In 1996, Atlanta hosted the Centennial Olympic Games from July 19 to August 4, with the Georgia Tech campus serving as the home of the Olympic Village — where the athletes lived — and as the venue for boxing, diving, modern pentathlon, Paralympic volleyball, swimming, synchronized swimming, and water polo.

Lots of Tech’s current faculty and staff were not at Tech during the Olympics, and some of today’s undergraduates had not even been born. So, many in the Tech community may not be aware of the herculean effort that transformed the campus for the Olympics.

Through the eyes of some of the key contributors, this edition of The Whistle spotlights Tech’s role in the 1996 Olympics, sharing a little insight into some of the work that occurred before the Games and how it shaped Tech’s Olympic legacy that remains today.

For full Olympic anniversary coverage, visit c.gatech.edu/olympics.
REFLECTING ON THE RINGS

“When the Centennial Olympic Games was written, it will say that Georgia Tech provided an Olympic Village that will be hard to top and will contribute to the legacy of the games that will be left behind for future generations.”

— G. Wayne Clough, president emeritus (June 1996)

LASTING LEGACIES

Much of what is familiar about campus today was brand new in 1996. Here are a few things that came as preparations for the Atlanta Games:

Kessler Campanile

The gathering spot features an 80-foot stainless steel obelisk rising from a fountain, surrounded by a 200-seat amphitheater. The sculpture, which is capped with a stylized tribute to Tech Tower, was donated by alumnus Richard Kessler, with the Classes of 1943 and 1943 providing funding to build the plaza. The Kessler Campanile served as the backdrop for the for the TODAY show’s broadcasts during the Games.

Georgia Tech Logo

Before the 1996 Olympics, Georgia Tech introduced a new logo. It was created following a nearly two-year study of how the Institute was viewed by various audiences and what symbols conveyed its tradition and mission. The logo incorporated their then-new Kessler Campanile and was accompanied by type that incorporated both names: Georgia Tech and the Georgia Institute of Technology. An updated version of this logo is still used today.

Housing

To house 18,000 athletes on the Olympic Village, Georgia Tech built seven apartment-style residence halls at a cost of $28.5 million: Center Street Apartments; Crescent Residence Hall; Golden House; Stein House; Hayes House and Gray House; Maulding Residence Hall; and Zbar Residence Hall; Eighth Street Apartments; Nelson-Shell Residence Hall, and North Avenue Apartments. The additional housing nearly doubled student housing capacity to 70 percent of the undergraduate student body on campus. Several fraternities and sororities also renovated or built new facilities to house athletes.

McAuley Aquatic Center

The aquatic center was the venue for swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and water polo. After the Olympics, Georgia Tech demolished the old Student Athletic Center building and added—all above the Olympic pool—a six basketball courts, three dance studios, an inline hockey rink, and an elevated four-lane running track with an impressive city view. Connected to the front of the aquatic center is a 15,000-square-foot fitness center, with four racquetball courts, a squash court, a climbing wall, classrooms, and office suites. All of this makes up the Campus Recreation Center, which has the aquatic center as its centerpiece. In 2015, thanks to the generosity of alumnus Richard L. Bergmark, the aquatic center was named in honor of James Fredrick “Fred” McAuley, a Tech graduate and former swim coach.

Alexander Memorial Coliseum (now McCamish Pavilions)

The Coliseum underwent a $72 million renovation to add better seating, air-conditioning, and executive suites for the Games. It served as the venue for boxing and Paralympic volleyball. In 2011, the coliseum was renovated again, opening the following year as the Hank McCamish Pavilions.

A (A) Katie Curcio; (B) Bryan Gambil; and (C) Matt Laser host TODAY Live from the Olympic Plaza in the center of campus. (D) (E) Georgia Tech Library Archivist houses many artifacts from the 1996 Games, including memorabilia and the camp may, pictured on display in the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons during a 2012 exhibit. (F) Bill Bradley and Vanessa Love Bradley, both Georgia Tech architecture graduates, designed the Olympic swimming facility that would become the McAuley Aquatic Center. (G) Former Olympic swimmer turned broadcaster, swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, and water polo. (H) President Bill Clinton, daughter Chelsea, and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton receive commemorative Olympic jackets at a ceremony at the Ferst Center for the Arts. (I) Derrick Adkins, a Tech alumnus, earned a gold medal in the 400-meter hurdles during the 1996 Games. (J) From left to right: Georgia Lt. Gov.依旧Hoons, Mayor of the Olympic Village Frank Chandler, President G. Wayne Clough, Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell, Georgia Gov. Zell Miller, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Centres and the American Olympic committee, and Ed Whitmore, chief operating officer for ACOG at the Olympic Village key ceremony.

MISCELLANEOUS

July 21–22

Incoming first-year students attend New Student Convocation and are welcomed by Georgia Tech President G.P. "Bud" Peterson. Classes begin for fall semester.

July 22

Georgia Tech hosts a WIAA state championship for the Atlanta Dream Women’s Basketball team against the Dallas Wings at 7:30 p.m. at McCamish Pavilion. Discover more at whistle.gatech.edu/athletics.

July 26

Last day of classes for Fall Semester.

July 27

Faculty and staff are invited to enjoy tailgate for fall games at 8 p.m. at Bobby Dodd Stadium.

July 28 – August 4

First names for Fall Semester.

July 30

The Museum Center and Georgia Tech Millikin Pavilion hosted the Atlanta Dream Women’s Basketball team against the Dallas Wings at 7:30 p.m. at McCamish Pavilion.

August 3

New Student Convocation takes place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at McCamish Pavilion.

August 21

New Student Convocation takes place from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at McCamish Pavilion.

August 22

President G.P. "Bud" Peterson will host the Athletic Scholarship Luncheon from 11 a.m. to noon in Room 100, Scheller College of Business. 

August 18

Preliminary exams begin.

July 21

First day of classes for Fall Semester.

July 28

Last day of classes for Fall Semester.

August 22

President G.P. "Bud" Peterson will host the Athletic Scholarship Luncheon from 11 a.m. to noon in Room 100, Scheller College of Business.

For a more comprehensive listing of events, visit the online calendar at whistle.gatech.edu.
Many faculty and staff members on campus today played integral roles in the 1996 Games, ranging from envous to athletes. We talked with five of them in a series of videos about their experience then and how they believe hosting the Olympics changed Georgia Tech. See what they had to say at c.gatech.edu/olympics.

WHERE WERE YOU?

Faculty and staff members share their memories and roles in the 1996 Games.

> Billiee Pendleton-Parker (left), who recently retired from Georgia Tech after nearly 30 years, was assistant director of the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning but administered gender verification tests to female athletes as a volunteer in the Gender Verification Office of the Polyclinic during the Games. She also volunteered as the chef de mission for the Paralympics and with the Cultural Olympiad at the High Museum of Art, was a torch bearer for the Paralympic torch relay, and escorted the Paralympic mascot, Blaze.

> Annie Anton, professor and chair in the School of Interactive Computing, was pursuing her Ph.D. at Georgia Tech in 1996. She served as an envoy to Equatorial Guinea. This required two years of intensive training.

> When G. Wayne Clough became president of Georgia Tech in 1994, the campus was a very large construction site, preparing for the 1996 Olympics. He had to step in and lead that effort, while keeping Tech’s mission front and center.

> Matt Ryan, executive director of Regional Development in the Office of Development, was once an Olympian himself. He played handball for Team USA during the 1996 Games.

> Michael Edwards, director of Campus Recreation, was “on loan” from Georgia Tech, at the request of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG), to be the venue manager of the aquatic center.

> Jud Ready, a graduate student in 1996 and now principal research engineer at the Georgia Tech Research Institute, experienced the games as both a Tech employee and permitted street vendor. His fondest memories are of playing laser tag against the Romanian wrestling team, seeing the Torch Relay pass by his off-campus apartment, hawking frozen lemonade and T-shirts on the street, and enjoying all-you-can-eat dining. “You could tell which athletes hadn’t competed yet — they ate salad and fruit from the ones who were done and ate McDonald’s and ice cream.”

> Laura Pusateri, special events manager in Institute Communications, played the role of a butterfly during the Summertime show in the Opening Ceremonies.

> Adam Arrowood, a research scientist with Georgia Tech Cyber Security, worked at Tech during the Games and set up a website to document the experience. The site, a relic of the mid-’90s World Wide Web, contains hundreds of photos from June and July 1996 and lives on at c.gatech.edu/viewfrombeaville.

> Georgia Tech is once again hosting Olympic athletes. From July 21 to Aug. 1, McAuley Aquatic Center hosts USA Diving’s official team send-off prior to the team’s departure for the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As part of the send-off, Team USA will hold open practices, participate in team-building exercises, and visit local children’s hospitals. McAuley Aquatic Center will also host the training camp for the USA Swimming Olympic Team from July 21 to Aug. 1. Select diving and swimming sessions will be open to the public. For more information, visit crc.gatech.edu/aquatics.