

# Azerbaijan – a sporting nation

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Year 2012 has gone down in the history of Azerbaijani sport. It was then that the 41st General Assembly of the European Olympic Committee held in Italy decided to hold the first ever European Games in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan. Certainly, the key factor behind the decision was the fact that Azerbaijan has managed to create the image of a modern and dynamic country in the international arena. It is also obvious that, along with the impressive socioeconomic achievements of recent years and the public and political stability in the country, an important role has been played by the policy conducted in Azerbaijan in the field of sports. In other words, the European Olympic Committee has made this remarkable choice not by chance.

Even in the distant past physical culture and sport formed an integral part of everyday life and culture of the Azerbaijani people. This is evidenced by numerous historical monuments. The rock paintings in Gobustan, the folk epics of “*Dada Gorgud*” and “*Koroglu*”, other folk works contain evidence of the importance our ancestors attached to physical perfection and a healthy lifestyle. The works of classics of Azerbaijani poetry Nizami, Khagani, Fuzuli and others dwell upon martial games and amusements that were common in the Middle Ages – horse-racing, fencing, archery, wrestling, weight lifting, *surpapak* and chess. It is known that many Azerbaijani men and women spent a significant part of their life in the saddle. Such equestrian games as *chovgan*, wrestling and fencing of riders were very popular. Until relatively recently many cities of Azerbaijan operated *zorkhanas* – a kind of sport clubs which cherished and promoted the old traditions of wrestling and weight lifting.

All this is occasionally reflected on the pages of our magazine. In this edition, too, we continue the publication of a series of articles on the history of sport in Azerbaijan. As to the First European Games Baku-2015, an extensive report on the outcomes of the competition will be published in the next edition. In short, stay with us.