



AROUND THE RINGS

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SPORT FOR ALL

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A Note from the Publisher and the Editor

It's hard to believe more than three years have passed since the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics commanded the world stage. We are delighted to return again to a city that never fails to delight the senses and inspire the imagination – in this case, how Sport for All can better the wellbeing of nations.

Sheila Scott Hula, *Publisher* and Ed Hula, *Editor*

Obesity is a thoroughly modern problem – even just 50 years ago, there were no worldwide statistics available. In light of recent numbers, however, Beijing seems a particularly appropriate host for this important conference.

On the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's list of 28 countries with obese populations, the United States ranks first with nearly 31 percent of its population registering a Body Mass Index of more than 30.

While that may not be surprising, another country definitely caught my attention: the United Kingdom – host of the 2012 Olympic Games – ranks third, just behind Mexico. Nearly a quarter of the UK's population – a whopping 23 percent – is classified as obese.

Perhaps even more surprising to me is that the majority of countries on the list are past Olympic hosts.



Many of these countries consider themselves to be mad about sports.

Even the Nordic countries IOC Sport for All chair Sam Ramsamy considers to be among the world's most active appeared on the list (Finland, 15; Sweden, 21; Norway, 26).

But China? Nowhere to be found.

So what does this country know that much of the rest of the world apparently doesn't?

While there are too many factors involved to tackle that question completely, I can look back to my first visit to Beijing for at least part of the answer.

We'd made an early morning visit to the Temple of the Moon. We wanted to beat the heat and the crowds, but that day we were surprised by one of the loveliest of all Chinese traditions. There, all around, were dozens of people participating in Tai Chi. The movements were beautiful, graceful, calming – and boy were they burning calories!

Perhaps that's something more governments and communities should consider: low-impact exercises that groups of friends and neighbors can perform in public areas. No gym memberships, no sweat, not even any special equipment is required. Just the will to get up and MOVE.

So don't wait until you get home – make that change first thing tomorrow morning, and head out to the Olympic Green for a class in shadow boxing (see page 6). It won't cost a thing ... but it will pay a lifetime of benefits. ■



AROUND THE RINGS

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Sport for All Means Exactly What You Think



Sport for All is, in a sense, self-explanatory. No simpler or more complex than you'd expect, its meaning is unburdened by qualifiers, question marks or superlatives of any sort. Sport for All, ladies and gentlemen, means *sport for all*.

Written by Ann Cantrell

A movement spanning race, class, age and gender, Sport for All trumpets the Olympic ideal that exercise is a basic human right and encourages activities that can be practiced at any stage in life by any socioeconomic class.

Working towards this goal, the Sport for All Commission finances between 15 and 20 events each year that encourage everyone to embrace all things exercise.

The commission also gets people moving through its annual Olympic Day fun runs. Olympic Day celebrates the creation of the IOC and is held on June 23 with thousands of people participating in sports activities worldwide.

Since 1987, many National Olympic Committees have also hosted Olympic Day runs with young and old entrants alike.

Sport for All is at its heart a cooperation among international sport federations, NOCs and national sports organizations the world over.

In 1986, the IOC first patronized the event with the World

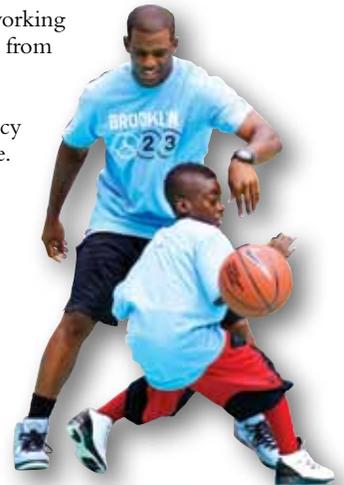
Health Organization pitching in support in 1994. Two years later, SportAccord teamed with the IOC to plan the conference, since held roughly every two years as a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences.

This week's 14th World Conference on Sport for All is hosted by the Chinese Olympic Committee as well as the Beijing Municipal Government and is organized by the IOC in conjunction with the Beijing Olympic City Development Association.

The conference will include panel discussions, interactive workshops, networking opportunities and social events. Experts from around the world will converge to talk about the health and social benefits of exercise, the development of sports policy and the future of the movement at large.

Participants will get the chance to meet with leading Sport for All experts as well as a who's who of Olympic organizers, officials and affiliates.

For the first time ever, the IOC will also hand out awards for initiatives that encourage people to be active. Selected by the commission, the three winners will receive \$20,000 each to develop their programs. ■




AROUND THE RINGS

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- ANOC General Assembly - Moscow, April 2012
- SportAccord - Quebec City, Canada, May 2012

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“Everybody Must Take Part” Says IOC Sport for All Chair

IOC member Sam Ramsamy tells *ATR* the conference no longer centers on science, academics or research. “It’s an activity,” he says, “and everybody must take part.”

Interview by Matthew Grayson

Around the Rings: I understand the philosophy behind Sport for All, but the IOC only has so many commissions. Why such focus on this initiative, particularly within the Olympic Movement?

Sam Ramsamy: Sport for All is the basis for all exercise activity that leads to recreational sport that leads to sport for disabled people that can eventually also lead to sport for the elite. If we did not have a Sport for All basis, we would not have the elite athletes coming out because it’s a pyramidal formation. The base of the pyramid is Sport for All. It’s a wide base, and one goes higher up on the base until one gets to the pinnacle, which is not only representing their respective countries at the Olympic Games but doing well at the Olympic Games.

ATR: How would you assess the practical impact of the Jyväskylä declaration one year out from its adoption at last year’s World Conference on Sport for All?

SR: The recommendations that have come out of Finland are very academic, and we felt that Sport for All must not only remain in the hands of scientists and researchers. It’s an activity and everybody must take part.

Therefore, we moved the emphasis totally out of academic and scientific presentations of data to explain to the National Olympic Committees, the international federations and other community groups that activity is as important and as crucial and as essential as anything coming out of academic study. That’s what we are concentrating on now.

Our conference is now a division between academic study, scientific study and explaining to the ordinary person on the street what they could do to exercise themselves. In the end, Sport for All is something that is an activity that we should all take part in because it benefits everybody and it’s a reality, a vision through different programs we have such as Olympic Day, the Olympic Solidarity programs and other activities.

Also, it pursues the promotion of health, fitness and wellbeing, which again aims at human beings leading a healthy life, and a healthy life means living an exercising life.

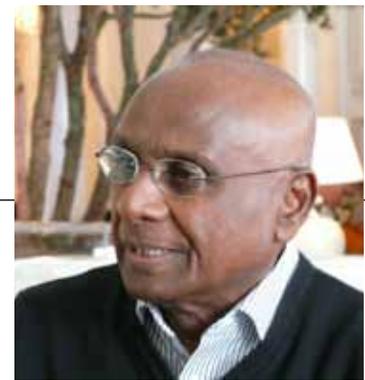
ATR: How do you ensure the goals and recommendations coming out of this week’s conference in Beijing are not only implemented but advanced upon going forward?

SR: What we will do this time is disseminate the conference activities that will take place in Beijing down to international federations and down to all the National Olympic Committees, so that everybody benefits out of whatever is going to happen.

I believe that after Beijing, we will see a resurgence of activity. As we talked about with the pyramidal structure of sport, you start at the base and move upwards to elite sport, but the pyramidal structure also has a reflection downward like one would see in the water because not everybody can go higher up to elite sport, and we want everyone participating as much as possible.

Participating means not only must sport be healthy, sport must provide joy. That is the wonder that we want to bring in. You don’t only participate because you want to keep healthy. You participate

because it’s conferring other social benefits and communal benefits. We want parents to get involved with children, and that’s not happening. For instance, when we look at all sports activities in the world, stadiums are getting bigger and bigger. In football you get 22 people kicking a ball in the middle of the field and another



▲ Sam Ramsamy of South Africa is an Executive Board member of the IOC and chair of its Sport for All Commission. (ATR)



▲ Sport for All is a major legacy component of the London Olympics. Just ask four-time gold medalist Michael Johnson, who lagged at the finish line during two-years-to-go events. (Getty Images)

60,000 people watching them. We’d like those 60,000 also to get involved in activities of one type or another. That is our aim.

ATR: Getting kids off the couch and onto the playing field has long been touted as a major legacy of the London Olympics. How do you see this playing out post-Games?

SR: We are very encouraged with what is happening at the London Olympic Games because part of the legacy is to get school kids taking part in sport activities. Of course, when they get interested in sport, that’s going to last a lifetime.

For instance, one of the people who’s going to address us at the conference in Beijing is Sir Keith Mills, the deputy chair of the organizing committee for London 2012, so there are close relationships with what we’re doing.

ATR: Is there any sort of quantitative index you know of to measure overall athletic activity among a given population? Which countries are truly living according to the Sport for All ideal?

SR: The Nordic countries are doing quite a lot of work. Finland, in fact, is very actively involved in this. Cardiovascular disease is one of the illnesses that can be a result of physical inactivity, and because Finland offers so many Sport for All activities, its prevalence of cardiovascular illness is one of the lowest, if not the lowest, in the world. That’s a heightened example of what is happening with Sport for All. ■

Bottom photo: The national stadium's official website indicates the Bird's Nest isn't lighting up all that often. (Getty Images)

Bottom photo inset: The Water Cube aquatics venue was relaunched as Asia's largest indoor water park as part of the two-year anniversary of the Games. (Getty Images)

Beijing Serious About Olympic Legacy Commitments

Three years after the Beijing Olympics were billed as China's "coming-out party," the city is ensuring the Games are never forgotten.

Written by Mark Bisson

Acclaimed by IOC president Jacques Rogge as well as the Olympic Movement at large, China was tasked with following through on its legacy plans – to keep the Olympic spirit alive, to keep Games venues busy with sports events and to further raise awareness of Olympic values.

Set up on the first anniversary of the 2008 Games and chaired by former BOCOG head Liu Qi, the Beijing Olympic City Development Association is helping do exactly that.

In a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of Beijing's successful Olympic bid, Liu told BODA's general assembly earlier this year that the organization has undertaken a lot of useful work in the last two years, strengthening international exchange and cooperation as well as playing an active role in inheriting the Olympic spirit and promoting the capital's growth.

With the city heading into a new five-year development plan, he noted that BODA had to "grasp opportunities and do work enterprisingly," including developing sports and leisure projects as well as advancing Sport for All activities by promoting physical education in schools. Maximizing the use of Games venues was identified as an ongoing project.

A spokeswoman for BODA tells *Around the Rings* the organization is promoting the use of any and all initiatives to prevent the 2008 venues from becoming white elephants.

Of the 31 competition sites in Beijing, she said: "The vast majority continue to take regular sporting events and other events."

The Bird's Nest stadium – centerpiece of the Olympics – and the Water Cube aquatics center attracted a collective total of almost 400 million visitors from September 2008 to July 2010, according to BODA.

Large-scale cultural and sporting events are putting bumps

in seats and "carrying forward the Olympic spirit," claims the legacy organization.

But aside from the Beijing International Equestrian Masters, annual National Day celebrations and a handful of smaller events, the national stadium's official website indicates the Bird's Nest isn't playing host to crowd-pulling, revenue-generating activities on a regular basis.

Instead, the venue still appears reliant upon the income generated by the hordes of tourists who flock to the site to glimpse the iconic venue. However, the Bird's Nest Snow Festival is starting to make a name for itself, attracting thousands of youngsters a year with a sort of winter sports wonderland. The third edition runs from Dec. 18 through mid-February of 2012.

There are still plans in the works by the CITIC Consortium Stadium Operation Company to transform the area around the Bird's Nest into a shopping and entertainment destination, perhaps by the time the athletics world championships come to town in 2015.

BODA tells *ATR* it's delivering on the city's legacy promises to the IOC in other ways, too.

The Games have boosted the city's economy and improved environmental management practices. Olympic education projects are promoting fitness and the overall wellbeing of young people through sport. Publishers are compiling Beijing 2008 literature along with audio-visual products focusing on areas such as the environmental legacy of the Games. Universities and other institutions are also undertaking Olympic research projects, and this year the "Beijing Olympic Legacy Exploitation Development Program 2011-2015" was launched.

Last month, the 2nd Beijing Olympic City Sports Culture Festival – an event combining the Beijing Olympic City Development Forum with the Olympic City Cup football championship for Beijing primary and secondary schools – further underlined to the world that China is serious about its legacy commitments.

BODA says Beijing has strengthened its relationships with sports bodies outside the country and with other Olympic cities as well as the organizing committees of upcoming Games in London, Sochi and Rio de Janeiro.

Asked what lessons Beijing's legacy plan had for London 2012 and Rio 2016, the BODA spokeswoman said her association had increased its contact and cooperation with the IOC and future Games organizers since 2008 and continues to share best practices with its Olympic brethren. ■



Remembering a Missing Sport for All Colleague

Among the 30+ members of the IOC Sport for All Commission are IOC members, federation leaders and a kidnapped National Olympic Committee president.

Written by Ed Hula

Missing since being taken at gunpoint in July 2006 from an NOC meeting in Baghdad along with two-dozen colleagues, Ahmed Al-Samarrai has remained on the membership roll of the Sport for All Commission ever since.

“We keep him there because of symbolic reasons,” acknowledges Sport for All chair Sam Ramsamy.

“He is missing. We don’t know whether he is dead or alive. Of course, he’s obviously not going to take part in activities, but again we have to give the benefit of the doubt to Mr. Samarrai,” says Ramsamy.

Al-Samarrai was 65 when he was seized during the most fevered period of sectarian violence in Iraq. While some of his colleagues were released, Al-Samarrai as well as the former secretary general and other sports leaders disappeared without a trace. Since the kidnapping, Al-Samarrai has



been succeeded by other NOC presidents.

Behind-the-scenes efforts by the IOC to learn more about the exact fate of the NOC leader and his associates have been fruitless. Al-Samarrai’s wife, Niran, has tried to push Iraqi officials to expose what happened to her husband. She recently published a book in Arabic about her search for the truth.

Ahmed Al-Samarrai was a basketball player in his youth, competing for the Iraqi national team. He fled the country during Saddam Hussein’s regime, returning in 2003 after the fall of the dictator and the death of Hussein’s son Uday, then president of the Iraqi NOC. The NOC had been suspended by the IOC after charges from athletes that they had been subjected to torture and humiliation by Uday.

When Al-Samarrai returned to Iraq, he was chosen to chair the group reforming the NOC. He then took the helm of the National Olympic Committee of Iraq in early 2004 and led its largest team in years to the Athens Olympics. In the two years Al-Samarrai led the NOC, he was subject to regular threats and at least one assassination attempt. ■

◀ Ahmed Al-Samarrai took over the National Olympic Committee of Iraq in early 2004. Two years later, he was kidnapped at gunpoint and has not been seen since. (ATR)

Shadow Boxing for All

Conference organizers are taking the Sport for All concept literally this week.

Written by Ann Cantrell

Whether in Beijing for business or for pleasure, you’re encouraged to get a workout by taking part in *taijiquan*, better known as shadow boxing. Professional coaches will teach the activity each morning from Wednesday to Friday beginning at 7:30 on the Olympic Green.

A mix of martial arts and fitness exercises, shadow boxing has a long history in China. Originating roughly 400 years ago during the Ming Dynasty, the underlying theory is even older, deriving from traditional Chinese philosophies such as Confucianism and Taoism.

Unlike the quick jabs and

punches associated with the sport of boxing, shadow boxing instead consists of gentle, coherent and flexible movements. As a martial art, the soft and slow motions are meant to counteract and exhaust an attacker’s brute force.

The activity is also used to maintain mental as well as physical health and is particularly popular among elderly care facilities. By focusing on the motions, practitioners can achieve mental calm and clarity while burning calories via low-impact movements.

But don’t take the organizing committee’s word on face value. Simply gather in the lobby at 7:15 a.m. and give shadow boxing a try. After all, it’s included in the registration fee, and you just might leave with a new morning routine. ■



◀ China chose shadow boxing to mark the first anniversary of the Beijing Olympics. More than 34,000 people joined in for the world’s largest martial arts exercise. (Getty Images)

Conference Schedule

Hours	20.09 Tuesday	21.09 Wednesday	22.09 Thursday	23.09 Friday	24.09 Saturday			
7:30 – 8:30	Arrivals and registration	Morning exercises	Morning exercises	Morning exercises	Departure of the participants			
9:00 – 10:30		Workshop 1	Workshop 2	Plenary session 2 “Programmes and policies”		Plenary session 4 “Health and social benefits”		
10:30–11:00		Public sport performance Coffee break		Public sport performance Coffee break		Coffee break		
11.00 – 12:30		Workshop 3	Workshop 4	Parallel session 1		Parallel session 2	Parallel session 3	Parallel session 4
12.30 – 13:00		Lunch		Networking		Networking	Networking	Networking
13:00 – 14:00				Poster session		Poster session	Poster session	Poster session
14:00 – 15:30		Plenary session 1 “Follow-up of the 2010 Conference”		Lunch		Lunch		
15:30 – 16:00				Poster session Coffee break		Poster session Coffee break	Plenary session 5 Panel discussion “Future directions”	
16:00 – 17:30		Presentation of case studies		Panel discussion “Cooperation in the global Sport for All Community”		Coffee break	Closing Ceremony	
17:30 – 18:30		Exhibition on Sport for All						
19:00 – 21:00		Opening Ceremony	6-9 p.m. Visit of Beijing Olympic venues and dinner party					
				7.30-9.30 p.m. “Night in Beijing”				





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