

PAN AMERICAN GAMES

The first Pan American Games were held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from February 25 to March 9, but the road to this inaugural event was long and arduous.
It was Moisés Sáenz, Mexico's representative to the IOC, who convinced his American counterparts to organize a continental competition during the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games. With the approval of Belgian Count Henry de Baillet Latour, president of the IOC, negotiations began that would take shape four years later in Berlin, when Brundage and his compatriot, politician and military officer George Marshall, invited the nations of the Pan American continent to participate in the "American Sporting Activities" (as they were called) to be held the following year at the Pan-American Exposition in Dallas.
In 1937, these sporting events were supposed to be held in Brazil, but the green and gold nation was unable to organize them. However, "American sports" competitions continued, and in 1938, Bogotá hosted the inaugural version of a competition honoring Simón Bolívar, the Bolivarian Games, which brought together the six countries he declared independent (Bolivia, Colombia, Panama, Peru, Ecuador, and Venezuela). In 1940, the first congress of the Pan American Sports Committee (COP) was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the participation of 16 nations.

American Avery Brundage was appointed president of the COP, and it was agreed that two years later, the same city would host the first official Pan American Games, competitions to be held every four years. But at the end of 1941, the continent formally entered World War II, and the dream of the Games had to be shelved until peace returned. At the IOC meeting held in London during the 1948 Olympic Games, the COP made two crucial decisions: the first was to elect Mexican José María de Jesús Clark Flores as the organization's new president; the second was to recognize Argentina's right to finally host the Pan American Games.

In the first edition, walking was represented with two events: the 10,000-meter track race and the 50-kilometer road walk. Only eight athletes participated in the two races, representing three nations.

In the 1955 and 1959 editions, walking was not present. It returned in 1963 in São Paulo (Bra) with the 20-kilometer race.
Since that edition, walking has been present in every one of the seventeen editions held to date.

The women's competition made its debut in 1987 in Indianapolis with the 10,000-meter track race. Starting in Winnipeg in 1999, the race was extended to 20 km. In 2019, the 50-kilometer race was held for the only time in Lima.
In Santiago 2023, the mixed relay race was held.

After initial dominance by the United States and Canada, Mexico's supremacy began in 1975, but starting in 1995, South American nations began to dominate, especially in 20 km.

The national medal table is clearly dominated by Mexico.
In the men's event, the Aztec nation has won 13 gold, 17 silver, and 5 bronze medals in the 32 races held. Behind Mexico is Ecuador (8-1-1), followed by the United States (5-3-7).

The women's event has seen the same pattern as the men. Mexico dominated until 2003, but then, in the last few races, supremacy shifted to South American nations.
In the 13 races held, Mexico continues to lead the medal table (7-3-3), followed by Ecuador (2-2-2) and Peru (1-2-1).

The male athletes with the most medals are 3 Mexicans and 1 Ecuadorian.
The Mexicans are Raul González (2 golds, 1 silver, and 1 bronze), Carlos Mercenario (3 golds and 1 silver), and Horacio Nava (1 gold, 2 silvers, and 1 bronze) and for Ecuador Jefferson Pérez obtained 3 golds and 1 bronze.
Four other athletes with three medals each are: Larry Young of the United States (2 golds and 1 bronze, Martín Bermudez of Mexico (1 gold and 2 silvers), Hector Moreno of Colombia (1 gold and 2 bronzes); and Caio Bonfim of Brazil (2 silvers and 1 bronze).

In the women's category, one athlete monopolized the podium with four golds. This is the Mexican Graciela Mendoza who won consecutively from 1991 to 1999. Following her with three medals we find another Mexican: Rosario Sánchez with 3 silvers and the American Michelle Rohl with 1 silver and 2 bronzes.

The best performances recorded at the Games were in men 20 km, won in Santiago 2023 by David Hurtado with a time of 1:19:20, and in men 50 km, Carlos Mercenario finished in Mar del Plata in 1995 with a time of 3:47:55.

In the women's 10,000-meter track race, the record is held by Graciela Mendoza with a time of 46:31.93 in Mar del Plata in 1995.

In 20 km, Sandra Arenas leads with a time of 1:28:03, set in Lima in 2019. In the only 50 km race held, Ecuadorian Johana Ordóñez won in 4:11:12.

The edition with the highest number of starters was Lima 2019, with 55 athletes (30 men- 25 women) at the start of the four races. Lima also had the race with the highest number of nations represented: 11 in the men's 20km race.
The record for the edition with the highest number of disqualifications goes to Rio de Janeiro 2007, with 14 out of 45 starters suspended, representing 31% of the athletes who competed in the three races.
In the women's 20km race, 6 out of 15 starters were disqualified, a whopping 40%.

In the 17 editions held to date, fortunately, there have been no correct rankings for participants found guilty of doping.

