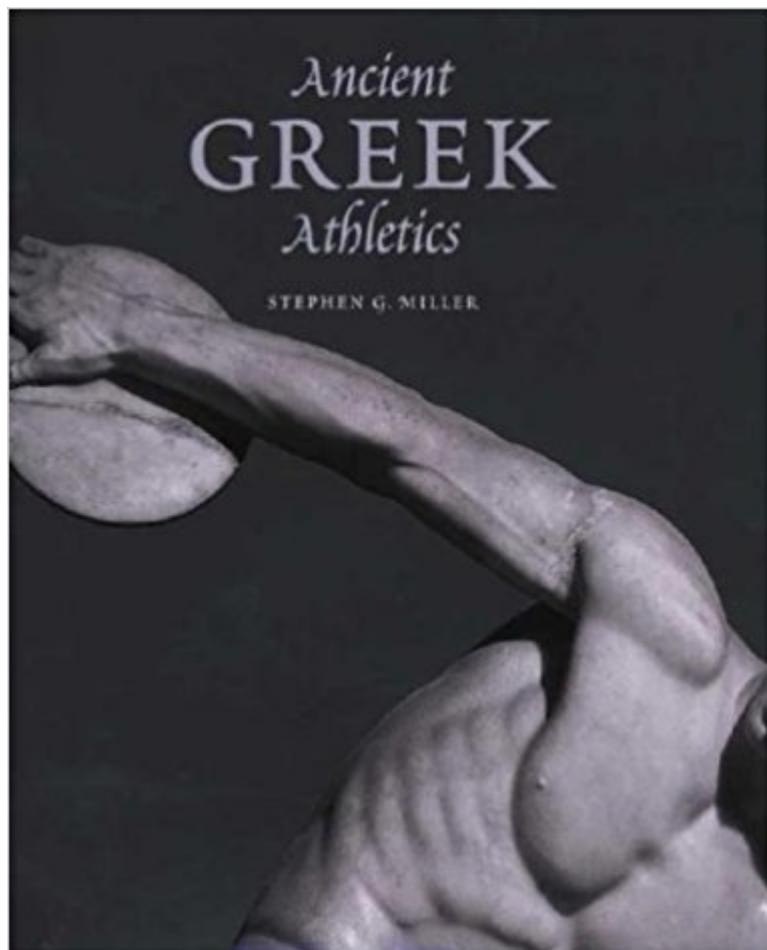


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# Ancient Greek Athletics



## Synopsis

A considerable number of academic and popular studies on ancient sports have been, and are due to be, published in this Athenian Olympic year (throwing the opening statement of this book into some doubt: 'Ancient Greek athletics as a field of study does not suffer from overpopulation') but this study stands out among the best. Miller draws on recent archaeological and historical discoveries to discuss in comprehensive detail all aspects of games and athletic competitions in ancient Greece. Throughout Miller places athletics in its social context because, as he argues, sport was one of the ways in which Greeks could aspire to their cultural ideal, to be civilised men.

Supported by numerous photographs, often in colour, and illustrations of sites and objects that depict competitions, the scholarly text describes in fascinating detail the origin of athletics, the Olympic Games and other festivals, the role of women in this male domain, the relationship between an athlete and a hero, Greek recreation, the gymnasium, sport as entertainment, professional athletes and the political side to competitions. Includes a glossary.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

As the Olympic Games open in the land where it all began, it is both fitting and delightful to sit down with this beautiful, informative book. Miller, an archaeologist and professor of classics at the University of California at Berkeley, brings the ancient Greek athletic festivals to life by reconstructing the scene at one of the Panhellenic games and explores broader themes such as the integral role they played in society and politics. For almost 12 centuries, beginning in 776 B.C. at Olympia in the Peloponnese (not at Mount Olympus, as one often hears), the games were so

popular that nothing was allowed to stand in the way; even battles were temporarily halted in deference to the athletic competition. Olympia was the site of only one of four major contests; the others were at Delphi, Isthmia and Nemea. The closest visual link to the classic athletic festivals comes from paintings on amphoras, huge vessels that held as much as 39 liters of olive oil. These were offered as prizes at the games; one side depicted the event for which the prize was given. Modern fans would find other striking differences between today's contests and the original games: There were no second-place prizes--you won or you lost. There were no team sports. Fouls were punished by flogging. Athletes performed nude. By the fourth century A.D., with the spread of Christianity and the waning of belief in the Greek gods, the games "ceased completely to play any meaningful role in society." They were revived in something resembling their modern form in 1896.

Editors of Scientific American

This exhaustive survey by a Berkeley archeologist covers not only the Olympic Games but the related festivals at Delphi, Isthmia, and Nemea (where Miller is in charge of excavations), and uses evidence from vase painting, statuary, and the remains of ancient stadiums to elucidate such details as halteres (special weights used by long jumpers) and the hysplex, a complicated gate intended to prevent false starts. By our standards, many of the events were brutal; an unfortunate boxer named Kreugas had his intestines ripped out in a bout at Nemea. But Miller identifies a specifically Greek ideal in the fact that the athletes, regardless of social standing, competed on equal footing and would even submit to flogging if they fouled. This is a far cry from the behavior of the Roman Emperor Nero, who breezed through Greece in A.D. 67, winning some eleven hundred events; at Olympia, he fell out of his chariot and failed to finish the race but was still awarded the victory crown. Copyright © 2005 The New Yorker

Scholarly and insightful with details about the four Panhellenic games, athletics in general. The average reader will add dimensions to understanding modern Olympic games. The scholar gains insights into the culture, politics and economics of the ancient games; and the significance of the crownings, the "stephanitic cycle" at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and Isthmia.

Item came in great condition! It is a required book for a college course. It has already proved useful for looking up locations on maps and definitions of class terminology.

very satisfied with this item arrived on time condition was good as it was described on the

description. happy with the book. would recommend it to anyone

This book is quite behind the times of what is acceptable to most readers, contemporaneously in 2014. However, it does provide a lot of original research and provides the reader a better understanding of the Olympic Ideal as it was first instituted. Is a great text for serious students of athletics and their history. Would help anyone who wants to formulate an, "athletic policy."

Everybody knows that the Olympics started in ancient Greece over 2,000 years ago, but nobody seems to know much about those games. Well, the author of this book really knows his stuff. He gives lots of detailed information, and answers lots of questions that you never thought to ask. My personal interest in the subject was not so much about the sports aspect of the ancient games, but more about how those competitions illuminated the Bible's use of athletic metaphors. The Apostle Paul used a number of them. I have gotten some insight on the metaphors, but I've also been drawn in to the workings of the games, the contestants, the officials, and, of course, the games themselves. The author uses many Greek words in his writing, but explains each one when it is first used. (I wish I could remember them all). Having some knowledge of the Greek language is not necessary, but will make some things easier to follow. The book is lavishly illustrated with dozens of pictures of Greek vases and inscriptions that depict the ancient athletes performing in their events - most of the time, completely naked. Modern readers (especially men) will find it surprising, I suppose, that for most events, this was exactly how it was done (I guess that motivated them to run really fast). And the gymnasium was the place where they practiced and performed naked. And that is the meaning of the Greek word, *gymnos*. I think this book will set the standard for information on the ancient Greek games. I highly recommend it.

I bought this book for college and it arrived on time with minimal wear and tear. I recommend this for other students.

Perfect and on time

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