

## Get Ready for the Games

Athletes from around the world are preparing to go for the gold in Brazil

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ANDY LYONS—GETTY IMAGES

Organizers are promising opening ceremonies filled with the sounds and rhythms of Brazil. But once the 2016 Summer Olympic Games get under way in Rio de Janeiro, the focus will turn to sports. Nearly 11,000 of the world's best athletes will take part in the Games.

The Olympics will run from August 5 to 21, with athletes from 206 countries competing in 42 sports. An audience of 4.3 billion is expected to watch on television. Then, from September 7 to 18, the Paralympic Games will shine the spotlight on 4,350 athletes with disabilities. This year's Paralympics will feature athletes from 176 countries competing in 23 sports.

### South America's Olympics

The Olympic Games date back to ancient Greece. French educator Pierre de Coubertin founded the first modern Olympics. He hoped the Games would

promote peace among nations. The first modern Olympics were held in 1896, in Athens, Greece. The 2016 Games will be the first in South America. Rio has been preparing for the 2016 Olympics since 2009, when it won the bid to host the Games. New roads, buildings, and a 10-mile subway extension have been built. About 85,000 soldiers and police are set to provide security for athletes and fans. The cost of the Games is expected to be about \$11 billion. But government scandals, a health crisis, and other challenges may take a toll on the festivities. (To read about these challenges, click [here](#).)

### **Hope and Glory**

Although preparation for the Games has been filled with challenges, many athletes are excited about the upcoming Olympics. “Any time you get to represent your country is amazing,” U.S. swimmer Reece Whitley, 16, told TFK. “To represent your country at the largest sporting event in the world is a whole other story.”

The record-breaking athlete was *Sports Illustrated Kids’* 2015 SportsKid of the Year. He will find out in July if he’s made it onto Team U.S.A. Each sport has its own Olympic trials. U.S. athletes in track and field, cycling, fencing, sailing, and wrestling have already secured spots.



JOSHUA HUSTON—NBAE/GETTY IMAGES

Breanna Stewart of the Seattle Storm shoots a free-throw against the Phoenix Mercury during a preseason game on May 4 at Key Arena in Seattle, Washington.

Breanna Stewart, 21, was chosen for the U.S. Olympic women’s basketball team in April. Stewart has led the University of Connecticut’s Huskies to four consecutive NCAA tournament championships. On April 14, she was the

Seattle Storm's Number 1 pick in the WNBA draft. But, she says, "playing in the Olympics is my biggest goal—and winning a gold medal."

The Rio Games will feature the newly created Team Refugee Olympic Athletes (ROA). The five- to 10-person team will include athletes who have had to flee their homelands. In a statement, International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach called the inclusion of the ROA "a message of hope for all the refugees in the world."

Pierre de Coubertin said that "the important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part." After 120 years, that spirit of sportsmanship and community lives on. "It's really cool to interact with athletes from all over the world," Whitley says. Stewart agrees. "You're playing the sport you love, at the highest possible stage within the sport, with all these other countries," she says. "There's no finer goal."

To learn more about all Olympic hopefuls, visit [teamusa.org](http://teamusa.org). The Olympics begin on August 5.

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