

A PIN - FEVER PRIMER

COLLECTING OLYMPIC GAMES MEMORIES

Every pin collection, small or large, begins with the acquisition of a single pin—quickly followed by a desire for more.



Souvenir pin from the 1984 Los Angeles Games featuring the mascot, Sam the Eagle.

Though Olympic Games pins have adorned lapels for nearly a century now, the hobby of collecting these tiny, alluring keepsakes is still in its infancy. Whether you're a beginning collector or already a veteran, you're right on time for a front-row seat

at what has become the number-one spectator "sport" of the Games.

The hobby is booming, as thousands of new collectors around the globe are exposed to pin fever with every Olympic Games. Pin designs are continuously coming on

the market, too, especially now that the Winter and Summer Games are staggered at two-year intervals. That means there's always someone new to trade with, a new pin to add to your collection, and something new to learn.

Since the 1980 Lake Placid Games, trading fever seems to more than double with each successive Olympiad. Olympic Games pins have also become part of the scene at such other events as the U.S. Olympic Festival, the Goodwill Games, Olympic Team qualifying trials, and the Paralympic Games.

In Europe, which has hosted more Games than any other continent and thus has a well-established tradition of pin collecting, the hobby has even leapt from the sporting arena to the fashion pages; style mavens and young hipsters of both sexes can be seen with glittering pin-adorned jackets, hats, and even tuxedo lapels.

Perhaps most interesting about the hobby's explosive growth, however, is its diverse appeal: Olympic Games pinheads



Unofficial souvenir pin, 1994 Winter Games.

come in all ages and races; they're male and female, athletes and nonathletes, corporate tycoons and blue-collar workers. Pin collecting and trading recognizes no borders—economic, national, or social.

In contrast with the stagnant growth of such well-established collectibles as stamps, coins, and baseball cards, Olympic Games pins are being called the hottest sports collectible of the 1990s.

Whether your collection consists of a few pins you bought just for fun or covers all four walls of your den, you'll likely find something in the following strategy guide to help you better understand and enjoy your place in the world's fastest-growing hobby.

DID YOU KNOW . . . The first official bridge pin showed a skier en route from Sarajevo to Calgary. An earlier bridge pin linked the 1980 Games in Lake

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Beginning collectors often “shotgun collect” any Olympic Games pins they can find—an approach that’s also known as the anything-with-the-rings syndrome. Though this is a great way to amass a lot of pins, it can also prove frustrating (not to mention expensive), since collecting every Olympic Games pin ever made is virtually impossible. Thousands of designs have been manufactured over the years; more than 3,000 different pins are being created for the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games alone.

Eventually you may decide to narrow your focus, seeking out the Olympic Games pins that make a personal connection with your interests, tastes, and loyalties. You might decide to collect only Atlanta Games pins, or only those from Summer Games. Many earnest collectors specialize in just a few narrow categories.

Recognized genres of pins include sport pins, National



Club membership pin, 1987.

Olympic Committee (NOC) pins, media pins, and sponsor pins. (See “What’s Collectible?” on page 82.) Or you can fashion a more personal specialty, such as pins from the year you first attended an Olympic Games, or pins that simply look nice to you. The choices seem endless.

An added benefit to specializing is that it increases the thrill of the hunt, giving you a target when it’s time to buy or trade.

LEARN ALL YOU CAN

Since the hobby is relatively young, information about it is still transmitted mainly by word of mouth. Aficionados rely on a loose network of collectors—with whom they have phone, fax, mail, and even on-line computer relationships—to swap information about the value and availability of specific pins.

Indeed, until the formation of the 1996 Olympic Games Pin Society and the creation of its publications (including this book; the Pin Society’s newsletter, PIN POINTS; and up-



LORI ADAMSKA-PEEK

coming pin guides), very little had been published in this country about the hobby; you won’t find many books and magazine articles on the topic at your local library. The few pin guides produced for Los Angeles, Calgary, and Seoul, for example, are now out of print, and guides to Lillehammer pins are written in Norwegian. A few serious hobbyists have also gathered some information about individual pins, which they share with others for a small fee. (See “Resources,” page 96.)

Yet the best way to become a knowledgeable

collector is to learn as much as you can. So where do you turn? This book, the *1996 Olympic Games Countdown*, provides information on Olympic Games pins that has never before been gathered together in one place.

For finding out about individual pins, no source is better than other collectors. Most of them pick up such knowledge over time, in the course of many trades. They discover through trial and error what pins are made of, how to spot fakes, and what current values are.

The best place to talk to

SHOW AND SELL

California collectors Suzanne Papazian and Robert Bravender welcome fellow traders at the Lillehammer Winter Games. Right: a 1994 commemorative pin.





NINA BARNETT

WANT TO TRADE?

Indianapolis, Indiana, dealer-collector Judy Dupler displays her wares on boards so pinheads can quickly size up her offerings.

other collectors is where they tend to gather: at the Olympic Games and at other major amateur sporting events, as well as at pin shows, meets, and other organized trading events.

You can also learn a lot about pins by familiarizing yourself with the Olympic Movement and with world history, culture, and geography in general. An atlas or an encyclopedia can be your best friend when trying to identify the flag on a nameless NOC pin, for example, or when trying

to connect a city to a pin that simply says 1952 and has a winter motif. Every pin tells a story, but you may not understand it unless you can decipher the clues it gives you.

EXPLORE THE MANY SOURCES OF PINS

Participating in the Games is the most direct way to expose yourself to the best and brightest pins, whether you make the journey to Atlanta to experience the fun firsthand or do so vicariously by joining a club such as the 1996 Olympic Games Pin Society for improved access to official pins. Pinheads can find plenty of "off-season" opportunities for acquiring pins as well, including these:

- **Retail offerings.** Likely outlets include mall kiosks, comic-book stores and similar shops where baseball cards and collectibles are sold, and souvenir shops in Olympic Games host cities.
- **Pin shows, swap meets, and auctions.** In addition to a growing number of informal buying-

The Australian team mascot, Willy the koala, on a souvenir pin.

and-trading sessions just for Olympic Games pins, you can find pins at baseball-card and sports-memorabilia shows. Also check flea markets and antique shows, particularly in cities that have hosted previous Games.

- **Athletic events.** Pin trading thrives at most Olympic-related events, such as qualifying trials and national championships of sports common to the Olympic Games.

- **Olympic-related organizations.** Favorite sources for longtime collectors are National Olympic Committees and sports federations (such as national governing bodies, a.k.a. NGBs, and international

Unofficial commemorative pin from 1984 Summer Games.

federations, a.k.a. IFs) of countries that participate in the Games. Not all organizations will respond, but many will send a pin upon written request. For NOCs, it's customary to make a donation (typically \$10 to \$25) to the country's Olympic effort. (Expect about a 25 percent response rate, and be patient; some collectors, having given up hope after waiting many months for a reply, later receive the pin of their dreams.) At press time, plans called for the Pin Society to sell NOC pins, too.

- **Sponsors.** Like Olympic-related organizations, official Olympic Games sponsors will sometimes give pins to those who request them; such corporate pins are free advertising for the companies, so some sponsors will provide them at no charge as a goodwill gesture; others do not.

- **Other pinheads.** Many collectors swap pins and infor-

