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THE 1976 OLYMPIC GAMES

Moments of glory, passion and pride

It was at precisely 4:34 p.m. on Saturday, July 17 in Montréal when the athletes, the 76,433 spectators gathered at the Olympic Stadium, and millions of television viewers on five continents witnessed Her Majesty the Queen utter the ceremonial words from the Olympic Rules: "I declare open the Olympic Games of Montréal, celebrating the XXI Olympiad of the modern era." And the dream became reality!

The massive expanse of land where the Olympic Park would later be built was initially selected, in the 1930s, as the site for the British Empire Games (now the Commonwealth Games) by Mayor Camillien Houde. Those plans were cut short by the Second World War, but were revived on May 12, 1970, when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced that in 1976, Montréal would host the Games of the XXI Olympiad. On September 20, 1972, representatives of the City of Montréal and the Canadian Olympic Association (now the Canadian Olympic Committee) founded the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG), a non-profit organization. On July 17, 1976, the entire world watched as the Montréal Summer Olympics finally opened, and the athletes were given their chance to reach for glory.

THE FACILITIES FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES

The Olympic Park: Soul of the Games

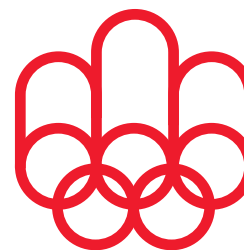
The Olympic Park reigned over all other competition sites, both for the size of its installations and the importance of the events that were held there. The Olympic Park also stood out for the way it managed to harmonize the grounds and buildings, integrating the Stadium, aquatic centre, Velodrome, fields, metro stations, promenades and two existing buildings: the Pierre Charbonneau Centre and the Maurice Richard Arena.

The Stadium, a masterpiece of architecture and engineering

Designed by French architect Roger Tallibert at the request of Mayor Jean Drapeau, the Olympic Stadium was the centrepiece of all the structures built for the 1976 Games. Impressive and grandiose, the building has architectural and technical features that make it a one-of-a-kind monument. This immense concrete structure comprises 12,000 prefabricated elements weighing several tons. To build the structure, it took 71,500 m³ of poured concrete containing some 1,000 km of high tensile steel cable. During the opening and closing ceremonies respectively, the Stadium fulfilled its mission as the prime location for hosting international events, by welcoming 76,433 spectators!

The Olympic Village, a veritable garden city

Adjacent to the Olympic Park, the Olympic Village was integrated into a landscape of trails that turned it into a veritable garden city. It consisted of two 19-storey buildings shaped like pyramids, offering 980 apartments surrounded by balconies, and accommodating up to 11,000 people. All the



EMBLEM OF THE GAMES

The emblem consisted of the Olympic rings with an Olympic podium at the top, which is also a graphic representation of the letter "M" for Montréal. In the middle is the athletics track, considered the heart of the Games. This emblem evoked the universal fraternity of the Olympic ideal, the glory of the winners, the chivalrous spirit of their battles and the rise of Montréal to the rank of Olympic city. The emblem was designed by graphic artist Georges Huel, who, along with Michel Dallaire, also designed the torch.

NOTABLE FACTS ABOUT THE GAMES

Opening date

July 17, 1976

Closing date

August 1, 1976

Participation

94 nations
6,084 athletes (1,260 women, 4,824 men)
414 athletes representing Canada
2,661 team officials
196 events

Official opening

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Lighting of the Olympic cauldron

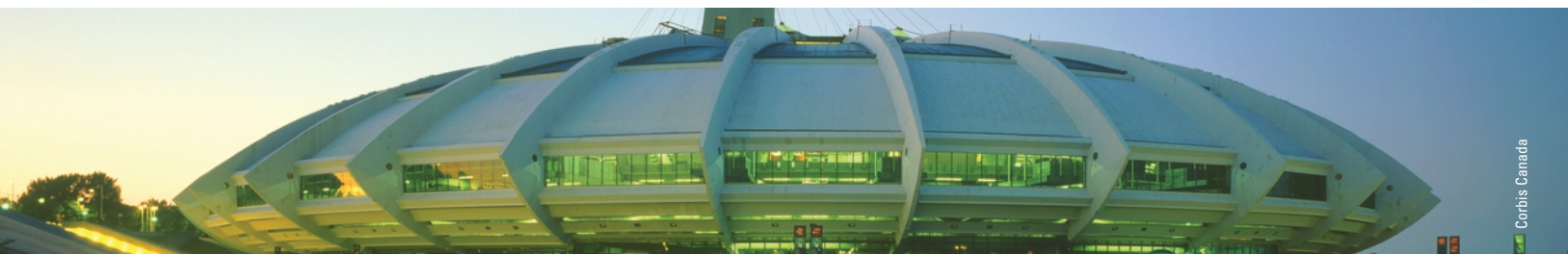
Stéphane Préfontaine (16 years old) and Sandra Henderson (15 years old)

Sports on the program

21 sports
No demonstration sports
27 competition sites
26 training sites

Security

Approximately 16,000 people (police and military)



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athletes were housed there, except those participating in equestrian sports and sailing who lived in residences set up in Bromont and Kingston, the competition sites. A half-pyramid was reserved exclusively for the female athletes, though they were given access to the men's quarters. The reverse was not true for the men, who occupied the remaining three sections. The Olympic Village featured a movie theatre, music room, dance club, swimming pool, shops, hair salons and a bank, among other things.

Food services at the Olympic Village

For obvious safety reasons, the delegations' apartments were not equipped with kitchens. The cafeteria, however, was open around the clock and could accommodate up to 3,000 people at a time. The menu featured an international cuisine with balanced, protein-rich meals containing 5,000 calories a day. By the end of the Games, more than 645,000 meals had been served. Each day at lunchtime, all those celebrating their birthdays would share an enormous birthday cake. After the closing ceremonies, a massive corn roast was held at the Village for all of the delegations.

The competition sites

Eager to use existing structures as much as possible to hold the Games, the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG) chose various sports centres, stadiums, pools, fields, gymnasiums and buildings in the Montréal network of urban communities for competitions, training, and services such as administration and telecommunications. Most of the locations selected were less than 10 kilometres from the Olympic Park.

Outside of Montréal, Olympic competitions took place in eight cities with enhanced or adapted facilities. The range at a private hunting and fishing club located in L'Acadie, 45 km outside the city, was chosen for the shooting event. Bromont, located 72 km from Montréal, hosted the equestrian events. The handball preliminaries took place in Québec City and Sherbrooke. Half of the soccer games were held in Sherbrooke, Ottawa and Toronto. Kingston, with Canada's largest yacht club, took advantage of the Olympic Games to convert the old Portsmouth Village shipyard into a harbour for pleasure craft.

THE GAMES BEHIND THE SCENES

The Olympic torch

Extensive research went into designing the torch that would be used to transport the Olympic flame from Ottawa to Montréal. Weight and safety were the top priorities, since each torchbearer would have to run with it in one hand for a kilometre. Made entirely out of aluminum, the torch weighed no more than 836 grams. The head was designed to provide enough ventilation for the olive oil to burn, allowing the flame to shine brightly. The head was painted black for photogenic contrast with the flame. The red stem bore the Olympic emblem engraved in white. During the opening ceremony, the last torchbearers, Stéphane Préfontaine and Sandra Henderson, lit the cauldron.



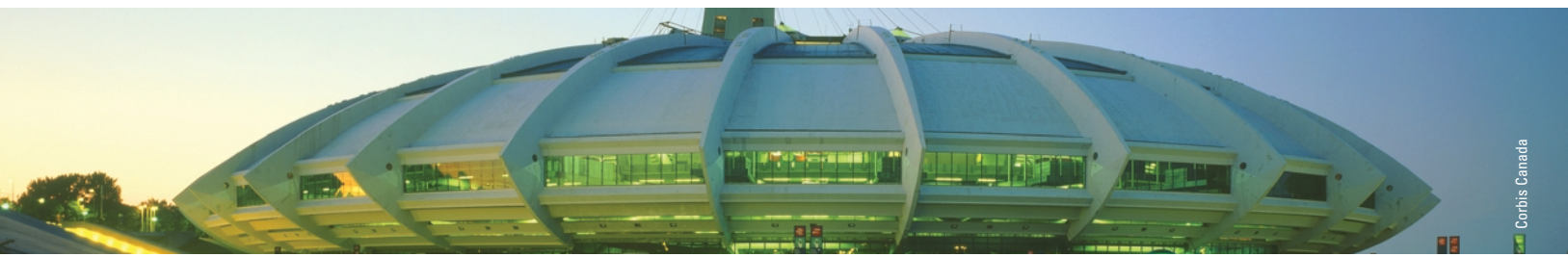
MEDALS OF THE GAMES

The face featured the design by Giuseppe Cassioli for the 1928 Amsterdam Games. The dominant symbols are Victory, Fraternity and Universality. The back was purposely sparse, displaying the emblem of the Montréal Games, and a crown of laurels, which has been a symbol of victory since the ancient era of the Olympics.



MASCOT OF THE GAMES

The beaver, called "Amik" after the Algonquin word for this animal, was chosen as the mascot because it is recognized for its patience and hard work. It also played an important role in Canada's development when fur trading was one of the primary activities in North America. A great Canadian national symbol, the beaver appears on our five-cent coin (the nickel) and certain stamps. The mascot donned a red sash bearing the Olympic emblem and symbolizing the ribbon to which the winners' medals were attached.



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Teleporting the flame

For the first time ever, the Olympic flame arrived from Greece electronically. It was sent as binary-coded impulses that were carried by telephone cable, transmitted to an Intelsat satellite, and then forwarded to a receiver in Ottawa. There, a laser beam returned it to its original fiery form.

The Olympic cauldrons

The Olympic cauldrons were designed with clean, modern lines. The OCOG had six different cauldrons made, which were lit one after the other in several cities from the moment the torch arrived electronically in Ottawa from Greece. The largest two aluminum cauldrons were 1.8 metres in diameter. One was placed at the foot of the famous cross on Mont Royal, and the other was erected in the Olympic Stadium. The four other cauldrons, made with stainless steel and measuring 60 cm in diameter, were placed in various cities along the torch relay path.

The staff at the Games

Some 23,000 people were put to work to make sure the Games went off without a hitch. The following positions were required: OCOG administrative personnel, hostesses and guides, technical delegates, jury members, medal presenters, auxiliary staff, photographers, timekeepers, ticket and program sales staff, ushers, messengers, chauffeurs, and surveillance and support staff. The 928 hostesses and 114 male guides spoke some 45 languages in all.

The uniforms

A group of four Montréal-based clothing designers created the uniforms: Marielle Fleury, Léo Chevalier, Michel Robichaud and John Warden. The uniforms were to be worn by people occupying 39 different positions, so various styles and colours were needed for easy identification. There were seven official colours used to distinguish the groups, and the styles were used to distinguish occupations within those groups. Red was for official positions. Green was for those working at the Olympic Village. Orange was for miscellaneous services. Yellow was for the technology teams and purple for the Arts and Culture and Protocol staff. Magenta was for Youth Camp personnel. Grey was chosen for the pants and skirts to complement those colours. Accessories such as striped scarves, running shoes, T-shirts, cardigans, shirts, blouses, ties and belts gave the uniform a contemporary, simple and comfortable look. In all, some 52,000 metres of fabric were used to create 88,656 articles of clothing.

Decorations and flags

The decorations and flags program for the streets of Montréal and other cities where events would be taking place was wonderfully simple. The primary element consisted of two-, three- and five-metre-long streamers, with nine of the same size suspended from a hoop. In solid red or rainbow colours, they were eye-catching as they fluttered in the wind. On the competition sites were hung banners in rainbow colours and red pennants with the pictograms of the sports or the emblem of the 1976 Olympic Games.



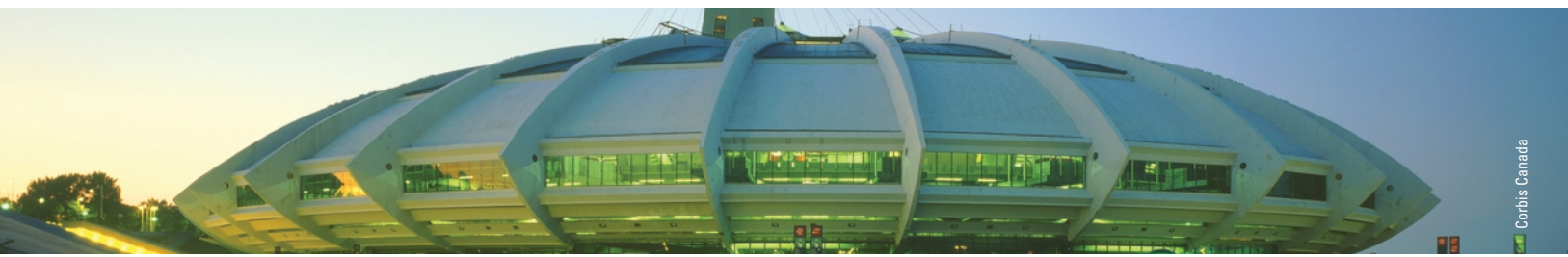
The clean, modern lines of the Olympic cauldron



Uniforms worn by the guides and hostesses



Rainbow-coloured streamers



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The music of the Games

The musical score for the opening and closing ceremonies was written by the musical director and conductor for the Games, Victor Vogel, in close collaboration with Montréal musician Art Philips, who specialized in orchestral arrangements. The musical themes of the Games were based on the works of Canadian pianist-composer André Mathieu (1929–1968). While his compositions were largely unknown to the general public, they won over the organizing committee for the richness of their themes and their universality. His writing style, which Mathieu himself described as very much of the romantic school, loaned itself perfectly to the grandeur of the Olympics.

The Box Office

The Internet did not exist in those days and selling tickets worldwide was a monumental challenge. The organization ran like a well-oiled machine. Each national Olympic committee was asked to delegate a ticket agent in their country. Thanks to this approach, 42% of the tickets were sold abroad. In Canada, tickets were being sold through Eaton's as early as April 1975, since it had stores in every part the country and its computer system was compatible with the OCOG's. By March 8, 1976, tickets were only available through the OCOG box office in Montréal. Ticket prices for the various events were anywhere from \$1 to \$32. Tickets for the opening and closing ceremonies ranged from \$8 to \$40. A total of 5,382,633 tickets were sold for the entire Olympic Games.

Paying for the Games

All expenditures associated with hosting the Games were immediately paid off with revenues generated largely by the OCOG, and in small part by the City of Montréal thanks to a special tax to cover the cost of some of the facilities built for the occasion, such as the rowing basin on Île Notre-Dame and the Claude Robillard and Étienne Desmarteau centres.

The main Olympic facilities (Stadium, aquatic centre, Velodrome and Olympic Village) were covered by a special mortgage that was repaid in just 30 years, a relatively short period considering the scale of these buildings. The initial building costs, costs of completion, and the cost of converting the Village into rental apartments and the Velodrome into the Biodôme rose to \$1.5 billion. The mortgage was paid down largely thanks to the special Olympic fund, which was generated by taking a portion of the tax on tobacco products. The final installment was paid on November 14, 2006. The Olympic Park facilities are the only public buildings to have had a proper mortgage, since the cost of government buildings are typically included in the consolidated expenditures of the different levels of government and the date they are fully paid off is unknown.

Source

The information and images presented here were taken from:
Games of the XXI Olympiad-Montréal 1976,
official report of the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, Ottawa, 1978.

COMPETITION SITES

Montréal

- Olympic Stadium
- Olympic Park aquatic centre
- Olympic Velodrome
- Maurice Richard Arena
- Pierre Charbonneau Centre
- The Île Notre-Dame rowing basin
- Claude Robillard Centre
- Étienne Desmarteau Centre
- St. Michel Arena
- Paul Sauvé Centre
- Forum
- Winter Stadium – Université de Montréal
- Molson Stadium – McGill University
- Fairview cycling circuit
- Mont-Royal cycling circuit
- Marathon track
- Walking marathon 20-km track
- Pentathlon track

Other cities

- Olympic shooting range, L'Acadie
- Olympic equestrian centre, Bromont
- Olympic archery field, Joliette
- PEPS – Université Laval (Québec)
- Sherbrooke Stadium
- Sherbrooke Sports Palace
- Kingston Yacht Club (Ontario)
- Varsity Stadium, Toronto (Ontario)
- Lansdowne Park, Ottawa (Ontario)