

## The influence of Sport

I should like to remind all the officials and athletes about to take part in the Olympic biathlon competitions of the fact that your participation will not only prove to be a pleasure for you, but that it will also be of the greatest importance to others.

Pierre de Coubertin, the Father of the Modern Olympic era, once made the following statement which was to become famous the World over : "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part".

The publishers of the main newspaper in a very small Swedish town named Grönköping thought that these were so clever that they should be made known to all of their readers. They therefore published a full-page portrait of the Baron de Coubertin with his famous saying below it, but in this their memory failed them and the published words were as follows : "The most important thing is not to win, but it is nonetheless better than coming second".

I think that both statements are correct and worthy of consideration.

Simply taking part in the world's greatest event is extremely important, because, among other reasons, it brings young people together

in a common interest which creates bonds of friendship overcoming the usual political, religious and racial differences which keep them apart.

The struggle for first, second, third and further placings adds enormous interest and excitement to your own training and competition activities. But the Olympic Games are not only important for those attending them. They are also a momentous occasion for the millions of athletes sitting at home watching the Olympic competitions on television and who are therefore being inspired in their own training and racing. And remember that there are also one to two billion people who follow the Olympic Games by means of the written press, radio and television. The tremendous consequences are obvious.

Taking these background factors into consideration, I would like to welcome all the officials and athletes to the Olympic biathlon competition, to the extremely interesting and exciting moments you will all experience in Sarajevo, and draw your attention to all the good your participation will do for the Sporting Movement and for the benefit of the physical and - even more importantly - the moral education of young people all over the world.



*Sven Thofelt, President of the International Union of Modern Pentathlon and Biathlon*