



## HOW TO KEEP THE GAMES AS A PREMIER EVENT?

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ORIGINAL TEXT IN ENGLISH

As most people recognise, the Olympic Games are still the world's premier sporting event because they represent a universal and unique social phenomenon bringing together people, cultures, values and countries across the world.

However, as generations change, more and more people worry that the Games are losing their mass appeal.

How do we continue to capture people's attention in today's society and keep the original Olympic values while continuing to generate the required revenue for development? That, I believe, needs deep discussion.

Today I would like to raise eight points for further examination:

#### 1. WE NEED THE BEST ATHLETES AT THE GAMES BUT WE ALSO NEED UNIVERSALITY TO ENSURE GLOBAL REPRESENTATION

We all know that top level competition is one of the most important components of the Games' success. Therefore, ensuring that top athletes compete in each Olympic sport is obviously crucial. But it is not appropriate to directly compare the Games with the highest level "League Championships", "Grand Finals", or "World Series". Although we use the word "Olympic" to describe things that possess superior quality, a balance between universality and the best athletes' participation is also required.

There is at least one thing we can do. We should combat decisions where a qualified athlete, according to the International Federation (IF) qualification system approved by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), is judged, at national level, unable to medal and therefore denied their rightful place at the Games. This is an absolute contravention of the Olympic spirit and the IOC must find a way to limit this kind of behaviour of a small minority of National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

#### 2. THE PHENOMENA OF "WHITE ELEPHANTS"

Indeed, it is not easy to determine a moderate way of hosting the Games and guaranteeing the Games' standards with regard to organisational capacity. Moreover, increasing costs are not visible when one focuses on the organisation of successful competitions or athlete preparation alone. But we should recognise that the Games are different for different countries.

For example, we can never compare the number of volunteers at the Beijing Olympic Games with any other edition of the Games. Small countries should not be prevented from organising the Games because they have fewer resources at their disposal. It is not necessary to have only the best infrastructure, otherwise the original Olympic concept is not respected. The Games are not only about staging the biggest and most elaborate sporting event.

People have said that the growing size of the Olympic Games is the result of its success as the world's foremost sporting event and of continued efforts by all involved to achieve excellence at all levels. Therefore, defining "affordable" Games is becoming the key challenge.

Involving more IFs' opinions in the selection process for the Games host is very important. More emphasis should be placed on the candidate cities long-term use of their facilities or legacy plan – this should be made an essential component of the process – and should also include their future international event plans with respect to each IF.

#### 3. THE TOUGHEST PROBLEM MUST BE WHICH SPORTS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE GAMES

Of the total number of athletes competing in the Games in Beijing, 42.37% were women and 57.63% were men, which is close to the IOC's goal of having an equal participation for each gender.

But the IOC is facing the difficult challenge of selecting 28 sports with 302 events from these sports and limiting participation to 10,500 athletes to prevent an oversized Olympic Village. For sure, limitations always lead to difficult choices, but too much energy has been expended in the past for campaigns to ensure participation in the Games Programme. But at some level, maybe the Games should involve all IFs underlining its premier position.

There are some concerns that the popularity of new sports will overshadow the old sports, which may consequently never return to the Programme. On this point, although it is essential to reach the next generation and connect them to the Olympic Games early in their lives, the traditional Olympic sports should not "panic" about young children's sporting attentions as I believe they will broaden over time. But each IF still needs to adapt itself to modern society to keep up-to-date because we can never ignore developments in the world such as the use of computers. Therefore, instead of panicking, IFs should adapt themselves as we are doing for the modern pentathlon.

Besides that, lots of people want to see new events in the Games because they say the world is changing with the introduction of new technologies and new generations need more modern sports. Yes, I think the IOC respects the Olympic Ideals and opens the door to innovation and new sports and honours the traditional and historic sports in the Games. We can absolutely say this is the challenge for IOC: to



ensure that the founding pillar sports of the Games remain a point of reference in many regions and continue to enhance the participation of numerous nations in the Olympic Games, which is truly the Olympian base. On the other hand, “new” sports are reflecting their growth and likewise need to be taken into account.

The IOC should also be aware that when sports are addressing their ambitions to become part of the Olympic Programme, it is important for them to embody the Olympic spirit and to inspire people, which is key for all Olympic sports.

What we know is that there are a lot of recommendations regarding sports selection and some of them are reasonable, but I believe that the IOC will make its final choice based on the above-mentioned principles since the Olympic Games are their core mission.

#### 4. FAIR PLAY IN ALL ASPECTS

If we want the Games to keep its premier position, fair judging and fair qualifying processes are basic things we must insist on. We know that in some competitions, especially where judges decide on the result, controversies and disagreements are normal. But if we look back, we can see that the situation has improved and that IFs have been continuously developing technologies to ensure fairer judging.

Even so, some principles on which we must insist include refusing to change the result after competitions are completed or unreasonably delaying the publication of the result. These issues are damaging the Games. The same applies to the Games Programme, as the competition process for each candidate sport in the selection process as well as the evaluation procedures should also be fair and transparent.

#### 5. THE GAMES ARE THE MOST PEACEFUL AND “TOUCHING” EVENT FOR MOST PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES, SO WE MUST TREASURE AND DEVELOP IT

If we count the member NOCs, the Olympic Games have more member countries than the United Nations and are definitely the most universal and unique movement bringing together people and building international goodwill, co-operation and interaction. Not just in terms of its values and diversity, but also the beneficial effects of the Games, which transcend the sporting field. Let us review the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games for a moment:

- 204 NOCs took part;
- 87 countries won medals – more than ever before;
- Gender equality among the athletes was greater than ever before.

The Games demonstrated a spirit of reduction in conflict and discrimination and a contribution to peace in line with the Olympic spirit. We may say that Olympic values reach far beyond national and political boundaries. They reach human beings and are immune to racism, religious persecution etc. A country does not become united in the same way even over a world champion. But an Olympic champion brings values that can foster true national unity.

According to the IOC’s 2008 Olympic Consumer Research, one of the key sentiments of the Olympic Games is the feeling of national pride, which audiences derive from watching and reading about, listening to the feats of their own athletes, and celebrating with them through medal ceremonies and so forth. Meanwhile, national identity at the

Olympic Games is a very important domain for NOCs. Therefore, we must develop the national image at the Olympic Games and reinforce the emotional response which helps countries’ solidarity. However, at some level this is dependent on NOCs’ education and management of their teams. Touching images from the Games make them more tangible and accessible to everyone, bringing Olympic values into the living room, which is one of the amazing factors making Olympic Games the premier event.

#### 6. CULTURAL PROGRAMMES SHOULD BE PROMINENT

Although everyone knows that the Olympic cultural programme is very important for the Games, we do not really pay enough attention to developing this. There was often little real connection between the cultural programmes and the Games themselves during the Beijing Olympics. Actually there was plenty of fine art, literature, drama, music, science and numerous related events prior to as well as during the Games throughout the city. But athletes were not sufficiently informed about these events and so did not participate in them.

Of course, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Games are a demonstration of culture as was the case with Athens in 2004, but it is not really a truly cultural event and it falls far behind the original objectives of the Olympic Ideal. Therefore, it is worth thinking about how to integrate cultural events into the Games itself. It is not just because we should live up to the Olympic Ideal but also because we can use this special aspect to differentiate the Olympic Games from other sporting events.

#### 7. BALANCING THE BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPANTS, SPECTATORS, VIEWERS, CONSUMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

If we want to stay in a premier position in today’s society and given the current economic situation, we must share benefits together. For the Olympic Games to remain vibrant and appealing, we also need to think about our commercial partners while giving priority to athletes and spectators.

However, balancing the interests of client groups is a continuous challenge. No matter how we go about striking this balance, understanding the different interests of the different stakeholders is very important. We have to recognise that we must keep the original Olympic values so the Games can keep its position. If we ignore this, the present benefits may disappear someday and the Games may lose its premier position.

Therefore, when we try to revise the Games, we must consider if this revision should serve the interests of each stakeholder.

#### 8. MAKE THE GAMES UNIQUE

- There are people who suggest using marketing analysis methods such as SWOT, which identifies the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOTs) of the Games. They emphasised the “once-in-a-lifetime” experience.
- Moreover, they think the engagement must start years before the Games through preparation activities such as the countdown and selection of the national teams attending test events.
- In order to capture more young people, we need more promotion techniques, which should reflect modern society in order to cater to



young people, who are more familiar with new media formats such as mobile phones, networking sites, online TV, web conferences, online collaboration and content aggregation.

- If the IOC's promotional material can be more adapted to each sport and are made more available to IFs, more age groups around the world will develop an interest in the Games and in more ways.