



VINTAGE

SPORT

TIM HARRIS

Contents

Cover

About the Book

About the Author

List of Illustrations

Dedication

Title Page

Epigraph

Introduction

A Few Words of Warning – and Thanks

1. The Field of Screams

Where sport is played

ANCIENT GREEK STADIA

THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS

ROMAN ARENAS

DARK AGE SPORTS

FORESTS, TILTYARDS AND BUTTS

SIXTEENTH-CENTURY TENNIS AND RACING

STUART GOLF AND RACECOURSES

NEWMARKET, ASCOT AND EPSOM

COUNTRY SPORTS

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET GROUNDS

ROWING, BOXING AND GOLF

NAPOLEONIC WAR GAMES

THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE RAILWAY AGE

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET

THE GREAT EXHIBITION

THE FIRST SWIMMING BATHS
COUNTY CRICKET GROUNDS
RUNNING TRACKS
VICTORIAN THEME PARKS
THE FIRST NATIONAL STADIUM
THE FIRST FOOTBALL FIELDS
RIOTS, RUSHES AND COLLAPSES
THE FIRST FLOODLIGHTS
BRITAIN'S FOOTBALLING MAP
CRICKET'S NEW TEST VENUES
THE TROUBLE WITH LAWN TENNIS
THE 'PARK' RACETRACKS
LATE-VICTORIAN POOLS
RINKS AND RESORTS
GOLF GOES GLOBAL
BICYCLE RACETRACKS
THE FIRST US BALLPARKS
THE FIRST FOOTBALL STADIA
THE FIRST MODERN OLYMPICS
INTERWAR US STADIA
ODSAL STADIUM
INTERWAR FOOTBALL AND RUGBY
Highbury
1930S FLOODLIGHTING
CRUSHES AND BLAZES
GREYHOUNDS AND SPEEDWAY
INTERWAR RACECOURSES
INTERWAR GOLF
1920-1936 OLYMPICS
THE FIRST WORLD CUPS
WARTIME STADIA
1948-1964 OLYMPICS
POSTWAR US BALLPARKS
AMERICA'S GOLF BOOM
POSTWAR BRITISH FOOTBALL
FOOTBALL'S FIRST MODERN STANDS

THE ASTRODOME
ARTIFICIAL V. NATURAL GRASS
1968-1984 OLYMPICS
IBROX
VALLEY PARADE
HILLSBOROUGH
THE ITALIA 90 STADIA
1990-1994 FOOTBALL STADIA
THE SIR ALFRED MCALPINE STADIUM
OLD TRAFFORD TO NEW WEMBLEY
SLIDING ROOFS, MOVING SEATS
1988-2000 OLYMPICS
POSTWAR WINTER OLYMPICS
ATHENS 2004

TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY STADIA

2. **Nice Guys Finish Seventh**

Rule making and rule breaking

THE ANCIENT OLYMPICS

THE ROMANS

SPORT AFTER THE ROMANS

MEDIEVAL SPORTS

TUDORS AND STUARTS

THE FIRST WRITTEN RULES

HAMBLEDON AND THE MCC

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY RACING

NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET

BASEBALL

1830s AND 1840s FOOTBALL

ORGANISING ATHLETICS

SWIMMING

RIVAL FOOTBALL CODES

THE FIRST FA RULES

QUEENSBERRY RULES

EMPIRE AND ARMY SPORTS

REGULATING RACING

TENNIS'S COURTROOM BATTLE

THE FIRST RFU RULES
LONDON AND SHEFFIELD RULES
INVENTING AMERICAN FOOTBALL
QUALIFYING TO PLAY CRICKET
1880s AND 1890s FOOTBALL
RUGBY'S GREAT STAND-OFF
HOCKEY AND HURLING
CRICKET'S CHAMPS AND CHUCKERS
BASKETBALL AND OTHER INVENTIONS
RUNNING THE EARLY OLYMPICS
WINTER SPORTS
BIKE RACING
PRE-1914 FOOTBALL
1900-1914 RUGBY
THE US FOOTBALL CRISIS
INTERWAR SOCCER
INTERWAR RUGBY
THE NFL
BODYLINE
INTERWAR OLYMPICS
WINTER SPORTS 1919-1939
CYCLING
TABLE TENNIS AND THE TURF
1940s AND 1950s CRICKET
OPENING UP RUGBY
SOCCER'S SUBS AND SWEEPERS
1950s GOLF AND GRIDIRON
RACING'S 1960s REVOLUTION
THE POSTWAR OLYMPICS
1960s AND 1970s CRICKET
SHOOT-OUTS AND TIEBREAKS
FOUL PLAY
1990s RULES
CYCLOPS TO HAWKEYE
WINTER SPORTS
TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY RULES

3. Kit and Kaboodle

How sports equipment changed sport

PREHISTORIC KIT

PRE-OLYMPIC GAMES

THE ANCIENT GREEKS

ROMAN SPORTS

AFTER THE ROMANS

CHINA V. JAPAN

JOUSTING

MEDIEVAL SPORTS

THE TUDORS

THE STUARTS

RESTORATION SPORTS

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BLOOD SPORTS

CRICKET TAKES SHAPE

COTTON

CAOUTCHOUC

MASS PRODUCTION

THE LAWN MOWER

RACING EIGHTS

MAKING THE MODERN SKI

SPORTS CLOTHES

MACHINE-MADE SHOES

THE GUTTIE REVOLUTION

VULCANISED RUBBER

FOOTBALL AND RUGBY COLOURS

RUBBER SOLES

LAWN TENNIS RACKETS

RATIONAL DRESS

THE HASKELL BALL

CELLULOID

INTERWAR SPORTS

THE FIRST PLASTICS

COMPOSITES

NEW METALS AND FIBRES

POSTWAR SKIING

FIBREGLASS
ARTIFICIAL BOOTS AND BALLS
METAL RACKETS
CARBON FIBRE
KEVLAR
NIKE
TENNIS TOOLS UP
GOLF AT THE LIMIT

4. Pills and Thrills

Sports drugs
ARTHUR LINTON'S CRIME
ANCIENT SPORTS DRUGS
ALCOHOL
MARIJUANA
CAMPHOR
STRYCHNINE
OPIUM AND LAUDANUM
NICOTINE
CAFFEINE
HEROIN
ANAESTHETICS
COCAINE
BARBITURATES
AMPHETAMINES
CORTISONE
STERIODS
BETA-BLOCKERS
STERIODS FOR WOMEN
BLOOD DOPING
EPHEDRINE
DIURETICS
BETA-2 AGONISTS
EPO
PEPTIDE HORMONES
NANDROLONE, STANZOLOL, ETC
THG

CREATINE
PICK 'N' MIX DRUGS
DETECTING DRUGS
GENE DOPING

5. Horsepower

A swift history of speed sports

THE ANCIENT OLYMPICS
ROMAN RACING
MEDIEVAL HORSES
SIXTEENTH- AND SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RACING
THE FIRST THOROUGHBREDS
CARRIAGE RACING
SPORTING SPECIALISTS
THE JERSEY ACT
THE GENETIC PLATEAU
INVENTING THE BIKE
EARLY BIKE RACING
TRACK RACING
ROAD RACING
THE FIRST MOTORISTS
THE FIRST RACERS
INTERNATIONAL RACING
THE PARIS-MADRID DISASTER
THE FIRST GRAND PRIX
INVENTING THE MOTORBIKE
THE FIRST AIR RACES
INTERWAR MOTOR RACING
MERCEDES AND AUTO UNION
INTERWAR BIKE RACING
INTERWAR AIR RACING
INTERWAR CYCLING
THE END OF THE AIR RACE
RACING AFTER THE WAR
1950-1953
1954-1960
POSTWAR MOTORBIKE RACING

1961-1965

1966

1967-1969

THE 1970s

TURBOS

1970s MOTORBIKING

POSTWAR CYCLING

THE 1980s

POST-TURBO RACING

IMOLA AND AFTER

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

6. **Show Me the Money**

The business of sport

ANCIENT GREEK SPORT

THE ROMANS

THE MIDDLE AGES

TUDOR GAMBLING

THE STUARTS

THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SWEEPSTAKES AND HANDICAPS

HAMBLEDON

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROS

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET

GOVERNMENT AND GAMBLING

AMATEURISM

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL

UNION V. LEAGUE

TOURS, TELL-ALLS AND SHAMATEURS

FOOTBALL V. RUGBY V. CRICKET

NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN SPORT

PARI-MUTUEL GAMBLING

PRE-FIRST WORLD WAR RACING

PRE-FIRST WORLD WAR FOOTBALL

TWICKENHAM

EARLY SPORTS SPONSORSHIP

THE BLACK SOX

BRITISH GAMBLING
INTERWAR SPORT
INTERWAR OLYMPICS
POSTWAR SPORT
THE FIRST TV RIGHTS
1950s SOCCER
1960s US SPORT
PLAYER'S RIGHTS
1960s SPORT
THE 1960s OLYMPICS
THE 1970s
THE 1980s OLYMPICS
1980s SOCCER
THE SATELLITE TV BONANZA
RUGBY'S BIG BANG
CORRUPTION IN CRICKET
OLYMPIC BIDDING SCANDALS
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

7. Playing Politics

Who gets to play?
THE ANCIENT WORLD
THE ANCIENT OLYMPICS
OLYMPIA
ROMAN SPORT
THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES
CHIVALRIC SPORTS
MEDIEVAL AND TUDOR SPORT
THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
SPORT AFTER 1660
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY RACING
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET
1795-1815
THE GAMING ACT
ROWING'S GREAT DIVIDE
NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET
THE JOCKEY CLUB

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
HOME NATIONS AT WAR
EXCLUSIVE SPORTS
ENGLAND V. AUSTRALIA
1880s ATHLETICS
THE BIRTH OF THE GAA
NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S SPORT
FOOTBALL TURNS PROFESSIONAL
NORTH V. SOUTH
OUTLAWED SPORTS
THE FIRST BLACK STARS
RACISM IN US SPORT
CYCLING AND ANTI-SEMITISM
ANIMAL RIGHTS
OLYMPIC AMATEURISM
THE FIRST RUGBY TOURISTS
GLOBAL FOOTBALL
THE LONDON OLYMPICS
THE 1912 GAMES
THE 1913 DERBY
1914-1918
BOLSHEVISM
IRISH INDEPENDENCE
FEMINISM
INTERWAR FOOTBALL AND RUGBY
RIOTS, THEFT AND EXTORTION
ALPINE V. NORDIC SKIING
EQUAL RIGHTS AND THE OLYMPICS
THE WORLD CUP
BODYLINE
INTERWAR RACISM
JOE LOUIS
FASCIST SPORT
SECOND WORLD WAR
THE AUSTERITY OLYMPICS
NEW NATIONS

INTEGRATING US SPORT
EAST V. WEST OLYMPICS
WORLD CUP FOOTBALL
POST-COLONIAL CRICKET
THE 1956 OLYMPICS
THE EARLY 1960s
APARTHEID IN THE RSA
APARTHEID IN THE USA?
THE D'OLIVEIRA AFFAIR
OPEN TENNIS AND THE WTA
RADICAL SPORT
RED CHINA, BLACK SEPTEMBER
HOOLIGANISM
1970s CRICKET
THE MONTREAL OLYMPICS
THE MOSCOW BOYCOTT
THE HEYSEL DISASTER
RACISM IN FOOTBALL
THE LA AND SEOUL OLYMPICS
HILLSBOROUGH
THE 1980s AND 1990s
INTERNATIONAL SPORT
1990s LEGISLATION
UK SPORTS POLICY

8. Hold the Back Page

Sport and the media
THE ANCIENT OLYMPICS
ROMAN SPORTING MEDIA
INVENTING THE BOOK
THE MIDDLE AGES
THE FIRST SPORTS BOOKS
EARLY NEWSPAPERS
PRINTING THE RULES
PARTWORKS, FORM GUIDES, AND HOW-TOS
AFFORDABLE PAPERS
THE TELEGRAPH

BUILDING SPORTING EMPIRES
INSTANT NEWS
THE DAILY MAIL
THE DAILY MIRROR
THE STAGE
THE MOVIES
RADIO
THE INTERWAR PRESS
TELEVISION
THE POSTWAR PRESS
1940s AND 1950s TV
1960s TV
1960s PAPERS
1970s TV
1980s TV
1990s TV
TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY SPORT
THE PRESS
THE INTERNET

Conclusion

Picture Section

A Rough Guide to Football Team Colours

Select Bibliography

Index

Copyright

About the Book

Sport: Almost Everything You Ever Wanted to Know tells the story of sport. All sport. Ever. From ancient times to the 21st century.

In eight themed parts, Tim Harris describes the triumphs and breakthroughs – as well as the cheating and skulduggery – that have created the modern world of sport.

Part One looks at sports grounds, from stadiums to ice rinks, explaining why golf courses have 18 holes, why boxing ‘rings’ are square and why Woolwich Arsenal ended up in Highbury.

Why do wickets have three stumps? Why do we ‘serve’ in tennis and play soccer in halves? Part Two uncovers the stories behind sporting rules, while the next section, on sports equipment, shows why we row in eights, why cue balls have black dots and golf balls have dimples.

Why do teams score more goals at home than away? Why have women got worse at shot putting? A history of sporting drugs reveals all.

A swift history of ‘speed sports’ – from chariot racing to Grand Prix – explains why Formula One races clockwise, why racehorses aren’t getting any faster and the odd origins of British racing green.

Why compete for 'stakes' and hold 'whip-rounds'? Why doesn't the NFL play on Saturdays? A section on money and sport tells all. Then sport and politics uncovers the reasons why we ten-pin bowl with ninepins, why greyhounds aren't grey and why rowing is so posh.

Lastly, a history of games and the media tells of racehorses starring on stage, boxers fighting *inside* cameras and just why the FA Cup draw uses wooden balls.

Dip into it, or read it cover to cover – there's a 'Oh – now I get it' moment on every page. *Sport*: it's unique, funny, amazingly comprehensive and packed with extraordinary anecdotes to turn any reader into a sporting expert.

About the Author

After working in advertising for fifteen years, Tim Harris got involved in a pub argument about why football shirts tend to be striped but rugby shirts tend to be hooped. Thus began an obsession with the odd reasons and strange stories behind the games we take for granted. This book is the result.

Like so many writers, Tim is married with two children and lives in North London.

List of Illustrations

- Acquatint of the 'Great Fight', 26 January 1841 by C. Hunt (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- Greek vase, circa 525 BC (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- George Parr's cricket team, 1859 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- The Aboriginal cricket team, 1863 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- Epsom Derby, 1913 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- Dick Kerr Ladies football team, 1920 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- Suzanne Lenglen, 1926 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- Herbert Chapman and his team, 1930 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- Harringay greyhound track, 1929 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Northolt Park racecourse, 1934 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
 - . Jesse Owens and Lutz Long at the Berlin Olympics, 1936 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
 - . Nazi salute, Berlin, 1938 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
 - . 'Private Joe Louis Says', 1942 (*courtesy of the National Archives, Washington DC*)
 - . A doodlebug passes overhead at Lord's, 1944 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
 - . Burnden Park, 1946 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
 - . The World Series, 1947 (*courtesy of Bettman/Corbis*)
 - . Steve Redgrave's medals, 2000 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
 - . The Canadian Formula One Grand Prix, 2007 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)

- . Joey Dunlop on the Isle of Man, 2000 (*courtesy of EMAP Archive*)
- . The Grand National at Aintree, 2007 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Stage Four of the Tour de France, 2006 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Ben Johnson at the Seoul Olympics, 1988 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player, 1962 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Tonya Harding at the Lillehammer Winter Olympics, 1994 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Brian O'Driscoll in New Zealand, 2005 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Stirling Moss, 1955 (*courtesy of Cahier Archive*)
- . Lester Piggott, 1947 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle, 1966 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Muhammad Ali versus Sonny Liston, 1965 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . The World Cup at Wembley Stadium, 1966 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the Mexico Olympics, 1968 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- . Kathy Switzer at the Boston Marathon, 1968 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- . Vince Matthews and Wayne Collett at the Munich Olympics, 1972 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- . Billie Jean King, Evonne Goolagong and Virginia Wade at Wimbledon, 1973 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Arthur Ashe at Wimbledon, 1975 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- . Broomhill Pool, 2005
- . Tottenham Hotspur, 1983 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- . Mike Gatting and Shakoor Rana in Faislabad, 1987 (*courtesy of Graham Morris*)

- 1. Heysel Stadium, Brussels, 1985 (*courtesy of Eamonn McCabe*)
- 2. Hillsborough Stadium, 1989 (*courtesy of Associated Press*)
- 3. Tiger Woods at the Masters in Augusta, 1997 (*courtesy of Getty Images*)
- 4. Skaters Jamie Salé and David Pelletier, 2002 (*courtesy of Offside Pictures*)

To Lucy

Tim Harris

SPORT

Almost Everything You Ever
Wanted to Know



Yellow Jersey Press
LONDON

Never read print. It spoils one's eye for the ball.
W.G. GRACE

Introduction

THIS BOOK BEGAN with an argument in a pub. The vital issue at stake was whether soccer players were more likely to wear striped shirts and rugby players were more likely to wear hoops – and if so, why? Having found out the answer to that one, a lot of other sporting questions began to suggest themselves. For example:

Why 18 holes in golf? Why are boxing ‘rings’ square? Why ‘pits’ in motor sport? Why do Grand Prix cars race clockwise? Why do we have a ten-yard centre circle and a six-yard box? Why is cycling bigger on the Continent? Why a ‘Kop’? Why *do* teams score more goals at home than away? Why do we row in eights? Why are there four different swimming strokes? Why do we have extra time in football? Why are there indirect free kicks? Why hop, skip and jump? Why is it a ‘try’? Why a ‘fly half’? Why an ‘umpire’? Why do centre halves play at the back? Why are jockeys ‘warned off’? Why is the lbw rule so complicated? Why is tennis scored in such a strange way? Why a ‘popping’ crease? Why is a ‘bogey’ one over ‘par’? Why do wickets have three stumps? Why is football played in halves? Why do cue balls have a black dot? Why do bowling balls have a white circle? Why British racing *green*? Why are golf balls dimpled? Why do Arsenal play in white sleeves? Why do huntsmen wear red? Why do we go tenpin bowling with ‘ninepins’? Why do the Lions play in red and England in white? Why do royal jockeys wear purple? Why is a dartboard the way it is? Why is it called water ‘polo’?

Why a 'southpaw'? Why a 'derby match'? Why 'snooker'? Why is rowing so posh? Why 'Cosworth' Formula 1 engines? Why are players 'capped'? Why does the NFL play on Sundays? Why do we 'stake' money? Why a hat-trick? Why is table tennis called ping-pong?

It soon turns out that there is a reason for everything. Not all of these reasons are particularly good or logical ones, but even today tens or hundreds of years later, they still govern the sports we play and how we play them. Put them together and all these apparently 'useless' facts and stories begin to turn into something rather more useful – an explanation of how our modern world of sport has come about.

So how and why did it all happen? Find out here ...

A Few Words of Warning - and Thanks

THIS BOOK AIMS to explain how the modern world of sport has developed over the last 3,000 years. Obviously it does so at a pretty brisk pace. If it went into much detail, you'd have to carry it around in a wheelbarrow.

Its main focus is on the major sports - football, rugby, cricket, tennis, golf, athletics, horse racing, cycling and motor racing - most of which developed in Britain. This is not of course because the British were the first to kick a ball or race a horse, but because they were seized with a general enthusiasm for sports and rule-making at a time when they also happened to control the largest trading and manufacturing empire in history. This allowed them to spread their own sports, plus some of the others that they encountered on their travels. Even when new games like baseball or American football were developed, these were usually adaptations of - or reactions against - existing British sports. They are covered too, but sports that remain rooted in particular cultures didn't all make the cut. Sorry sumo fans.

These British origins are one reason why so many sports are a terrible tangle of yards and inches - or in the case of cricket, of nails, ell and perches. I have gone for a rather messy compromise which reflects current usage. This means metres rather than yards, but miles rather than kilometres. However, in Part Two (on sports rules) I have retained the original imperial measures, as it doesn't make

much sense to talk about a '5.49 metre' (six-yard) box. In other words, it's still a mess, but less than it used to be.

Tracing every single fact back to its origin would be a lifetime's work and not, I suspect, a particularly enjoyable one. Instead, I have looked for the most authoritative sources I could find, and when these sources disagree (which is quite a lot of the time) I've tried to tease out the facts. I hope that every falsehood has been detected and every myth exposed – but I doubt it.

Thanks go first to my wife, Lucy, who worked while I played, and then – in sequence – to Audrey Niven who got the ball rolling, Mark Stanton of Jenny Brown Associates and Juliet Brooke and Tristan Jones of Yellow Jersey.

Further thanks go to Dr Alan Salama who saved me from some acute medical errors, Kate and Martin Banister who tried to instil some logic into my classical spelling and to Jo and Melissa Mansfield Evans and Simon Entwistle who tried to save me from myself. Debra Godding and Martin Gamage provided media monitoring, gentle chivvy and books that I still haven't returned. Thanks also to Richard Speed and Scott Vickers-Willis for local knowledge, John Weston for advice and photography and Ian Simpson for cycling anecdotes. Finally a big thank-you to my sons Al and JJ who pressed buttons on my laptop and made a huge difference to the timing of the project.

Tim Harris
London, July 2007

1 The Field of Screams

Where sport is played

ANCIENT GREEK STADIA
THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS
ROMAN ARENAS
DARK AGE SPORTS
FORESTS, TILTYARDS AND BUTTS
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY TENNIS AND RACING
STUART GOLF AND RACECOURSES
NEWMARKET, ASCOT AND EPSOM
COUNTRY SPORTS
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET GROUNDS
ROWING, BOXING AND GOLF
NAPOLEONIC WAR GAMES
THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
THE RAILWAY AGE
EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY CRICKET
THE GREAT EXHIBITION
THE FIRST SWIMMING BATHS
COUNTY CRICKET GROUNDS
RUNNING TRACKS
VICTORIAN THEME PARKS
THE FIRST NATIONAL STADIUM
THE FIRST FOOTBALL FIELDS
RIOTS, RUSHES AND COLLAPSES
THE FIRST FLOODLIGHTS
BRITAIN'S FOOTBALLING MAP
CRICKET'S NEW TEST VENUES
THE TROUBLE WITH LAWN TENNIS
THE 'PARK' RACETRACKS
LATE-VICTORIAN POOLS

RINKS AND RESORTS
GOLF GOES GLOBAL
BICYCLE RACETRACKS
THE FIRST US BALLPARKS
THE FIRST FOOTBALL STADIA
THE FIRST MODERN OLYMPICS
INTERWAR US STADIA
ODSAL STADIUM
INTERWAR FOOTBALL AND RUGBY
Highbury
1930s FLOODLIGHTING
CRUSHES AND BLAZES
GREYHOUNDS AND SPEEDWAY
INTERWAR RACECOURSES
INTERWAR GOLF
1920-1936 OLYMPICS
THE FIRST WORLD CUPS
WARTIME STADIA
1948-1964 OLYMPICS
POSTWAR US BALLPARKS
AMERICA'S GOLF BOOM
POSTWAR BRITISH FOOTBALL
FOOTBALL'S FIRST MODERN STANDS
THE ASTRODOME
ARTIFICIAL V. NATURAL GRASS
1968-1984 OLYMPICS
IBROX
VALLEY PARADE
HILLSBOROUGH
THE ITALIA 90 STADIA
1990-1994 FOOTBALL STADIA
THE SIR ALFRED MCALPINE STADIUM
OLD TRAFFORD TO NEW WEMBLEY
SLIDING ROOFS, MOVING SEATS
1988-2000 OLYMPICS
POSTWAR WINTER OLYMPICS

ATHENS 2004

TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY STADIA

THE SPORTS STADIUM, the gymnasium, the racetrack, the swimming pool, the health club, the players' tunnel and quite possibly the bowling alley too – the ancient Greeks invented the lot. In fact by the third century BC virtually all that was left to create was the arena, and even that was based on two Greek theatres butted together. About the only bit of sports architecture they didn't invent was the ball court, the first examples of which, dating from around 1400 BC, have been discovered in Paso de la Amada in Mexico.

At the beginning of the archaic age of the Greeks, around 750 BC, the only sports fields were, quite simply, fields. Our best sources of information for this period are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were composed around this time, although they claim to describe much earlier events. In Homeric times trials of strength and speed were held on any convenient patch of grass – and sometimes on quite inconvenient patches too. (The *Iliad* mentions a foot race between Odysseus and Ajax the son of Oileus in which Ajax trips head first into a cowpat.) Race distances were based on an agreed number of paces and started from a scratch on the ground. Since there was no accurate timing – no clocks or watches in those days – exact distances could vary from place to place, and all that really mattered was winning. For centuries to come runners would continue to 'start from scratch'.

What began to change in eighth-century BC Greece was that more and more people started gathering to watch these sporting contests and began offering bigger prizes to attract the best athletes – which in turn attracted even larger crowds, until proper venues were needed. Then, as now, stadiums got built not because people wanted to play

sport, but because others wanted to watch them. At first these contests were held in temple precincts and city squares, so that an *agon*, meaning a meeting place, came to refer to a contest – eventually giving us the word agony. Once the city centres were filled to overflowing, contests moved on to purpose-built stadia, and *dromos* (running) started to mean a racetrack.

Although the first local games seem to have started among the richer Greeks of Asia Minor, the major competitions were all held on the Greek mainland. The first and most famous of these was staged at Olympia, located rather inconveniently in the backwoods of Elis, 120 miles west of Athens. The simplest explanation for this location is that the site was sacred to Zeus, king of the gods, and in case it slipped anyone's mind a 13-metre-high gold and ivory statue of him was later built in the temple there. However the true origins of both Olympia and its games are pretty obscure. The site itself was occupied at least as early as the third millennium BC and by the second there were already shrines in place honouring various nature gods and goddesses – perhaps the reason why the games were held after the summer solstice, once the crops were gathered in. During the Mycenaean age (1600–1200 BC) the goddess Rhea was worshipped here and the hill above the site was dedicated to Kronos, Rhea's baby-devouring husband and brother. Meanwhile the whole region was termed the Peloponnese in honour of the god-turned-hero Pelops; the Olympics were sometimes said to be his funeral games, held at the site of his tomb. Hera, another pre-Greek goddess, was also worshipped at Olympia, and separate Heraean races for unmarried women were held there as well as the men-only Olympics. In about 1200 BC the Dorians rocked up, bringing with them their god Zeus, who became the brother and husband of Hera and the son of Rhea and Kronos. Zeus was now said to have killed his father at this sacred spot, and if that wasn't enough