

Top 10 Sports Achievements from the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona

Credited with revitalizing Barcelona and doubling its tourist numbers, the 1992 Summer Olympics were memorable for more than sports. It was the first boycott-free Olympics since 1972, the first time several Eastern European countries competed independently, the first appearance of a united German team, the last time athletes from the Soviet Union competed as a Unified Team, and the first appearance of a racially integrated South African team. “Barcelona” (a duet by Freddie Mercury and opera star Montserrat Caballé) was the theme song, and costs were approximately \$9.69 billion USD with cost overruns of 266%. Here are 10 of the most memorable sports moments from these Olympics.

- 1. The First Appearance of the U.S. Men’s Basketball “Dream Team.”** The increasing presence of pro athletes at the Olympics reached its pinnacle with the appearance of active NBA players on the U.S. men’s basketball team. Featuring NBA stars Michael Jordan, Scottie Pippen, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Charles Barkley, the “Dream Team” (as it was dubbed) has been touted as the “greatest sports team ever assembled” by sports journalists. The team dominated every game it was in—scoring more than 100 points per game and outscoring opponents by an average of 43.8 points. The team won the gold medal after defeating Croatia and is credited with increasing global interest in basketball.
- 2. Vitaly Scherbo Dominates Men’s Gymnastics.** In a stunning performance, Belarus gymnast Vitaly Scherbo made Olympic history by winning gold medals in six of eight events (team, all around, pommel horse, rings, vault and parallel bars)—the most ever earned by a gymnast at a single Olympics. Even more impressive, Scherbo won four of the medals on the same day. This accomplishment led many to call him as the greatest male gymnast of all time. Known for his outspokenness as well as his gymnastic skills, Scherbo was inducted into the International Gymnastics Hall of Fame in 2009. He opened the Vitaly Scherbo School of Gymnastics in Las Vegas in 1998.
- 3. Linford Christie Sprints to the Gold.** At age 32, British sprinter Linford Christie found himself facing a pack of much younger sprinters in the 100 meters—with some almost 11 years his junior. Christie knew he faced an uphill battle. American sprinter Leroy Burrell was favored to win, and several of the sprinters had recently set personal bests. After a false start by Burrell, Christie hunkered down and blasted out of the blocks—winning the race in 9.96 seconds (the only competitor to go under 10 seconds) and becoming the oldest man to win the gold medal in the 100 meters—a record he still holds.
- 4. Spain’s Unprecedented Olympic Success.** At the 1992 games in Barcelona, Spain won three times as many medals than its entire Olympic history. With a final count of 22 medals (13 gold, 7 silver, and 2 bronze), the Spanish Olympic team experienced unprecedented

success. Fermín Cacho's unexpected win in the 1500 meter final was one such highlight as it was the first gold for Cacho and the first ever for Spain in a running event. The men's Under-23 football gold medal before a crowd of almost hundred thousand was another sweet victory. Miriam Blasco's gold in the women's judo 57 kg division was also notable as the 1992 Olympics marked the first time women's judo appeared at the games.

5. **Evelyn Ashford Wins Fourth Olympic Gold.** American sprinter Evelyn Ashford had already made a name for herself before the 1992 games—winning two golds at the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles and another at the 1988 games in Seoul. In her final Olympics at the age of 35, Ashford won her fourth gold medal—making her the oldest American woman to win a gold medal in track and field and one of only a handful of women to win multiple golds in the sport. Her three consecutive gold medals in the 4x100m relay is an accomplishment unmatched by any female athlete.
6. **Derek Redmond's Injury.** Not all memorable moments come from victories. Sometimes perseverance in the face of pain and disappointment elevates an athlete's accomplishments into the history books. Such was the case with Britain's Derek Redmond, a 400 meter runner who tore his hamstring during his semi-final heat. Collapsing in pain, Redmond's race and Olympic dreams were over. But what came next is what people remember. Getting to his feet, the visibly pained Redmond made his way to the finish line hopping on one leg. Halfway there, Redmond's father joined him and helped his sobbing son across the finish line, where he was greeted with a standing ovation.
7. **Young Olympians Make Their Mark.** The 1992 Olympics featured athletes of all ages. We've already discussed the accomplishments of older athletes such as Evelyn Ashford and Linford Christie, but what about the younger Olympians who distinguished themselves at the games? Most notable was China's Fu Mingxia, who won the high dive event at age 13—making him one of the youngest gold medalists of all time. Another standout was Kyoko Iwasaki of Japan, who won the 200 meter breaststroke at age 14. The 1992 games also featured one of the youngest Olympians: Carlos Front, who at age 11 competed as the coxswain on Spain's rowing team.
8. **Krisztina Egerszegi Wins Three Gold Medals.** Hungarian swimmer Krisztina Egerszegi made her mark on the 1992 Olympics by becoming the only female athlete to win three individual gold medals. Known as the "Little Mouse of Hungary," Egerszegi ended up winning five individual gold medals in her Olympic career—the only female swimmer to do so. She held the world record for the 200 meter backstroke for 17 years. Egerszegi is perhaps most well-known for her legendary "gap time" at the 1996 Summer Olympics, where she had a 4.15 second lead on the second place swimmer—the greatest gap time in the history of 200 meter female swimming.
9. **Chris Boardman Energizes British Cycling.** Britain hadn't won a gold medal in cycling in 72 years until Chris Boardman broke the world and Olympic record in men's individual pursuit at the 1992 Olympic summer games. At the time of his historic victory, Boardman was unemployed, broke and married with two children. No one—including Boardman—expected him to win the gold medal. Armed with an experimental bicycle designed by self-

taught engineer Mike Burrows, Boardman stunned the cycling world with his gold medal victory. Boardman credits that bicycle—which came to be known as Lotus Superbike or “Wind Cheetah”—with playing a critical role in his victory.

10. **A Historic Victory Lap.** The women’s 10,000-meter final wasn’t particularly close—with Ethiopia’s Derartu Tulu beating out South Africa’s Elana Meyer for the gold by almost 5 seconds. But these two runners made history for who they were and what they did next. Tulu was the first black African woman to win an Olympic gold medal. Meyer, who is white, was the first South African to win an individual medal since her country returned to the Olympics after being banned due to apartheid. After the race, Meyer congratulated Tulu, who then grabbed her hand for a joint victory lap. The sight of two Africans—one white and one black—became an iconic image and represented the unifying spirit of the Olympics.