

SKINGAMES

By D. Salcido

Displays of raw power & determination are the order of the day at the **1996 NUDE OLYMPICS.**

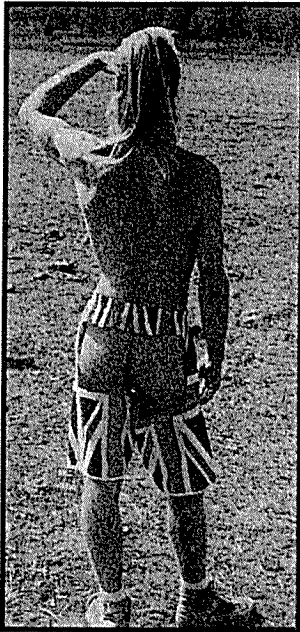


There will be no kettle drum intro. No brassy flourishes. No quicktime orchestration. In fact, there will be no theme song at all. The setting isn't Atlanta, or even Salt Lake City. It's a wooded glen somewhere east of Flagstaff, Arizona. There are no sponsors, no endorsements and no *Life* magazine exposés. This is the third annual **Nude Olympics** we're talking about and, like the contestants themselves, this event has been stripped of all trappings.

So, why a nude Olympics? The most obvious reason in this, the Olympic year, is historical. It's an established fact that the original Greek Olympics were held in the nude. The *Arizona Republic* recently reported a widely held belief that "the magistrate Hippomenes passed a law requiring all participants to compete nude after an Athens runner tripped on his clothing."

A scholarly female friend of mine

prefers the legend that the law was passed because a woman snuck her way into the games and completely humiliated the testosterone-laden Greek males with her prowess (the beginning of the Amazon myth, perhaps?). Competing naked from there on out would all but guarantee that such a thing would never happen again.



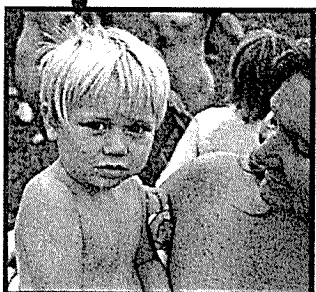
The best reason I can think of is that the Greeks just liked being naked and looking at other naked bodies. What better naked bodies to look at than athletic ones? Nuff said.

Sponsored by the Canyon State Naturists, a non-profit organization dedicated to spreading the word about the benefits of nude recreation, these Olympics are a throwback to those original games held in ancient Greece. Well, sort of...

"We're a family organization, so our events have to be family oriented, but it's pretty much tongue-in-cheek," says president and founder of CSN, Don Titmus. "What we've done is have a little bit of

fun with the Olympics, not in a derogatory way, just in a fun way. In England they have TV shows that are just about these fun games. They go around the country doing events where two towns go head to head on these games to create unity and a little bit of competition. So, I've brought some of that knowledge from England with me and we created these fun games."

One wonders what the British would think of these particular "fun games..."



THE COUNTDOWN BEGINS!

They are men, women, children and come from all walks of life: teachers, students, grocery clerks, accountants, housewives, even cops. "We've had people planning to be here all year," says Titmus. "People plan for a long time to make sure that they get this particular weekend off. They know that it's going to be such an incredible experience, they do whatever they have to do to get here."

All of these participants have one thing in common—the innate longing to strip away the confining layers of society's dictates and hurl themselves naked into the maw of pure, unadulterated hedonism. Subtle proof that the spirit of the original Olympics is very much alive and well, tucked away in the pristine surroundings of the Coconino National Forest. One can almost feel the approving gazes of the gods as the moment approaches. Of course, that feeling could also come from the fact that everywhere one looks there are cameras recording every intimate detail of the proceedings.

"To my knowledge this is the only Nude Olympics in the country," says Titmus. "And because it's the Olympic

year in Atlanta, we seem to have an awful lot of press that are interested. Nude Olympics? We've go to go and see this!" So it is that cameras are set to roll, photographers are busy snapping



photos and reporters are trying to think up ever wittier adjectives to describe the raw emotion surging around them.

First, however, there's the Parade of Champions, an awe-inspiring display of power in its many forms. Contestants from all across the state, indeed the country, converge in one final show of unity before dividing into five separate teams—Red, Blue, Yellow, Green and Purple—each made up of five spirited men and women. Each member ties a colored ribbon around the upper arm. These will be the only distinguishing marks allowed them,

except for those which they display naturally. The contestants themselves come in every size and shape imaginable. Some are as young as 12, others are pushing that more mature range which would rather not divulge. All are single minded in their purpose: have fun!

Colorful banners flying and infinitely varied body parts bouncing, the whooping rabble makes a pass around the volleyball court (what else?), mugs for the assembled press, then scatters to take up position for the first event.

LET THE GAMES COMMENCE!

Event One is the *Sun Lounger Race*. "It's like a chariot race... almost," Titmus explains. Almost is right. One of the five member team sits on the "sun lounger," a common, everyday lawn chair, while the other four hoist them up and do their best to navigate a mud-slicked obstacle course. A trade-off is made at the end and the chair-lugging contestants huff back to the starting point.

Event Two sounds a bit more professional. "The *Javelin Throw* sounds serious," says Titmus, "but let me tell you, when somebody picks up that

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eight foot long, half inch, schedule forty PVC pipe, they're not going to be able to throw it as easily as an aluminum javelin and it isn't going to go where they want it. It's going to wobble and shake in the wind and it may die five feet away from them." He's right, they do and the result is nothing short of hilarious.

Event Three makes the first event look easy. Jogging, jumping and bouncing through an expanded *Relay Obstacle Course* made up of volleyball nets, mud bogs, rubber tires, trampolines and more all but guarantees that each and every one of the contestants will be thoroughly humiliated. All in the name of good clean fun, of course. The crowd cheers the buff champions on enthusiastically.

Perhaps the event which takes the most amount of concentration, **Event Four**, is the *Boardwalk*. Dubbed by **Pete Christensen**, Secretary and Treasurer of the organization, a "study in forced synchronous walking," the *Boardwalk* requires all five members to stand back to front on two planks of wood laced with rope and, moving in unison, "walk" the boards several yards forward, then reverse the order and return to the starting point. It's much easier than it sounds and delivers some of the funniest moments of the day.

Finally, **Event Five**. Titmus calls it the "knockout event at the end." A good old fashioned *Tug-O-War*. Easily the most strenuous event these champions will face all day, the pressure is on and the determination is fierce. Several elimination rounds are valiantly fought and won, but in the end only one team will take home the gold.

And The Winners Are...

Team Purple, an underdog at the outset of the games,

surprises many by snatching the Gold medal away from the more athletically-inclined Yellow Team. Blue Team brings home the Bronze, while Green and Red Teams are left out in the cold, both figuratively and literally. "I've trained all year for this, man," claims one Red Teamster cheekily, "I'm disappointed. I trained all year, but next year I'm coming back stronger!"

"You trained?" asks a fellow teammate incredulously. "What does your back yard look like?"

As for the winners, to what do they attribute their stunning victory? "Pure raw power..." exclaims front man Christensen. "...and a lot of meat!" adds another team member.

The games are over for another year. The winners repair to the Winners Tent to be congratulated, photographed and interviewed. It's starting to rain again and all around, pink bodies can be detected disappearing into the undergrowth and trees. Soon the camera crews will depart and life will continue along as usual for the Naturists of CSN.

No recaps, except for those around the campfire tonight. No profiles of the winners in *People* and *Time*. Just a bunch of happy naked people having fun in a timeless fashion. Those ancient Greeks would be so proud.

For more information on the annual Nude Olympics and/or Naturism in Arizona, contact

Don Titmus at:

Canyon State Naturists, Inc.

P.O. Box 33431

Phoenix, AZ 85067-3431

Phone (602) 834-0039

Or try contacting CSN on the Internet, either by e-mail at

csn@netzone.com or through

their website at

http://www.netzone.com/

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