



HOW TO KEEP THE GAMES AS A PREMIER EVENT?

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Sport is playing an increasingly important role in a world of changing economic, political, cultural and social systems.

We are currently living in a golden age of sport. Since ancient times, never has sport occupied such an important place in society as today.

This status has largely been achieved by the athletes themselves, inspired by sporting excellence, and also by the positive impact of staging highly successful Olympic Games. “Unforgettable, dream Games”, as they have often been described after their conclusion.

The Olympic Games are the only event that has the power to involve the whole world and to bring a social, urban and economic regeneration to a city, while touching all generations through sport.

The Olympic Games are undoubtedly the world’s major sporting event. The scale of the event, the imagery as well as the universal audience involved, both live and rebroadcast, demonstrate the position of the Games in modern society. The Olympic rings, the main symbol of the Olympic Movement – which is the most recognised symbol in the world – is universally seen as embodying highly positive values.

The critical challenge in keeping the Games a primary event is to preserve the values associated with the Games in modern society.

The Olympic Games are unique because they are a role model for young people, a source of national pride, and a symbol of unity, friendship and international cooperation.

Olympic athletes have described participating in the Olympic Games as being “the most important moment of their sporting career”. This is the strength of the Games. Every athlete in an Olympic sport recognises the value and the importance of participating in such an event. Why is it so much more important to win an Olympic medal rather than a World Championship medal?

The answer is in the values – recognised by people everywhere – that the Olympic Games represent. The appeal of these values and how they attract the world’s attention is confirmed by how they are used in the Olympic Games communication campaigns.

The Beijing organisers knew that hosting successful Olympic Games relied on, among many other things, capturing the imagination of the people of the host country and the rest of the world. The Beijing Olympic slogan was: “One World, One Dream”. In its reach and simplicity, this slogan clearly aims to express the unity of humanity and the shared global dream embodied in the Olympic Games.

Athens 2004 offered its hospitality to the world with “Welcome Home”, a theme that goes back to the ancient Games. Salt Lake City 2002 was “Light the Fire Within”, focusing on the power of the Olympic flame to inspire. Sydney 2000 invoked global participation with “Share the Spirit”.

That sport must play an important role in the education of the young generations was the conviction of Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the modern Olympic Movement.

The big issue is: how can we continue to keep the appeal of the Olympic Games alive among the younger generations?

We all know that our young people have many distractions that draw them away from the Olympic Games and indeed from sport in general, yet this is what we must focus on. Our young people must be the privileged audience, to whom our message is first and foremost addressed to. We must concentrate our efforts in that direction and cater to the broadest spectrum of our young audience and what they want to see in terms of sport.

The challenge then is to spread our values among the young. The Olympic Games must be kept in line with its audience and maintain its universal appeal. An interesting aspect of the Games is that it helps weaker and more backward countries to modernise and learn the marvels of modern technology, which raises them to the level of more modern and advanced countries. The Olympic Games must continue to be instrumental in narrowing this gap.

I have had the privilege of witnessing two Olympic Games in my country: one summer and one winter Olympic Games. They were, respectively, the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome that I experienced as a young boy and more recently the 2006 Olympic Winter Games in Torino, at a much older age. Both have made history in my country.

This has taught me that the Olympic Games need to be managed by an organisation that is strong and financially independent. Highlighting the importance of the autonomy of sport Giulio Onesti stated “Sport to the people of Sport”. Giulio Onesti was President of the Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano (CONI) for 32 years, International Olympic Committee (IOC) member from 1964 to 1981, among the founders of the European Olympic Committees and IOC Olympic Solidarity, and was the man who built the autonomy of Italian sport, delivering a model that is still considered to be avant-garde. The IOC, the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs) must continue this work and cooperate in defining the autonomy of sport today together with governments.



The autonomy of sport also implies financial independence, and the whole Olympic Movement is financed by the revenue from the Olympic Games.

The economic importance of the Olympic Games is demonstrated by the interest of great cities and nations who seek to organise them. The IOC and the Olympic Games are in good shape! We have seen, here in Copenhagen, great competition to assign the 2016 Olympic Summer Games. Four big cities from four different continents have presented excellent projects. Chicago, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro and Tokyo have come into play, analysing their sport heritage, and planning new urban and sport infrastructures to present strong candidatures.

The core element of the Olympic Games is the sports programme. It must, as I have already said, comply with the expectations of the generations of tomorrow. Cities are selected seven years ahead of time and the sport programme changes on the basis of a seven year interval. The IOC has met this need by implementing a programme review process in order to ensure that it is in line with young people's tastes in the decades to come.

The Olympics are the icon of the life we all wish to live: a clean existence where competence, respect and professionalism still win over trickery and subterfuge. To keep the Games at this level, it is necessary to fight against doping. Doping drastically damages the athletes and the image of the Olympic Games! Yet, with the creation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), major steps forward have been made in this area. The great increase in the number of tests conducted at the Olympic Games is a strong deterrent.

Lastly, the mission of the IOC is to promote Olympism and to ensure the regular celebration of the Olympic Games.

Vancouver is around the corner and the final months of preparations are going well.

The Torino organisers have passed the baton to the Vancouver team. The motto of the 2006 Torino Olympic Winter Games was "Passion Lives Here". Let us continue to pursue this mission with "Glowing Hearts"!