Foot Racing Image

Background to Hebrews 12

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History of Foot Racing

- Origin lost in antiquity
- Probably began (like most other ancient sports) as practice for warfare
Ancient Athletics

- Greece is our main source of information on the ancient period.
- After Alexander the Great, Greek culture spread through most of the Mediterranean world.
- This culture was continued (with some additions) by the Romans.
Ancient Athletic Meets

In ancient Greece, there were four main competitive meets, held for centuries every two or four years.

These were:

- Olympic Games
- Pythian Games
- Isthmian Games
- Nemean Games
Olympic Games

- Every four years, in August of the 1st year of the Olympiad
- At Olympia in the W Peloponnesus
- In honor of Zeus
- Prize an olive wreath
Olympic Games

- Originally only men were competitors; later boys & adolescents.

- Events:
  - Various Footraces
  - Discus
  - Javelin
  - Broad jump
  - Boxing
  - Wrestling
  - Pankration
  - Pentathlon
Pythian Games

- Every four years, in August of the 3rd Olympiad year
- At Delphi, 80 mi NW of Athens
- In honor of Apollo
- Prize a laurel wreath.
- Events similar to Olympics, plus musical competition
Isthmian Games

- Every two years, in Apr/May of 2nd & 4th Olympiad years
- At Corinth
- In honor of Poseidon
- Prize was dry celery wreath, later pine
- Not as prestigious as Olympics
Nemean Games

- Every two years, in July of 2nd & 4th Olympiad years
- At Nemea, 15 mi SW of Corinth
- In honor of Zeus
- Prize a wreath of fresh wild celery
Other Games

- By New Testament times, every major city in the Roman empire had games annually or at longer periods, with much less prestige than these four.
- Prizes were more valuable, but less prestigious.
- Athletics by this time had become dominated by professionals.
Ancient Footracing

Little information about non-Greek footracing
Various Footraces

- **Stadion or dromos**
  - The standard-length race, one length of the stadium, about 200 yards

- **Diaulous**
  - One turn at end of stadium, ~400 yds

- **Dolichos**
  - Various longer races, up to 3 miles (24 stades)

- **Hoplite**
  - Racing in full or partial armor, 2-15 stades
Stadium

- Long, narrow (200 x 30 yd) with stands all around
- Up to 20 runners ran side-by-side
- Turned at one or more posts at end, rather than having an oval track.

Delphi Stadium
Sources

- E. N. Gardiner, *Athletics of the Ancient World* (1930)
- [www.perseus.tufts.edu/Olympics](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/Olympics)
The End

Run so as to obtain the prize!