Lost in the Vault?: Demonstration Sports at the Winter Olympics and How Digital Media Can Bring Them ‘Back to the Future’

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Abstract
Compared to the Summer Games, the Winter Olympics hold a relatively limited sporting appeal, yet their importance and capacity to capture the public and media attention remain undisputable. For many years, in addition to events on the official programme, Olympic Games Organising Committees (OCOGs) have advanced demonstration sports, some of which then dissipated from the landscape while others moved to full medal status, including curling, ice dancing and short track speed skating. Followed by the decision in 1989 by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to eliminate demonstration sports, these events made their last appearance at Albertville 1992. Nevertheless, other demonstration sports –military patrol, skijöring, dogsled racing, ice stock sport, winter pentathlon, bandy, speed skiing and ski ballet–occupy distinct realms of Olympic history, informing the history of the Olympic movement by what did or did not advance into mainstream competition. Resources and footage housed in the IOC historical archives focusing on demonstration sports at the Winter Games can be brought ‘from the vault’, via the Olympic Channel and its social media handles, to broaden citizens’ appreciation of the cultural significance of demonstration sports at the Winter Games and understanding of the Olympics in the process.

Keywords: Demonstration sports, Winter Olympics, digital media, Olympic Channel, history.
Since the first Winter Olympics in 1924, the Games have experienced substantial and exponential growth. Still dubbed the ‘second cousin of the Olympic family’ with a ‘relatively limited sporting appeal’ in comparison to the Summer Games, their importance and capacity to capture the public and media attention remain indisputable in large segments of the sporting world. The escalating process of mediatization – from press to radio, television and the Internet – has boosted the visibility of the Winter Games over the past decades. More recently, ‘the social media reach across all continents has further enabled the Winter Olympics, claiming a position as a global sporting mega-event’.

The Winter Olympics programme has been dominated by high-profile sports, which amass large popularity and media exposure around the world. Those include Alpine skiing, figure skating, speed skating, hockey, ski jumping, and snowboarding. Those competitions have provided pinnacle moments in the history of sport, including the 1980 ‘Miracle on Ice’, when, in the midst of Cold War tensions, the US hockey team improbably defeated the USSR. Apart from those major sports, other disciplines are part of the current Winter Olympics line-up. The PyeongChang 2018 Olympics featured a record 102 events from seven different sporting disciplines – biathlon, bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, luge, skating and skiing – offering audiences a genuine opportunity to engage with a diverse range of practices. Nevertheless, many sports that once were part of the Winter Games have faded from public consciousness. Most started as demonstration sports, designed as test or trial runs to determine whether niche sports could become popular enough to become regular Olympic fixtures.

While scholarly attention on the Summer Olympics demonstration sports such as Basque pelota or roller hockey has been scarce, research on winter demonstration sports that never made it to the official Olympic programme is even scarcer. Arguably, demonstration sports lie at the ‘sporting periphery’, therefore, more attention should be devoted to this rather unexplored domain within the Olympic Studies research field. The characteristics and the evolution of demonstration sports at the Winter Games reveals their position within Olympic history and determines the distinctive role that IOC digital platforms can have in giving these sporting practices broader visibility.

Sources used in constructing the history of demonstration sport inclusion on the Olympic programme include materials contained in the IOC historical archives hosted by the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) in Lausanne, Switzerland, the OSC Olympic World Library and the LA84 Foundation Digital Library. IOC documents, including
programmes and general rules of the games, press articles and scrapbooks, and correspondence between the IOC, National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs) that address the demonstration sports, along with media coverage of demonstration sports, demonstrate the characteristics and evolution of those sports within the Olympic competitions, the involvement of athletes in those disciplines, and the factors predating their inclusion and withdrawal. The IOC could therefore further showcase and reinvigorate the presence of some of those demonstration disciplines through its multiple viewing portals.11

These crucial (yet often forgotten) moments in Winter Olympic history provide information about a period in which IOC rules and regulations allowed the inclusion of traditional or popular sporting practices tied to host countries, a situation which contrasts with the escalating globalization and commercialization of this mega-event and the fairly restrictive criteria that currently dictate which sports can be integrated into the Olympic programme. In the age of media portals, the Olympic Channel and its social media handles can be ideal vehicles for bringing ‘from the vault’ footage from those demonstration sports back to life, broadening citizens’ understanding of the Olympics in the process. Through their flexibility and accessibility, the IOC’s media platforms can also promote emerging sports to be known and garner wider popularity.

**Demonstration sports at the Olympics**

For many years, in addition to events on the official programme, Olympic Games Organising Committees (OCOGs) had the chance to include demonstration sports in order to ‘increase awareness of non-Olympic sports popular in the host country’.12 In 1924, rule 6 of the Olympic Charter first established that OCOGs could incorporate two demonstration sports into the Games (one national sport and one sport foreign to the host country).13 Six years later, a specific stipulation regarding the Winter Olympics was added into the 1930 Olympic Charter (Rule 7: ‘Winter Sports not governed by an International Federation can only be included in the Winter Games under the title of Demonstrations’).14 Those rules and regulations remained stable until 1971, when demonstration sports were cut out of the Olympic programme.15 After the 84th IOC Session held in Baden-Baden (1981), demonstration sports were reintroduced into the 1982 Charter: ‘the OCOG, with the approval of the IOC, may choose not more than two sports from the recognised sports as demonstrations during the period of the Games in
accordance with the bye-laws’. Following a the IOC’s decision in 1989 to once again eliminate demonstration sports on the basis that the summer and winter programmes were too crowded for any additional events, they made their last appearance at Barcelona 1992 and Albertville 1992. The decision ‘left the door open for one more appearance at the Winter Games in 1994’, but the ‘OCOG of the XVII Olympic Winter Games Lillehammer 1994 decided not to include any’. The IOC thus supported the inclusion of demonstration sports on the Olympic programmes between 1924-1971 and 1982-1994, yet demonstration events were not scheduled or contested consistently or at each Games taking place within these periods of eligibility.

Demonstration sports were considered ‘important symbols of the sporting traditions’ of nations that nonetheless did not ‘meet the strict admission criteria which state that a gold, silver, and bronze medal sport must be played worldwide and by a great many athletes’. Demonstration sports provided an ‘element of freshness each time the Games occurred’. In the early editions of the Modern Games, many summer-oriented sports were demonstrated, including balloon flying, canon shooting and hang gliding (Paris 1900), baseball, basketball, football and hurling (St. Louis 1904), or baseball, glima, and Gotlandic sport (Stockholm 1912). Many other sports ‘closely tied to place and locality’ have been featured in the Summer Games, including American football (Los Angeles 1932), lacrosse (Amsterdam 1928, Los Angeles 1932, and London 1948), Australian football (Melbourne 1956), and roller hockey, taekwondo and Basque pelota / Jai-alai (Barcelona 1992). The latter had already been featured in Paris 1924 and Mexico 1968. Some of those demonstration sports at the Summer Olympics later made it to the full medal status, including beach volleyball, becoming a part of the official Olympic programme in Atlanta 1996 and taekwondo, becoming a part of the official Olympic programme in Sydney 2000.

At the Winter Olympics, demonstration sports were included for the first time in St. Moritz 1928, where military patrol and skijöring were incorporated into the line-up. Over time, some of those demonstration sports (e.g., curling, ice dancing and short track speed skating) were accepted as part of the official Olympic programme. Curling originated in Scotland in the sixteenth century, later expanding due to immigration flows in the nineteenth century to other territories, such as the US and Canada. Athletes competed in curling in Chamonix 1924, and the sport was scheduled as a demonstration event in Lake Placid 1932, Calgary 1988 and Albertville 1992. It was re-introduced in the Olympic programme in Nagano 1998, following the decision taken at the 99th IOC
Session, held in Barcelona in July 1992. Speed skating for women was demonstrated in Lake Placid 1932 and, 28 years later, was included on the official programme. Ice dancing –also known as rhythmic skating– was introduced in Grenoble 1968, becoming a medal sport in Innsbruck 1976, following its acceptance in the 74th IOC Session (Varna, October 1973). Short track speed skating was added as a demonstration in Calgary 1988 and later rose to full medal status.

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Table 1. Demonstration sports at the Winter Olympics. Source: Authors’ own elaboration with data from the Olympic Studies Centre (2017) and the IOC website (https://www.olympic.org). Note: Inclusion refers to the edition of the Olympics in which those sports were included in the official programme. The recognised federation column presents if sports are governed by federations recognised by the IOC.

Nevertheless, other sports –military patrol, skijöring, dogsled racing, ice stock sport, winter pentathlon, bandy or more recently, speed skiing and ski ballet–, were short-lived and never returned to the Olympic spotlight. However, that does not diminish their cultural value and historical significance to the Olympic movement. Demonstration sports are of heightened importance because they provide ‘worthwhile insights into the
development of the Games and the overall philosophy that underpins them’. Particularly, they inform us about a period in which IOC rules and regulations allowed the inclusion of sporting manifestations tied to locality, a situation which contrasts with the increasing globalization and commercialization of this mega-event. By lending space to traditional or popular sports within host countries, both the IOC and OCOGs played an important role in fostering core values of Olympism such as diversity and inclusiveness.

**Demonstration sports that never made it to the Winter Olympic programme: an overview**

Eight demonstrations sports that did not move to full medal status share several characteristics and evolution. The first six –skijöring, military ski patrol, sled-dog racing, ice-stock sport, winter pentathlon, and bandy– were displayed at least once between the 1928 and 1964 editions of the Games. The last two –freestyle skiing (ballet) and speed skiing– were exhibited in Calgary 1988 and Albertville 1992, which makes them the last two events that IOC regulations allowed OCOGs to include demonstration sports.

Following the introduction of demonstration sports into the 1924 Olympic Charter, skijöring and military patrol were incorporated into the St. Moritz 1928 Winter Games. Skijöring (spelled *skijöring* or *skikjöring* in Norwegian and meaning ‘sky driving’) is a sport with Scandinavian roots. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was originally used by Scandinavian military ‘for carrying dispatches in snowy conditions [...] Soon, however, it was enjoyed as a sport, not just behind horses but also reindeer and various other animals, behind motorcycles, cars, and in the 1920s, even behind airplanes’. Skijöring was part of the Nordic Games programme in 1901, 1905, and 1909; Pierre de Coubertin was enthusiastic about its potential. As Arnd Krüger highlights, ‘as his favourite sport was fencing on horseback, it is understandable that he was most thrilled by skikjöring, being pulled by a horse on skis’. In the 24th IOC Session held in Prague in 1925, it was decided that skijöring would be included in St. Moritz 1928, where it would make its one-time appearance at the Winter Olympics. Held on ‘the frozen surface of the lake, men on skis grasped the reins and tried to stay upright while pulled along behind galloping horses, racing around icy track, for a demonstration event that proved popular with the spectators’. The rise of Alpine skiing brought the decline of skijöring. Despite waning participation, skijöring behind dogs is still popular nowadays in Scandinavia and far beyond. For instance, there are ‘skijöring spots in New
England, New York, California, and throughout the upper Midwest. There is also a skijöring class in the International Federation of Sleddog Sports (IFSS) competitions. The popularity of skijöring pulled by horses is growing in the US and Canada, where it has been described as ‘a spectacle, an unlikely marriage of skiers and cowboys’. In 2018, the governing body of the sport in America, Skijoring America, ‘helped stage events in Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah and Wisconsin – and every year they’re adding more participants and more events’.

For its own part, military patrol offered spectators a ‘cross-country ski race of 25 to 30 kilometres for squads of 4 men in full military equipment, who are allowed to help each other, time being taken only when the last man of the squad crosses the finish line’. During the course, participants stopped ‘periodically to shoot at targets’. Military patrol made its first Olympic appearance in Chamonix 1924, where it was considered on equal terms with the other competitions in the programme. Five countries entered the contest: Finland, France, Italy, Poland and Switzerland. Following the meeting of the IOC Executive Committee held in Brussels on January 5, 1927, military patrol was offered in St. Moritz 1928 as a demonstration sport. Its inclusion, though, was not without opposition. On January 12, 1927, Vice-Chair of the Council of The British Olympic Association, Brig.-Gen. R.J. Kentish, wrote a two-page letter to Count Henry de Baillet-Latour, objecting to the inclusion of military ski race as a demonstration sport. As Kentish stated:

I conclude this letter by saying that far from encouraging military competition or anything that has to do with the armies of the different nations, which are affiliated to the International Olympic Committee, we ought to do all in our power to discourage such competitions and keep our movement absolutely outside of and apart from anything of a militaristic or warlike nature.

Despite opposition of this nature, military patrol was featured as a demonstration sport in Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936 and St. Moritz 1948. In a context of ‘strong post-war antimilitary feelings’, in the IOC 45th Session held in Copenhagen in 1950, the majority of the members voted in favour of eliminating military patrols from the Games. Later on, the event was reconfigured in the form of biathlon, making its first appearance in the 1960 Squaw Valley Winter Olympics held in California, which remains on the programme today.
Four years after St. Moritz 1928, the 1932 Games celebrated in Lake Placid, New York, became an opportunity to showcase dogsled racing, a sport typical of the American North.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly to peoples from other polar regions, such as Central Siberia, the Inuit had used sled dogs for centuries as a method of transportation.\textsuperscript{45} The importance of dogsledding in the Inuit culture facilitated its development as a sport during the nineteenth century both in Alaska and the Northwest Territories in Canada.\textsuperscript{46} As a demonstration event, it became one of the biggest attractions of the 1932 Winter Olympics. Its choice did not come as a surprise, given that annual dog derbies had long been held at Lake Placid, ‘drawing the most famous teams and drivers from all parts of the continent’.\textsuperscript{47} The race was ‘run over 40.5 km (25.1 miles), lasting two days’.\textsuperscript{48} However, just twelve competitors from only two nations – Canada and the United States– took part in the event, which was developed under the rules of the New England Sled Dog Club. Émile St. Goddard, from Manitoba, Canada, won the competition, followed by Leonhard Seppala (US) and Shorty Russick (Canada). According to the 1932 American Olympic Committee Report, as it happened with the participants from other demonstration sports –women’s speed skating and curling– competitors had to finance ‘their own traveling, housing, clothing and equipment expenses’.\textsuperscript{49}

Despite its popularity in the aforementioned countries –which later resonated across other Scandinavian territories such as Norway–\textsuperscript{50}, dogsled racing never made it back to the Olympic spotlight. Thomas Settler, representative of The International Sledge Dog Racing Association (ISDRA) put in a request to the IOC to include the sport at the Calgary 1988 Winter Games.\textsuperscript{51} However, the request was not granted. Rule 57 of the 1983 Olympic Charter (Olympic recognition) stated that ‘the IOC can give recognition to International Federations, provide the sport they govern complies with the criteria valid for Olympic sports and the following standards: 25 countries and three continents for summer sports; 20 countries and three continents for winter sports’.\textsuperscript{52} Dogsled racing did not meet the aforementioned criteria to be considered a recognized sport. In addition, Rule 48 (Demonstration sports) stipulated that ‘the OCOG, with the approval of the IOC, may choose not more than two sports from the recognised sports as demonstration during the period of the Games in accordance with bye-laws’.\textsuperscript{53}

Following the experiences of skijöring, military patrol and sled-dog racing, ice stock sport, also known as Bavarian or German curling (\textit{Eisstockschießen}) was contested at Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936. The sport, dubbed as ‘a close cousin of curling and pétanque’\textsuperscript{54} uses ice stocks instead of curling stones.\textsuperscript{55} In 1936, competitions were held
on Lake Rießersee and proved successful in attendance. There were ‘men’s international team and individual events (target shooting and distance shooting), and a national competition for men and women and also involving team and individual events’. Austrian competitors dominated in the majority of competitions. *Eisstockschießen* became again a demonstration sport in Innsbruck 1964. In the 1980s, the International Federation of *Eisstockschiessen* sent the IOC Sports Department information on the federation to request IOC recognition, as can be ascertained in a letter sent by Mr. Edelbert List on June 1, 1986. Benhard Schneider answered him on June 18, 1986 that they would need more detailed information and a minimum number of 25-member countries for *eisstockschiessen* to be recognized. While the sport has been played for centuries in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, it is nowadays practiced around the world. In 2018, the International Ice Stock Sport Federation (IFI) was granted provisional IOC recognition. This represents a significant step, since IFI is now ‘able to receive funding from the IOC and can apply for development programmes’. After a two-year probation period, permanent recognition must be granted by the IOC Session. Achieving full recognition, however, does not translate into the sport coming back to the Olympic competitions.

Due to the Second World War, the 1940 and 1944 editions of the Winter Olympics were cancelled. After being accepted in the 40th IOC Session (Lausanne, September 1946), an atypical demonstration sport was added to the 1948 St. Moritz Olympics: winter pentathlon. It included five different sub-events: fencing, shooting and riding –also present in the Summer Olympics pentathlon– along with cross-country and alpine downhill skiing –which substituted swimming and running. Winter pentathlon originated during the late 1930s and early 1940s in Sweden and Switzerland, where the sport was embraced and developed by their respective armies. During five days (one day per sub-event), 14 participants from Sweden, Great Britain, Switzerland and Finland took part in the competition, won by the Swede Gustav Lindh. According to the Union Internationale de Pentathlon et Biathlon Moderne (UIPMB), the IOC was not satisfied with the particular combination of sports, which ‘seemed to offer the most intriguing spectacle’. In addition, a series of unfortunate incidents shaded the sporting action. Along with three serious injuries that occurred during the alpine skiing competition, in the shooting event Swede Bertil Haase unintentionally discharged his gun and hit the leg of a Swiss policeman who was providing service on the shooting range. Ultimately, the criticisms related to the scant number of participants, all of whom had military
background, the high costs associated with the organization of the horse-riding and shooting events and the ‘lack of tradition and attraction finally led to its cancellation’. The decision to discontinue the event was taken by IOC members at the 44th IOC Session (Rome, April 1949). The minutes of this discussion briefly state that ‘in the light of the experiences made in St. Moritz, it is decided to abandon this competition definitively’.

A year later, in the 45th IOC Session (Copenhagen, May 1950), IOC members voted to include bandy in the next instalment of the Winter Olympics. Bandy is considered to be ‘hockey’s ancestor’, consisting of a ‘11-a-side game similar to ice hockey but played on a large ice rink similar to a football pitch’. In contrast to hockey, it is not played with a puck but with a field-hockey-like ball. The sport ‘may have originated in England, circa 1790, mainly in the low-lying districts of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire’. The game later developed in Great Britain and in North America. Afterwards, it was adopted in Sweden, where ‘the game was well suited to the country’s long, frozen winters and its still largely rural economy’. The appearance of bandy in all seven editions of the Nordic Games held in Stockholm (1901–1926) boosted its popularity. The sport also expanded to Russia and other European countries such as Finland, Norway, Austria, Hungary, Germany and Switzerland. The Oslo 1952 Winter Games were the first to be celebrated in a Scandinavian country and therefore, ‘it seemed quite natural to include this old Scandinavian ice-game as a demonstration sport. Norway, Finland and Sweden took part in the tournament. After a three-way tie, Sweden became the winner with 5 goals for and 2 goals against. Despite enjoying the Olympic spotlight in Norway, bandy became overshadowed by ice hockey. As Stephen Hardy and Andrew C. Holman point out in Hockey: A Global History, ‘we can speculate about what would have happened had Europe’s many national bandy associations formed an international federation (not done until 1955) and successfully lobbied the IOC before the LIHG [Ligue International de Hockey sur Glace] did’.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the International Bandy Federation (IBF) tried re-establish bandy on the Olympic map. On May 4, 1977, V. Kotochkin, IBF’s Secretary General sent the IOC information about the activities of the federation and the growing interest in bandy in the US. The letter was accompanied by the article ‘Russian athletes break the ice with new game’ published by the Minneapolis Tribune on March 10, 1977. Attempts to include bandy in Sarajevo 1984 as an exhibition sport were futile. On September 29, 1981, Drago Bozja (Sports Director of the Sarajevo OCOCG) informed IBF’s Secretary General Steffan Söderlund that Sarajevo lacked a bandy playground and
that indoor halls were fully scheduled.\textsuperscript{79} In 1982, Juan Antonio Samaranch informed IBF’s president Mr. Pontus Widen that ‘the programme of those Games had already been decided’.\textsuperscript{80} Eventually, in the IOC’s 116\textsuperscript{th} session (Athens, August 10-12, 2004), the Federation of International Bandy (FIB) was granted recognition, pursuant to rule 29 of the Olympic Charter.\textsuperscript{81} Despite gaining full acceptance as a recognized sport, bandy has not yet been included in the Winter Olympics programme.

The FIB was not the only federation seeking inclusion on the Winter Olympic programme at this time. After the introduction of ice dancing in Grenoble 1968, demonstration sports experienced a decade-long hiatus after being eliminated by the IOC in 1971 only to then be re-established in 1981 due to ‘expressions of OCOG interest in staging demonstration events again’.\textsuperscript{82} According to correspondence available in the IOC Archives, in the 1980s different federations approached the IOC to have their sports demonstrated in Calgary 1988. Among them, request letters were sent by the International Orienteering [a group of sports utilizing navigational skills and topography] Federation (IOF) in 1983 \textsuperscript{83} and the International Federation of Barrel Jumping in 1987.\textsuperscript{84} Nevertheless, it was freestyle skiing that would rise as a demonstration sport in this new era. Three modalities of freestyle skiing – moguls, aerials and ski ballet – debuted in Calgary 1988. The first two were included on the official programmes in Albertville 1992 and Lillehammer 1994, respectively,\textsuperscript{85} with the latter being eliminated by 2000.

In ski ballet, also known as acroski, ‘the skier intersperses balletic dance steps with jumps, spins and flips in a two-minute-and-15 second routine performed to music on a 282-yard-long stretch of slope’.\textsuperscript{86} After fighting their ostentatious reputation for many years,\textsuperscript{87} in Calgary freestylers got their chance to shine in the Olympic spotlight. Moguls and aerials proved popular, but ski ballet failed to capture audiences’ attention. As Jeff Chumas, director of the US freestyle ski programme between 1985 and 1995, recalls: ‘It didn’t do well with TV ratings, it didn’t do well with respect to how it was viewed and reviewed. Which is not to say that there wasn’t some great ballet skiing that happened’.\textsuperscript{88} After the 1992 Winter Olympics, marked by the triumphs of Fabrice Becker and Conny Kissing,\textsuperscript{89} the popularity of ski ballet declined as ‘interest grew in the more astoundingly acrobatic events’.\textsuperscript{90} The last FIS World Championship of Acro was held in 1999. Almost completely ‘lost in the vault,’ ski ballet regained exposure in February 2018, when The Guardian posted a short video on Twitter with the caption ‘Bring back ski ballet – a tribute to the lost winter discipline’.\textsuperscript{91} The video went viral and captured the attention from international media outlets, including the National Post.\textsuperscript{92}
Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC). As former US ski ballet Olympian Suzy Chaffee would state in CBC, ‘ski ballet is dancing down the mountains, embracing the mountains, poetry on skis’.

In the Olympiad following ski ballet’s debut in Calgary, speed skiing became the last sport to be demonstrated at the Winter Olympics. When its inclusion in Albertville 1992 was being discussed, a controversy arose between the International Ski Federation (FIS) and the Fédération International de Ski de Vitesse (FISV), which purported to be in charge of the event. On June 23, 1987, FISV’s executive director, Leif Nelson, wrote a letter to Walther Tröger, IOC sports director, asking what steps they should take between that moment and 1992. On July 24, 1987, Walther Tröger sent a copy of that letter to Mr. Gian Franco Kasper, FIS Secretary-General, to have his opinion on the request. Kasper answered vehemently on August 6, 1987:

A so-called “Fédération Internationale de Ski de Vitesse”, which you mention in your letter tries since approximately one year to organize semi-professional speed skiing competitions outside of the influence of the National Ski Associations and the International Federation. Should speed skiing really become a demonstration event in 1992, we believe that FIS should be responsible and not a private group. The FIS prevailed and organized speed skiing events at the 1992 Winter Games. Equipped with ‘skin-tight ski suits, aerodynamic helmets and calf-mounted ailerons’ speed skiers achieved stratospheric records in Albertville. In the men’s competition, the French skier Michael Prufer set a world record of 229.299 km/h. At Les Arcs, Finnish Tarja Mulari also broke the women’s record with a speed of 219.245 km/h. This spectacular but dangerous event was marked by the accidental death of Swiss skier Nicholas Bochatay, who collided ‘with a course-laying caterpillar tractor while training shortly before the final’. He had qualified ‘as 13th fastest among the men, at 130 miles an hour’. After Albertville 1992, speed skiing competitions run by FIS continued. The sport differs from other snow events that ‘give the athletes opportunities to navigate turns, land jumps, or perform tricks—to demonstrate flair and athletic ability’. Therefore, despite continually attracting global coverage, speed skiing is considered to be a ‘tough sell as a spectator sport’.

Beyond high-profile sports and other major disciplines that constitute the Winter Olympics line-up, eight demonstration sports showcased between 1928 and 1992 were never accepted as part of the official Olympic programme. The sports under consideration share some remarkable similarities: they were introduced as tests; they were chosen by
OCOGs because of their popularity and/or tradition in their host countries and regions; events were typically entered by a reduced number of countries; and medals were not included in the official counts. Some of the demonstration events – such as skijöring, ice stock sport and bandy – proved popular with the spectators. Others, such as winter pentathlon, did not attract much attention. In certain cases, such as with speed skiing, unfortunate circumstances play an important role in understanding the lack of continuity. Notably, the IOC position towards demonstration sports shifted throughout the years. After a long period of stability in which demonstration sports were allowed in the Games (1924-1971), they were eliminated and then brought back a decade later. The second era of demonstration sports was short-lived, as they made their last appearance at Barcelona 1992 and Albertville 1992. The concern over the increasing growth of the Olympics was the reason underpinning both withdrawals.

Currently, the Bye-law to Rule 45 of the Olympic Charter states that the sports which may be included in the Winter Games are ‘the sports, governed by the following IFs, which are currently included in the programme, namely: International Biathlon Union (IBU); International Bobsleigh and Skeleton Federation (IBSF); World Curling Federation (WCF); International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF); International Luge Federation (FIL); International Skating Union (ISU); International Ski Federation (FIS)’. Events organized by these federations can only be complemented by ‘other sports governed by other IFs recognised by the IOC’. In the selection of those sports, the IOC places emphasis on key criteria, such as their appeal to youth, commercial and media interest, business model, sponsors, and television rights. This fairly restrictive approach limits the opportunities for some of the examined sports – including those governed by recognized IFs (bandy and eisstockschießen) – to come back to the Olympic spotlight. It also offers little room for the future inclusion of new sports as well, thus undermining core values of the Olympic movement such as diversity and inclusiveness. Yet, by employing the Olympic Channel and its social media handles, the IOC can draw attention to the diverse range of sporting manifestations that have been part of the Olympic history and contribute to preserving their legacy. According to the Bye-law to Rule 48 of the Olympic Charter, ‘it is an objective of the Olympic Movement that, through its contents, the media coverage of the Olympic Games should spread and promote the principles and values of Olympism’. By informing the public about ‘Olympic History, Olympic Culture and Olympic Values’, the Olympic Channel can become a genuine platform to advance the goals of the Olympic Agenda 2020.
Olympic Channel: ‘Where the Games Never End’

In the current cluttered and dynamic media landscape, ‘the growth of over-the-top (OTT) Internet and mobile video streaming services is a major development in the distribution, transmission and consumption of global media sport’. The Olympic Channel, established in 2016, is a prominent example of media portal that ‘takes advantage of the multiple technological advances that have tremendously altered the sports-media nexus to maximize users’ opportunities to access a broader range of Olympic-themed content’.

The Olympic Channel is a digital-first, multi-platform site established by the IOC to keep the Olympic spirit alive throughout each year and to promote the Olympic Movement throughout the world. Following the 2016 Rio closing ceremony, the Olympic Channel was launched on August 21, 2016. As a free digital destination, the Olympic Channel provides a global audience with IOC’s historical footage, live sports events, original series and shows, and news pertaining to sports and athletes, enabling fans to experience the Olympics year-round, especially during the two-year gaps between the Games. Moreover, the Olympic Channel is designed as a multi-platform site with smart devices in mind, such that a global audience could access the Channel via mobile apps (for both IOS and Android) and at olympicchannel.com. The Olympic Channel also highly encourages fans to follow and share content on its social media handles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. As of November 2019, the Olympic Channel has more than 3.3 million followers on Facebook, has received more than 3 million “likes” on YouTube, has 3.9 million followers, and has posted 7,648 videos since it was launched following the 2016 Rio Olympics.

As Hutchins, Li and Rowe argue, ‘the expansive territoriality of portals offers the possibility for semi-professional, non-traditional and/or marginalised sports to attract niche audiences in a wide range of locations’. The establishment of the Olympic Channel provides winter demonstration sports, especially those not being included as official Olympic disciplines, a chance to re-experience the Olympic spotlight. According to the Commission, the Olympic Channel aims to ‘appeal to a target audience of 14-30-year olds’. Considering that the first Winter Olympic demonstration sport—skijöring—made its debut at St. Moritz 1928, and the most-recent winter Olympic demonstration sport—speed skiing—appeared at Albertville 1992, the target audience of
the Olympic Channel rarely have chances to watch, know, and understand these ‘disappeared’ winter demonstration sports in the broadcasting of the Olympic Games on TV. As the IOC’s official media platform, the Olympic Channel serves to ‘provide a platform for sharing the IOC’s very rich patrimonial assets and archives [historical footage/materials] with the world and create additional value and content for the IOC archives’.\(^{114}\)

Although some demonstration sports did not become official Olympic disciplines, the IOC still has the archives recording the related competitions of these demonstration sports. Through mobile apps, websites, and social media, the Olympic Channel offers these sports an opportunity to come back to the Olympic audience, especially to a global, young generation.

According to the Olympic Channel Commission, the Olympic Channel not only serves to share IOC’s historical archives, but also to provide key stakeholders of the Olympic Movement — such as International Sports Federations (IFs) that are responsible for the integrity of their sports on the international level — a forum for content promotion.\(^{115}\) As the IOC’s official media platform, the Olympic Channel is granted unparalleled advantages in collaborating with the IOC’s associated federations and organizations. For instance, by May 2019 the Olympic Channel has reached cooperation agreements with 84 global platform federation partners, including IFs, multi-sport organizers, recognized federations and organizations, and non-recognized federations.\(^{116}\) In other words, the Olympic Channel does not only collaborate with sports federations/organizations responsible for Olympic sports, but also non-Olympic sports. Although the two-week Olympic Games have to focus on official Olympic sports, the Olympic Channel has the agency (and, indeed, content need) to cover a wider range of competitions, including both Olympic and non-Olympic sports. In this case, beyond presenting the historical archives of Olympic competitions pertaining to the ‘disappeared’ winter demonstration sports, the Olympic Channel could also cooperate with the related IFs to bring the live events back to the Olympic spotlight, such as the 1952 demonstration sport of bandy.

Although the sport was not included as an official Olympic discipline afterward, the International Bandy Federation (IBF) was recognized by the IOC in 2004. After the Olympic Channel was established, IBF and the Channel reached an agreement on March 1\(^{st}\), 2017, for content collaboration,\(^{117}\) paving a path for bandy’s return to the Olympic spotlight. At the Krasnoyarsk 2019 Winter Universiade, recognized as the largest winter
university multisport competition in the world, the Olympic Channel presented more than 100 hours of live streaming coverage of the Games to a global audience, including the live competitions of bandy,\textsuperscript{118} which was the first time that bandy competitions came back to the Olympic media after its debut. Although bandy is still not an Olympic sport, the collaboration between the Olympic Channel and IBF guarantees its future presence on the Olympic media platform, which could promote the sport of bandy to a global Olympic audience and also broadens the coverage scope of the Olympic Channel.

Bandy is not the sole exception as other demonstration sports could experience similar renaissance; ski ballet is another sport benefitting from the Olympic Channel. A demonstration sport at both the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games and the 1992 Albertville Winter Olympic Games, ski ballet was featured in a 2017 Olympic Channel clip entitled \textit{The Magic of Ski Ballet},\textsuperscript{119} showcasing the historical archive of the event at the 1988 Calgary Games. The post was also published on Facebook, receiving over 25,000 comments and 16,000 reactions, becoming one of the most popular posts on the Olympic Channel’s Facebook platform. The top comment was from a ski ballet fan. He stated that:

This rare remaster footage of excellent Suisse Ballet Skier is just an exemple of how far this discipline could have done. Europe bring this art at a second level, but USA own medias? Herman Reitberger and Richard Schable did about the same quality of routine at the COP in 1988. This video is to support the next winter games in Calgary. So, if we recap here, if you have a young generation around you, tell them that this wonderful Sport/Art deserve to be developed at its full potential. Their imagination will work on the rest, believe me all.

Thus, the Olympic Channel not only could present these ‘disappeared’ winter demonstration sports, but also offers a platform for fans/viewers to interact with each other and contemplate each event’s viability in the future. In the cited comment, the author appealed to other viewers to promote ski ballet to the young generation, which could be identified as a ‘word of mouth’ message, one of the most effective persuasion strategies in marketing.\textsuperscript{120} With its social media handles, the Olympic Channel is more than ‘broadcast’ media that passes messages to the viewers; it is an ‘engaging’ media that facilitates the audience to communicate with the Channel and with each other. The interaction leads the Olympic Channel to a more accessible media platform, amplifying its communication effect worldwide.
Among the discontinued winter demonstration sports, the Olympic Channel has paid high attention to speed skiing, which made its debut at the 1992 Albertville Winter Olympic Games. After the Olympic Channel was founded, it produced a series of videos introducing speed skiing at the 1992 Winter Games, including Going Faster - Speed Skiing at Albertville 1992, Run 1 - Men's and Women's Speed Skiing | Albertville 1992 Replays, Tarja Mulari, Gold Medal Run - Speed Skiing | Albertville 1992, Michael Prüfer, Gold Medal Run - Speed Skiing | Albertville 1992, and Run 2 - Men's and Women's Speed Skiing | Albertville 1992 Replays. By presenting the archives of speed skiing at the 1992 Games, the Olympic Channel—again—brings the ‘disappeared’ winter demonstration sport back to the Olympic media, especially to the young generation. However, the Olympic Channel did not publish any of these clips on its social media handles, potentially limiting its social impact as a multi-platform media in promoting speed skiing.

A similar situation also happens with coverage of bandy, with no related posts published on social media. Although the post pertaining to ski ballet was highly applauded on Facebook, the Olympic Channel, again, did not post the video on other social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Considering the low marginal cost of publishing content simultaneously on multiple platforms, the Olympic Channel, in the future, might post more content on its social media platforms to reach its maximum social influence on a global audience.

The Olympic Channel not only could bring the ‘disappeared’ winter demonstration sports back to the Olympic spotlight; it could also promote potential Olympic demonstration sports in the future, such as eSports. In the entertainment industry, eSports has been emerging as one of the most popular sports worldwide, which captured a viewership of nearly 400 million and the total revenue reached 869 million dollars in 2018. It is expected to exceed a revenue of 1 billion dollars in 2019, with a year-on-year growth of +26.7%. At the 2018 Asian Games, eSports was featured as a demonstration sport and will become a medal event at the 2022 Games. In recent years, debates as to whether eSports should become an Olympic sport have percolated within the general public. In 2018, the IOC and the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) hosted an eSports forum in Lausanne, the Olympic capital, to discuss the engagement between eSports and the Olympic Movement. According to the International eSports Federation, eSport is highly likely to be included as a demonstration sport in future Games.
Although eSports has not officially being included as a demonstration sport in the Olympic Games, Intel—the IOC’s worldwide top partner—delivered the Intel® Extreme Masters eSports tournament in the lead-up to the 2018 Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang, with official support from the IOC, which was referred as ‘the start of an exciting future’ to explore eSports’ relationship with the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Channel broadcasted the live competitions, offering fans—both Olympic fans and eSports fans—a chance to watch eSports on an IOC media platform. Meanwhile, the Channel’s social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, actively covered the tournament in Pyeongchang. For instance, the tweet featured eSports athletes and reached 5,700 views, and the related post on Facebook received hundreds of reactions.

Broadcasting the Intel® eSports tournament at the 2018 Winter Games was not the first time that the Olympic Channel covered eSports. For instance, the Olympic Channel published a piece of news in 2016 titled ‘Esports takes another step towards mainstream: Could eSports one day be part of the Olympic Games?’ to discuss the potential of eSports being included as an Olympic discipline. During the 2016 eSports forum in Lausanne, the Olympic Channel posted several videos on its social media platforms, such as ‘Esports stars welcomed to Lausanne!’ and ‘Game on as Esports and Olympics’, to cover the interaction between the IOC President Thomas Bach and eSports stars, and to follow the joint understanding between the gaming industry and the Olympic Movement, respectively. In addition, the Olympic Channel also produced an original video discussing ‘how eSports are becoming serious business in India’, providing the audience an in-depth understanding of eSports as a ‘serious business’ rather than a childish play among teenagers.

Olympic Channel: Bringing winter demonstration sports ‘back to the future’

The Winter Olympics attract large audiences well beyond those countries that ‘have winter conditions suitable for practicing the snow and ice-based sports included in the Games’. Digital platforms help the sports that encompass the current Olympic programme to be showcased, yet can also play a major role in preserving, revisiting and reimagining the legacy of the Winter Games. Eight demonstration sports at the Winter Olympic Games –skijöring, military patrol, dogsled racing, ice stock sport, winter pentathlon, bandy, ski ballet, and speed skiing– never entered the official programme, but this does not diminish their cultural value and historical significance to the Olympic
movement. Through its digital platforms, the IOC can leverage technology to select and amplify the history of forgotten demonstration winter sports, thus contributing to bring them ‘back to the future.’

The Olympic Channel, as the IOC’s official media platform, is able to cover a wider spectrum of sports beyond Olympic disciplines, which not only could return winter demonstration sports that not being included as Olympic disciplines to the Olympic spotlight, but could also promote emerging sports to be known and garner wider popularity. Compared to the two-week Olympic Games, the year-round Olympic Channel is much more flexible regarding time, space, and coverage scope, which significantly broadens the Olympics’ connection to a wider group of fans throughout the world. Also, the Olympic Channel’s multiple social media platforms provide the audience a platform to communicate and interact with each other, making the Olympic Games more accessible to the global audience and amplifying the social impact of the Olympic Movement to a young generation. This wider flexibility and accessibility –combined with the provision of contemporary and archival footage about major and minority disciplines– has ‘the potential to broaden citizens’ knowledge and understanding of the Olympics’.

Despite having showcased content on bandy, ski ballet and speed skiing so far, the Olympic Channel could easily expand its already colourful menu to incorporate content from other demonstration sports discussed in this study, such as ice stock sport, military ski patrol, skijoring, sled-dog racing, and winter pentathlon, as well from other demonstration sports present at the Summer Olympics. Further opportunities to enhance the potential and cultural value of the Olympic Channel include: (1) establishing more partnerships with International Federations (IFs) across the globe, and (2) enhancing the collaboration with Rights-Holding Broadcasters (RHBs) and Non-Rights-Holding Broadcasters to disseminate ‘from the vault’ content. The prelude to each edition of the Olympics represents an invaluable opportunity to take audiences on a trip down memory lane and shed light on sports that previously were off the radar in mainstream media. Looking forward, the preparation towards the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics represents a key opportunity for The Olympic Channel to continue bringing winter demonstration sports ‘back to the future’.
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