



FASTER HIGHER STRONGER

Explore the Olympics past and present

The summer games of the 30th Olympiad are almost upon us. The world's greatest athletes — including, for the first time, women from Saudi Arabia — will gather in London on Friday to compete on behalf of their home countries.

The winners of the gold in the premier sports, such as swimming, track and gymnastics, will go on to fame and endorsement fortunes. The winners in the lesser-watched events, like archery, badminton and table tennis, will have the satisfaction of being the best in the world, but they probably won't be on any Wheaties boxes.

In addition to the upcoming television and newspaper coverage of the games, there are several websites that offer extensive coverage of the 2012 Olympics, as well as looks at past and future games.

Olympians online

Olympic.org is the official website of the Olympic Movement, a collaboration of international sports organizations overseen by the International Olympic Committee. The site focuses on the Olympics as a whole, not just the London games, but there is plenty of information on the upcoming 2012 events.

The home page is a dynamic collection of images, video and graphics that connect you with the interior content of the site. A slide show at the top of the page allows you to

The games

When: Opening ceremony Friday, July 27, 4 p.m.; Closing ceremony Sunday, Aug. 12, 4 p.m.

Where: London

Coverage: NBC; NBCOlympics.com will stream live coverage of all the events

click into coverage of London, relive the Beijing games, follow athletes on social media, take virtual tours of the Olympic Museum or play online Olympic events like archery, swimming, track, skeet shooting and more. There's also an RSS newsfeed superimposed over the images.

Below the slideshow are the logos for the Olympic games from 2006 to 2018. Clicking on the logos brings you to pages dedicated to those particular games.

In the eye of the beholder

Speaking of Olympic logos, the design for 2012 has to be one of the worst ever. It's an abstraction of the numbers "2012" as fragmented shapes that change color as the games draw closer. The design has sparked a lot of online criticism and debate, with the more conspiracy-minded making charges of hidden images, words and meanings.

As long as I'm criticizing Olympic branding, I might as well take a shot at the 2012 mascots. Named Wenlock and Mandeville, they're creepy shiny-skinned, one-eyed creatures that are supposed to be made of molten steel. Wenlock, who reminds me of Plankton from *SpongeBob SquarePants*, looks perpetually angry and Mandev-

ille looks scared or confused.

Despite these aesthetic transgressions, the rest of the site is visually strong. It's busy because of all of the content, but the use of logical grids, unified typography and color palettes helps to keep it organized. And, of course, given the subject matter, there are lots of excellent photos and videos throughout the site.

Visually inspiring

Tabs across the top of the page lead to pages on a variety of topics. There are profiles of past games, the Youth Olympic Games, sections on all the various sports, athlete and country profiles, photos, videos and more. An interactive timeline at the bottom of the games' profile pages lets you select games as far back as Athens in 1896.

Perusing the many photo galleries of games past is a fun way to pass some time. It's amazing to see the evolution of the athletes over the years from fit bodies whose sport is hard to determine, to today's ultra-ripped specialists. The pictures are terrific, but often the captions don't give enough information.

There are hundreds of videos of different events, from the historic to the obscure. There are also some video montages on the site that are spectacular. They combine Olympic triumphs, tragedies and pageantry from over the years to create some truly inspiring viewing.

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