

# SPORTING CHANCE

**The 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles generated a lot of interest in software based on competitive sports. Although some of these packages have originated in the UK (Daley Thompson's Decathlon is a recent chart-topper), most of them — such as the package we look at here, called Summer Games — come from the US.**

Summer Games from Epyx is marketed in the United Kingdom by Quicksilver. The package includes eight sports events — from athletics and swimming to gymnastics and shooting. Each event can have up to eight different competitors, who can choose one of 17 countries to represent. Nationals whose flags are not included in the program have the opportunity to compete under the Epyx standard.

Once the game has loaded, the first scene shows the opening ceremony. To the accompaniment of suitably heraldic music, an athlete carrying the Olympic torch runs up to a rostrum and lights the flame, as a flock of doves is released into the sky. The sound and graphics of the opening ceremony are typical of those of the package as a whole. The background is carefully drawn using high resolution bit-mapped graphics, and the smooth movements of the runner and the doves are a result of the Commodore's excellent sprite facilities. The music, while not the best example of what can be achieved using the Commodore 64's SID (sound interface device) chip, makes good use of the three available oscillators. The general impression is that the program exploits the capabilities of the 64 to the full, however.

## Up The Pole

The quality of Summer Games from Epyx is clearly seen in these photographs. Each event is loaded individually from disk or tape, which allows large amounts of hi-res data for the backgrounds to be stored and processed



IAN MCKINWELL

Players can choose to compete in all of the events, one of the events, practise an event or see a list of the world records in each event. There is also an option to allow one or two joysticks to be used, which lets the players compete directly against each other in the swimming and running events without the need for a computer pacemaker.

The first of the eight events is the pole vault, which is perhaps the most difficult of all. The players compete in turn, responding to a series of prompts from the computer. After the lowest bar height of four metres is set, the player is asked whether he wishes to compete at that height. If the answer is yes, the computer then asks for the position of the pole grip, and the athlete then begins the run across the screen.

The player must pull the joystick back to plant the pole, push it forward to raise the athlete over the bar and then press the fire button to let go of the pole and prevent it from toppling over onto the bar. Each of these actions requires split-second timing, as a miscalculation at any point will result in the bar being brought down.

This sequence is a good illustration of the kind of parameters that have to be considered while coding. Not only does the screen have to be fully supported at all times to ensure smooth scrolling of the graphics, but the computer also has to check for movements in the joystick and fire button. Finally, the computer has to check that the pole and athlete are at the right angle and position for a successful jump. Throughout this, the user must not notice that these actions are being performed.

After each event, a table is drawn up showing the medals awarded and the winning country's national anthem is played. The computer then loads the next event. The fact that each event is loaded separately shows how much code is required to run each event.

The events that follow are the high diving and gymnastics. Here, the player must manipulate the joystick to produce a smooth dive or vault, making sure to finish with a smooth entry into the water, or land carefully on the mat. The computer then evaluates the performance.

**Summer Games:** For the Commodore 64. Disk version £19.95; cassette version £14.95

**Publishers:** Epyx Software, 1043 Kiel Court, Sunnyvale, California, USA

**Authors:** Randy Glover, Stephen Landrum, John Leupp, Brian McGhie, Stephen Mundry, Erin Murphy, Scott Nelson

**Joysticks:** Required

**Format:** Twin cassette or disk version