

Future of the Olympics: Olympics in the 21st Century

廿一世紀奧林匹克運動會的前景



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摘要

奧運會被批評為過於職業化，商業化及充滿民族主義色彩，這些批評破壞了奧運會的真正精神，而奧運會的真正精神是培養良好的體魄和德性一業餘運動的基本要素以及將全球運動員集合起來一同參與四年一度的體壇盛事，藉以建立國際聲譽，從而協助建設一個更美好和更和平的世界。本文記載作者在亞特蘭大的所見所聞，以及作者對於未來籌辦更佳奧運會以外另闢蹊徑方面所作的討論。

To the whole world's surprises, the site for the Centennial Olympic Games is not Athens. On the 17th September, 1990, when the IOC (International Olympic Committee) announced the result of their decision to award the last Olympic of this century to Atlanta, the birth place of Coca Cola and the memorial site of the black American civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Athens, the origin of the Olympics was relegated to the sidelines. The Greeks thought that they would have every right and honour to stage the Olympics during its centennial year but the Lord of Rings (International Olympic Committee) wanted to look ahead to the 21 century instead of back to the 19th century. Just as the Economist stated that "Sentiment no longer counts for much among Olympic administrators, the old fashioned idealism, humanism and Greek ideals will not stand alone without blending high-tech support and endless financial backing". Atlanta has all the qualities over Athens in hosting the Games in this respect. If we know that the financial situation of the Games depends entirely on the scale of television rights, it will not be a surprise that the Games went to Atlanta.

For a long time, the Olympic Games has been criticised for being too professional, commercialized, political and nationalistic, have hampering the true spirit of the Games. Pierre de Coubertin, father of modern Olympics stated that the spirit of the Olympic Games was to "promote the development of those fine physical and moral qualities which are the basics of amateur sport

and to bring together athletes of the world in a great quadrennial festival of sport thereby creating international respect and good will and thus helping to construct a better and more peaceful world".

In recent years, suggestions concerning the future of the Games ranged from reforming the Games to terminating them. Some critics suggested that the Olympics should be abolished because they are too professional and "Professionals will win at all cost and this is contradictory to Amateurism". Another reason for abolishing the Games is that they have become too commercialized. Since the Los Angeles Games, cities initiated to bid for the Games are motivated by their desire to make money rather than by good will. This can be seen at the Atlanta Games, expenses were kept low by cutting administration cost, facilities cost and good marketing strategies. TV rights are sold for a new record high amount and major sponsors dominate the scene. Some critics expostulated that the greatest beneficiary at the 96 Olympics was the sponsors. Coca Cola, Kodak, Panasonic and MacDonaldis were just a few whose trademark have got most publicity in the Olympic Village and competition venues. Some even called the 96 Olympics as the "Coca Cola Olympics". "Tasteless marriage of competition and commerce" was used by many to describe the marketing strategy adopted by Billy Payne, Chairman of ACOG (Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games). Even the athletes resented to the ways that they were being treated throughout the games. There was either not enough rooms nor beds for the athletes and bunk beds were stacked on one another in the sitting rooms to accommodate athletes and officials. There was not enough tickets for the officials to march in the Opening Ceremony. Needless to say, there were insufficient tickets for the athletes to watch the Closing Ceremony. Athletes should be the emphasis of the Olympic Games! Instead, a lot of the tickets have gone to the sponsors. The ceremonies became show cases for the Americans and the athletes were merely props on stage.

Out of frustration, one British athlete honestly declares that "Games are for the athletes, without athletes, there would be no games, so treat them well and do not commercialize them".

Since the revival of the modern Olympics, the Games were considered to be a political platform for showing political strength of world powers. This can be seen at the selection of the host city, the boycott of the Games in 1980 and 84. In the award ceremony, the playing of national anthems and raising of the national flags of the winners increase the prestige of the nations who dominate the victory stand. (In fact, the Olympic Charter expounds that the Olympic Games are a contest between individual and not nations). Nationalism can further be seen from favouring the host country at the expense of others. Why does the Organizing Committee ask the teams to select a certain member from each delegation to participate in the Opening Ceremony except the American delegation? Why are all the TV coverage on American athletes and not on their opponents. TV coverage is one sided and to the advantage of the American athletes. Rowdy support

of the American home crowd who jeered at their opponents have affected the performance of other athletes and the decision of the judges. After the American girls have won the overall Champion in women gymnastics, one of the Russian officials said " It has always been political in the Olympics but this one is so extreme because it is America, America, America. Be nice to other athletes, give them a fair chance".

Various parties have made suggestions regarding the future of the Olympics, e.g. to eliminate some of the above ceremonies, and to select a neutral site such as Athens or Switzerland to be the host city. The former being the birth place of Olympics and the latter where many International Sports Association is located. But will such measures make Olympics truly a celebration of peace and develop international understanding through sport? Will the IOC accept that the true spirit of the Games is more important than the income it can generate? Will all nations be given an equal opportunity to host the Olympics? If the answer is "yes", then the Olympics will have a brighter future.

References

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