**17-Sport**

Sports are one of the most popular **leisure time activities**. This is mainly due to the fact that they help one to keep fit both physically and mentally. Such a form of relaxation as sports is refreshing, can help take off some weight, and makes use of one's skills and strength. Last but not least, during sports events one can meet a lot of new people and see how it feels to be a winner.

It is also important to mention that besides taking an active part in sports it is also possible **just to watch** sports events as a spectator or play the pools (bet money on certain sports results).

Usually all sports and games are further divided into two groups according to where they can be practised. **Indoor sports** include for example gymnastics, table tennis, boxing, wrestling etc. On the other hand, among **outdoor sports** are skiing (down-hill, cross-country, slalom, ski jump), sledding, hiking, rock climbing, horse riding, golf, and some **water sports** such as rowing or windsurfing. Non-professional cycling, or riding a (mountain) bike, which is one of the most popular activities, is also enjoyed outdoor.

But most sports and almost all games can be done **both indoors and outdoors**. Meetings in all the track (dráhový) and field events (sprints, middle and long distance runs, hurdling, high and long jump, pole vault, shot put, javelin and discus throw) take place in summer stadiums as well as in athletic halls. Also one of the healthiest sports, swimming, and figure skating do not actually demand a roofed room. One can easily recognize that those sports which can be done only on ice or snow (skating, skiing etc.) **are winter sports** whereas all the rest we call **summer or all-season sports**.

The most numerous group of games are the ball games. Now, I am going to mention the games in the order in which they are popular in Great Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada.

**The British** are great lovers of competitive sports and when they are neither playing nor watching games they like to talk about them. The most favourite one is **football**. As is commonly known, in this collective game two teams of 11members play with a ball on a grass field. The purpose is to kick the ball to get it into the opposite goal. In Britain there **are a great number of clubs** (some of them are Aston Villa, Manchester United and Arsenal…), and in London there is one of the world's biggest football stadiums **- the** **Wembley Arena**. Football is played all over the world. In the United States, however, it is called soccer.

**Rugby** football is also very popular. This game was first played at Rugby School in England. In this game the ball is oval. While golf is of Scottish origin, **cricket** was and still remains an English national game.

**Rowing** has become popular as a result of the British rower Steve Redgrave achieving gold medals in the Olympics in every Olympic year from 1984 to 2000. In boats designed for two, four or eight people, rowers can reach speeds of up to 36km/h. Each year in March, Cambridge and Oxford universities compete on the River Thames. The **tennis** season reaches its peak every year at the Wimbledon tournament which is played in London in early June.

**USA**

Sports play an important part in the lives of Americans. Some sports are popular all over America, while other sports, such as lacrosse or ice-hockey, are popular in certain regions. However, the big three sports still are **American football, baseball, and basketball.**

**In American football** two teams, wearing helmets and pads, throw and run with a ball similarly shaped as a rugby ball. They block with their bodies and try to help other players of their team to gain more ground. If they cross a goal line at the end of the field, they score a touchdown, which is six points.

American football is a very strategic game, and also very rough; many players become injured each year.

**Baseball** is similar to the English game of cricket. Nine players on each team take turns, trying to hit a leather ball with a wooden bat. After the ball is hit, the player runs, stepping on bases, before he returns to where he was when he hit the ball, and scores a run (point) for his team. If the other team touches him with the ball, he is "out" and must leave the field (until his next turn).

**Australia -** In Australia, mainly because of its climate, **water sports** are very popular - sailing and surfing in coastal areas and water-skiing on rivers and lakes.

**Canada -** All Canadians play and love **hockey** and everybody know their hockey stars.

However, the national sport in Canada is an indigenous game called **lacrosse**. It is a field game where each player carries a long handled racket, called a "crosse." The ball is caught with the crosse and carried on it, or

tossed from it, and then thrown to the goals placed at the opposite ends of the field.

**OLYMPIC GAMES:**

**Every four years**, athletes from around the world come together to compete in the Olympic Games. And also the name these Games has its **origin.** It is because the games were first held at Olympia in Ancient Greece. Today, the Olympic Games are held in different cities around the world.

**The ancient games**

It is difficult to separate myth from reality, but it is thought the first Olympics were held in 776 B.C. From that point on, the games were held every four years, and became such a regular event that people of the time used them **to mark epochs in history**. The

original games finally came to an end in A.D. 393, when they were **banned** by **Emperor** Theodosius I. Theodosius was a Christian and disliked the games’ **pagan origins**.

Athletes came from cities throughout Greece to compete in races, boxing and wrestling matches, gymnastics, and weightlifting. Winners were crowned with **wreaths of olive or palm leaves**.

The ancient Olympic Games were **not just a sporting event**, however. There were competitions in poetry, music, speechmaking as well. At the beginning of the Games, animals were **sacrificed** to Zeus.

**The modern games**

Ironically, **it took a war to bring about the beginnings of** the modern **Olympics**. A Frenchman, Pierre de Coubertin, tried to find the reason, why his nation was defeated in the Franco-Prussian War (1870). His **conclusion** was that the Prussian soldiers were in much better physical condition than the French. Coubertin decided for a regular meeting of nations to compete in athletics. It would help to **prevent** war. Other Europeans liked the idea, and in 1896 the first modern Olympics were held in Athens, Greece.

Only nine countries participated in the first Games, and all the athletes were male.

**Today**, some 10,000 athletes compete in the Olympic Games, and nearly half of them are female. They represent about 200 nations.

The Olympic Games have always included a number of **ceremonies** with a lot of performances and music. The Greek team always enters first, to commemorate the ancient origins of the modem Games and the team of the host nation always enters last.

**The torch relay** - the Olympic Flame symbolizes the transmission of Olympic ideals from Ancient Greece to the modern world. After the last runner lights the Olympic Flame in the main Olympic stadium, the host country's head of state declares the Games officially start.

\*The 1952 Olympics in Melbourne **became** Emil Zátopek **a world star**. This Czech long distance runner won gold medals in the 10,000 and 5,000 metre races, and the marathon. It was the first time he had ever run a marathon. (Czech stars-in athletics: Špotáková- javelin throw, Šebrle- decathlon; Sáblíková- speed skating)

\*I also like **sports** e.g. cycling or skiing in winter, but it has never been the most important thing in my life. I enjoy individual sports as well as team sports for example at school, which teaches you to cooperate with other people and maybe the fact that I am with my friends is more important for me then the game itself. But I like watching the Olympic games or Ice hockey Championships with Czech national team.