Traditional Bulgarian Sports

**Wrestling**

Wrestling was firstly introduced by the thracians 3000 years ago.

The most renowned revolutioneers from ottoman time were very good wrestlers. Even the genius poet Hristo Botev.

Nikola Petrov and Dan Kolov are bulgarian wrestlers who have won the first medals for the country. Petrov won world championship in Paris in 1900 and Dan Kolov won the european championship in 1936, also in the french capital.

**Volleyball**

Volleyball became popular in Bulgaria in the twentieth century. The men’s national team first took part in the World League in 1994. They went all the way to the Semi-Finals, led by players like Dimo Tonev and Lubo Ganev.

In 2003, the Under-21 team won a medal at the World Championship, with players such as Matey Kaziyski.

In 2011 Bulgaria qualified for the first time in the Final Round after four years, they finished as the fifth rank. The 2012 Final Round was held in the newly opened Armeets Arena in Sofia, and the host reached the Semi-Finals once again.

In 2018, Bulgaria is one of the hosts of FIVB Volleyball Men’s World Championship. The Bulgarian national team took 11th place in the final rating.

**Athletics**

The first Olympic Games were held in 776 B.C. Centuries later, after the revival of the modern Olympics in 1896, Bulgaria has marked great success in the sport.

Bulgarian athletes had their Olympic debut in Paris in 1924. Four Bulgarians competed then.

In comparison to other sports, however, track and field athletics in Bulgaria developed slowly. After the Olympic games in 1972 in Munich the world started to speak with astonishment about the Bulgarian athletes.

Bulgaria was very successful at the games in Montreal in 1976, too. The biggest triumph for the Bulgarian athletes came in Seoul in 1988 when Yordanka Donkova won the Olympic gold in the 100 m hurdles, while Hristo Markov became an Olympic champion in the triple jump. Markov’s medal is the first gold medal won by a Bulgarian male athlete at Olympic Games. In 1988 legendary Stefka Kostadinova won the silver in high jump, while Tsvetanka Hristova grabbed the silver in the discus throw. In 2012 in London, more than 2000 athletes competed and Bulgaria proved that traditions in the sport have not been lost.

**Some of the most successful Bulgarian athletes.**

In the end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s Bulgaria had world stars in athletics and Stefka Kostadinova - a retired athlete who competed in the high jump was one of them. In 1987 the Bulgarian set a world record of 209 cm, which remains unbeaten to this day. She is the 1996 Olympic champion, a two-time World champion and a five-time World Indoor champion. She has been the president of the Bulgarian Olympic Committee since 2005.

Tereza Marinova competed in long jump and triple jump. In her earlier days, she became both European Junior and World Junior champion, and she still holds the world junior record at triple jump. At the 2000 Summer Olympics, she won the gold medal with a personal best jump of 15.20 meters. In long jump her personal best is 6.46 m.

Tihomir Ivanov specializes in the high jump. He won a gold medal at the 2019 Summer Universiade in Naples.

He has personal bests of 2.31 metres outdoors (London 2017) and 2.28 metres indoors (Banská Bystrica & Beograd 2017). He is one of the rising stars of Bulgarian Track and Field.

Petar Petrov is a retired Bulgarian sprinter who specialized in the 100 metres. In 1973 he won two European Junior silver medals in the 100 and 200 metres. He was 1976 Olympic 100 metres finalist, where he finished 8th. He also won seven Balkan Games titles. On domestic level, Petrov won nine outdoor Bulgarian sprint titles and five indoor 60 metres titles. His personal best time was 10.13 seconds, achieved at the 1980 Olympics. This is the Bulgarian record.

Vania Stambolova is a Bulgarian athlete. She competes in the 400 m hurdles and the 400 m event. At the 2006 IAAF World Indoor Championships she won a silver medal over 400 m. She also won a gold medal at the 2006 European Championships. But at the 2014 European Championships, she finished in 6th place in the 800 m, setting a personal best in the final.

Ivet Lalova-Collio is an athlete who specialises in the 100 metres and 200 metres sprint events. She is the 12th-fastest woman in the history of the 100 metres and is tied with Irina Privalova for the fastest time by a sprinter not of West African descent. Her career was interrupted for two years between June 2005 and May 2007 due to a leg injury. She has participated in four editions of the Olympic Games and will take part in the 2020 Olympic games in Tokyo.

**Football**

As the most popular sport in Bulgaria Football was introduced in 1893–1894 by Swiss gymnastics teachers invited to the country.The first football match was played in Varna’s High School for Boys in 1894, where it was introduced by Georges de Regibus, and the game was brought to Sofia by Charles Champaud the following year. Nowadays football competition tournaments include:First league, Second league, Third league and Regional groups-divided by region.There is also Cup and Super Cup.Bulgarian football achieved its biggest Olympic success, being third in the 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne and second in the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico City, also finishing fifth in Euro 1968.Then, in the 1994 FIFA World Cup, came Bulgaria's biggest World Cup success, the fourth place, the elimination of reigning world champions Germany and Hristo Stoichkov's top goalscorer prize.

CSKA Sofia, Levski Sofia and Ludogorets Razdgrad are three of Bulgaria’s most successful professional clubs competing in Champions League and League Europa.

Famous footballers like Hristo Stoichkov, Dimitar Berbatov, Martin Petrov and Stiliyan Petrov played in Premier League, Spain’s La Liga, France’s Liga 1 and other leagues.

**Weightlifting**

Gradually, by means of general physical development, weightlifting is identified as an independent sport discipline.

In the beginning, our weightlifters compete in different International meets to gain experience. The first success for our country brings Luben Bozev, who in 1928 have set a world record. Unfortunately, in that time Bulgaria didn’t have good conditions to develop. Better opportunities have come years later.

On December 22, 1947, after a wrestling competition in Sofia, was held the first weightlifting competition. Immediately after that, under the leadership of Zhivko Filipov training conditions were created. Together with Angel Akrabov, they wrote the first teaching tool.

From 1950 to 1960, the first centers for weightlifting appeared in the country.

Bulgarian weightlifters debuted at Olympic Games in Melbourne in 1956 when Ivan Abadzhiev placed 7th while Ivan Vasilev was fifth. This way the first Olympic Games became the most successful ones for Bulgaria’s weightlifting. From then on the sport brought a lot of glory to the country.

Milka Maneva is the first bulgarian woman, who has won a medal from the Olympics.