



The Naked Olympics: The True Story of the Ancient Games

Tony Perrottet , Lesley Thelander (Illustrator)

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What was it like to attend the ancient Olympic Games?

With the summer Olympics' return to Athens, Tony Perrottet delves into the ancient world and lets the Greek Games begin again. The acclaimed author of **Pagan Holiday** brings attitude, erudition, and humor to the fascinating story of the original Olympic festival, tracking the event day by day to re-create the experience in all its compelling spectacle.

Using firsthand reports and little-known sources—including an actual *Handbook for a Sports Coach* used by the Greeks—**The Naked Olympics** creates a vivid picture of an extravaganza performed before as many as forty thousand people, featuring contests as timeless as the javelin throw and as exotic as the chariot race.

Peeling away the layers of myth, Perrottet lays bare the ancient sporting experience—including the round-the-clock bacchanal inside the tents of the Olympic Village, the all-male nude workouts under the statue of Eros, and history's first corruption scandals involving athletes. Featuring sometimes scandalous cameos by sports enthusiasts Plato, Socrates, and Herodotus, **The Naked Olympics** offers essential insight into today's Games and an unforgettable guide to the world's first and most influential athletic festival.

"Just in time for the modern Olympic games to return to Greece this summer for the first time in more than a century, Tony Perrottet offers up a diverting primer on the Olympics of the ancient kind....Well researched; his sources are as solid as sources come. It's also well written....Perhaps no book of the season will show us so briefly and entertainingly just how complete is our inheritance from the Greeks, vulgarity and all."

--The Washington Post

The Naked Olympics: The True Story of the Ancient Games Details

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Marilyn says

Another informative and engrossing read by Tony Perrottet - as informative as his book about following in the footsteps of ancient Roman tourists Route 66 Ad , and written without academic jargon.

Perrottet guides us through how the judges, the priests, the athletes, the spectators, and the refreshment and souvenir sellers may have experienced the five days of the ancient Olympic games: training, getting to Olympia, finding food and drink, sacrificing to Zeus and other deities, poets and philosophers touting their works, participating in the sports, and, of course, the victory banquets. A few myths are corrected. (One is the "amateur" nature of the Games. The athletes were chosen young to compete in various prize games, and trained full time for at least ten months for the Olympics. They competed to win - no "second place is good enough". The victors were set for life: money, personal appearance tours, free food, free seats at the auditorium, a career in politics if desired.) A few theories are put forth with whatever facts can be deduced from the pottery and archaeological sites. The Games were a tourist attraction, and spectators came from all over the northern half of the Med - and from Egypt and Carthage too.

Constanza Gomez says

Good and informative book, although I didn't like that quotes lacked source (like he says "as Homer tells" and don't address the work and lines]. It's very frustrating nit knowing where to look in the original sources. And it was a bit messy sometimes, but the appendixes are very useful.

Janis says

Those who think history is boring might want to try Tony Perrottet – especially his fascinating and entertaining account of the ancient Greek Olympics. He explores the original Olympics as experienced by athletes and spectators, from the moment purple-clad heralds announced the sacred games, to ancient workout routines and diet plans, the details of the often-brutal contests, the wild festivities, and the clean-up afterwards. I learned a lot and had fun all along the way!

Colin says

A friend got me a copy of this book signed by the author and inscribed to me - it's pretty cool.

Kathy Wojo says

Such a fun book to read! I borrowed this book from my library but will now buy it so when the next

Olympics come around I can dazzle my friends with fascinating tidbits of Olympic history.

A'Llyn says

A lively account of what it must have been like to attend and/or compete in the ancient Olympic games, with lots of entertaining asides and historical detail.

Eric says

A good historical reference for many of the interesting Olympic traditions that have come about because of the ancient games in Greece. Although the author can be quite dry and boring at times, there are numerous adequate references and cited material for many of the now similar Olympic events that took place in ancient Greece. Not a very stimulating or exciting read but one that is helpful to understanding the Olympic traditions.

Bandit says

This is my third read by the author and the first one where historical aspect dominates the book. Usually it's a balance between history and a travelogue. So this one is somewhat less humorous, but nevertheless interesting, well written and informative. Olympic games back in the day certainly were not what we're used to now, a wholly different (and very naked) kind of spectacle is presented here. Once again the author makes history come alive with his wit, erudition and attention to detail. This has got to be the only book I've ever read from the sports section of the library. Slender yet very informative and entertaining volume. Quick fun read. Recommended.

Catherine says

Great read during my trip to Greece which included a visit to Olympia

Tina says

Some interesting tidbits about the Ancient Olympics, a little dry in parts.

Jerry Smith says

Very enjoyable, easy read. Certainly not for you if you are looking for serious scholarly information, but that isn't the intent of this book. It sets out to explain what the ancient games were really like, especially for those attending. TP also covers the competitors, the nature of the competitions themselves, the judges and the

whole structure of the 5 day festival that was the Olympic games.

I have been to Olympia, and it remains one of the most atmospheric places I have ever visited. Much of the splendour that was the ancient olympic site has been lost to us, but nonetheless, it has the power to capture the imagination. TP goes a good job of expanding that out into a description of how the games functioned, and he sets it into its context pretty well also.

As I am fascinated by ancient civilizations as well as the Olympics both ancient and modern, this book was right up my street. I like books like this that don't take themselves too seriously, but also have facts that add to my knowledge. I definitely learned some things and the author does a good job of bringing the games to life.

It's a short read - a relatively small book and written with a light touch so even if you are not passionate about the subject, you will find it easy enough to get through. The overall quality of the editing and writing is not top notch in my opinion. There are numerous examples of repetition - basically the same story told to illustrate different (and sometimes the same) points. This often LOOKS as though it is unintentional, since it leaves the reader thinking: "I've heard this before" and the text doesn't generally acknowledge that we have heard the particular anecdote previously.

As I say, not a deep book that could be considered a reference book, but I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Clark Knowles says

Fantastic book. For anyone who follows the Olympics, this is a must read. The ancient Olympics ran for 1200 years--mind boggling, really. Tony Perrottet reveals the bloody, drunken, naked religious and athletic festival in all its glory. It sounds like a cliché, but he really does allow the reader to "feel like they are there."

Paige says

I wasn't sure how to rate this. At first I liked it, as it was very informative. But I guess it got a little graphic for me, and it later became a little uncomfortable for me to read... maybe I just wasn't ready to know THAT much about the ancient games! ;)

Jennifer says

I would give this book a 3.5 or 4. Perrottet covers many aspects of the original Olympics despite the difficulty of finding primary sources. Good historical overview.

Nathan says

A lighthearted popular history of the original Olympic Games that should appeal mainly to armchair enthusiasts of Greek history. While impressive scholarship or exhaustive research is not the order of the day,

there is enough to satisfy - and entertain - the casual reader.

James says

To quote Gertrude Stein, there's no there there. The writing is fine, but the book could have easily been cut down to a long piece in the *New Yorker*. It feels padded. There are plenty of passages in which Perrottet invokes what have to be legends to make his narrative seem like a recounting of fact:

In one famous tiebreaker at Nemea, a certain Demoxenos of Syracuse jabbed out with his outstretched fingers, pierced the skin covering his opponent's rib cage, and pulled out his intestines. The judge denied Demoxenos victory, not for killing the other boxer but on the obscure technicality that he had actually struck four blows--one for each of his finger.

Really? And who cares? The book is filled with anecdotes like this: they don't ring true and aren't that interesting.

Alix says

A bit repetitive at times, but for a nonfiction book this was pretty good. I actually enjoyed the time I spent reading it and it was the perfect mix between story and fact. Would recommend, even though I doubt I will ever read it again.

Jay Daze says

A lot of interesting factoids about the ancient olympic games using the five days of the games as a way of structuring the book. While there was lots of interesting stuff about how the games have always been profession, corrupt and basically gross, I found there wasn't much of a narrative through line (I'm mostly a fiction reader), so I found the book a little too easy to put down and pick up. More bathroom reading than urgent reading. That said, the writing was clear, the facts were interesting. The fuck tents remind me of how prostitutes usually stream into modern cities hosting the games to keep up with demand. Either a depressing thought or a reassuring note on the constancy of human existence - probably depressing.

Vicki Cline says

This is a reconstruction of what the Greek games at Olympia must have been like. Perrottet describes events in chronological order, starting with the arrival of the athletes at the nearby town of Elis, through the day-by-day athletic events, with asides about training, evening debauchery, and cheating, among others. I was amazed at the large amount of detail available from ancient sources. Also included are many illustrations of various events found inside Greek drinking cups. The only lack was a map of Greece showing where the different cities mentioned were at.

Don says

Really interesting description of the ancient Olympics... the angle is terrific: Here's what it's like for the athletes and fans heading into and during the games at Olympia. This book dispels many myths surrounding the Olympics -- and enlightens us that the glory of sport was just as overbearing as it is today (for all the good and bad -- corruption, greed, sex, etc. -- it just is what it is, and what it ain't, that's all).
