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The world has seen some incredible feats of skill, endurance and prowess recently. The 2012 Olympic Games reached out to more members of our global population than any other sporting event in the history of the world to date. Included in this feast of competition was the sport of BMX. Once seen as an upstart by the cycling community, this event, being included in the Olympics, has shown the world that there is no difference between such long standing events, such as the Pentathlon, and BMXing; from the perspective of training, preparation and skill. So how did this lesser known sport make the journey from hobby and a great way to get muddy with your mates to an Olympic event?

The roots of the sport can be traced back to 1950's Holland and followed through history to California in the late 60s and early 70s. The kids that wanted to emulate their heroes from the motor-cross world were out, at the weekend and in the evening after school, racing around the countryside on modified road bikes getting dirty and having a great time. Then in the mid-1970s a Dutch motocross rider came to the US to set up an exchange event and in the process saw the smaller bike version of the Dutch cross country bike racing and the two halves of the same sport were effectively united.

The late 1970s were a time of national and even international exposure for the fledgling sport and with popularity rising, a minimum mass was achieved such that bike manufacturers started to invest in the plant and designs required to manufacture specific bikes for the sport. This led to fast paced leaps and bounds for the sport culminating in April 1981 with the creation of the International BMX Federation. This not-for-profit organisation existed to promote and encourage the sport at any and every level. The federation set about homogenising the sport as it stood and helped to develop the sporting identity that it still carries with it today.

The acceptance of the sport at international level helped BMXers everywhere to be seen as serious and honourable competitors. The connection with motocross became less and less appropriate such that in January 1993 the sport was included into the pantheon of events supported by the International Cycling Federation (UCI). This sealed its appropriateness for inclusion in many more international cycling orientated events and the world of BMX Freestyle continued to grow from this firm base.

The modern world of Freestyle BMX includes: Dirt, Vert, Park, Street and Flatland sections. With major sponsorship and world television coverage the sport has become part of the culture of modern athletic endeavours. So much so that, in 2008, the IOC (International Olympic Committee) included it in the events for the Beijing Olympics.

Watching the 2012 Olympic BMX events was a stunning and intense experience but for many perhaps there has been the question of where did this relatively new sport come from. Like many modern sports it came from the street and it is a testament to the changing nature of our times that we can include such sports alongside the centuries old standards of say running and boxing.

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William Hill - About Author:

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