

By Dr Laszlo Nemeth

International Basketball Coach



FIBA

Achieving Together

One of the fundamental aims of the Olympic Movement is to “educate young people through sport in a spirit of better mutual understanding and friendship, thereby helping to build a better and more peaceful world”.

The people of Iceland are proud to be a link between two continents. Everyone remembers the superpower summit which took place in Reykjavik between President Ronald Reagan and Secretary-General Mikhail Gorbachev in 1986. Since then the Icelanders have called Reykjavik “summit city”. The spirit of enterprise, which is one of their qualities, was stimulated in many areas, and notably in sport. Thus they invited athletes from the two great countries to come and play under the Icelandic banner, and the RK Reykjavik basketball club decided to take part in the European Korac Cup. The FIBA rules indeed allow two foreign players to play for the team of each club that enters the Cup. In general, the invited players are Americans.

In the basketball world, 1989 is a historic year, the year of the official agreement between FIBA and the NBA*! In future, Soviet and Yugoslav players will be able to play with all Americans, whether they are professional or not. But before this important change, the Icelanders had, for the first time, invited a Soviet player, Anatoly Kovtoun, a member of the top club Stroitel from Kiev, and an American player, Jonathan Bow from Indiana, to join their club RK Reykjavik to contest the Korac Cup.

The presence of two basketball players from the two superpowers in the same team was a first which attracted the attention of not just the local press, but also the international press. The support given by



the sports fans of little Iceland — it has only 250,000 inhabitants — was enthusiastic.

What would these two players do with the Icelandic basketball team ? Did we have a chance ?

These questions were asked daily by supporters, friends and the Icelandic press. Going beyond this interest, and before the whistle was blown for the first match, I already knew that we had achieved something. Yes, we had responded to one of the fundamental principles of Olympism and the sports movement, quoted above. The public and the media were talking about us as players, without worrying about the colour of our passports.

We won the first match played in Reykjavik by eight points. The resounding ovation from the spectators nearly burst the walls of the Seltjarum gymnasium. The supporters were pleased and proud of their players, while still sceptical about their chances of winning the return match. But the team was victorious in London, thereby qualifying for the second round.

Jonathan Bow (USA) and Anatoly Kovtoun (URS), after a historic match.

But no rose is without thorns. RK Reykjavik is a team of amateurs in the traditional sense; they use their holiday time when they have to travel to matches. They pay their own transport costs, and even have to pay to rent the hall for their daily training which takes place in the evening after work.

Travelling abroad from Iceland is a not inconsiderable expense, and to fly to Pau Orthez in France represented a heavy financial burden for the players. Once again, international goodwill intervened, with the president of the club from Pau Orthez offering to cover all costs provided that the two matches were played at Orthez. We lost honourably.

Participating in the cup was important ; winning the first round even more so. These two things give the act of taking part its full value.

The real gain for our team was to meet young players, thanks to sport, in a spirit of better understanding and friendship. We who belong to four nations : Iceland, the Soviet Union, United States and also Hungary — since I, the proud and happy coach of this international team, am from that country — we hope that we are helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

*The American professional league



FIAC

The Olympic Cycling Track in Barcelona will be tried out from 20th to 24th June, when the Spanish Cycling Federation organizes all the events of the 1990 Europe cup.



FEI

An international conference on Equine Sports Medicine will take place in Stockholm from 21st to 22nd July, in conjunction with the World Equestrian Games. The programme will cover different areas of medicine and exercise physiology relating to the various disciplines such as endurance, eventing and racing. Details can be obtained from : International Conference on Equine Sports Medicine, c/o Stockholm Convention Bureau, P.O. Box 6911, S-102 39, Stockholm, Sweden.

Those interested might like to know that the 3rd International Conference on Equine Exercise Physiology is scheduled for the preceding week in Uppsala.

■ A revised Medication Control Programme is launched this year. The new Equestrian Ethics Committee has also made recommendations concerning stable security and stewarding, which are both to be tightened up..

Olympic velodrome, Barcelona.

