

Trampoline as an Olympic Event

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With gymnastics being such a popular sport in the Olympics, with great athletes such as Simone Biles; it isn't a large bounce away for similar events like trampolining to exist. Gymnasts are able to use detailed acrobatics by themselves and with trampolines the ability to create and execute fine acrobatics is increased with more air time. This sport includes great American Athletes including Nicole Ahsinger and Aliaksei Shostak.

Trampolining for the Olympics was first introduced in the late 1990's when it was announced that it would be an event for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney Australia. This sport would be dominated originally by the countries of the U.S and other European countries consisting of France, Germany, and Britain. Though the announcement of Trampolining to the Olympic Games brought a former 3-Time world champion out of retirement, this former champion was Aleksandr Moskalenko from Russia. Moskalenko ended up winning the Olympics event, with on the female side Irina Karavayeva taking home a gold medal for Russia as well.

Then in 2004, the Olympics in Athens would lead to both former champions failing to repeat championship gold. Ukraine's Nikitin would slightly beat out Russia's Moskalenko. On the women's side Karavayeva did not even make it back to the Olympic Finals, which led to Dogonadze of Germany to win gold. In 2008, the Beijing Olympics led to two champions from China. Wenna from China took gold and Chunlong took gold on the men's side.

The 2012 Olympics were hosted in London, the previous champions both failed to retake gold but China's former champions still earned medals at the event. Canada's MacLennan took

the top score and with that takes the gold for the women's side. China still took gold in the men's though it was from a different competitor, this Olympics being China's Dong Dong.

In the most recent Olympics in 2016, located in Rio that year, China earned silver and bronze in the men's side while Hancharou from Belarus earned gold. In a surprise from these Olympics, Canada's Rosie MacLennan repeated and defended her Olympic gold medal in the women's trampolining event.

That is the history of the winners throughout the Olympic Event of Trampolining, but how was trampolining introduced to the Olympics? It started with a man named George Nissen, who gave birth to the Olympic Trampoline. To the surprise of not many, Nissen himself was acrobatic, which is a common skill of many gymnasts or athletes that are able to use trampolines at a high skill level. Nissen was inspired by the days of circus acts where acrobats would do tricks in the air and land safely into a safety net. How could this be made better, or more efficient? It took multiple years of work from Nissen and his own coach Larry Griswold to create prototypes and complete the first version of a functioning trampoline.

Nissen wanted to test his first durable version of the trampoline at a summer camp, letting kids loose on the trampoline to see their response. To the joy of Nissen, the kids loved it, the most difficult part of the process was getting them off. When it was time to go to the pool none of the kids would want to, they all wanted to stay on the trampoline and have fun with it. At this point Nissen knew he was onto something huge. Around the 1960's trampolines would be used for pilots and astronauts to train them about going into the sky, since they did not have the high training technology that they have today. This was all well and good although George Nissen wanted more, Nissen wanted trampolining to become a sport and a competitive sport at that.

Then in 1964, the first World Trampolining Championship was hosted in London, Nissen wanted to gain more attention with this and created a large trampoline photoshoot. Taking photos with the trampoline in front of the Big Ben Clock Tower, right beside the great pyramids in Egypt, and the most remembered photo is with George Nissen jumping on a trampoline with a Kangaroo. Now there was a bigger sight set on the Olympic Games, trampolining already had its own world championship but having its own event in the Olympics could skyrocket the success of the trampoline and its popularity. George and Dian Nissen, a young trampoline champion, would travel the world to different countries with a trampoline to try and create an outreach for people to know what trampolines are and how great they can be. Either it be Australia, Russia, or even Brazil; the trampoline was becoming more widespread than ever. Sadly George Nissen could not get the trampoline added to the Olympics as an event in the nearest Olympics in 1980, it took not until 2000 till it was fully added and competing was a reality. George Nissen would go with loved ones to go see the first Olympic Trampolining event, and in his own words “We marched into the stadium, it was full”. George Nissen finally did it, he accomplished what he always wanted to accomplish, and he taught the world how to bounce. George Nissen stayed active with trampolining till his eventual death at 96 years old.

Now why don't we hear about the Trampolining Event in the Olympics, we have a couple reasons why this is the case. Surprisingly trampoline viewership isn't as high as other Olympic or other sporting events. People have a tendency to watch sports that they have done in the past, either in high school, college, or maybe just in their backyard. This goes for football, basketball, but why not trampolining? There is a huge amount of children across the country that has had a trampoline as a kid, or when they don't have a trampoline kids would be jumping on their bed or couch.

The Super Bowl or the NBA Finals is what young people dream of once they are children, there aren't many kids throughout the nation that dream of being a world champion in trampolining. It is common knowledge that either NFL or NBA players make salaries that earn them millions of dollars and many Olympic athletes with a lot of these events don't make that kind of money. But aren't we talking about why don't people know or watch trampolining, why does the money these athletes make matter?

If the younger generations are playing these sports at a young age, they are focusing on the main popular sports that will earn them all the money and the fame, this reflects to what they will be watching on TV every week. They aspire to be athletes in the NFL or NBA, trampolining doesn't create this same kind of buzz. Although many people would consider jumping on a trampoline to be joyful and entertaining, people wouldn't say that they enjoy watching other people jump on a trampoline for hours on end. In other sports like the NFL or NBA people happily will watch those sports for hours all day. With that information in mind people will often watch things that their parents or friends watch, a common family will have a favorite sports team to watch on the TV and that will be passed down for generations. If they cheer for a certain college, it is common for them to watch multiple sports that college competes in. Most colleges will have a base set of sports they compete in. To list a few there is football, basketball, volleyball, track and field, baseball, softball, and tennis. Many of these sports will have teams assorted to different genders, which gives people more things to watch.

Now do you notice how I didn't say trampolining? Trampolining won't be a sport you find in most colleges worldwide, you would find trampolining teams more commonly in local gymnastics centers in towns and cities which there isn't always one. Which more often than not it

isn't televised to the masses instead of having local competitions which aren't always advertised very well to be known and have high attendance.

Another reason why Olympic Trampolining could get low viewership is because at the Olympics, multiple events go on at the same time. If only trampolining was playing at the Olympics, there would be a bigger possibility of high viewership while viewers wait for their favorite events.

In conclusion, it's inspiring the way that Trampolining found itself to the Olympics, although ever since its been in the Olympics the viewership and publicity has been low. The event will last in the Olympics but the world of trampolining will need to find a way to expose themselves into the modern day world for they can flourish.

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