



HIGHLAND GAMES

More than strength. More than size. More than a single gift.

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"Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution."

— Aristotle

INTRODUCTION

The Secret History

How a forbidden people kept their warrior spirit alive

There is a legend — and like most legends, it carries more truth than it might appear to — that the Highland Games were never really about sport at all.

After the Jacobite rising of 1745 and the defeat at Culloden, the British Crown moved to systematically destroy Scottish Highland culture. The Act of Proscription of 1746 banned the wearing of tartan, the playing of bagpipes, and the bearing of arms. Scotland's warrior class found themselves forbidden from the practices that had defined their identity for centuries.

So they invented a festival.

Stone throwing developed explosive combat power. The hammer throw built rotational strength for battle. The caber trained soldiers to direct heavy objects with precision under pressure. Weight for distance built the heaving power soldiers needed. It was a military training program disguised as a country fair. The occupiers saw kilts and folk games. The Highlanders saw a way to keep themselves ready.

Today's competition is not war. But it carries the memory of war — and demands the same qualities: not just strength, but coordination, timing, courage, and the refusal to be broken by what stands in front of you. The strongest men who have tried this sport have found it the most technically demanding pursuit of their lives.



"The secret of freedom lies in educating people, whereas the secret of tyranny is in keeping them ignorant."

— Plato

EVENT II

Stone Put

Braemar Stone & Open Stone

The stone put is where every newcomer discovers their first lesson: power without mechanics is just noise. You can be the strongest person on the field and still throw shorter — because the stone cares about hip sequencing, elbow height, fingertip release, and the precise transfer of force through a kinetic chain that must fire in exactly the right order.

Two formats are contested. The Braemar Stone demands a standing delivery — no glide, no rotation, no borrowed momentum. The athlete generates everything from zero. The Open Stone permits a glide or rotational approach, rewarding athletes who move efficiently through space before the throw.

In the old tradition, the stone was whatever was at hand — a river boulder, a field rock, awkward and never the same twice. A warrior who could only throw a standardized implement was less useful than one who could adapt.

*"First say to yourself what you would be;
and then do what you have to do."*

— Epictetus

**16-22
lbs**

OPEN STONE

**20-32
lbs**

BRAEMAR CLASS

1843

FIRST FORMAL GAMES



EVENT III

Weight for Distance

Light Weight (28 lb) & Heavy Weight (56 lb)

A cast-iron block on a chain. A D-ring handle. Send it as far as possible, one hand only, any style within the trig. Deceptively simple. Brutally complex.

Its war-training origin is the most direct. The ability to heave heavy loads over distances was a battlefield skill. The chain and ring handle mirrors actual military implements — hooks, rings, weighted chains used to drag obstacles and breach barriers. The Highland men who threw these were not playing. They were practicing.

Two weights: 28 lbs (light) and 56 lbs (heavy). Elite athletes use a multi-spin technique — two to four rotations building angular velocity before releasing at 35-40 degrees. The 56 lb heavy weight exposes every flaw. The world's most powerful men have stepped into this circle and found coordination was the limiting factor, not strength.

"It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters."

— Epictetus

28 lbs

LIGHT WEIGHT

56 lbs

HEAVY WEIGHT

35-40°

OPTIMAL RELEASE



EVENT IV

Scottish Hammer

Rotational Throw — Feet Fixed

The Scottish Hammer is the event that most completely dismantles the assumption that these games are won by the strongest. A round metal ball on a rigid cane handle — 16 lbs (light) or 22 lbs (heavy) — is wound overhead and hurled for distance. The feet do not move. Every inch comes from the upper body alone.

In the Olympic hammer throw, athletes spin freely. In the Highland Games, feet are planted for the entire throw. Every inch comes from shoulder torque, lat engagement, and core counter-rotation. A technically precise athlete with moderate strength will consistently beat a powerful athlete with poor timing.

Three to four rotations overhead build velocity. The release — timed to within fractions of a second — determines distance. In the war-training tradition, this directly simulated wielding a battle hammer from a planted position — exactly as a warrior needed in close quarters.

*"The impediment to action advances action.
What stands in the way becomes the way."*

— Marcus Aurelius

16 lbs

LIGHT HAMMER

22 lbs

HEAVY HAMMER

3-4

ROTATIONS



EVENT V

Caber Toss

Scored on Direction, Not Distance

The caber toss is the most famous event and the one that most completely confounds the expectation that this is a sport of brute strength. A tapered log — 17 to 20 feet, 100 to 175 lbs — is lifted, balanced vertically, carried at a run, and tossed end-over-end. Distance is irrelevant. Only direction is scored.

Scoring uses a clock-face system. A perfect toss sends the caber to exactly 12 o'clock — directly ahead. A throw that goes twice the distance but lands at 10 o'clock scores lower than one that goes short but lands at 11:45. The strongest athlete in the field can be beaten by the most precise one.

Highland soldiers used timber poles to bridge ravines and breach palisades. Directing a heavy log with precision was a tactical skill. Men who deadlift 700 lbs have stood in this circle and failed. Strength is necessary. It is not sufficient.

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

— Aristotle

17-20 ft

CABER LENGTH

100-175 lbs

CABER WEIGHT

12:00

PERFECT SCORE



EVENT VI

Sheaf Toss

The Pitchfork Event — Agricultural Roots

A burlap bag stuffed with straw, 20 lbs, impaled on a pitchfork and hurled over a horizontal bar at increasing heights. One hand. One motion. Straight up.

During the periods when the Crown banned arms in the Highlands, the pitchfork was exempt — it was a farm tool. No one could argue otherwise. In the hands of a trained man, it was entirely something else. The sheaf toss formalized a weapon into competition.

The format is a height competition — three misses at any height eliminates the athlete. What separates elite sheaf tossers is not raw strength but refinement of the vertical drive and release angle. Brute force directed slightly wrong knocks the bar off every time.

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

— Socrates

20 lbs

MEN'S OPEN

3

ATTEMPTS / HEIGHT

1

HAND ON FORK



EVENT VII

Weight over Bar

Vertical Throw for Height — One Hand

A 28 lb or 56 lb weight on a chain is hurled straight up with a single hand, attempting to clear a horizontal bar at increasing heights. No spin. No arc. Three attempts at each height. Force directed even slightly off-axis knocks the bar off every time.

The war-training purpose: heaving heavy objects upward over walls and barriers was a fundamental assault skill. The soldier who could hurl a weighted implement sixteen feet up and direct it accurately had a capability no amount of raw strength alone could replace.

Missing twice and stepping up for a third attempt — knowing failure means elimination — tests character as much as the body. The bar does not reward effort. It rewards precision. And precision is earned through thousands of repetitions, not years of simply getting stronger.

"Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one."

— Marcus Aurelius

**28-56
lbs**

IMPLEMENT

3

ATTEMPTS / HEIGHT

1

HAND ONLY



Training for the Field

The Knight to Fit Performance Approach

The Highland Games will not be mastered by the strongest person in the room. They will be mastered by the most complete one — absolute strength alongside explosive power, coordination, rotational fluency, spatial awareness, and the patience to refine technique through thousands of repetitions until it requires no thought. All of them, integrated.

Aristotle's arete — the full expression of one's potential — was never about one thing. At Knight to Fit Performance, we build structural capacity through heavy compound movement, then layer rotational power development, ballistic training, and deliberate technical practice of the throwing events themselves.

The Stoic discipline means showing up when motivation is absent. Logotherapy means connecting every session to a purpose larger than itself. The Viking ethos means the difficulty is not a problem to be managed — it is the point. When the implement is heavy and the competition long and the day has already asked everything — that is the Highland Games.

"He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."

— Epictetus



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