



YOUTH SPORT EVENTS

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Why are youth sport events important for the Olympic Movement?

Taking care of the Olympic Summer and Winter Games, and making sure that they are organised successfully, is the most important task of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Movement.

The Olympic Games is a fantastic and unique event, where athletes from all over the world come together to stage superb athletic performances.

As side effects of the Olympic Games, we promote a number of very positive things: peace, mutual understanding, equality (gender, race, religion, and political and sexual observance), health, care of the environment, and the possibility of highlighting the importance of young people.

International youth events are important as a way of inspiring talented young athletes to stay in competitive sport. Today, there are so many opportunities for young people outside of sport, and events like the continental Youth Olympic Festivals and the coming Youth Olympic Games (YOG), help to keep young athletes dedicated to their sports.

In addition, there are two main reasons for the Olympic Movement to stage youth events:

1. "Product development" of competitive sports, to inspire and influence the International Federations (IFs) to make the necessary adjustments to their programmes, so that athletes and spectators will still find it attractive to participate in and follow and watch the Olympic Games in the future.
2. To enhance the importance of youth in securing fruitful world development. Youth events should inspire the participants and other young people to understand and promote the importance of peace, equality, health and the environment in order to influence older generations to make the right decisions.

How can youth events achieve the goals of product development and fruitful world development?

The IFs must understand the need for product development of their sports, and must see the benefits of using young people in the process. Youth events must therefore not be mere "duplicates" of traditional world championships and other international and national events, but should always include new elements. To get ideas for these "new elements", the IFs should involve young people in the process. These young people should not only be recruited among the young elite athletes of their respective sports, since many of these will already have been "brain-washed" to do their sport the traditional way. Instead, the IFs should recruit some young people from other environments and backgrounds to get inspiration for building new elements into their sport.

In connection with youth events, efforts should be made to involve young athletes in discussions and projects concerning peace, mutual understanding, equality, health and the environment. These discussions and projects should involve some practical examples, so that the young people can identify with the discussions and projects.

Alongside the involvement of young participants, an effort should be made to convey a number of case studies and good examples to the outside world. This could be done by people from universities and media, and should include examples of athletes from different countries working peacefully together, the benefits of exercise in improving health, and initiatives to take care of the environment.

Next year, the first edition of the YOG will take place in Singapore. I believe that many of the goals and suggestions that I have mentioned have been taken into consideration for the Games in Singapore. As far as product development is concerned, I think many IFs still have a long way to go in really trying to include new elements in their sports. As far as the cultural elements are concerned, I think the IOC and the organisers are making a great effort. It remains to be seen, though, whether the young athletes will actually involve themselves wholeheartedly in the activities, as most of them will probably devote most of their energies to achieving good results.

It will be very interesting to learn from the YOG in Singapore and to use the experience acquired there to organise good youth events in the future.