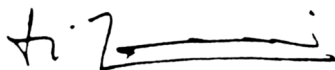


The "pièce de résistance" of the Winter Games

Ice-hockey is the "pièce de résistance" of the Winter Games. Without this exciting team sport, the Winter Games would be like soup made without salt. However, the struggle for participation by qualifying teams is a hard one because of the strict tournament conditions established by the IOC and the IIHF, which have eliminated several teams, causing them to not even be allowed to take part from the very outset - as was the case, for example, of the Swedes and Canadians in Innsbruck in 1976.

But thanks to the new classification system set up by the IIHF, the importance of Olympic gold is once again supreme, even with those teams. The World ice-hockey championships which were previously held the same year as the Games have been cancelled in favour of

The fact that several Federations have set themselves new standards is of particular importance for Sarajevo. The 1980 Games in Lake Placid proved that no team was constantly a regular Olympic champion. This provided incentive - particularly for the overseas countries of the United States and Canada - to now make definite preparatory efforts to resurrect former moments of glory. Sarajevo is the enjoying a situation which gives this tournament more explosive strength than ever, a fact which makes one anticipate the intense interest of spectators and team supporters. In this way, ice-hockey's favoured status in Sarajevo will also emphasize the tournament's importance, a tournament without class restrictions, in which participation - taken in the context of Coubertin's ideals - is already an honourable achievement, and yet, how much more of a reward would be the winning of gold, silver or bronze...



Günther Sabetzki, President of the International Ice Hockey Federation.