

## Extra Feature Story

### 2010 Winter Olympics Begin in Vancouver, Canada

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**Athletes from all over the world have arrived in Vancouver, Canada, for the 2010 Winter Olympics, but unusually warm weather, a lack of snow and a lagging interest in winter sports are worrying organizers.**

The Winter Olympics, which take place from Feb. 12-28, revolve around sports held on snow or ice such as skiing, figure skating and ice hockey.

The 216-member U.S. Olympic team has high hopes for its medal chances this year with short track speed skater Apolo Anton Ohno and skiing star Lindsay Vonn vying for gold.

However, organizers are having to truck in snow, adding to the already expensive price tag which is expected to top \$2 billion.

#### **What do Olympic Games mean to a host city?**

Much like the Summer Olympics, the Winter Olympics can bring revenue and visibility to the host area. But because cities need to make a considerable investment in roads, sports facilities and hotels, economists say hosting the Olympics is usually a net economic loss.

That hasn't stopped countries from competing hard to host the Games. The 2008 Summer Olympics were seen as a defining moment for Beijing, China, and when Rio de Janeiro was awarded the 2016 Olympics last year, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva cried and said, "Today, people who don't even know me gave me the greatest gift that a president could have: to host the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. Rio deserves this because Rio is a city that has suffered."

Despite the costs and the weather woes, Canada hopes to bolster its national pride and make a lasting impression by bringing home more gold medals than ever before.

Indeed, countries that participate in the Winter Games have better chances of winning big as the training needs for snow and ice limit the participation of many countries. While more than 200 nations compete in the Summer Games, about 90 nations will participate in the Winter Games.

#### **History of the Games**

The modern incarnation of the Olympic Games began in 1894 when a French aristocrat formed the International Olympic Committee to promote cultural exchange through sports. He was inspired by athletic competitions in Olympia, Greece, until 393 A.D. Athens, Greece hosted the first modern Olympic Games in 1896.

The first Winter Olympics to be held separately from the Summer Games took place in 1924 in Chamonix, France.

Until 1994, the Winter and Summer Games occurred in the same year, but the organizing committee decided to separate the games and hold them every two years so that both summer and winter sports programs could more easily raise money from corporations.

## **Olympics reflect international tensions**

Because the Olympic Games are one of the few moments when countries from all over the world come together, the games have often reflected international political tensions and controversy.

In 1936, the Olympics took place in Nazi-led Berlin and were used as a way to promote Germany as a thriving and compassionate dictatorship. Hitler only allowed members of the so-called "Aryan" race to compete on the German team. But black American runner Jesse Owens trumped Hitler's racist ideology by winning four gold medals that year.

In 1980, U.S. President Jimmy Carter led the charge for 65 nations to boycott the Summer Games in Moscow in protest of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Many communist nations, including the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba, retaliated for the U.S.-led boycott by staying away from the 1984 Games which were held in Los Angeles.

Cold War tensions between the U.S. and Russia heightened the drama and viewership of the 1980 Winter Olympics when a young and amateur group of American hockey players beat the Russian team, then considered the best in the world. The victory galvanized American patriotism and has since come to be known as the "Miracle on Ice."

**-- Compiled by Kate Stanton for NewsHour Extra**

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