

TAKING OLYMPISM TO SCHOOL



The Olympic vehicle is a baton in the relay.

True, he is a man of some prestige, but to overcome all the obstacles which stood in the way of his project, being famous was not enough. But Anton Geesink, Olympic judo champion in 1964 and twice world champion, does not know the word “abandon”.

By Marie-Hélène Roukhadzé

He needed money first of all? The NOC could give him none, as it invests 90% of its resources in high-level sport and had only 10% left over to support all the other Olympic activities: National Olympic Academy, philately, art and sport, sport for all and participation in the International Olympic Academy. For four years, Anton Geesink struggled and explained until, finally, he managed to interest and involve people and companies in financing the first stage of his project: to create a mobile unit. The company Nissan provided a vehicle, a Nissan Patrol. The postal authority (PTT Post) equipped the car with a tele-

phone and a fax machine, adding for good measure a ten-minute audio-visual presentation on the international history of Olympic stamps, presented on equipment by Philips, another sponsor seduced by the undertaking. Seduced is really the word, as Anton Geesink had nothing to offer in return. When he sought financial help, he put it simply, pointing out to potential sponsors the importance of making social commitments by helping to disseminate sport in the Olympic spirit, for example. The managers of the firms he approached responded generously. Thanks to them and to the aid of the Anton Geesink Founda-

tion, a budget of US\$ 600,000 guarantees until 1996 the activities run by Anton Geesink, who is also President of the Commission for the Olympic Movement of the Netherlands NOC. These activities are: travels with the "Olympic vehicle" for educational purposes, organizing the annual session of the National Olympic Academy, the annual Olympic Day Run on 23rd June and arranging for a delegation of students to the



"The Olympic Movement is like an iceberg, people only see the tip, that is, the Olympic Games," explains Anton Geesink who has committed himself to making known in his country in a concrete way the powerful submerged mass, which generates the force of the whole. He is talking about sport for all, which includes all the activities set up by the IOC and developed by the NOCs.

annual session of the international Olympic Academy in Olympia.

Once everything was ready for the launch, Anton Geesink called a press conference in Utrecht in December 1991 to explain how Olympism promotes the development of the physical and moral qualities which are at the basis of modern sport, and to present the mobile Olympic academy, a veritable peripatetic teaching unit which would visit any school on request. Five hundred schools have already responded to this first appeal and hundreds of others will probably join the queue once they receive the invitation which the Royal Asso-

ciation of Physical Education Teachers has just sent to all schools throughout the kingdom.

THE BIG LAUNCH

The big launch will be in early June 1992 when the "Olympic vehicle" will leave Utrecht with a team of four youngsters which will change five times in the course of the trip from the Netherlands to Greece via Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania on the out leg and Italy, the Principality of Monaco, France, Luxembourg and Belgium on the way back. The "Olympic vehicle" will be received in each capital by the National Olympic Committee of the country and publicized at a press conference. The first changeover will take place in Budapest with the help of the Dutch National airline, KLM, which has offered to deliver and bring home each team free of charge. The Olympic vehicle will reach Athens in time for the opening of the annual session of the International Olympic Academy on the hill of the Pnyx before travelling to Olympia, where it will stay for three days to participate in the session.

The twenty young people who will form this Olympic relay team have been selected from 150 candidates put forward by the thirty-seven Dutch schools and institutes for the training of physical education teachers. Each training centre was given the opportunity to put forward four students, who had to write a report on their plans, activities and motives. A special panel made up of directors of physical education institutes chose the lucky winners on the basis of these applications.

Anton J. Geesink, that great judo champion, sees his every day life as a kind of relay. He has batons to pass on and teams to train so that they can keep on passing them on. The "Olympic vehicle" is a sort of baton. The next one will be an "Olympic House". Another cause, another challenge and another adventure.

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