

CONTACT: Morgan Perry
Telephone: [719-482-9871](tel:719-482-9871)
E-mail: pr@money.org

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Seven Things You Didn't Know About Olympic Medals

(Colorado Springs, CO)—With so much excitement around the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio, here are seven obscure Olympic medal facts courtesy of the Money Museum in Colorado Springs, Colo. The museum is currently exhibiting "Olympic Games—History & Numismatics," honoring the history, ideals and pageantry of the world's finest athletic event.

#1. Olympic gold medals aren't really gold

The last series of medals made of solid gold were awarded at the 1912 Summer Olympic Games in Stockholm. Traditionally, Olympic gold medals are required to be made from at least 92.5% silver, and must contain a minimum of 6 grams of gold.

#2. "Citius, Altius, Fortius"

The Olympic Motto, "Citius, Altius, Fortius" ("Faster, Higher, Stronger"), has been the official motto of the Games since 1924. The motto has been featured on four Winter Games medals, but does not appear on any medals from the Summer Games.

#3. A wreath for first place

During the first modern Olympics in 1896, first-place athletes were crowned with an olive wreath and awarded a silver medal. It was not until the 1904 Summer Olympic Games in St Louis, that the now-famous gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded.

#4. Winter Games medals are heavier

Olympic medal designs have varied considerably over time. Award medals presented at the Summer Games tend to lean on a classical design, whereas medals awarded at the Winter Games have a more freestyle layout. The Winter Games medals are generally larger, thicker, and heavier than those for the Summer Games.

#5. Why do Olympians bite their medals?

Winning athletes are often photographed biting their medals. This is usually at the photographer's request, and is based on the ancient practice of biting into gold to test its purity and authenticity.

#6. Artistry worthy of Olympic medals

From 1912 to 1948, art competitions were held as part of the Olympic Games, and medals were awarded for works of art inspired by sport. The five categories included: architecture, literature, music painting, and sculpture.

#7. Worth their weight in gold

With 18 Olympic gold medals, Michael Phelps holds the all-time medal record. The record for most gold medals held by a woman belongs to Larisa Latynina, a former Soviet gymnast, with nine.

Olympic Medals Exhibit at the Money Museum

"Olympic Games—History & Numismatics" is currently on exhibit at the Money Museum in Colorado Springs, Colo. The exhibit features rare Syracusan dekadrachms (Greek coins) awarded during the fifth century B.C.; a 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics bronze medallion designed by the famed Karl Goetz; a complete set of award medals from the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics and 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics courtesy of the U.S. Olympic Committee; plus participation medals, torches and even a few mascots.

The museum includes an extensive and ever-growing collection of historical numismatic treasures. This one-of-a-kind facility showcases some of the most valuable coins and related items the public cannot see anywhere else. Rarities include a 1913 Liberty Head nickel valued at \$2 million and two of the 15 known 1804 dollars valued together at \$6 million.

The Money Museum is located at 818 N. Cascade Ave, adjacent to the campus of Colorado College and next door to the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. Museum hours of operation are Tuesday-Saturday, 10:30 am-5 pm. Admission is \$5 (\$4 for seniors, military and students). Kids 12 and under are free. For more information visit www.money.org/money-museum or call 719-632-2646.