polignac, who thought it was necessary to cut back on the Olympic programme, there was a debate about removing the optional sports.<sup>104</sup> Remember that winter sports were found amongst them, specifically, skating, ice hockey and skiing.<sup>105</sup> Following Polignac's request, president Coubertin suggested removing optional sports, an idea which was seconded by Baillet-Latour, and endorsed with some small differences by Clary, Montu and Courcy Laffan, agreeing that these sports should be eliminated and, in the words of Courcy Laffan himself, 'the programme set formally and permanently'.<sup>106</sup>

The IOC decided to refer the matter of optional sports to the Lausanne Conference in 1921, which would study this again,<sup>107</sup> a conference also devoted to completing and reviewing the work of the Paris 1914 Conference where necessary.<sup>108</sup>

### **The journey towards the 'Winter Sports Week' in Chamonix in 1924**

In Lausanne in 1921, when the IOC took the most important decision for the future of winter sports in the framework of the Olympic Games, as on previous occasions, Coubertin had other priorities; in this case, the 1924 celebration of the 30th anniversary of the IOC's foundation. It was the Baron's hope and objective that this celebration would coincide with the Olympic Games in his hometown, Paris, above all after the outright failure of those held in the French capital in 1900. For this, Coubertin did everything in his power to convince the IOC members to choose Paris as the seat of the VIII Olympic Games.

The IOC made the decision in Lausanne in mid-1921, after a memo from Coubertin addressed to his colleagues months before, dated 17 March 1921, in which, after announcing his intention to resign once the 1924 Games had finished, he asked them to vote for Paris as the seat of the VIII Olympic Games and Amsterdam as the seat of the IX as an exceptional favour to the renovator of the Olympic Games.<sup>109</sup> In the end, both were chosen, a decision not without certain controversy.<sup>110</sup>

Once the selection of Paris for the 1924 Games had been confirmed, Coubertin made every effort to organise a successful 1924 Games, as well as acts to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the restoration of the Olympic Games: 'We have three years



ahead of us to prepare the VIII Olympic Games, “the most beautiful and perfect ever held to date”. This was the organisers’ ambition, who believed in good faith in a complete success’.<sup>111</sup>

Arnaud and Terret<sup>112</sup> argue that the Paris Olympic Games in fact commemorate not only the 30th anniversary of the creation of the IOC, but also the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the *Club Alpin Français* and the 10th anniversary of the Paris Olympic Conference. In the end, Paris obtained the Olympic Games and France was to organise a ‘winter prelude’ to the Olympic Games which would occur in Chamonix. The event was added without a continuity solution to the ‘International Winter Sports Weeks’ regularly organised since 1907.<sup>113</sup> There was one important new element: for the first time, the Scandinavian countries would participate, which in the end joined this ‘experience’.<sup>114</sup>

Lausanne in June 1921 constituted the turning point, so the first winter Olympic Games were held three years later, and winter sports fully entered in the Olympic programme. Days before, on 26 and 27 May, a ‘Consultative Conference’ was held about winter sports<sup>115</sup> where the possibility of organising winter sports competitions was raised. The report from this commission would be written by Alfred Mégroz,<sup>116</sup> a Swiss non-member of the IOC, who proposed that the winter sports competitions represent a kind of pre-Games event.<sup>117</sup>

The French sports daily *L’Auto* reported on this conference which brought together a very small number of experts, according to the paper. Until then, only skating and ice hockey had featured in the Olympic Games and in unsatisfactory conditions.<sup>118</sup> On 28 May, *L’Auto* announced that the Olympic Committee had been consulted about a project which would consist in organising a ‘Winter Sports Week’ in February, whenever there were Olympic Games, which would take place in Switzerland, Sweden, Canada, France or Norway: ‘Opinion about this project was very divided’.<sup>119</sup> Switzerland, Canada and France were in favour, whilst Sweden and Norway objected. According to *L’Auto*, in the event that this ‘week’ were decided on, it should include the following events: skating (500, 1500, 5000 and 10000 metres; free figures, individual and pairs); hockey and ski runs of 12 to 18 kilometres. Lastly, they commented that the desirability of adding a bobsleigh competition was very controversial.<sup>120</sup>

Based on the Lausanne minutes,<sup>121</sup> the process will be now contextualised, until reaching the moment when the IOC made the decision to sponsor a ‘Winter Sports Week’.

At the 2 June meeting, the Committee addressed the issue of winter sports as of the report written by Mégroz, with the president highlighting the controversy which winter sports had generated at the Consultative Conference between the representatives of Switzerland, Canada and France on one hand, and on the other hand the Norwegian delegates, who also represented the Swedish members. The decision was postponed due to lack of agreement.<sup>122</sup> At the 4 June meeting, Clary and De Polignac stressed ‘France’s desire to organise a ‘Winter Sports Week’ in 1924 and to see this event somehow linked to the Olympic Games’.<sup>123</sup> On 5 June, the Committee argued that it clearly goes against the essential rules of the Olympic Games to introduce competitions which cannot be held at the same seat or on the same date as the other competitions. Therefore, winter sports could only be represented in a kind of pre-Games event, in line with the conclusions of the Mégroz report. From the conversations which took place those days, it appears that the Scandinavian representatives intended to deny other countries (especially France and Switzerland) the right to take on winter sports. However, Edström declared that he was in no way opposed to the IOC sponsoring the ‘Winter Sports Week’. Therefore, it was decided that the IOC would grant their sponsorship to this ‘Week’, which would take place in Chamonix in 1924,<sup>124</sup> on the occasion of the VIII Olympic Games, but without forming an integral part of the Olympic Games.<sup>125</sup> We have already seen the idea of the purity of Nordic skiing compared with Alpine skiing, what had a lot to do with amateurism versus professionalism.<sup>126</sup>

Terret<sup>127</sup> provides more details about this historic moment, as well as highlighting a key figure in this whole process: the Swede Edström. According to the French historian, the Mégroz report,

discussed after the decision to assign the VIII Olympic Games to Paris, suggests the possibility for the organisers to envision ‘preludes’ to the winter Games. The formula is accepted by IOC members. Frantz-Reichel (secretary of the COF [French Olympic Committee] and the main person responsible for organising the Paris Games) immediately took advantage of the situation.<sup>128</sup>

He was supported by two French members of the IOC, the new strong men of the IOC,<sup>129</sup> Clary, president of the French Olympic Committee and De Polignac,

to vindicate the idea of an international winter sports week as a prelude to the Paris Games, but outside the Olympic programme. On 5th June the project, which won the backing of the Swiss (especially Godefroy de Blonay) and Canadian (James G. Merrick) delegates, was subjected to a vote despite Coubertin's reluctance and Balck's opposition.<sup>130</sup>

However, the surprise of many, some Scandinavians took the side of the French proposal. The case of the aforementioned Sigfrid Edström, whose influence was to be increasingly decisive,<sup>131</sup> is especially relevant. Indeed, although the 'Winter Sports Week' gained a large majority during the IOC vote, the question of the participation of Scandinavian sportspeople in a competition which they judged to be in complete opposition to the Nordic Games remained uncertain. Edström tried for months to convince his compatriots.<sup>132</sup>

Krüger<sup>133</sup> states that at the time, Sweden had attracted Norway and Finland to vote against Olympic Games with winter sports and threatened a boycott of all the Nordic countries. Despite this, the conference voted in favour of a resolution proposed by Polignac in representation of the French, Swiss and Canadian Olympic Committees. As the next Games were going to be held in Paris, following Coubertin's wishes, the French Olympic Committee thus obtained authorisation to choose the location of the 'Winter Sports Week' in France.

Next, the 1922 correspondence of Edström with French members of the IOC (Polignac and Clary) and with Blonay will be dealt with, which reveals a difficult course where the Scandinavian will play a crucial role in mediation and strategy.

In a letter from Edström to Polignac dated 18 February 1922, the Swede suggests that the Chamonix Games would have to be called 'International winter Games' (*Jeux d'hiver internationaux*), given the hostility of the Nordic countries to winter Games of an Olympic nature and with the purpose to get them involved, and also notes that Balck is completely hostile to these Games.<sup>134</sup> Two months later, Edström is obliged to write to Clary to show his concern upon checking that the decisions of the French Olympic Committee were directed 'at giving the Chamonix Games the

appearance of true Olympic Games'.<sup>135</sup> In addition, in this letter of 26 April 1922, Edström expresses how he had worked for the Nordic countries to participate in the Chamonix winter Games, trying to transmit to Clary that everything could be lost if the wrong direction were insisted on.<sup>136</sup> On 10 May 1922, Blonay wrote to Edström to express his understanding given the difficulty the Swede had experienced after the explanations given to the Swedish and Norwegian Committees in order to justify the way in which the invitation was presented to the winter sports Conference in Paris, which in fact had a completely Olympic appearance. In addition, Blonay reported that Coubertin fully shared his opinion.<sup>137</sup> In a letter addressed to Coubertin and dated 2 May 1922, Merrick (Canadian member of the IOC) also shows his unease about this conference due to the lack of time to name a representative in Europe to defend his proposals.<sup>138</sup>

Regarding the letter from Edström to Clary, Terret maintains that it is true that the confident French, 'hesitate less and less to show themselves in competition with the Nordic Games, as confirmed by the choice of the Chamonix programme'.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, from 12 to 14 of June 1922, the French Olympic Committee instigates

a winter sports conference in Paris, with the international federations and commissions involved, which leads to a list of events which are no longer related to the reduced programme in Antwerp 1920, but clearly take the Scandinavian experience as their model. Despite the extremely sensitive nature of the subject, the 1924 programme is almost a replica of the Nordic Games.<sup>140</sup>

The reaction was not long in coming. The Scandinavians began to implement a 'Nordic Olympic Games' project, on the 300th anniversary of the city of Oslo (Kristiania), 'a project which clearly interested the Germans who were denied the invitation to Chamonix'<sup>141</sup> due to the consequences of the First World War. Despite a hostile press campaign towards France, 'the counter-Olympiad plan ultimately failed'.<sup>142</sup>

On 8 April 1923, at the Rome IOC meeting, it was confirmed at Edström's request that this 'Winter Sports Week' was not an integral part of the Olympic Games, that it was especially positioned under the sponsorship of the IOC and that it should be equipped with separate prizes and diplomas.<sup>143</sup>

In 1924, the 'Winter Sports Week' was finally held as a prelude to the Paris Games at Chamonix from 25 of January to 5 of February, with the participation of Scandinavian sportspeople. The first evaluation of the winter Games is made by Coubertin himself during the closing ceremony, by taking the floor to express

the admiration and gratitude which the efforts made with a view to giving the highest level of technical perfection to this first Olympic winter sports tournament inspire [...]. Among the numerous spectators who have attended the sports these last days, there are many who have had the revelation of exercises which they did not suspect the beauty of, and have been surprised, perhaps, to find them so rude, so violent.<sup>144</sup>

Towards the end of his speech, the Baron also proclaimed: 'Winter sports belong to those of great purity, which is the reason why, for my part, I have wanted so much to see them occupy a definitive place in the Olympic events'.<sup>145</sup> In the end, the winter Games were good business, 'a point which neither Coubertin nor the rest of the IOC could eventually resist'.<sup>146</sup>

In the Prague meeting of 1925, on 27 May, the IOC established a different cycle for the winter Olympic Games. These Games would be celebrated the same year as the Olympic Games. They would take the name of first, second, third winter Olympic Games and were subject to all the rules of the Olympic protocol. The awards, medals, diplomas and varied documents had to be different from those used by the Olympic Games in progress (the term Olympics would not be used).<sup>147</sup> The IOC was to designate the place where the winter Olympic Games would be held, reserving priority for the country which had obtained the Olympic Games, 'on the condition that it could provide sufficient guarantees to organise the winter Games in their entirety'.<sup>148</sup>

On 7 and 8 March 1926, the IOC Executive Committee met in Paris, making the following communication to the press:

On behalf of the Swiss Olympic Committee, Baron Godefroy de Blonay submitted the contracts and reports of the three places willing to guarantee the organisation of the 1928 winter Games to the Executive Commission: Davos, Engelberg and St. Moritz. All three have committed to submit to the decision which the IOC will make in Lisbon.<sup>149</sup>

At the IOC meeting in Lisbon, from 2 to 7 of May 1926, it was decided to assign the description of I winter Olympic Games to the Chamonix Games of 1924 and the decision was also made to assign St. Moritz the 1928 winter Olympic Games.<sup>150</sup>

## **Conclusions**

At the beginning of the Olympic movement, Pierre de Coubertin rejected various proposals to include winter sports in the Olympic competitions at the end of the Nineteenth century, amongst them the proposal by the Swede Balck. This rejection would result in the launch of the Nordic Games (1901) which for the next two decades were undoubtedly the main obstacle to the start of the winter Olympic Games, given that they were in clear competition with the relevance and the sports programme of Scandinavian games.

Disagreements between IOC members regarding the inclusion of winter sports in the Olympic programme, revealed during the meetings in Luxembourg in 1910 and Budapest in 1911, as well as the unclear status of the winter sports within the group of Olympic sports, also hindered the start of the winter Olympic activities. Proof of this is that ice skating or ice hockey competitions were only occasionally organised within the summer Olympic Games programme (London, 1908, and Antwerp, 1920).

Coubertin's indifference to winter sports had a clearly negative influence, however much he claimed the contrary after Chamonix. (1) His opposition to including them in the Olympic programme at the end of the Nineteenth century; (2) his conviction at the beginning of the Twentieth century that this facet was amply covered by the Nordic Games; (3) his friendship with Balck which led him to support him unconditionally regarding this issue; (4) the focus of his efforts on the debut of the art competitions and the modern pentathlon in the Stockholm games in 1912; and, finally, (5) his obsession about Paris obtaining the organisation of the VIII Olympics, as well as the inaction of the IOC president throughout the years, clearly contributed to the delayed start of the winter Olympic Games.

The key year for the future of winter sports in the Olympic framework is 1921. At the meeting in Lausanne in June, it was decided to approve holding a 'Winter Sports Week' in 1924, linked to the summer Games in Paris, although without forming part of them. French (Clary, Polignac and Reichel), Swiss (Blonay) and Canadian (Merrick)

members, with the vital support of the Swede Edström, who was a key element, defeated the Scandinavian resistance and obtained the IOC's support for the winter competition.

Therefore, the reasons for the delayed start to the winter Olympic Games have been clarified, as well as the process which led to them being able to be organised and the obstacles which had to be negotiated along the way. Thus the main objectives of this research have been met and a step forward taken in the contextualisation of this key moment which happened 100 years ago in Lausanne in 1921.

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## Notes

1. See a short historical overview about Chamonix I OWG in Karl Lennartz, 'The Elections of the Host Cities for the Olympic Winter Games. An historical overview', *Journal of Olympic History*, 19, no. 1 (2011): 46.
2. Heather L. Dichter and Sarah Teetzel, 'The Winter Olympics: A Century of Games on Ice and Snow' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 37, no. 13 (2020): 1215-35, DOI: [10.1080/09523367.2020.1866474](https://doi.org/10.1080/09523367.2020.1866474)
3. See the most interesting studies about the origins of the winter Olympic Games: Pierre Arnaud and Thierry Terret, *Le rêve blanc. Olympisme et Sport d'hiver en France, Chamonix 1924 - Grenoble 1968* (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 1993); Arnd Krüger, 'The history of the Olympic Winter Games, the invention of a tradition', in *Winter Games. Warm Traditions*, ed. Matti Goksoyr, Gerd Von der Lippe and Kristen Mo (Lillehammer: The Norwegian Society of Sports History and The International Society for the History of Physical Education and Sport, 1994), 101-22; Thierry Terret, 'Prendre ses repères : La semaine internationale de sports d'hiver à Chamonix', in *Les paris des Jeux Olympiques de 1924*, Vol. I, Les paris de la candidature et de l'organisation, dir. Thierry Terret (Biarritz: Atlantica, 2008), 57-81.
4. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 62.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Leif Yttergren, 'The Nordic games: visions of a winter Olympics or a national festival?', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 11, no. 3 (1994): 496, DOI: [10.1080/09523369408713876](https://doi.org/10.1080/09523369408713876)
8. Ake Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games: precursor to the Olympic Winter Games', *Olympic Review*, XXVII, no. 43 (2002): 64.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 62.
13. See Pierre de Coubertin, 'Olympiades boréales. Les Jeux du Nord à Stockholm', *Olympic Review* (Apr. 1901): 17-24.
14. Pierre de Coubertin, 'Notes sportives', *Olympic Review* (Oct. 1903): 61.
15. Krüger, 'The history', 105.
16. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 62.

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17. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 65.
  18. Ibid.
  19. Hermann Kinder, Werner Hilgemann and Manfred Hergt, *Atlas Histórico Mundial. De los orígenes a nuestros días* (Madrid: Akal, 2007).
  20. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 66.
  21. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbal. 12<sup>e</sup> Session Berlin 1909* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1909), 2.
  22. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 64.
  23. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 66.
  24. Pierre de Coubertin, 'L'organisation sportive en Suède', *Olympic Review* (Jun. 1912): 92.
  25. Krüger, 'The history', 107.
  26. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 66.
  27. Krüger, 'The history', 107.
  28. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 64.
  29. Ibid.
  30. Swedish Olympic Committee, *The Official Report of the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912* (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1912), 53.
  31. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 64.
  32. Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1979), 107.
  33. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 62.
  34. Ives-Pierre Boulongne, 'Les présidences de Demetrius Vikelas (1894-1896) et de Pierre de Coubertin (1896-1925)', in *Un siècle du Comité International Olympique. L'Idée. Les Présidents. L'Œuvre (Vol. I)*, ed. Raymond Gafner (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1994), 82.
  35. Ibid., 83.
  36. Pierre de Coubertin, 'The Olympic Games in 1896', in *The Olympic Games B. C. 776 – A. D. 1896*, ed. Pierre de Coubertin, Timoleon J. Philemon, Nicholas G. Polites, Charalambos Anninos, and Spiridion P. Lambros (Athens: Charles Beck, 1897), 6.
  37. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 64.
  38. Krüger, 'The history', 108.
  39. Ron Edgeworth, 'The Nordic Games and the Origins of the Olympic Winter Games', *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, 2, no. 2 (1994): 30.
  40. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 64.
  41. Ibid.
  42. Viktor Balck, *Letter from Balck to Coubertin*, March 12, 1921 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1921a).
  43. Viktor Balck, *Letter from Balck to unknown*, May 16, 1921 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1921b).
  44. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 68.
  45. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 75.
  46. Comité Olympique Français, 'La Cérémonie de Clôture des Jeux d'Hiver', in *Les Jeux de la VIII Olympiade, Paris 1924. Rapport Officiel* (Paris: Librairie de France, 1924), 721.
  47. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 66 and 68; Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 63; Yttergren, 'The Nordic games', 500.
  48. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 67.
  49. Ibid., 68.
  50. Ibid.
  51. Ibid.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Yttergren, 'The Nordic games', 498-500.
  54. Ibid., 503.
  55. Huntford argues Balck was 'the perfect Trojan horse' inside the IOC working to keep winter sports out of the Olympic programme. See Roland Huntford, 'The First Winter Olympics at



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- Chamonix', in *Two Planks and a Passion. The Dramatic History of Skiing*, Roland Huntford (London and New York: Continuum, 2008), 321.
56. Comité Olympique Français, 'La Cérémonie de Clôture', 721.
  57. Ibid.
  58. Pierre de Coubertin, 'Olympic Winter Games', *De Olympiade: Bulletin du Bureau Permanent del Fédérations Internationales Sportives* (1926): 1.
  59. Comité Olympique Suisse, *Rapport Général du Comité Exécutif des II Jeux Olympiques d'hiver et Documents Officiels divers* (Lausanne: Comité Exécutif des II Jeux Olympiques d'hiver, St-Moritz, 1928), 3.
  60. Arnd Krüger, 'Forgotten Decisions: The IOC on the Eve of World War I', *Olympika. The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, VI, no. 1 (1997): 94.
  61. Pierre de Coubertin, 'Le congrès de Paris', *Bulletin du Comité International des Jeux Olympiques*, 1 (1894): 4.
  62. Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, 107.
  63. Krüger, 'The history', 103.
  64. Ibid.
  65. Pierre de Coubertin, 'La décadence des sports d'hiver', *Olympic Review* (Mar. 1914): 39-40.
  66. Pierre de Coubertin, *Leçons de Pédagogie sportive* (Lausanne: La Concorde, 1921): 72. All of this before the process of 'feminisation' of figure skating between the late 1920s and the 1940s (Mary Louise Adams, 'From Mixed-Sex Sport to Sport for Girls: The Feminization of Figure Skating', *Sport in History*, 30, no. 2 (2010): 237, DOI: [10.1080/17460263.2010.481208](https://doi.org/10.1080/17460263.2010.481208)). We must keep in mind that Coubertin firmly objected women's sport.
  67. Huntford, 'The First Winter', 319.
  68. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 60.
  69. Krüger, 'The history', 103.
  70. Pierre de Coubertin, 'Les sports de neige', *Olympic Review* (Jan. 1908a): 9.
  71. Ibid., 13.
  72. Ibid., 14.
  73. Pierre de Coubertin, 'Les Winter Games', *Olympic Review* (Nov. 1908b): 163.
  74. Arnaud and Terret, *Le rêve blanc*, 28.
  75. Krüger, 'The history', 105.
  76. Krüger, 'Forgotten Decisions', 88.
  77. The connection between war and sport was a widespread idea by the time. About the ambivalent thinking of Coubertin, see Patrick Clastres, 'Culture of Peace, Culture of War: Pierre de Coubertin and the International Olympic Committee, 1910-1920', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, 250, no. 3 (2013); Raphaël Verchère, 'Was Pierre de Coubertin a Pacifist?', *The Philosophical Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 2, no. 2 (2018). Both consider Coubertin a patriotic activist but not a warmonger. For Coubertin sport made armies 'more human, more empathetic during the fight'. See Pierre de Coubertin, 'Le sport et la guerre', *Olympic Review* (Apr. 1912): 60.
  78. Jönsson, 'The Nordic Games', 66.
  79. Pierre de Coubertin, 'La XIII<sup>e</sup> réunion plénière du Comité International Olympique', *Olympic Review* (Jun. 1911): 89.
  80. Pierre de Coubertin, 'L'organisation sportive en Suède', *Olympic Review* (Jun. 1912): 92.
  81. Pierre de Coubertin, *Letter from Coubertin to Balck*, March/April 1910, in *Coubertin autographe (1889-1915)*, Jean Durry (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique - Éditions Cabédita, 2003), 219.
  82. Pierre de Coubertin, *Courrier de Coubertin à Blonay*, February 3 or 4, 1911; Pierre de Coubertin, *Letter from Coubertin to Balck*, February 7, 1911, both in Durry, *Coubertin autographe*, 235.
  83. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux des séances du Comité International Olympique. Anvers 1920* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1920), 15.
  84. See Otto Schantz, 'The Olympic Ideal and the Winter Games Attitudes Towards the Olympic Winter Games in Olympic Discourses - from Coubertin to Samaranch', 2008, 5-6,

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- [https://www.academia.edu/316747/The\\_Olympic\\_Ideal\\_and\\_the\\_Winter\\_Games\\_Attitudes\\_Towards\\_the\\_Olympic\\_Winter\\_Games\\_In\\_Olympic\\_Discourses\\_from\\_Coubertin\\_to\\_Samaranch?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/316747/The_Olympic_Ideal_and_the_Winter_Games_Attitudes_Towards_the_Olympic_Winter_Games_In_Olympic_Discourses_from_Coubertin_to_Samaranch?auto=download) (accessed October 12, 2020).
85. Huntford argues Coubertin and Balck were an ‘oddly assorted coalition’. See Huntford, ‘The First Winter’, 319.
  86. Krüger, ‘The history’, 103.
  87. Coubertin, ‘Les Winter Games’, 163. See information from Coubertin about the 1908 Games in Pierre de Coubertin, ‘La réunion de La Haye (1907): Les règlements de Londres’, *Olympic Review* (Jun. 1907): 279-281.
  88. Terret, ‘Prendre ses repères’, 61.
  89. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux des séances. Luxembourg 1910* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1910), 38. Coubertin did not comment anything about these discussions and the winter sports in his report on the Luxembourg session. See Pierre de Coubertin, ‘La réunion du Comité International Olympique à Luxembourg’, *Olympic Review* (Jun. 1910): 83-88.
  90. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux. Budapest 1911* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1911), 4-5.
  91. *Ibid.*, 11.
  92. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux. Stockholm 1912* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1912), 20-21.
  93. Norbert Müller, *Cent ans de Congrès Olympiques (1894-1994)* (Lausanne: Comité International Olympique, 1994), 115.
  94. *Ibid.*
  95. International Olympic Committee, *Congrès des Comités Olympiques Nationaux. Paris 1914* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1919), 7.
  96. Krüger, ‘Forgotten Decisions’, 86.
  97. François-Étienne ‘Frantz’ Reichel, ‘Le Congrès des Comités olympiques nationaux’, *Le Figaro*, June 22, 1914, 6.
  98. IOC, *Congrès des Comités [...] 1914*, 7.
  99. François-Étienne ‘Frantz’ Reichel, ‘Le Congrès des Comités olympiques nationaux’, *Le Figaro*, June 24, 1914, 4.
  100. IOC, *Congrès des Comités [...] 1914*, 7.
  101. *Ibid.*, 8.
  102. Reichel, ‘Le Congrès’ (June 24), 4.
  103. Terret, ‘Prendre ses repères’, 61.
  104. IOC, *Procès-verbaux [...] 1920*, 14.
  105. IOC, *Congrès des Comités [...] 1914*, 7.
  106. IOC, *Procès-verbaux [...] 1920*, 15.
  107. *Ibid.*, 17.
  108. IOC, *Congrès des Comités [...] 1914*, 1.
  109. Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, 106.
  110. Controversy due to the objections of some IOC members that the seats of two Olympic Games were chosen together (see International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux. Session de 1921* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1921), 7, and also because Italy (Rome) and the US (Los Angeles), saw their candidatures deferred until at least 1932 (Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, 110).
  111. Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, 110.
  112. Arnaud and Terret, *Le rêve blanc*, 58.
  113. *Ibid.*
  114. *Ibid.*
  115. Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs*, 106.
  116. IOC, *Procès-verbaux [...] 1921*, 6.
  117. *Ibid.*, 12.
  118. ‘Les Congrès de Genève et de Lausanne. À Lausanne: le Congrès Olympique’, *L’Auto*, May 28, 1921, 3.

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119. Ibid.
  120. Ibid.
  121. IOC, *Procès-verbaux [...] 1921*.
  122. Ibid., 6.
  123. Ibid. 10.
  124. The choice of Chamonix was clearly a decision of the Organising Committee. Reasons why are, among others, the economic strength (potential of the tourist industry) and the large quantity of events included (more winter sports meant more medals to be won and more countries to be happy).
  125. IOC, *Procès-verbaux [...] 1921*, 12.
  126. Three cities applied for the organisation: Luchon-Superbagnères (Pyrenees) with no real tradition, Gérardmer (Vosges) with Nordic practise only, and Chamonix, of Alpine practise. Chamonix had just received a railway connection and the maire wanted to invest in winter sports. The question would be if money was so important for the final decision since Coubertin was completely broke after the war.
  127. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 65.
  128. Ibid.
  129. Huntford, 'The First Winter', 326.
  130. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 65.
  131. Ibid., 66.
  132. Ibid.
  133. Krüger, 'The history', 108.
  134. Sigfrid Edström, *Letter from Edström to Marquis de Polignac*, February 18, 1922 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1922a).
  135. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 66.
  136. Sigfrid Edström, *Letter from Edström to Count Clary*, April 26, 1922 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1922b).
  137. Godefroy de Blonay, *Letter from Blonay to Edström*, May 10, 1922 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1922).
  138. James G. Merrick, *Letter from Merrick to Coubertin*, May 2, 1922 (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1922).
  139. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 66.
  140. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 66-67.
  141. Terret, 'Prendre ses repères', 67.
  142. Ibid.
  143. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux. Session de 1923* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1923), 14.
  144. Comité Olympique Français, 'La Cérémonie de Clôture', 721.
  145. Ibid.
  146. Krüger, 'Forgotten Decisions', 94.
  147. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbaux. Session de 1925* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1925), 14.
  148. Ibid.
  149. International Olympic Committee, *Communiqué à la presse. Réunion de la Commission Exécutive du Comité International Olympique. Paris 1926* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1926a), 1.
  150. International Olympic Committee, *Procès-verbal. 25<sup>e</sup> Session. Lisbonne 1926* (Lausanne: IOC Olympic Studies Centre, 1926b), 8.