

HISTORY OF SPORT IN SAUDI ARABIA AND CURRENT SITUATION

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## ABSTRACT

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Thirty-nine years ago Saudi Arabia began participating in international sporting events. During those years, the Saudi population expected a higher level of achievement based on human and material potentials, reputation, and economic position of their country. This situation asked: what does Saudi Arabia need to do to improve success in the Olympic Games? What might be missing? In other words, what do Saudis' athletes need to be competitive? This study took an historical review of the sports programs as one way to answer these questions. This study presented a brief overview of Saudi Arabia. Also, this study showed the history of sports development in Saudi Arabia from inception to the present. Medal count in the Olympic Games was the method used to determine success. Its history was divided into four sport periods starting with the establishment of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare. The ratio between the number of Olympic medals and population, were compared with the United States of America, China, and Australia. What was found in this study was that initially, the total number of medals that Saudi Arabia won in all events increased, followed by a decrease from the middle of the third period through the present period. From this study three suggestions for the improvement in medal count at the Olympic Games were the following: First, encourage Saudis to use the sports facilities by opening it to the general population. Second, create development programs for youth, coaches, athletes, referees, and administrators. Finally, cultivate and increase competitive interest in a variety of sports, particularly individual sports.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2	
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	2
Overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	2
Weather	2
Main Cities	3
History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	4
First Period: the first Saudi country (1744-1818)	4
Second Period: the second Saudi country (1824-1891)	5
Third Period: the third Saudi country (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)	6
Politics	7
Administrative Divisions	8
Currency	10
Education	10
Economy	11
Sport in Saudi Arabia	13
Sport Organization in Saudi Arabia	15
Organizational Development of Sport	18
Sports Facilities in Saudi Arabia	20
General Presidency of Youth Welfare Headquarters	20
Main and Branch Offices in the Central, Western and Eastern Regions	20
Olympic Committee and Sports Federations	21
King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh	21
Sports and Cities Centers	21
Sports Halls and Swimming Pools	22
Sports Headquarters for Clubs	22
Coastal Cities	23
General Presidency of Youth Welfare Stadia	23
Youth Hostels	24
Permanent Youth Camps	24
Leader's Preparation Institute	24
Sports Yards (Plazas)	25
Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Physiotherapy Hospital	25
The Gym of the Saudi Association for People with Special Needs and Paralympics Committee	25
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Participating in Overseas Events	26

Pan Arab Games	26
Asian Games	27
Summer Olympic Games	28
FIFA World Cup	30
Gulf Counties Soccer Cup	30
Asian Soccer Cup	31
Sports Development and Achievement During the Time	31
Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1974 to 1984	32
Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1985 to 1995	33
Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1996 to 2006	34
Sport in Saudi Arabia from 2007 to 2011	35
Comparing all the Periods	37
 CHAPTER 3	
METHODOLOGY	39
 CHAPTER 4	
DISCUSSION	40
 CHAPTER 5	
CONCLUSION	45
 REFERENCES	48

## LIST OF TABLES

Table1: Administrative Divisions in Saudi Arabia	9
Table2: Sports Federations in Saudi Arabia	17
Table3: Saudi Arabia Participation and Achievement in the Summer Olympic Games	29

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure1: Map of Administrative Divisions in Saudi Arabia	10
Figure2: Number of sports federations and the years of established	18
Figure3: The General Presidency for Youth Welfare Budget in Saudi Arabia.	19
Figure4: Saudi Arabian Medals in Pan Arab Games.	27
Figure5: Saudi Arabian Medals in Asian Games.	28
Figure6: Numbers of Sports that Saudi Arabia played in the Summer Olympic Games	30
Figure7: Saudi Arabian Medals from 1974 to 1984	32
Figure8: Saudi Arabian Medals from 1985 to 1995	34
Figure9: Saudi Arabian Medals from 1996 to 2006	35
Figure10: Saudi Arabian Medals from 2007 to 2011	36
Figure11: Comparing medals in all Periods	37
Figure12: Number of Sports Federations in Saudi Arabia	37
Figure13: Ratio Between population and Medals	42
Figure14: Ratio Between Population and Olympic Medals	43

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In 1974, sports in Saudi Arabia began to be administered through the government by an independent organization known as the General Presidency for Youth Welfare. Since that time, Saudi Arabia participated in all international sporting events possible, including the Olympic Games, the Asian Games, and the Arab Pan Games. However, their achievement in those events has been below expectations of the Saudi community.

The purpose of this study was to examine factors that may have affected results in international competition. Factors concerning sports history, culture, social life, education, and politics of Saudi Arabia were examined. Moreover, the internal sport development and the inventory achievements from 1974 to 2011 were included. This time period was divided further into four groups, with the first three each consisting of a ten year period, while the last period consisted of the most recent five years.

This study identified the current achievement level for sport in Saudi Arabia using medal counts and final placements, using this information that could be improved within the Saudi Arabian sports program. It is hoped that examination of this study would be used to aid development of sports in Saudi Arabia, and direct Saudi Arabia on a path to becoming a world leader in International Sports.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Overview of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, known as Saudi Arabia, is located in the Arabian Peninsula in the southwest of Asia with a size of approximately 2,250,000 square kilometers (868,730 sq mi), and a population of 27,136,977, according to the Central Department of Statistics and Information (Oliver, 1987 ). It is bordered by Jordan, Iraq and Kuwait on the North, by Yemen and Oman on the South, the Arabian Gulf, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar on the East, and by the Red Sea on the West. Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coastline stretches about 1,760 kilometers (1,100 miles), while its Arabian Gulf coastline is roughly 560 kilometers (350 miles). In fact, about half of the total area of the country is covered by desert. There are three main deserts; the Al-Rub Al-Khali (the Empty Quarter) located in the south, (650,000 square kilometers) (250,000 sq mi); the Al-Nefud desert on the north (103,600 square kilometers) (40,000 sq mi); and the Al-Dahna Desert, a corridor of sandy terrain forming a bow-like shape that connects Al-Nafud desert in the north to Al-Rub Al-Khali desert in the south. On the west side, Sarawat Mountains run parallel to the western coast of the Arabian Peninsula and is among the Peninsula's most prominent geographical features. These mountains start from Jordan in the north to Yemen in the south. The range's northern half, known as Sarat al-Hejaz, barely rise 2,100 meters, while the middle and southern, known as sarat Asir, portions can reach heights of over 3,300 meters (Long, 1997).

### **Weather**

Almost the entire Kingdom is arid, although there is rainfall in the north and along the mountain range to the west, especially in the far southwest, which receives the monsoon rains in summer. With the exception of the province of Asir on the western coast, Saudi Arabia has a



desert climate characterized by extreme heat during the day, an abrupt drop in temperature at night, and very low annual rainfall. Because of the influence of a subtropical high-pressure system, there is considerable variation in temperature and humidity (Long, 1997). The two main differences in the climate of Saudi-Arabia can be felt between the coastal areas and the interior. The average summer temperature is about 45° C (113° F), but readings of up to 54° C (130° F) are not unusual. The heat becomes intense shortly after sunrise and lasts until sunset, followed by surprisingly cool nights. In the winter, the temperature seldom drops below 0° C (32° F), but the almost total absence of humidity and the high wind-chill factor make a quite cold atmosphere. In the spring and autumn the heat is temperate, with temperatures average around 29° C (84° F) (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia , 2012).

The region of Asir along the Western coast is influenced by the Indian Ocean monsoons, usually occurring between October and March. An average of 300 millimeters (11.8 in) of rainfall occurs during this period, about 60 percent of the annual precipitation. For the rest of the country, rainfall is very low and erratic. The entire year's rainfall may consist of one or two local, heavy cloudbursts or thunderstorms (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia , 2012).

### **Main Cities**

*Makkah* is a sacred city in the west side and the birthplace of prophet Muhammad. Also Makkah contains the Holy Mosque, which receives about two to three million Muslims every year for practicing Hajj. The second-most holy city, *Al-Madinah*, is the city where Prophet Muhammad emigrated and lived. It is located also on the west side. The capital city, *Riyad*, is the largest city in Saudi Arabia and located in the middle of the country. *Jeddah* is located on the coast of the Red Sea, and the second largest city in Saudi Arabia, as well as being largest seaport

on the Red Sea. *Dammam* is the largest city in the Eastern Province and third largest in Saudi Arabia, and is located on the western shore of the Arabian Gulf.

### **History of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Until after the First World War, Arabian land was under the Ottoman Empire control. France and Britain partitioned the Ottoman lands, making Arabia within Britain's sphere of influence. However, Arabia did not become a colony similar to other colonies in the British Empire (Al-Rasheed, 2002). Before World War I, each part of Arabia was controlled by different families: Hijaz, which is the west side, was ruled by Sharifian family; Hasa, on the east side, was ruled by Banu Khalid family; Al- Ali family was in control of the north side; to the south side, Al-Meree was the leader; and in Najd, which is the middle of Arabia, there were several different families ruling different cities, such as Al-Saud in Diriyyah and Bin Dwas in Riyadh.

The country known as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia had three distinct historic periods until it became the country it is known as today, Saudi Arabia. These periods and their significance are detailed in the following paragraphs.

#### **First Period: the first Saudi country (1744-1818)**

In 1744, the first Saudi country started from Diriyyah when the leader Mohammad ibn Saud combined with Mohammad ibn Abdalwahhab to establish a Muslim country under ibn Saud control. Mohammad ibn Saud was able to annex large parts of Arabia under his rule (Al-Rasheed, 2002). In 1765, Mohammad ibn Saud died and his son Abdalaziz completed his father's quest as a leader, primarily working on consolidating the country. The first Saudi country became larger and stronger when they overtook Najd, Hasa, Qatar, Hijaz, and they continued north until they reached southern Iraq. At that time, the leader of the Ottoman Empire felt that Saud country would be a danger to, and threaten the security of the empire, because

people in the Arabian Peninsula began to show loyalty to the Saudi country. As a result of this change in loyalty, the Ottoman Empire would lose part of its land. The Ottoman Empire fought against and destroyed the Saudi country to keep the Empire safe. To initiate this war, a message was sent from the leader of the Ottoman Empire ordering Mohammad Ali Pasha, magistrate of Egypt, to send troops to ibn Saud's country. Mohammad Ali Pasha sent several troops starting in 1811, but ibn Saud continually defeated Empire until 1816, when Mohammad Ali sent troops led by his son Ibrahim. Under Ibrahim's leadership, this army was able to enter from the west side of the Arabian Peninsula through the Red Sea, (a common border between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula) and eventually arrived at the city of Diriyyah in 1818, where Ibrahim surrounded Diriyyah for six months, demolished and destroyed the city, and defeated ibn Saud. The leader of the defeated Saudi country was Abdullah ibn Saud, the grandson of Mohammad bin Saud. Ibrahim took Abdullah and those who survived to Cairo, where they were sent to Istanbul where Abdullah was beheaded. This event ended the first Saudi country period (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

### **Second Period: The second Saudi country (1824-1891)**

After Mohammad Ali's army destroyed Diriyyah and took Abdullah and other survivors of the war to Cairo, Turki ibn Abdullah, the son of Abdullah, was able to escape and returned to Najd to re-establish Al-Saud's country (Hobday, 1978). Turki traveled to Riyadh where he found support for his cause. However, the second Saudi country was not as big as the first one, they only had control in cities and oases around Riyadh, Hail and Qasim in the north side, and Hasa on the east side. The reason for this limited control was because the Egyptian army re-attacked Saudi country and the Ottoman army seized the eastern region. Moreover, Abdualrhman ibn Faysal, grandson of Turki, was faced with an authority challenge from his brother Abdullah.

This challenge and the internal betrayals resulted in a weaker country. Abdullah traveled to Hail after it became independent and asked Mohammad ibn Rashid, governor of Hail, for help against Abdualrhman. Ibn Rashid took an army to Riyadh, won the war, and took Riyadh under his authority (Al-Rasheed, 2002). In 1891, Abdualrhman took his family from Najd and Riyadh, and moved to Kuwait for two reasons. First, Kuwait was far from the dangers posed by Ibn Rashid. Secondly, the relationship between Najd's traders and Kuwait was strong, keeping Abdualrhman up on news from Najd's (Al-Rasheed, 2010). The second Saudi country period ended with Abdualrhman's move to Kuwait (Hobday, 1978).

### **Third Period: the third Saudi country (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)**

Ten years after Abdualrhman moved to Kuwait, his son Abdualaziz, known as Ibn Saud, returned to Najd to restore the rule of his family. On 15 January 1902, Ibn Saud with forty of his companions attacked Riyadh at night, killed Ibn Ajlan, Ibn Rashid's representative in Riyadh, and took it under his authority (Long, 1997). From Riyadh, Ibn Saud began rebuilding his country (Al-Rasheed, 2002). In 1906, both Najd and Qasim were under Ibn Saud control. In 1913, Ibn Saud took Hasa under his rule; followed in 1920 by Asir, on the southeast side, because he determined he needed waterfront for his country (Long, 1997). In 1921, Hail came under Ibn Saud rule, followed by all of the Hijaz area by 1925. Finally in 1930, Ibn Saud took over the final party of the country, known as Al-Mikhlaf Al-Sulimani or Jazan. As part of that takeover, Ibn Saud was named King of Hijaz and Sultan Najd and its dependencies. He named the country the Kingdom of Hijaz and of Najd and its dependencies. In 22 September 1932, he changed his country's name to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and as ruler was known as King Abdualaziz.

King Abdulaziz established the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and established the state constitution based on the principles and laws of the Quran and Sunnah. Also, he built the external relations of the Kingdom with neighboring, such as Kuwait and Egypt, and ally countries, such as the United States of America and The United Kingdom. King Abdulaziz passed away in 1953, and was succeeded as King by all five of his sons, as stated in Article five of the basic law of government in Saudi Arabia:

*“B- Rulers of the country shall be from amongst the sons of the founder King Abdulaziz Bin Abdulrahman al Faisal Al-Saud, and their descendants. The most upright among them shall receive allegiance according to Almighty God's Book and His Messenger's Sunna(The Tradition) (Majlis Ash-Sura, 2013).*

The first successor after King Abdulaziz was King Saud (1953 to 1964), then King Feisal (1964 to 1975), King Khalid (1975 to 1982), (King Fahd from 1982 to 2005), and King Abdullah 2005 until now (Al-Rasheed, 2010).

## **Politics**

Saudi Arabia is an Islamic country under Islamic rule, whose constitution is based on The Holy Quran (God's book) and The Sunna (the traditions or sayings of the prophet Muhammad). The system of government in Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy (Long, 1997), with the King as prime minister, who presides over the Council of Ministers. This Council of Ministers is comprised of the President of the Council of Ministers, Vice-President of the Council of Ministers, Ministers of State who are appointed members of the Council of Ministers by royal decree, and adviser to the king (Majlis Ash-Sura, 2013).

## **Administrative Divisions**

Saudi Arabia is divided into 13 provinces, with each province having a governor appointed by the Council of Ministers. According to article seven in the Law of Provinces; royal order number (A/92) in 1 March 1992 the responsibilities of these governors consist as the following:

*“ The Governor of each province shall assume the administration of the province according to the general policy of the State and in accordance with the provisions of this law as well as other laws and regulations. In particular, he has to:*

- (a) Maintain security, order, and stability, and take necessary measures in accordance with this law and other laws and regulations.*
- (b) Implement court judgments upon becoming final.*
- (c) Guarantee rights and freedom of individuals, refrain from any action affecting such rights and freedom except within the limits provided by Shariah and the law.*
- (d) Work for the social, economical, and developmental of the province.*
- (e) Work for the development and improvement of public services in the province.*
- (f) Administer counties and districts, and monitor the work of the heads of counties, chiefs of districts, and ascertain their efficiency in performing their duties.*

- (g) *Protect and prevent infringement on State property and assets.*
- (h) *Supervise governmental agencies and their employees in the province to ensure proper performance of their duties with integrity taking into consideration their affiliation with various ministries and agencies.*
- (i) *Have direct contact with ministers and heads of agencies and discuss with them affairs of the province with the aim of improving the performance of affiliated with them. A notice to this effect shall be submitted to the Minister of Interior.*
- (j) *Submit annual reports to the Minister of Interior on the efficiency of public services and other affairs of the province as defined by the implementing regulations of this law. (Bureau of Experts at the Council of Ministers , 2011)*

The provinces and their capital are:

Table1: Administrative Divisions in Saudi Arabia.

	Region	Capital		Region	Capital
1	Al-Riyadh	Riyadh City	2	Makkah	Makkah City
3	Al-Madinah	Al-Madinah City	4	Eastern Province	Dammam
5	Al-Bahah	Al-Bahah City	6	Northern Border	Arar
7	Al-Jawf	Sakaka city	8	Al-Qasim	Buraidah
9	Hail	Hail City	10	Asir	Abha
11	Tabuk	Tabuk City	12	Najran	Najran City
13	Jizan	Jizan City			

A map of these provinces follows in Figure1



Figure1: Map of Administrative Divisions in Saudi Arabia.  
For interpretation of the references to color in this and all other figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this thesis.

## **Currency**

The currency in Saudi Arabia is Saudi Riyal, abbreviated as SR. One Saudi Riyal equal to 0.2667 US dollar.

## **Education**

The roots of education and learning in Saudi Arabia continue to be connected to Islamic obligation, historically from the time of prophet Muhammad (Oliver, 1987). Education in early Islamic time began in mosques as a place for teaching the Quran and the Islam religion by prophet Muhammad. Later, learning occurred in small schools called Kuttab, and the curricula were the Quran, Hadith (prophetic traditions), Tfsir (exegesis of Quran and Hadith), Sharia (Islamic creed), Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), Faraid (law of inheritance), and Arabic language



sciences, which included rhetoric, grammar, philology and literature (The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission in the United States of America, 1991).

In 1924, King Abdulaziz established the Directorate of Education as the modern system of education in Saudi Arabia. However, the turning point of education was in 1953 when the Ministry of Education was founded by the government (Oliver, 1987). Prior to 1953, there were only 226 schools at all levels (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia , 2012). From 1953 until the present, Saudi Arabia has worked hard to develop education in the country. According to the Ministry of Education's statistics in 2011, Saudi Arabia has 32,986 schools in general education with 5,146,165 students, 490,097 academic staff, and 26,098 administrative staff. Currently, Saudi Arabia has 24 public universities with 666,475 students and 41,927 faculty members (Ministry of Education , 2011).

## **Economy**

It is difficult to refer to the economy of Saudi Arabia as an actual economy before oil was discovered (Metz, 1992). Prior to the discovery of oil, the country's economy was based on individual and small local businesses. The economy was supported almost solely by the pilgrimage from Muslims around the world visiting the Holy cities of Makkah and Medina, this early economy financially paled in comparison to the vast supply and profits from oil (Metz, 1992). In 1932, the region was ruled by King Abdulaziz Saud, and was established as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia , 2012). Six years after this, a dramatic series of discoveries took place, primarily the discovery of oil.

Saudi Arabia's location was an asset for commerce, sports, and worldwide activities. The Arabian Gulf, as well as the Red Sea, played a big part in the development of the economy of Saudi Arabia as well, due to sea commerce, with thousands of ships and freighters arriving in

Saudi ports transporting goods. This commerce helped to improve the already great economy Saudi Arabia was experiencing due to the discovery of oil, as well as natural gas, and many other petroleum-based resources.

Oil accounts for 90% of Saudi Arabian exports, and most of the government revenues as well (Global EDGE, 1994). In 2009, 12 million barrels per day were produced, generating over 200 billion dollars for the Saudi economy.

One other major of income to the country, and factors that helped improve the economy were the presence of holy cities, such as Makkah and Al-Madinah. Muslims from all around the world travel to Saudi Arabia to make their obligatory pilgrimage. It is a part of the religion that every able-body Muslim has to perform the rituals in both cities. Moreover, with the dramatic increase of the numbers of Muslims around the world (1.5 billion Muslims), it brings a constant source of visitors to Saudi Arabia (Adherents, 2000). These visitors bring revenues to hotels, restaurants, and shops, all adding to the revenue of the country as a whole.

Saudi Arabia is producing oil at a controlled pace, and is expected to keep the production flow for hundreds of years to come, as they are using the most advanced technologies to know how much oil is in reserve, and the most efficient way to utilize it. The world is still oil dependent and will remain so for many years to come, as cars, businesses, factories, and countries cannot run without it. As there is no sole substitute for oil presently, Saudi Arabia remains in a very powerful economic position.

With the resources, the climate, and the population of Saudi Arabia, there was little reason for the Saudi's to accept being "merely a participant" in the world of competitive athletics. Given a correct plan, a strong direction, and strong leadership, Saudi Arabia should be able to be near the top of the Olympic Games medal count.

## **Sport in Saudi Arabia**

Before Saudi Arabia became a true country, people who lived in this land used to play sports that were related to their life. The main sports were equestrian, fencing, and archery. These sports were the main activities in Saudi Arabia for more than two thousand years. The reason for these sports is that the main source of food was what they could supply by hunting. Additionally, Saudi's used to live their life by fighting and being at war between cities or families. Because of this, parents used to teach their children how to use the sword, bow and arrow, and how to ride a horse. During these early times, these activities of sport became a part of Saudis culture (Saaty, 1986).

Currently, the most popular sport in Saudi Arabia is soccer. Because of the historic and vast interest in soccer with the Saudi people, it was played daily in the streets, in schools, and any place that had an open area or field. Soccer eventually became so popular in Saudi Arabia, that it required organization. This organization of soccer began the support for change of sports in Saudi Arabia. The sports history in Saudi Arabia has three phases, defined by influences and directions of participation. Phase one, the construction phase and establishment from 1927 to 1953. During this time, the work was personal and individual and all about soccer, mostly in the west side of the country. Phase two, the basic regulation and development from 1953 to 1974. In this time government start to be the controller of sport through the General Presidency for Youth Welfare. Phase three, from 1974 to the present. During this time Saudi Arabia started and continued to participate overseas.

Change and improvement to sports in Saudi Arabia did not come quickly or easily. In fact, any new things developing in the community usually had an opposition (Saaty, 1986). When young people started to play organized soccer, the community and parents refused to

support this idea, and called it an obnoxious practice (Saaty, 1986). Also, they saw organized sport as a waste of time. Moreover, some of them started to act against the idea of organized sport by writing articles in the newspaper, supporting the idea of it being a waste of time. On June 17, 1932, an article in Umm Alqura Newspaper tried to prevent people from exercising (Saaty, 1986). This position did not last long because the government at that time began supporting sport when the Director of Public Security approved a formal request submitted by the Indonesian community living in Makkah<sup>1</sup> to practice soccer. With this government support, Makkah became the first city to host a sporting game in Saudi Arabia. Now, the reader might ask why Makkah, and what makes this city special? Makkah has a unique history and a building that is most important to all-Muslim people: the Holy Mosque and the Ka'aba<sup>2</sup>. When Muslims go to pray in any place in the world, they always face Makkah. Also, every Muslims has to do Hajj<sup>3</sup> "Pilgrimage" once in their life when he is able, as one of the pillars of Islam. However, every year Muslims from all over the world come to Makkah to do Hajj. In fact, some people came and did not leave Makkah for many years, in order to be near to the Holy Mosque. Over time, Makkah society became diversified with many different cultures from all over the world. In fact, that is how the Indonesian people became Makkah citizens (Saaty, 2012).

Saudi people started to participate in soccer games in Makkah, and other cities close to Makkah, and played "officially" organized sports. The number of participants increased until 1928, when the creation of the first official team in Jeddah<sup>4</sup> (named Al Ryadi) occurred. After

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<sup>1</sup> Makkah is the holy and sacred city for Muslim people located in the west side of Saudi Arabia.

<sup>2</sup> The place Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) built in Makkah and be came the most sacred site in Islam.

<sup>3</sup> The five pillars of Islam, people came to Makkah and prayed.

<sup>4</sup> Jeddah is the second largest city in Saudi Arabia and the largest seaport.

that, the number of teams increased around the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. By 1949, teams played against other teams in their region only. Until 1950, there was no governmental organization for the sport until prince Abdullah bin Faisal Al Saud, the Minister of the Interior, created the position of Minister of the Department of Sport in the Interior in 1952. The first league was in football (soccer) in 1957, because it was the most popular sport at that time. The league trophy was named the Cup of His Majesty the King (Saaty, 1986).

On September 22, 1960, a resolution by the Council of Ministers transferred the Department of Sport from the Interior Minister to the Ministry of Education, called the Supreme Sports Committee. After two years, they established the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and created a new department known as the Department of Youth Welfare. This department became responsible for sports in Saudi Arabia until May 18, 1974, when the Council of Ministers ordered the establishment of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare as an independent administration (Saaty, 1986).

### **Sport Organization in Saudi Arabia**

After the establishment of the head of sport in the country through the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, the decision-maker of sport became independent and fully focused on sports. In 1956 (the beginning of Phase 2), the Saudi Arabia Football Federation existed and in 1959 it became a member of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 2001). After that, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare started to focus on other sports besides soccer. In 1963, they created four federations, which were Volleyball Federation, Basketball Federation, Athletic Federation, and Cycling Federation (Saaty, 2012). These four federations became members in international associations as well. As a result, Saudi Arabia had five sports federations and became eligible to

create the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee. In 1965, the International Olympic Committee accepted the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee as a member in their conference in Rome. In fact, Saudi Arabia was ready at that time to participate in the international competition, and it was a very important step (Saaty, 2012). The first priority was not to be a winner or champion, but to show up, participate, and show the world who the Saudi people were. What makes this prioritization important is that, when the International Olympic Committee accepted the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee in 1965, Saudi Arabia was only 33 years old, and was recognized as a participant in international competition.

After that, the number of sport's federations increased, and currently Saudi Arabia has 25 sport federations as shown in the following table (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare , 2001):

Table2: Sports Federations in Saudi Arabia.

	Name of Federation	Date established
1	Saudi Arabian Soccer Federation	1959
2	Saudi Arabian Basketball Federation	1963
3	Saudi Arabian Volleyball Federation	1963
4	Saudi Arabian Athletic Federation	1963
5	Saudi Arabian Cycling Federation	1963
6	Saudi Arabian Handball Federation	1975
7	Saudi Arabian Tennis Federation	1975
8	Saudi Arabian Fencing Federation	1975
9	Saudi Judo and Taekwondo Federation	1976
10	Saudi Arabian Swimming Federation	1976
11	Saudi Arabian Gymnastic Federation	1978
12	Saudi Arabian Shooting and Archery Federation	1979
13	Saudi Arabian Weightlifting and Bodybuilding Federation	1980
14	Saudi Arabian Boxing and wrestling Federation	1980
15	Saudi Sports Medicine Association	1982
16	Saudi Arabian Physical Education and Sport Federation	1988
17	Saudi Bowling Federation	1989
18	Saudi Arabian Equestrian	1989
19	Saudi Sports Federation for Special Needs	1992
20	Saudi Squash Federation	1992
21	Saudi Arabian Table Tennis Federation	1993
22	Saudi Sports for All Federation	1994
23	Saudi Federation for Homing Pigeon Racing	2001
24	Saudi Arabian Billiard and Snooker Federation	2001
25	Saudi Arabian Karate Federation	2001

The following chart shows the number of federations and year of establishment. The first federation established was the Football Federation, as it was the first sport that organized competition even before Saudi Arabia had any sports organizations. After the establishment of the Football Federation in 1959, other sports federations started to establish respectively based on community's needs. Since 2001 until the current time, Saudi Arabia did not establish any new federations for sports.

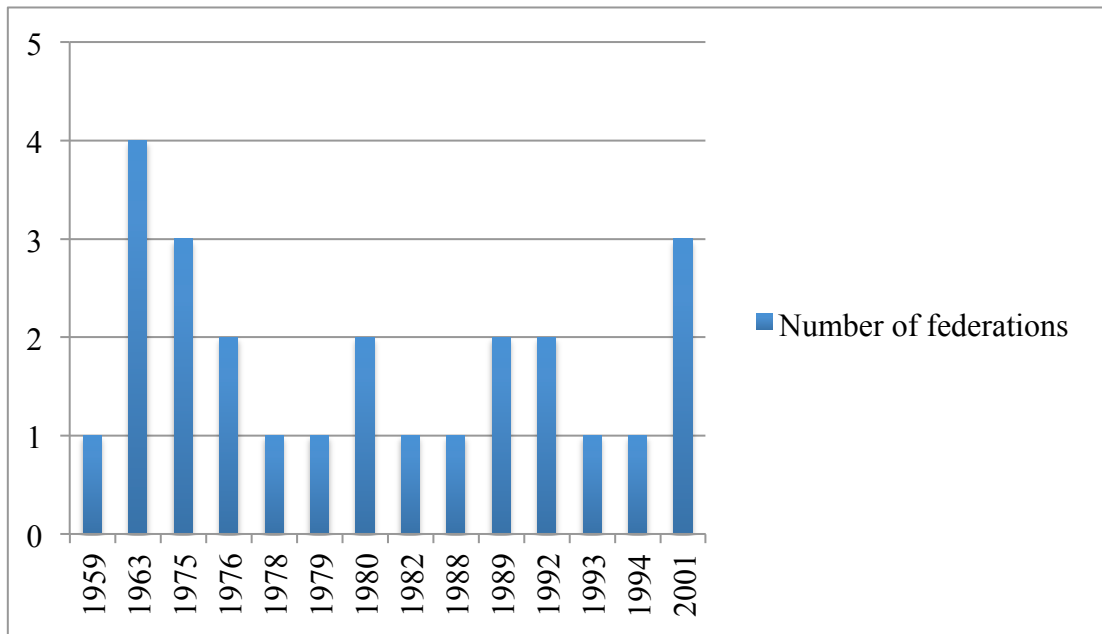


Figure2: Number of sports federations and the years of established

The responsibilities of the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee were that it was the only association able to represent the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Olympic Games, to be impartial when dealing with all Saudi people, to improve sports performance within the country, to help all sports federations in Saudi Arabia financially and technically, to represent and produce the Saudi identity, and participate in the international conferences (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare , 2001).

### **Organizational Development of Sport**

Historically, when a group of people tried to start a team, they voluntarily managed it for the love of the game, or for community factors like lane, city, school, or social life level (Saaty, 1986). The oldest person served as leader, an Arab cultural feature. When the General Presidency for Youth Welfare became the head of sports in Saudi Arabia in 1974 (phase three), a new era in sport began. Progress in management and leadership helped create sport offerings where, to start a new team, one must now sign documents and permits from different offices and



committees. While paperwork and specific procedures are not easy or convenient, they gave more organization to the Saudi sport world (Dawood, 2005).

In the past, not only was funding an issue, but problems also grew from the sports facilities being used. Team members funded their own transportation and uniforms. The “stadium” was any empty parcel of land. In 1968, during phase two, the Department of Youth Welfare was given their own budget to begin taking care of sports in Saudi Arabia. The budget continued to increase during the end of phase two and through phase three as shown in the following table (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 1991).

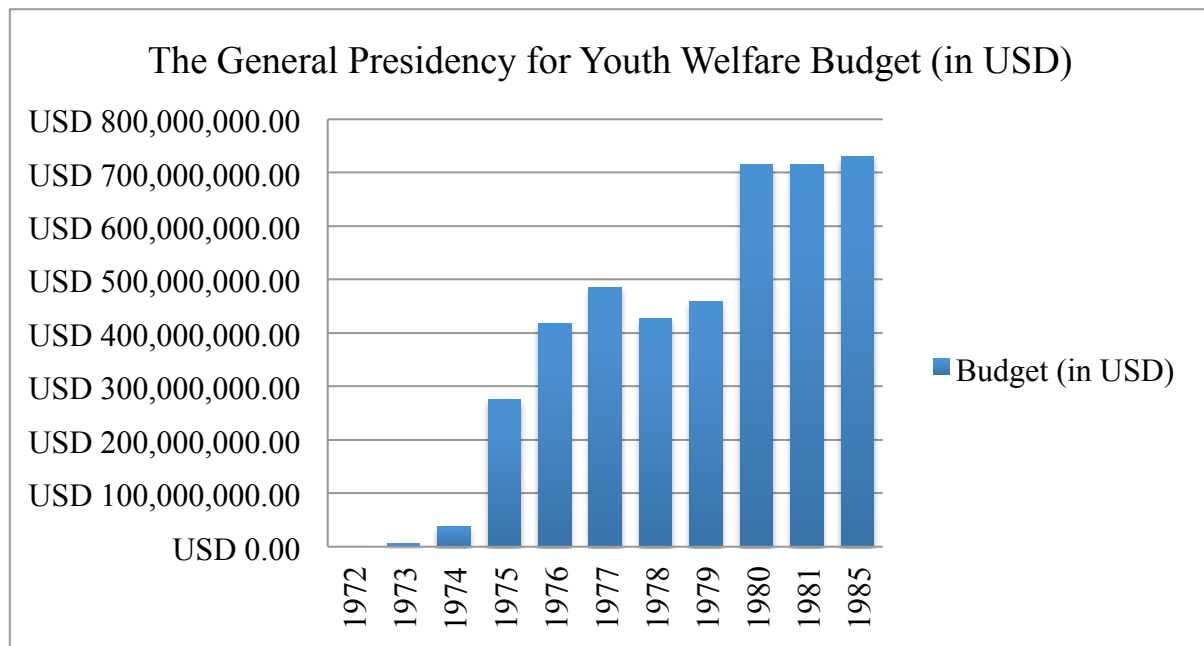


Figure 3: The General Presidency for Youth Welfare Budget in Saudi Arabia.

The previous chart shows the budget of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare and the amount of money the Saudi government spent for sports.

In 1966, sports facilities and the building of headquarters for the sports federations became important to organize sport in the country. In this regard, the King gave an order to the Interior Minister to give land to the clubs for their headquarters at a nominal price of 15 S.R. In

1967, the Department of Youth Welfare built three youth welfare centers, one each in three different cities in Saudi Arabia. Where once there was none, now there were 12 youth welfare centers due to the continuing of improvement by the government (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 1991).

### **Sports Facility in Saudi Arabia**

Since sport in Saudi Arabia had independent organization through the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, a different direction was taken by this organization, which helped to advance the standard of sports in the country. One of these directions was the sport facility. During phase three, 15 sport facilities were built. A brief overview of each facility follows (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 2011):

### **General Presidency of Youth Welfare Headquarters**

After the General Presidency for Youth Welfare become independent, it became necessary to have their own building. The main building was built on an area of 9000 square meters in the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. This building is the headquarters for all organizational sports in Saudi Arabia, which includes all administrative departments of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare beside suite for the reception and meeting rooms, a lounge for lectures and other celebrations can accommodate up to 100 people (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 2011).

### **Main and Branch Offices in the Central, Western and Eastern Regions**

To facilitate the administrative work in Saudi Arabia, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare built and opened branches in the western, the central, and the eastern regions for the purposes of organizing, supervising and providing subsidies to all sports, cultural, artistic, social and literary activities for all sports clubs and excelled young men in the Kingdom, organizing

matches, cultural and social competitions, and attaining the balance point in all different youth fields, and acting as a link between the Saudi youth and the General Presidency for Youth Welfare.

### **Olympic Committee and Sports Federations**

The General Presidency for Youth Welfare built other buildings in the city of Riyadh under the name of Prince Faisal bin Fahd Olympic Complex. This building consisted of three sections connected together. The first section included offices for all sports federations, the second included offices for all Arab sports federations, and the third included offices for the Saudi Arabian Olympic Committee.

### **King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh**

In 1988, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare opened King Fahd International Stadium as the largest stadium in the country on an area of 500,000 square meters with a seating capacity for 70,400 fans. This stadium had the most beautiful architectural designs in the region because it combined the present and the past in design, with the exterior using the form of tents, an expression of the Saudi past.

### **Sports and Cities Centers**

The General Presidency for Youth Welfare built 15 sport cities around the country, and had approval to build three more sport cities. The facilities in each city consisted of a football stadium with capacity of between 10,000 and 35,000 fans, a 400 meter running track with eight lanes, youth hostels with 60 to 200 beds, a hall for symposia, a dining hall and kitchen, an indoor gym, an indoor swimming pool, a medical unit for first aid, a public library, a mosque, administrative offices, outdoor courts for various games such as basketball and volleyball,

playgrounds for children, and parking. Each center was supplied with all essential services and utilities, such as bathrooms, showers, and locker rooms.

### **Sports Halls and Swimming Pools**

Beside sports cities, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare built three indoor sports halls and swimming pools in the west, east and central regions in the country. The exterior design for the sports halls was a hexagonal shape and dimensions of 110 \* 85 meters, with a total area of 26,500 square meters. These sports halls consisted of international standard size sports hall for various activities with seating accommodating 5000 spectators, rooms for administrative staff, referees and coaches with support services, rooms for changing clothes and restrooms, and restaurant accommodations for 500 people and a cafeteria. The exterior design for natatoriums was rectangular with outside dimensions of 140 by 70 meters, with a total area of 32,200 square meters. The spectator seating capacity of the pool facility held 5000, and included international size swimming pool (50 by 25 meters), training swimming pool (12.5 by 25 meters), and a basin dive.

### **Sports Headquarters for Clubs**

The General Presidency for Youth Welfare established the headquarters for the clubs. The design was divided into three categories. Eleven of the clubs were in Category A which included a football stadium with a capacity of 10,000 fans with rooms for public services, restrooms, a fast food restaurant, a 400-meter running track with eight lanes, and another eight lanes 100 meters long, a swimming pool and diving area of 25 by 15 meters able to seat 200 fans, an indoor sports hall accommodating 700 spectators, three squash playgrounds accommodating 150 fans, outdoor playgrounds for various sports, a natural grass playground for

physical exercises, a mosque, residential utilities for VIPs, and hostels of 14 rooms with a dining hall, public meeting centers and recreational areas, gardens, ticket sales area, and parking.

There were also 11 clubs in Category B which included in their facilities a football stadium with capacity of 5000 to 10,000 fans with rooms for public services, restrooms and one fast food restaurant, a 400-meter running track with eight lanes, a swimming pool and diving area of 25 by 15 meter with 200 seats for fans, an indoor sports hall, an administration building, outdoor playgrounds for various sports, a mosque, gardens, and parking.

Lastly, three clubs were considered Category C, which included the same facilities as Category B, with the only difference being different capacities of seating for fans. In addition, the General Presidency of Youth Welfare approved the building of 23 headquarters for clubs.

### **Coastal Cities**

The General Presidency of Youth Welfare constructed two sports cities one in Jeddah, the coastal city in west side, and the other one in Al-Khobar, the coastal city in the east side, under the name of The Two Coastal Cities of King Fahd. These facilities in these two cities were considered mostly recreation centers and included an indoor sports hall for various sports, an outdoor swimming pool, a theatre accommodating 460 seats, a poling and squash area, a library and room for hobbies, a restaurant and cafeteria, a clothes changing room and restrooms, and administrative offices.

### **General Presidency of Youth Welfare Stadia**

The General Presidency of Youth Welfare bought existing fields which they renovated and improved. In addition, they built their own stadium in Riyadh, Jeddah, and Dammam under the name of Sports Centers. Each Sport Center has a capacity of 30,000 to 45,000 fans, a main

stage, administration offices, and a natural grass field. Also, they include an indoor sport hall, where they have sports clinics, and house a judo hall, a taekwondo hall, a gymnastic hall, as well as having a housing suite.

### **Youth Hostels**

The youth hostels started even before the General Presidency of Youth Welfare, where they had begun in 1969. There are 20 around the country that included bedrooms with all relevant utilities, swimming pool, fields, theatre, halls for hobbies, and play area.

### **Permanent Youth Camps**

The General Presidency of Youth Welfare established two permanent youth camps in two cities, one Taif, in the west side, and the other in Hail, in the north side. The goals for these camps is to finding a suitable place for the organization of scouting gatherings and work camps, that are designed to make the youth accustomed to camp life, self-reliance and interacting with community service programs. In addition, the General Presidency of Youth Welfare approved the building of two more permanent youth camps soon. These camps included a building for administrative offices, a hall for various sports activities, a mosque, a theatre, housing units for camp directors and supervisors, a kitchen and restaurant, six buildings with relevant utilities, an outer camp comprising of 60 tents, and a parking area.

### **Leader's Preparation Institute**

In 1981, the General Presidency of Youth Welfare built the Leaders' Preparation Institute as a way to improve and prepare leaders in the sports area. The aims for this institute were to upgrade and raise the standard of sports and promoting the coaches, to organize courses for referees in different sports, as well as preparing specialized Saudi leaders in the field of sports training and the development of the regulations in force. However, the institute was designed to

accommodate 300 trainees and includes a sports hall for various sports, a swimming pool, administrative offices, lecture rooms, a library, an art hall, housing units accommodating 105 people, a kitchen and dining hall, and outdoor playgrounds.

### **Sports Yards (Plazas)**

For recreation, the General Presidency of Youth Welfare created 13 sports plazas which included outdoor playgrounds for various sports, children's playgrounds, an indoor activities building, restrooms, clothes changing area, a mosque, library, and a parking lot.

### **Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Physiotherapy Hospital**

Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Physiotherapy Hospital is the only one of its kind in the Middle East. The main goal for this hospital was to provide modern health care and physiotherapy to all athletes and players. It is a complete hospital including suites and rooms for patient, operation rooms, temporary sterilization rooms, physiotherapy training hall, etc. Also, the hospital included other medical specializations like general medicine, nose, ear and throat, ophthalmic, internal medicine, dermatology, psychiatric orthopedic and cardiology.

### **The Gym of the Saudi Association for People with Special Needs and Paralympics Committee**

The General Presidency of Youth Welfare created the project for people with special needs. It was located in Riyadh and has total area of 13,580 square meters. The building has two sections. The first, an indoor gym hall includes a multi-purpose play area, fan seating, clothes changing rooms, physiotherapy rooms, a referee room, and support services. The second was the Headquarters of Saudi Federation for Special Needs and Paralympics Committee and included administrative offices, a meeting hall, a mosque, support services, and a parking lot.

Saudi Arabia's vision in building sport facilities around the country comes from being keen on the provision of places and the right atmosphere for sports activities as youth sports

facilities and construction is the backbone of youth and sports. From this basis, Saudi Arabia built sports facilities and created services for these facilities with a high level of sophistication, and gave the right for all users to practice sports activities in appropriate places for intramural and competitive sports. Also, these facilities allowed Saudi Arabia to be capable of hosting many events, including important international events. In 2005, Saudi Arabia hosted the first Islamic Solidarity Games, that showed the purpose and prestige of the building of these facilities (The General Presidency of Youth Welfare, 2011).

### **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Participation in Overseas Events**

#### **Pan Arab Games**

In March 27, 1947 the Council of the League of Arab States approved the project of Pan Arab Games. Just like the Olympic Games it occurred every four years for member of Council of the League of Arab States. In Figure 4 is shown the achievements of Saudi Arabia in the Pan Arab Games, based on medals and type won during the time span from 1953 to 2011 (Saaty, 2012).



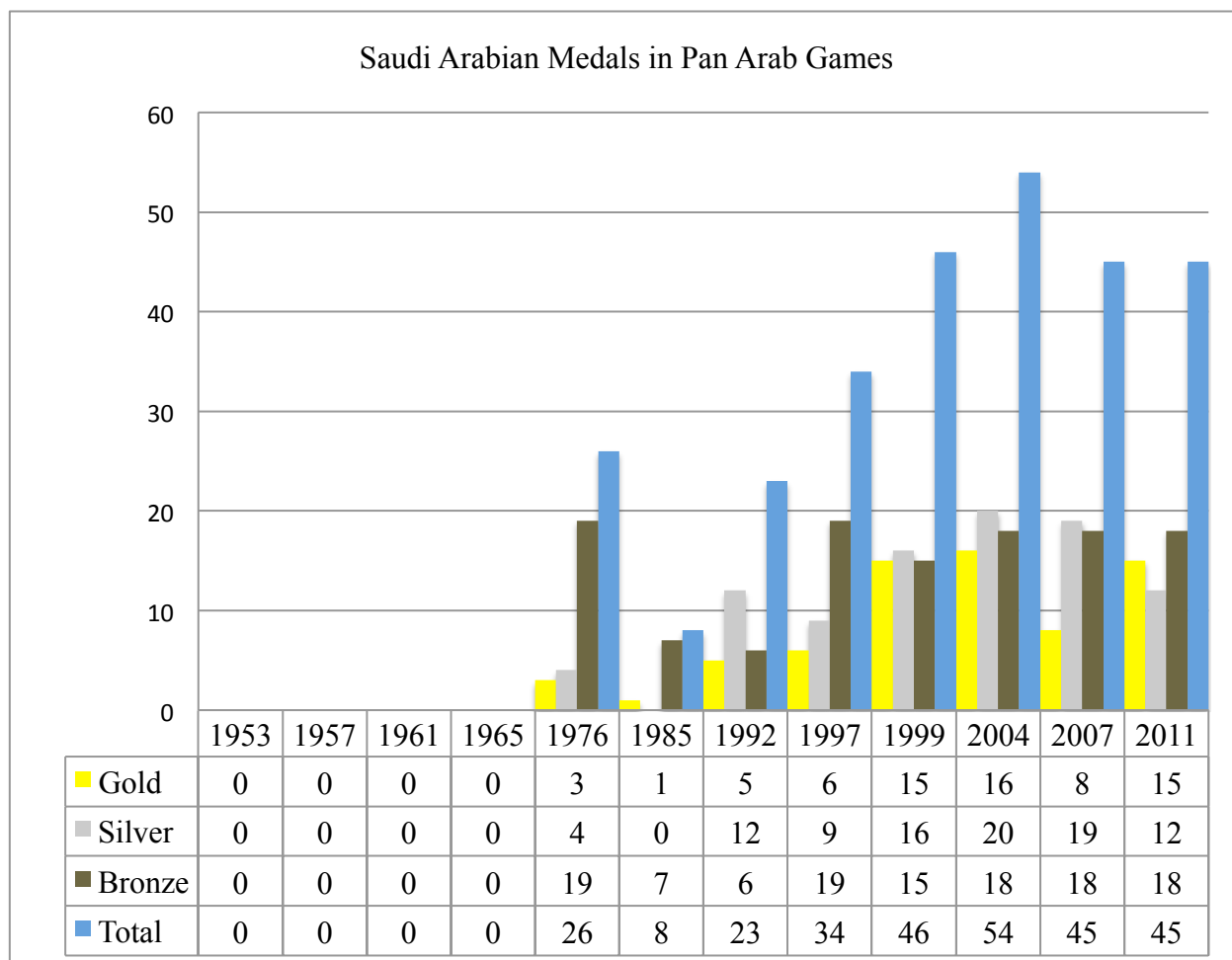


Figure4: Saudi Arabian Medals in Pan Arab Games.

The total number of medals increased consistently until 2004, when it started to decrease. This increase was reasonable because the numbers of sports federations were increased; as a result the numbers of sports in which Saudi Arabia participated were increased during the time. On the other hand, the decrease in the last two Pan Arab Games were unexpected without scientific reasons.

### **Asian Games**

Because Saudi Arabia is part of The Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), they participated in the Asia Olympic Games. Saudi Arabia began competing in these games from 1978 to the current year, with the exception of 1998, because the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Thailand

were tense at the time (The Olympic Council of Asia). In Figure 4, results of the participation and achievement show Saudi Arabia won 17 gold, 17 silver, and 24 bronze medals since participating in these Asian Games (Saaty, 2012). However, this number is less than half the total of the medals won in the Pan Arab Games, showing that the larger the international stage, the less success Saudi Arabia had. While most of the participants of the Asian Olympics also participated in the Summer Olympic Games, they also had less success. Figure 4 below show the achievement in Asian Games.

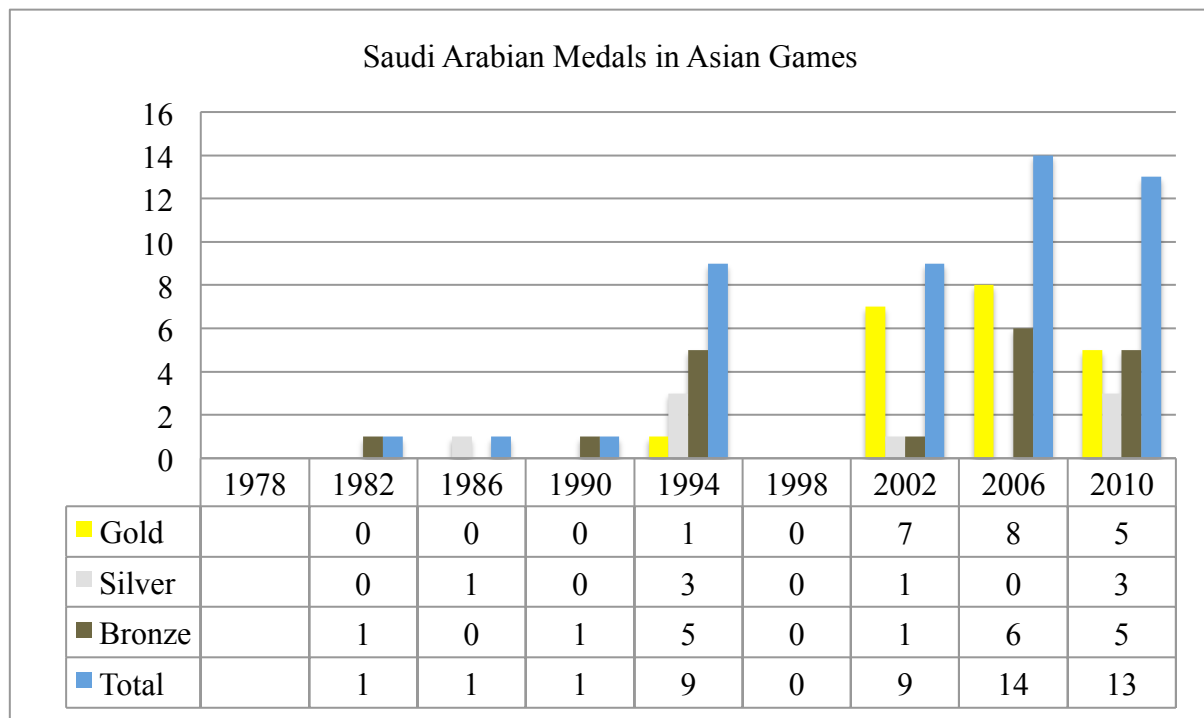


Figure5: Saudi Arabian Medals in Asian Games.

### Summer Olympic Games

Saudi Arabia has participated in eight Summer Olympics Games. The first Olympics for Saudi Arabia were in 1972, and they have been included at this Olympic games since that time. However, Saudi Arabia did not participate in the Olympics Games in 1980, held in the Soviet Union for political reasons. Also, Saudi's do not participate in the Winter Olympic Games, as the climate and geological features of Saudi Arabia make it nearly impossible.

However, in all eight Summer Olympic Competitions that Saudi Arabia has competed, only three medals have been won. The first medal ever won by Saudi Arabia was a bronze medal in 1988 in the sport of Taekwondo. Twelve years and three Summer Olympics later, a silver medal was won in the Men's 400 meter hurdles by Hadi Soua'an Al-Somaily, and the third medal was a bronze medal in Equestrian- Individual jumping by Khaled Al-Eid. All of the medals won were won by men, as no women are allowed to participate (Saaty, 2012).

Table 3: Saudi Arabia Participation and Achievement in the Summer Olympic Games.

The Olympic Game	Number of participations	Sports	Medal
1973 Munich, West Germany	26	Athletics	
1976 Montreal, Canada	120	Basketball - Volleyball - Handball - Athletics - Gymnastic - Fencing and Table tennis	
1980 Moscow, Soviet Union	Saudi Arabia boycott because the Soviet attack Afghanistan		
1984 Los Angeles, United States	40	Football- Cycling- Archery- Athletics- shooting- fencing- Taekwondo	
1988 Seoul, South Korea	14	Archery - Shooting - Athletics - Taekwondo	1 Bronze in Taekwondo
1992 Barcelona, Spain		Athletics- Swimming- Volleyball- Fencing- Cycling	
1996 Atlanta, United States	29	Football - Shooting - Athletics - Weightlifting- Equestrian	
2000 Sydney, Australia		Athletics- Swimming- Shooting- Equestrian- Taekwondo	1 Silver medal in Athletics and 1 bronze in Equestrian
2004 Athens, Greece	18	Athletics- Swimming- Table tennis- Shooting- Equestrian- Weightlifting	
2008 Beijing, China		Equestrian- Athletics- Weightlifting- swimming- Shooting	

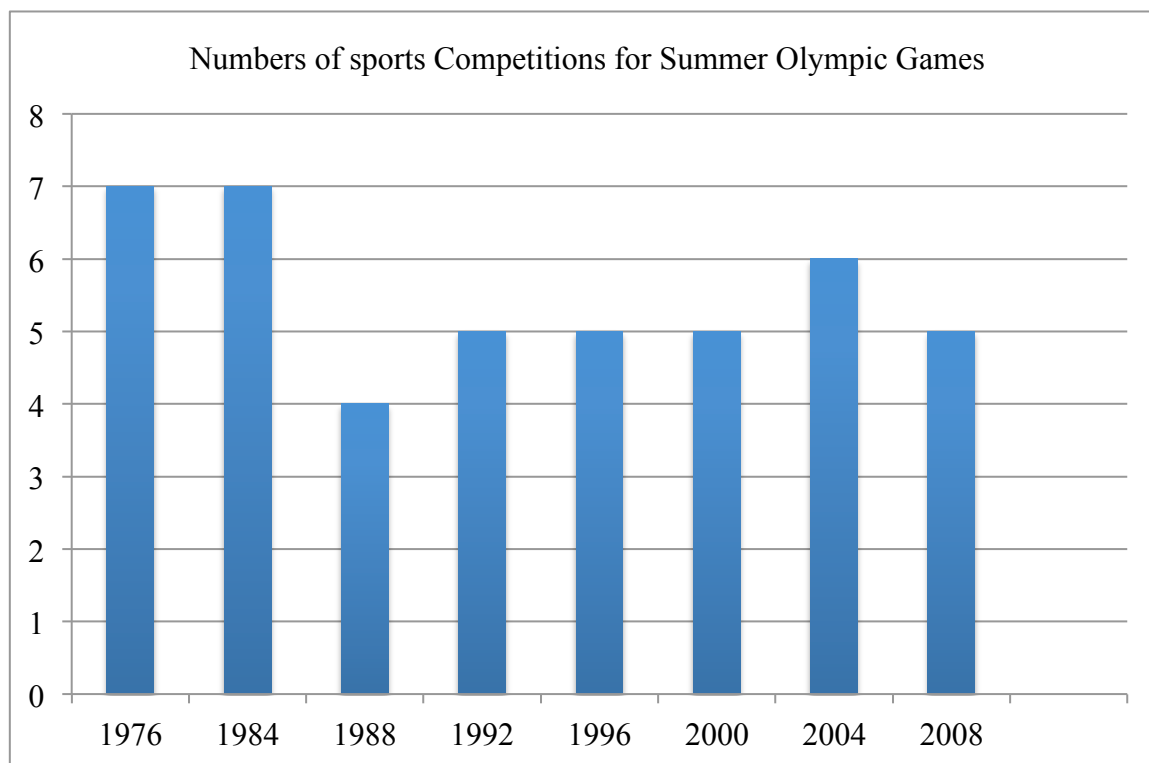


Figure6: Numbers of sports that Saudi Arabia played in the Summer Olympic Games

The previous chart shows the numbers of sports that Saudi Arabia participated in during the Summer Olympic Games. As seen, while the Summer Olympic Games have over 25 sports in which to compete, Saudi Arabia has consistently participated in only a limited number of sports (between 4 and 7).

### **FIFA World Cup**

Saudi Arabia participated in four FIFA World Cup events, held every four years. The best achievement was in 1994, the first year of competition in FIFA, when Saudi Arabia went to the second round (Sweet 16) of the competition. In the FIFA World Cup for the youth, Saudi Arabia won the World Cup championship in 1989 (Saaty, 2012).

### **Gulf Counties Soccer Cup**

Saudi Arabia started to participate in the Gulf Counties Soccer Cup from its inception in 1970, and won the champion three times in 1994, 2002, and 2003 (Dawood, 2005).

## **Asian Soccer Cup**

Saudi Arabia's first participation in the Asian Soccer Cup was in 1984, when they won the championship. Saudi Arabia won the championship two more times: in 1988, and in 1996. From 1984 until 2007 Saudi Arabia was part of the final match in every championship (Saaty, 2012).

## **Sports Development and Achievement During the Time**

After sports were established in Saudi Arabia and the transitions to the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, changes and developments in sports were defined in four periods, each one consisting of ten years. The first period consists of the years from 1974 to 1984, the second period consists of the years from 1985 to 1995, the third period consists of the years from 1996 to 2006, and the fourth period consists of the years from 2007 until 2012. The reason for beginning in 1974 is because the General Presidency for Youth Welfare was established at that time. However, each period consisted of two main parts, which were the domestic level and the achievement level. The domestic level will note changes inside Saudi Arabia like establishing federations or organizing an important sports event. During the achievement level Saudi Arabia succeeded in the three major Saudi Arabian International competitions: the Pan Arab Games, the Asian Games, and the Summer Olympic Games.

The development of sports and achievement of the Saudi's started before 1974. For example, Saudi Arabian Football federation (soccer) established in 1959 and joined the International Federation in 1972. Also, in 1963, four federations were established: basketball, volleyball, athletics, and cycling. Also, Saudi Arabia participated in the Olympic Summer Games in Munich, West Germany in 1972.

## Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1974 to 1984

The first period was the time for building and establishing sport inside the country by building facilities and focusing on a Five-Year plan to establish a strong infrastructure, prepare for the competition, and highlight the name of Saudi Arabia in international events. In this period Saudi Arabia established ten sports federations. Not only this, but also Saudi Arabia organized the Arab Championship for gymnastics for the under 17 age group. It was a good idea to organize a small tournament during that period, in order to test the ability in organizing such an event, and second, there was the reputation of, and excitement within, Saudi Arabian athletics.

During this period, Saudi Arabia participated in the Summer Olympic Games, the Asian Games and the Pan Arab Games. Also, they participated in regional and continental championships in nine sports. Moreover, they won 122 medals: 51 gold, 33 silver and 38 bronze in the all competitions and tournaments. It is worth mentioning that beside number of sports federations were not complete, there was no sporting events during 1975 because sports events held every four years; in 1976 Saudi Arabia participate in the Olympic Games and the Pan Arab Games and 1978 was the first time in the Asian Games.

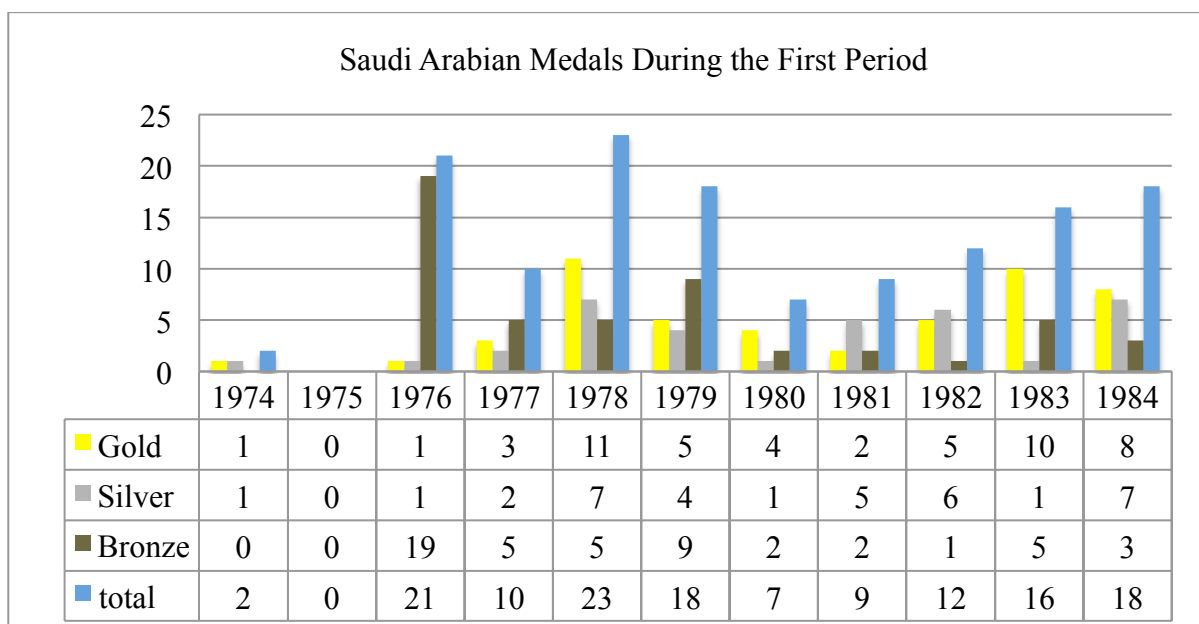


Figure7: Saudi Arabia Medals from 1974 to 1984 by years.

## **Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1985 to 1995**

In the second period, Saudi Arabia continued to build the infrastructure for sport by establishing five new sport federations. Also, Saudi Arabia had a bigger role in organizing tournaments when they organized the FIFA World Cup for youth in 1989. Additionally, in 1992, Saudi Arabia created and organized the FIFA Confederation Cup.

During this period, Saudi Arabia continued to participate in regional and continental championships, but in this period they won more medals than first period when the Saudi Arabian national team (under17) won the FIFA World Cup in 1989 in football (soccer). Also, the national team for men won the Asian Cup for the second time in a row, while football took the silver medal in the Asian Games in South Korea. In fact, it should be noted here that, the Equestrian and Special Needs Federations were established during this period time with a good results. For example, the Saudi Arabia Equestrian Federation was established in 1989 and in 1991 had a gold medal in the World Championship for amateurs. Furthermore, the Saudi Arabian Federation for Special needs, established in 1992, won 20 gold, 20 silver, and nine bronze medals in the Arab-African Championship.

The total number of medals that Saudi Arabia won between 1985-1995 was 1019 medals: 385 gold, 341 silver and 293 bronze in the all competitions and tournaments.

The following chart shows the numbers of medals Saudi Arabia won in sport event around the world during the second period. There was an overall increase in the medal won, from the beginning of the period to the end, except in 1987 and 1990. The reason for that was the Gulf War, which was between Iraq and Kuwait. In fact, all countries in the Arab area and Middle East were affected by this war especially Saudi Arabia because it has borders with both countries.

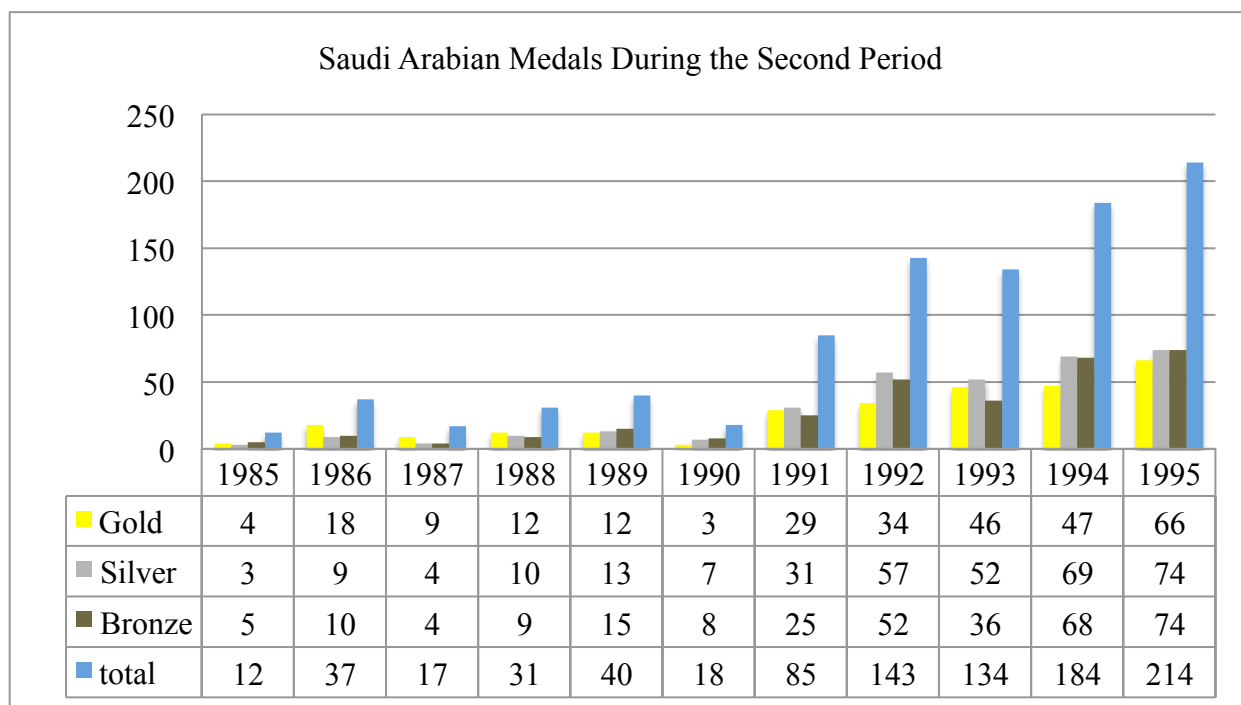


Figure8: Saudi Arabia Medals from 1985 to 1995 by years.

### **Sport in Saudi Arabia from 1996 to 2006**

During this period, Saudi Arabia did not focus on developing the infrastructure as much as the previous period, except that they established two sports federations, which were the Saudi Federation for Homing and Pigeon Racing and the Saudi Arabian Billiard and Snooker Federation. Also, they separated Karate into an independent federation. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia showed its ability in hosting and organizing events when they hosted the First Islamic Solidarity Games, the second largest sports event in the world, after the Summer Olympic Games.

At the Achievement level, in this period Saudi Arabia participated in all sports events in while they were able: Summer Olympic Games, Asian Games, Pan Arab Games and FIFA World Cup. In addition, Saudi Arabia had the best achievement in the Summer Olympic Games,



until now, when they won their first two medals during Olympic competition in 2000, a silver medal in athletics and a bronze medal in equestrian.

Saudi Arabia won the greatest number of medals from all periods, a total of 1956: 662 gold, 639 silver, and 655 bronze.

In Figure 9 is shown the numbers of medals Saudi Arabia won in international sport events during the third period. In general, the total number of medals increased from the previous two periods, but there was an overall decrease during this period.

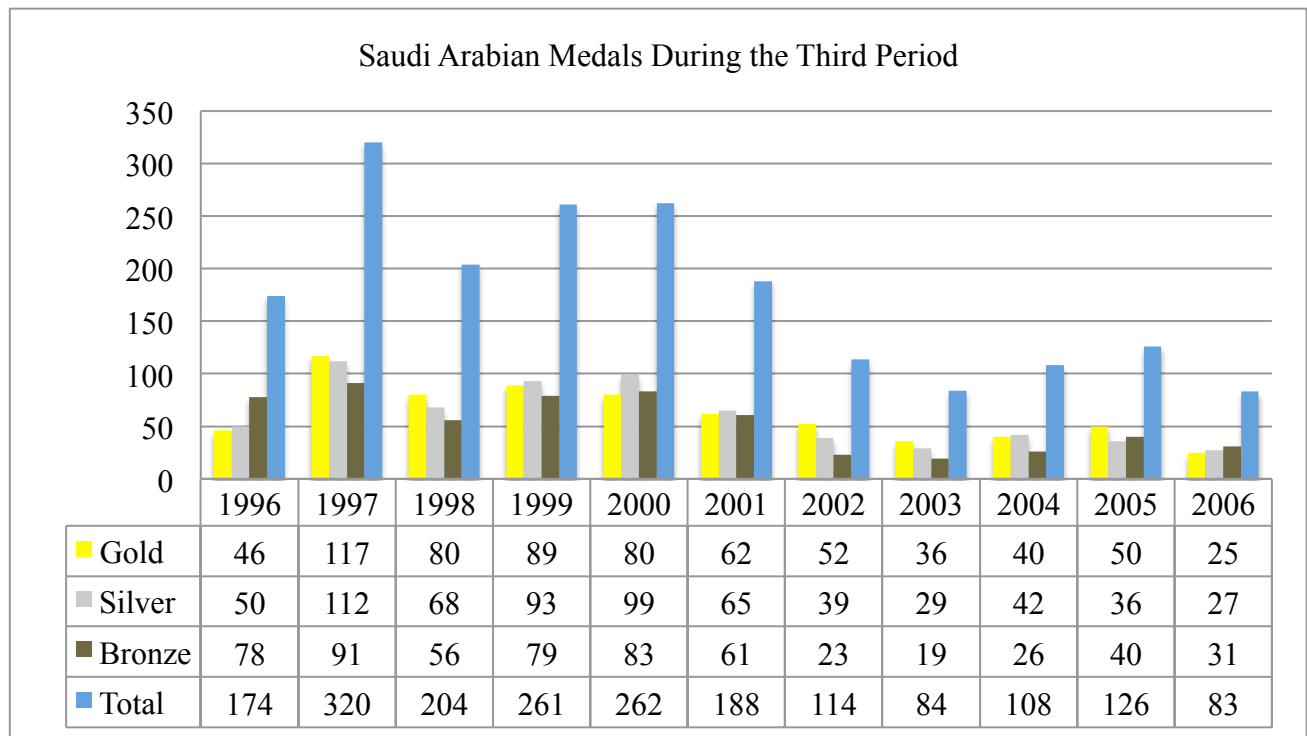


Figure9: Saudi Arabia Medals from 1996 to 2006 by years.

### **Sport in Saudi Arabia from 2007 to 2011**

In general, this period is half as short in length as the other periods. The first, second, and third periods are ten years long, but this period is five years long. As a result, the achievement

level was not as great as the previous periods. However, at the domestic level, with the only major occurrence was the building of five new headquarters for special needs sports.

At the Achievement level, in this period Saudi Arabia participated in Summer Olympic Games, Asian Games and Pan Arab Games but they did not achieve to participate in FIFA World Cup in the last time 2010 in South Africa. In addition during this period, people in general and especially the media did not pay attention to various sports, which caused locating information difficult. The total number of medals Saudi Arabia won was 454 medals: 196 gold, 132 silver, and 126 bronze, which, if the current trend were to continue, would not equal the third period.

The following chart shows the numbers of medals Saudi Arabia won in sport event around the world during the fourth period. The medal count for this period increased from the first year to second one but it was decreased after that to the end.

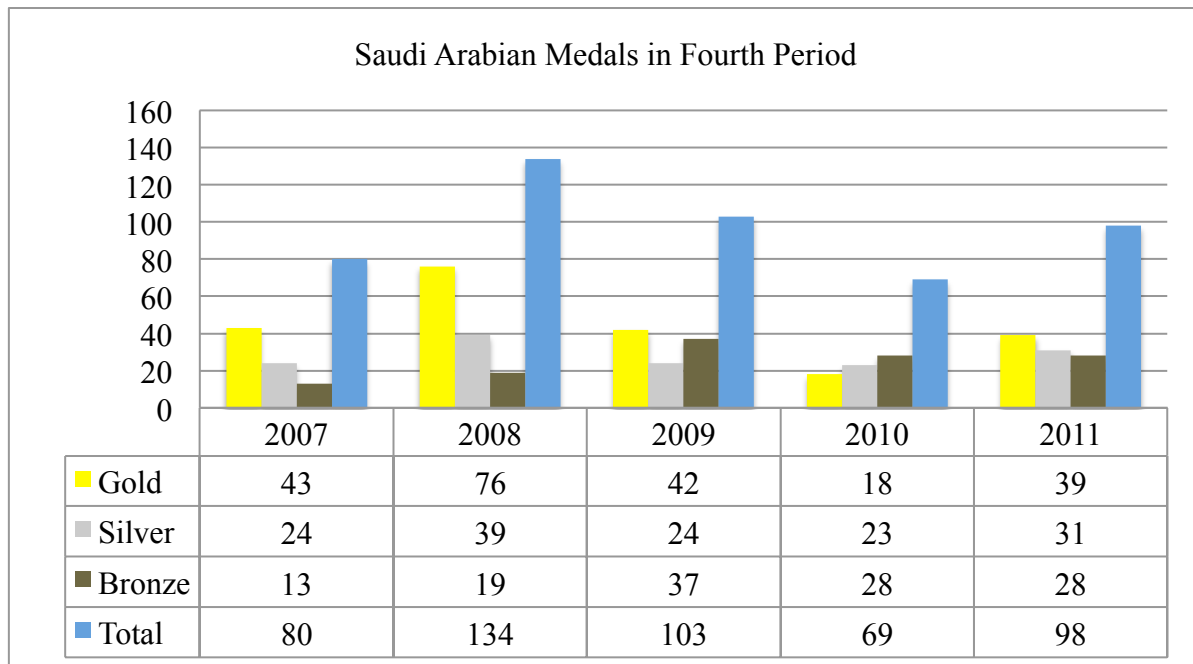


Figure10: Saudi Arabia Medals from 2007 to 2011 by years.

## Comparing all the Periods

Saudi Arabia increased in medal count across the first three periods, but the fourth period is lagging behind, as shown in figures 11 and 12.

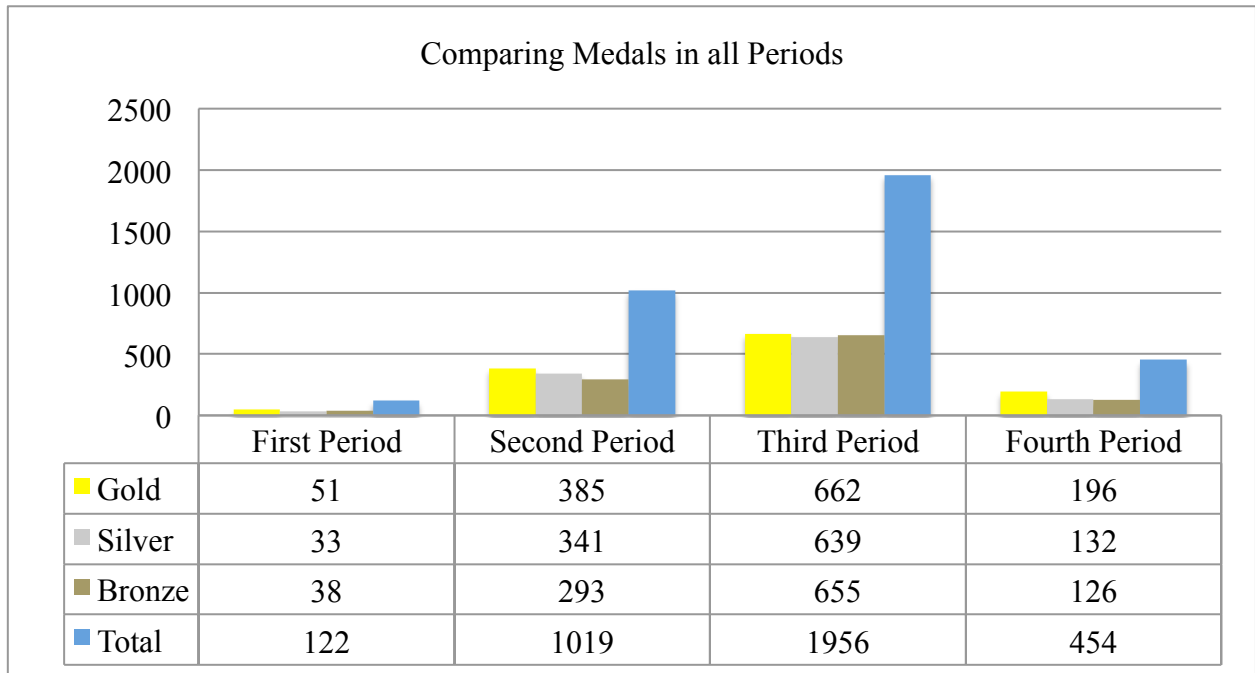


Figure11: Comparing Medals in all Periods.

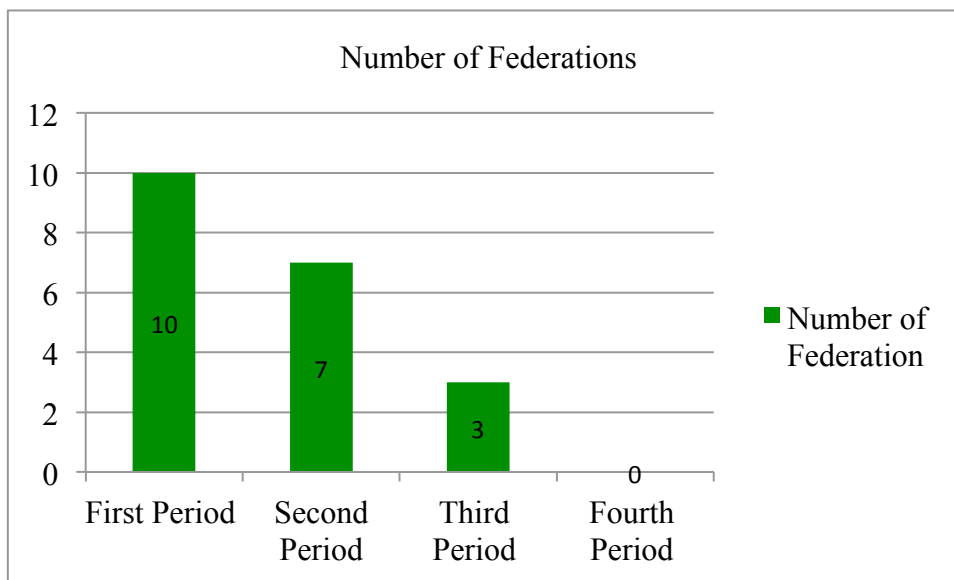


Figure12: Number of sports Federations in Saudi Arabia.

From the previous figures, we can see that the third period had the best achievement in the total numbers of medals, but after looking at all periods, there was an increase in the total number of medals that started in the middle of second period 1991. The decrease in medal count began in 2001, which was the middle of the third period, and was unexpected.

### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This thesis was an historical examination of literature for Saudi Arabia, originating from a need to identify factors that may have affected medal count results, especially in the Olympic games. A brief history of Saudi Arabia was reviewed in order to give some perspective to the current situation of sport. A range of information was reviewed including, but not limited to: the overview of Saudi Arabia, history of sport, sport organizations, sports facilities and participations in sports events. The increase in infrastructure of sport through the building of sports facilities in the country over a 39 years period was shown. Success was defined as the number of medals won over the time period investigated. Saudi Arabia is a relatively new participant in the Olympic Games, with their first Olympic competition being 1973. In order to identify current situation of Saudi Arabia in the Olympic Games through medals count, this study compared between Saudi Arabia, United States of America, China, Australia, Morocco, Algeria, and Syria based on the total number of medals won and population of these countries in three summer Olympic Games, which are 2000, 2004, and 2008. Suggestions for improvement were made, based on the history of what has been done in the country.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

From the literature reviewed, one of the major factors found in the development of Saudi Arabian sport, was the building of sport facilities in the country. These facilities provided places to play, compete and practice different sports. Although those facilities were functional and beautiful architectural buildings, they were not used to their full capabilities. The buildings were erected, in part, to improve training of athletes for international competitions. However, the buildings did not appear to be used to their full sport capabilities. Some suggestions for greater use of these facilities and other suggestions for the improvement of athletics in Saudi Arabia were discussed in this chapter.

Several suggestions for improving the medal count follow, based on the literature reviewed. First, it is important to encourage Saudis to use and participate in sport facilities. In fact, Saudi Arabia has done an outstanding job in building the sport facilities. Unfortunately, the number of participants and users was not as expected. One way to increase the number of participants might be to create marketing plans that incorporate a broader scope of sports, which could provide untold popularity for the General Presidency, and Saudi Arabia. One example might be to organize competitions across different sports between schools and colleges in the respective areas. These events would provide an opportunity for students and parents to discover how much the facility is appropriate for different sports competitions. Additionally, by having colleges and schools in local areas compete, the community would be more involved in supporting these facilities, and their favorite teams. A fee scale appropriate for the use of these facilities could be developed. Intramural/recreational use with a greater potential of participants might have a lower fee, than for college competitions. Entry fees for observers (fans) for these

competitions would help offset the cost of maintenance, security, and other aspects of running the facility.

Marketing plans that would advertise these competitions might be in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education to host all their competitions in the General Presidency's facilities. One way would be to give discount to students to use all facilities around the country, and allow students who travel from region to another to stay for free in the Youth Hostels in the area.

Medal count was used to define success in sport competitions in this study. When the medals for all four periods were compared, it was shown that success started during the middle of the second period to the middle of the third period. This increasing success was reasonable under the development Saudi Arabia had in that time, especially with the increased sports' budget, as shown in figure two. However, a decrease was shown in the time periods following. Perhaps one reason for this decline in medals was because the focus was on a few team sports as compared to the previous period.

Another way to examine medal count would be by population. It is logical to assume that the greater the population, the greater the number of athletes from which to choose. Upon that assumption, the ratio of Olympic medals won to population was calculated. Although there were no two countries with exactly the same population as Saudi Arabia, three countries with a large presence in the Olympics were chosen; Australia, China, and the United States of America. Three Olympic Games, during 2000, 2004, and 2008 were used for this comparison. In figure 13, this ratio was calculated and illustrated, as well as the medal count alone.

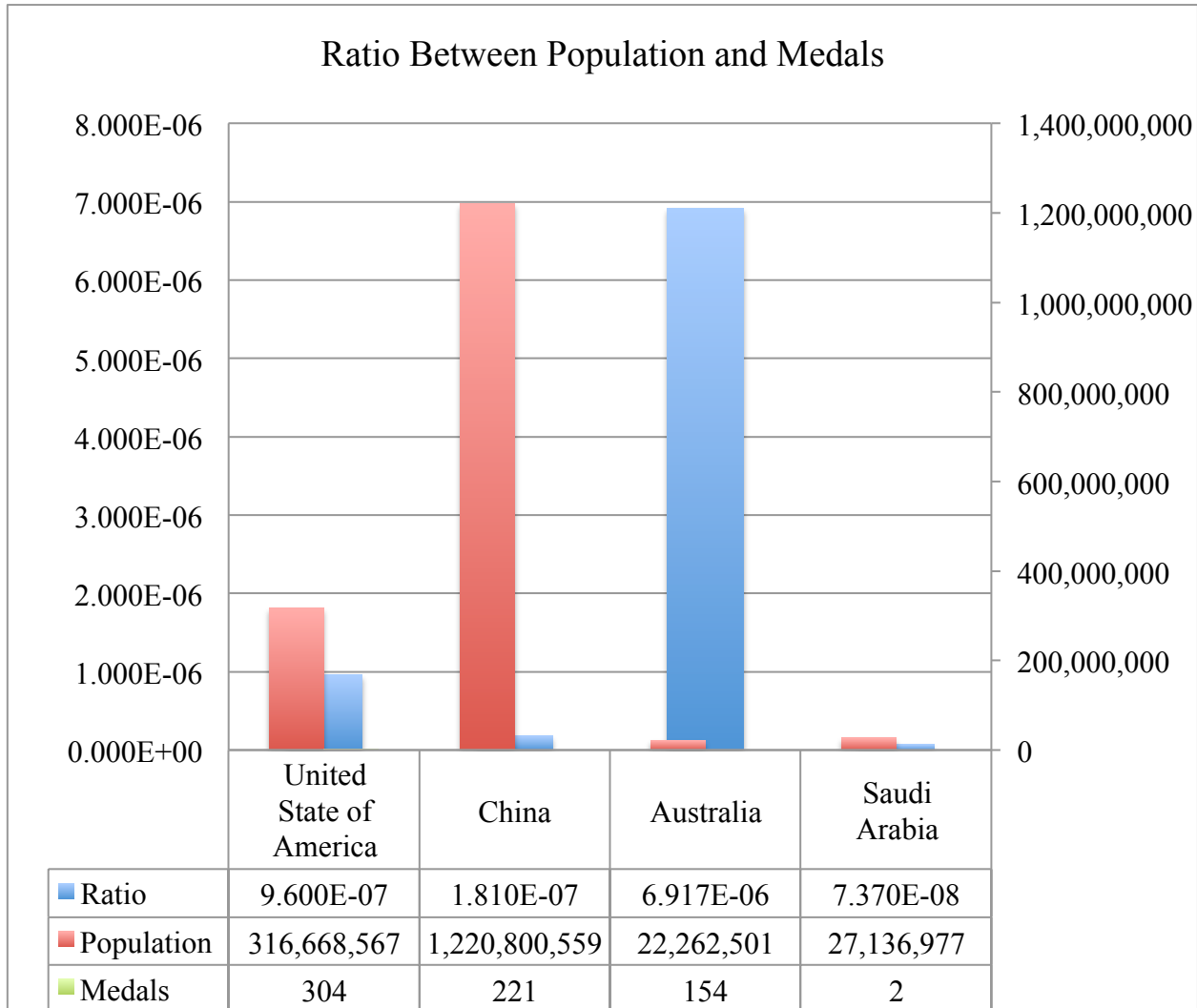


Figure 13: Ratio Between Population and Medals

Illustrated in Figure 13 was that the United States of America took first place with the highest number of medals, followed by China in second place, and Australia in third place. However, after taking into the consideration the ratio between population and total number of medals, Australia, with smallest population of this set, took first place, followed by the United States in second place, and China in third. As a result, Saudi Arabia might have an advantage in medal count if a ratio comparison were made, rather than a straight medal count. If countries closer in population to Saudi Arabia were examined using this ratio calculation, perhaps a truer



indication of success would be indicated, if medal count were the criteria of success. In Figure 14 this ratio was calculated and illustrated under same conditions, but with different countries. All three are Arab countries under the League of Arab States and the populations between them are close.

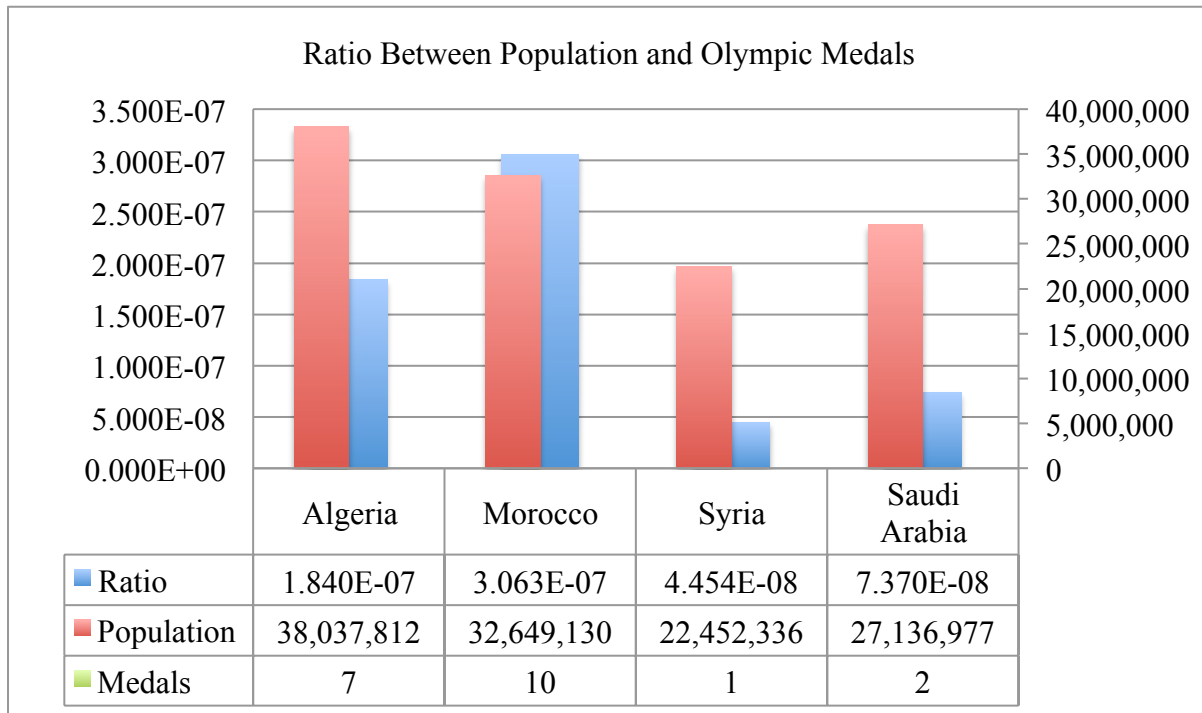


Figure 14: Ratio Between Population and Olympic Medals Won.

Unlike Figure 13, illustrated in Figure 14 was that Morocco took first place with the highest number of medals, followed by Algeria in second place, and Syria in third place. However, after taking into the consideration the ratio between population and total number of medals, and because there were no big gaps in populations, the ranking remained the same between medal counts and ratio counts.

An additional suggestion would be to create developmental programs for youth, athletes, coaches, referees, and administrators, through a Leader’s Preparation Institute and use the facilities of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare for these programs. The benefits of these

programs would be many. One result would be that there would be an increase in youth and athletes' skill abilities, developed under the watchful eyes of coaches trained in the Saudi Leaders' Preparation Institute. In addition, these youth and athlete development programs would allow for identification of talented individuals who could then train under Saudi coaches trained through the Leader's Preparation Institute. These athletes could then be enrolled into one or more development and training programs, with the hope that they would be serious future Olympic and Pan Arab contenders.

Additionally, more attention needs to be given to a variety of sports, especially individual sports, because individual sports provide a greater number of medals for the country, than do team sports. In fact, all Saudi Olympic medals won were in individual sports. Moreover, Saudi Arabia needs to continue their focus on sports related to Arabic culture such as archery, equestrian, and fencing, because of their rich history in these sports.

Finally, a new focus on popular Saudi Arabian sports should be included in competition training. For example, badminton and beach volleyball have become popular within Saudi Arabia, and participation in these sports is increasing across the country. By continuing to develop these, and other popular sports, it is conceivable that Saudi Arabia would be a serious contender in a greater number of sports at the international level.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that might help Saudi Arabia achieve greater success in international sports competitions. Sports in Saudi Arabia started officially under the government umbrella through the General Presidency for Youth Welfare. Before this time, different ministries managed sport in Saudi Arabia until 1974 when sport was administered through the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, as an independent institution. Within 38 years, Saudi Arabia participated in almost every sporting event around the world. Moreover, Saudi Arabia secured a strong infrastructure to support sports in the country. With all this, the achievement level did not live up to Saudis' expectations, especially in the Summer Olympic Games.

This study used medal count as the indicator of success. A comparison was made both with total medal count and also with a ratio of medal count to population. Medal count was divided into the four periods of relatively recent development of sports in Saudi Arabia. Each of these periods represented different visions and foci on athletic improvement in the Saudi Arabian sporting world.

During the first period the focus was to build new and useful sport facilities, as well as to establish sport federations, ten in all, during this period. During this ten years period, Saudi Arabia won 122 medals: 51 gold, 33 silver and 38 bronze medals.

The second period saw the completion of the infrastructure, as Saudi Arabia established five more sport federations and finished the third five-year plan. Also in this period, Saudi Arabia became more involved in the sports world by organizing the FIFA World Cup for Youth, and created and organized the FIFA Confederation Cup. In terms of achievement, Saudi Arabia's

success on the field improved, as they won 1019 medals in this period: 385 gold, 341 silver and 293 bronze.

During the third period Saudi Arabia established two sport federations and reorganized certain areas, including separating the karate federation from taekwondo federation during 1996 to 2006. This period was the golden time for sport in Saudi Arabia because they hosted and organized the First Islamic Solidarity Games, an event both popular and extremely important to the Islamic Community. Also, the success of Saudi Arabia in the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games produced two Olympic medals: one silver and one bronze. What really made this period important, and successful, was that Saudi Arabia had 1956 medals during all international competitions in which they participated; with 662 gold, 639 silver and 655 bronze medals.

Saudi Arabia is currently half way through the fourth period. Even so, this period is far behind the medal count at its halfway point, when compared to the other three periods. To date, Saudi Arabia has won 454 medals: 196 gold, 132 silver and 126 bronze medals. At the domestic level, there were no major changes except for the building of five headquarters for special needs sports.

After comparing all periods, the time between the middle of second period and the middle of third period was the best time in Saudi Arabian sport history by medal count. A decrease started immediately after the middle of the third period. This decrease may have been due to focusing most of the training attention on soccer, more than a variety of sports.

Also, this study examined the relationship of the ratio between the number of Olympic medals won and country population. This ratio showed that Saudi Arabia was advantaged in medal count as it had more medals by population when compare it with countries of larger

populations. However, when compare with countries of closer populations, the ratio was close to the medal count.

In summary, the aim of this study was to identify what Saudi Arabia needed to achieve success (medal count) in the Olympic Games. As a result, of this study four suggestions were made. First, motivate Saudis to participate and use the sport facilities. Second, create programs to develop sports in the country. These programs should be targeted toward youth, athletes, coaches, referees, and administrators. Third, there needs to be an increase in the range of competitive sports. Popular individual sports, in particular, would be a good place to start, as interest would not need to be generated, rather maintained and increased. Finally, Saudi Arabia needs to develop marketing programs in order to motivate the respective communities to use and participate in the General Presidency's sports facilities through school and college competitions. Most importantly, by incorporating all of the suggestions, the local communities would be able to be more involved, which should generate greater sport interest, and result in greater achievement at future Olympic Games.

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