

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1 MEN'S OLYMPIC BASKETBALL TOURNAMENTS

1.1 1936 Berlin, Germany

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Canada
Bronze	Mexico

Officially recognised as an Olympic sport in 1930, basketball made its first appearance on the programme at the Olympic Games in Berlin. Twenty-one countries took part. The games were played in the open on the Reichssportfeld tennis courts. The jump ball at the beginning of the first game between France and Estonia was administered by the father of basketball, the Canadian Dr James Naismith.

The United States, having played basketball for so long, had a head start on all their opponents, yet dominated the scores only narrowly: 19-8 against Canada and 25-10 against Mexico, the two other medallists in this first Olympic tournament.

The American team, made up of thirteen players, was the one which most often strove to keep control of the ball using sophisticated combinations surprising to European observers.

1.2 1948 London, England

Gold	United States of America
Silver	France
Bronze	Brazil

Twenty-three teams were present in London for this tournament, the first after the break imposed by the Second World War. Once again - and it would not be the last time - the players from the United States of America were head and shoulders above their opponents with their giant Bob Kurland (2.14m). Only Argentina managed to resist them (57-59) but then fell victim to their own efforts, finishing in 15th place.

The remaining representatives from South America, on the other hand, were more fortunate. Brazil, which did not meet with the USA on its path to the finals, were thus awarded the bronze medal, Uruguay finished fifth and Chile sixth.

France's great achievement was to reach the Final after having beaten Chile by the skin of their teeth following extra time in the Quarter-Finals (53-52). But, in the Final, the fighting French cockerels failed to show their spurs and were taught a hard lesson by the Americans who beat them 65-21.



1.3 1952 Helsinki, Finland

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Soviet Union
Bronze	Uruguay

This was the first appearance by the USSR at the Olympic Games which were preceded by a Qualification Tournament in order to limit the number of participating teams to sixteen. The six teams qualified joined the first ten from London in a tournament which failed to reach new heights.

For the first time at an Olympic tournament, the 100-point barrier was broken by the USA against Chile (103-55). However, in the Final against the USSR they distinguished themselves with a miserable score of 36 to 25 (17-15) at the end of an indigestible game both for the players and the spectators, the two teams practically having frozen the ball out of fear of losing it. These soporific tactics led the FIBA legislators to review the regulations and introduce the 10-second back court rule and the 30-second shot clock.

An incident occurred at the end of the group game between France and Uruguay (68-66) which the South-Americans finished with three players due to foul trouble. Two Uruguayans were suspended for 2 years for attacking the American referee, however the Uruguay team still managed to win the bronze medal against arch rival Argentina (68-59).

1.4 1956 Melbourne, Australia

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Soviet Union
Bronze	Uruguay

Just fifteen teams were present at these Games in a distant land. The United States rode it alone taking potshots at Thailand (101-29), the Philippines (121-53), Brazil (113-51) and even Uruguay (101-38) which, however, as in Helsinki, was on the podium to receive the bronze medal thanks to a victory in the third-place game against France (71-62), having previously lost to the same team (62-66) in the Quarter-Finals.

Beaten by France (67-76) in the Preliminary Round, the Soviets took their revenge in the Semi-Finals (56-49) only to be subjected once again to the law of the Americans in the Final (89-55).

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1.5 1960 Rome, Italy

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Soviet Union
Bronze	Brazil

The tournament itself was preceded by a "pre-Olympic tournament" organised the week before in Bologna. It saw eighteen teams take part and the road to Rome opened up to Czechoslovakia, Spain, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland, the latter replacing Chile which had withdrawn. They joined the eleven countries which had automatically qualified.

The United States with their best university players such as Oscar Robertson, Jerry West, Jerry Lucas, Walt Bellamy or even Terry Dischinger made short work of Japan (125-66), Hungary (107-63), Yugoslavia (104-42), Uruguay (108-50) and even Italy (112-81) before seeing off Brazil (90-63) and the USSR (81-57).

1.6 1964, Tokyo, Japan

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Soviet Union
Bronze	Brazil

With the system of qualification having been amended by the World Congress in 1960, the first eight teams from the previous games in Rome (USA, USSR, Brazil, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland and Uruguay) were automatically qualified for these Games. To these were added Puerto Rico and Peru, qualified by the Pan-American Games, Hungary and Finland from a European qualifying tournament in Geneva, and also United Arab Republic of Egypt from the African Championships. However, the withdrawal of Czechoslovakia and Egypt resulted in the need to qualify four teams instead of two at the pre-Olympic tournament in Yokohama. Mexico, Australia, Canada and Korea thus qualified.

These Olympic Games were again dominated by the players from the United States of America. They carried off nine huge victories even in the Final which was more or less played in one direction against the USSR (73-59).

But if elements such as Bill Bradley, Jim Barnes, Walt Hazzard, Jeff Mullins and Mel Counts were particularly in evidence in the American camp during this tournament, three Europeans, the Soviet Gennady Volnov, the Pole Janusz Wichowski and the Finn Martti Liimo, also figured in the "All Stars" table together with the Peruvian Ricardo Duarte and the Mexican Alberto Almonza.



1.7 1968 Mexico City, Mexico

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Yugoslavia
Bronze	Soviet Union

Once again, the system of qualification had been amended. The first five teams from the previous Games were automatically qualified along with the host country. The participants were joined by eight teams qualified by the American, Asian, African and European championships as well as a pre-Olympic tournament in Monterrey to win the right to compete in Mexico City's Palais des Sports with a capacity of 22,500 spectators.

For the seventh time in a row, the USA made off with the gold medal. But the greatest surprise of the tournament was provided by Yugoslavia which knocked the USSR out of the Final by one small point (63-62).

A Final during which the Yugoslavs, with the excellent Ivo Daneu, scorer of sixteen points, supported by Michel Cermak and Petar Skansi, put up a good fight against an American team which took advantage of the skill of its duo Spencer Haywood (21 pts.) and Jo Jo White (16 pts.) to make the difference.

In the third place game, the USSR defeated Brazil (70-53).

1.8 1972 Munich, Germany

Gold	Soviet Union
Silver	United States of America
Bronze	Cuba

A huge surprise with the gold medal slipping through the Americans' fingers for the first time when the Soviets beat them by a single point at the end of a Final which finished in disarray.

Three seconds before the end, following two consecutive errors from the scorer's table, the game was interrupted. As a result of a misunderstanding, the Americans started celebrating their victory. Amid total confusion, the game was restarted with just three seconds on the clock. A long throw by the Soviet player Ivan Edeshko passed the ball to Aleksander Belov who scored a basket and victory for the USSR (51-50).

A lesson for the USA whose team, on this occasion, was not the most representative and was suffering from an obvious lack of preparation. In addition, the fact that not one player stood out (no one scored more than nine points in the Final) and that the team was paralysed by what was at stake may explain the USA's defeat.

For the first time, the Cubans mounted the podium after having snatched the bronze away from the Italians by just one point (66-65).

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1.9 1976 Montreal, Canada

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Yugoslavia
Bronze	Soviet Union

Owing to the arrival of women's basketball at the Olympic Games, the tournament from this point on was limited to twelve teams divided into two groups in the Preliminary Round. The USSR and USA completed their groups without a single defeat but the Americans had a harder time of it than the Soviets, particularly in the games against Puerto Rico (95-94) and Czechoslovakia (81-76).

There was a surprise in the Semi-Finals where Yugoslavia repeated its success from Mexico beating the USSR (89-84) whilst the USA experienced less difficulty in beating Canada (95-77).

In the Final, the skill of Drazen Dalipagic (27 pts.), Dragan Kicanovic (18) and Kresimir Cosic (15) was not enough to counteract the brilliance of Adrian Dantley (30 pts.), Mitch Kupchak or Scott May.

But, at the end of the day, the tournament's master scorer was the Australian Ed Palubinskas with an average of 31.2 points per game.

1.10 1980 Moscow, Soviet Union

Gold	Yugoslavia
Silver	Italy
Bronze	Soviet Union

Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the United States and several other countries from the western world decided to boycott these Games during the course of which the Secretary General emeritus of FIBA, R. William Jones, suffered a stroke which, several months later, would prove to be fatal.

In the absence of America, the Europeans were sitting pretty and took the first four places, Spain stumbling at the last hurdle and ceding third place to the Soviets. The latter, contrary to predictions, were unable to be masters in their own house and conceded the Final to the Italians and Yugoslavs who beat them (87-85 and 101-91) respectively.

With their star trio Dragan Kicanovic (22), Mirza Delibasic (20) and Drazen Dalipagic (18), the Yugoslavs carried off the Final (86-77) in spite of Italian Renato Villalta's technical excellence as the game's best scorer with 29 points.

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1.11 1984 Los Angeles, United States of America

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Spain
Bronze	Yugoslavia

The United States not having gone to Moscow four years earlier, the Soviets in turn decided to boycott these Games and were emulated by other East Bloc countries.

The USA marked its return to the competition by lining up a fine team which included the likes of Michael Jordan, Patrick Ewing, Alvin Robertson and Chris Mullin. This choice selection made short work of France (120-62), Spain (101-68) and Uruguay (104-68).

The Semi-Finals brought together two European teams (Spain and Yugoslavia) on the one hand and two North-American teams (USA and Canada) on the other. The Spanish gave a splendid performance knocking out the Yugoslavs (74-61) and found themselves in the Final against the USA where they had to content themselves with just maintaining a good counter-attack (65-96).

And it came as no surprise when, at the end of the competition, Michael Jordan was elected M.V.P. for his outstanding performance throughout.

1.12 1988 Seoul, Korea

Gold	Soviet Union
Silver	Yugoslavia
Bronze	United States of America

Defeat again for the United States but, in contrast to Munich, with a very representative selection from the NCAA including strong players such as Danny Manning, Dan Majerle, David Robinson and J. R. Reid. American specialists primarily made Coach John Thompson carry the can for this setback for not having given his individual players enough room to breathe in a collective game which suffered from the lack of a leader and three-point scorers. Strong play from David Robinson and Dan Majerle was not enough in the Semi-Finals to triumph over the Soviets who dominated thanks to the skills of Rimas Kurtinaitis, Sarunas Marciulionis and especially Arvydas Sabonis who made good use of his 2.23 metres and 130 kilos.

In the Final, the Soviets confirmed their solidity by triumphing over the Yugoslavs (76-63), who despite 24 points from Drazen Petrović were unable to resist the strength of an opponent with players of the calibre of Sabonis, Marciulionis and Kurtinaitis.

Another great individual from the tournament was the skilled Brazilian Oscar Schmidt with the exceptional average of 42.3 points per game.

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1.13 1992 Barcelona, Spain

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Croatia
Bronze	Lithuania

Geopolitics had changed the deal. The USSR, without the Baltic countries, had become the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). On the other hand, with the break-up of Yugoslavia, Croatia and Slovenia were playing as independent nations (in the qualifying tournament) whilst Yugoslavia, which had had sanctions imposed on it by the United Nations, was unable to take part. The result was that Croatia and Lithuania climbed the podium together with the United States, which had led the dance from start to finish with a brilliance only rarely achieved.

It must be said that the Americans had learned their lesson from their defeat in Seoul. In addition, taking advantage of the NBA and FIBA coming closer together and the connivance of an IOC which no longer considered true professionals to be lepers, they were represented in Spain by the best in the world, namely the superstars from their professional league. This was to be the "Dream Team" which fully justified its name by making the spectators dream and paralysing its opponents. What luck for coach Chuck Daly to have at his fingertips the likes of Charles Barkley, Larry Bird, Clyde Drexler, Patrick Ewing, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Michael Jordan, Christian Laettner, Karl Malone, Chris Mullin, Scottie Pippen, David Robinson and John Stockton to name them all, and it is only fair to do so given the extent to which they marked these Games.

This was a tournament of a particularly high standard since, USA aside, other players from the NBA were also on the courts in Barcelona, for example Drazen Petrović and Stojan Vranković for Croatia, Sarunas Marciulionis (Lithuania), Alexander Volkov (CIS), Luc Longley (Australia), Detlef Schrempf (Germany) or even Jose Ortiz and Ramon Rivas (Puerto Rico). It was only the last four teams in the classification (Spain, Angola, Venezuela and China) which did not have any players from the NBA.

1.14 1996 Atlanta, United States of America

Gold	United States of America
Silver	Yugoslavia
Bronze	Lithuania

There was little doubt that, playing on home territory, the United States would not be letting the visitors leave with a gold medal.

There was a new "Dream Team" which, although possibly less spectacular than the one in Barcelona, lacked neither style nor centimetres with five players over two metres, among them David Robinson (2.16m.) and Hakeem Olajuwon (2.13m.), and which had the experience of Charles Barkley, Karl Malone, Scottie Pippen and Shaquile O'Neal.

As predicted, the USA made a meal of their opponents on their way to the Final against the Yugoslavs. The latter, who were tying at the end of the first half, were pulverised by the end of forty minutes (95-69).

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

1.15 2000 Sydney, Australia

Gold	United States of America
Silver	France
Bronze	Lithuania

With a slightly less representative American team than on previous occasions, this time, no one attributed it with the qualifier "Dream Team". It very nearly lost its place in the Final when, in the Semi-Finals, it found itself one point down against the Lithuanians with just 43 seconds to go to the end of the game. It took a tip in from Antonio McDyess and a free throw from Jason Kidd to save the day (85-83).

One of the major surprises of this tournament was France qualifying for the Final, something which the French had not managed to do since the Olympic Games in London in 1948.

However, France had got off to a somewhat difficult and chaotic start in the tournament being defeated by Lithuania, Italy and the United States (94-106) in its preliminary group. Fortunately, it pulled itself together in the Quarter-Finals against Canada (68-63) and in the Semi-Finals against Australia (76-52).

In the Final, a miracle was practically in the making: in the closing minutes of the game, the French were just four points behind their opponents before finally having to admit defeat (75-85), however not without having first won the Americans' respect.

1.16 2004 Athens Greece

Gold	Argentina
Silver	Italy
Bronze	USA

Best Ever

Athens will go down as perhaps the most exciting international tournament ever held, and certainly the least predictable. The curtain came down on the Olympic Basketball Tournaments with Argentina triumphing in just its fourth Olympic appearance in the Men's competition.

It was an Olympic Tournament where, against current trends, offense played a big part in making this competition such a spectacle. Men's teams have gone over the 100-point mark four times and have exceeded then 90-point mark fifteen times. The highest-scoring team was Lithuania with an average of 93.8 points per game.

Argentina, won the gold medal featuring the Men's Tournament's most accurate player from the field with Luis SCOLA (65.5%) and from two-point land with Emanuel GINOBI (70.8%). Despite these outstanding performances were the South Americans and Italy the best example for the triumph of the team effort over individual skill. Italy were not presented with their players in the individual top statistics, but had an incredible team spirit, just like a year before during the Eurobasket.

**FIBA**

We Are Basketball

The US Men's team winning streak came to an abrupt end after losing in their opening match to Puerto Rico. Tim DUNCAN, Allen IVERSON and Co. finished just 5-3, but managed to maintain the American tradition of always bringing a medal home from Olympic Men's Basketball Tournaments. This is only the third time the gold medal has eluded them (after Munich 1972 and Seoul 1988), as they failed to qualify for the Final for only the second time in their Olympic history (Seoul being the other case), but managed not to go home empty-handed.

Spain was probably the most unlucky team, since Mario PESQUERA's team won six of its seven games, but only the loss to the United States in the quarterfinals was enough to send them playing for 7th place.

YAO Ming, the Chinese 2.25-m. sensation, scored the most points in a single game, with 39 against New Zealand, but lost the unofficial scoring title to Spain's captain Pau GASOL (22.4 points per game).

Emanuel GINOBILI was the MVP of the Men's competition, scoring among others perhaps the most heartbreaking basket of the Tournament, a fall away jumper at the buzzer that gave Argentina the win in their premiere against defending World Champions Serbia Montenegro. The latter, playing without stars like Predrag STOJAKOVIC, Vlade DIVAC and Zeljko REBRACA ended up as the disappointment of the Tournament. The Balkan outfit lost three games with margins ranging from one to three points, finally edging Angola for 11th place.

Athens was also a place to say good bye for some record Olympians. Shane HEAL (AUS) announced his retirement from the national team after competing at four Olympic Games in the Men's Tournament, a record shared by Angola's Antonio DE CARVALHO and Angelo VICTORIANO. Jose ORTIZ, the captain of Puerto Rico, said goodbye to Basketball in style after a great 25-year career, scoring the last basket of his team's last game against Greece. Only Andrew GAZE (AUS) and Oscar Schmidt (BRA) have appeared in more Olympic Basketball Tournaments, with a record five.

Oh yes, it was an incredible competition, featuring big upsets and spectacular plays on the court and it certainly will stay in the memory of the lucky one's who were able to witness it live. But international basketball will travel on, and we look forward for exciting Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing.

Olympic Games Medal Table 1936-2004 : men's medallists

	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	12	1	2	15
SOVIET UNION	2	4	3	9
YUGOSLAVIA	1	3	1	5
ARGENTINA	1	-	-	1
BRAZIL	-	-	3	3
LITHUANIA	-	-	3	3
FRANCE	-	2	-	2
ITALY	-	2	-	2
URUGUAY	-	-	2	2
CANADA	-	1	-	1
CROATIA	-	1	-	1
SPAIN	-	1	-	1
YUGOSLAVIA (Serbia and Montenegro)	-	1	-	1
CUBA	-	-	1	1
MEXICO	-	-	1	1