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Birth of Modern Olympics - I

Lead: Born of optimism about the human spirit and steeped in nineteenth century ideals of progress, the modern Olympics were designed to promote international good will, healthy living and peace. It did not always work out that way.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Ever since Coro 'ebus, a young El'ean cook, prevailed in the 200 meter dash in 776 B.C., the Olympic games have been a source of inspiration and controversy. For more than a thousand years, each

quadrennial, spectators and athletes, fans and opportunists would make the uncomfortable summer journey to the shrine of the god Zeus for the games. They were held on the Olympian plain in the northwest corner of Greece's Peloponnesian peninsula.

Despite the success of the spectacle, the Romans, who absorbed Greece in the middle years of the second century B.C., found the games a bit unseemly. The idea of stripping naked and competing in public was offensive to Latin sensibilities and the popularity of the games faded. Christian Emperor Theodosius I or his son as part of an anti-pagan campaign terminated them permanently sometime around 400

A.D.

The modern games emerged from the ideas and efforts of several people. Though many see the year 1896 as the genesis point of the current round of Olympics, the year 1859 is probably closer to the mark. At that time Evangelis Zappas founded a series of Greek Olympic festivals. His work coincided with that of William Penny Brookes, a physician from the village of Much Wenlock, in the English midlands not far from Birmingham. He had had been promoting local games for several and took them national in the first British Olympiad in London in 1866. Yet, the best-known architect of the modern games was a Frenchman, Pierre, Baron de

Coubertin. His tireless advocacy restored the Olympics. Next time: ...'Chiefly to please me.'

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

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