

# Metrology

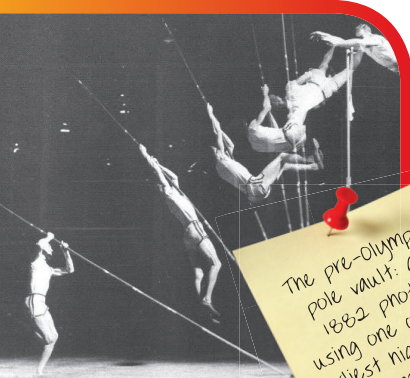
## Measurement in Sport

# Height

The high jump and pole-vault are the obvious Olympic events where height matters – but they're not the only ones. Goals, nets, hurdles, diving boards – all of them have to be set up at specified distances from the ground.

**Did you know?** In the 1936 Olympics, during the basketball tournament, the International Basketball Federation imposed a rule banning all players taller than 1.905 m (6 feet 3 inches). The rule was withdrawn following an objection.

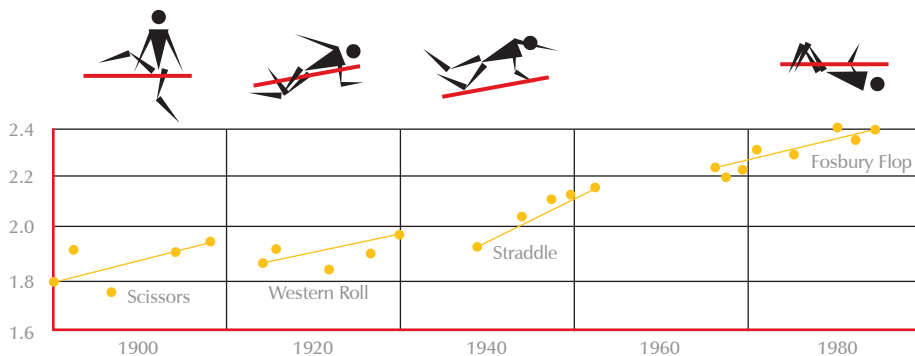
In 1791 the unit of length was defined as one-ten-millionth of the distance from equator to pole through Paris and given the name – metre. But because the Earth's shape changes constantly, it was necessary to define the metre in terms of universal properties that do not change. Today we define the metre as the distance that light travels in space during a very small and precisely defined fraction of a second.



The pre-Olympic pole vault: an 1882 photo, using one of the earliest high-speed cameras

**Did you know?** In the 1964 Olympics, there were complaints from the Hungarian team that the shallowness of the Water Polo pool allowed the taller Yugoslav team to stand on the bottom with their heads above the surface.

Style matters: changing high jump techniques over the last century meant sudden increases in record heights.



**World Metrology Day 20 May 2008**

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