

Olympic Gold Medallists

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OR : What is your earliest image of the Olympic Games?

My earliest image of the Olympic Games goes way back to the early 1950s when in my youthful thinking I believed the Olympic Games were sim-

CHIHARU IGAYA

Chiharu Igaya joined the IOC in 1982, after having won a number of Japanese and US national championships, as well as many international competitions; but the high-point of his sports career came in 1956, when he won the silver medal in slalom at the VII Olympic Winter Games in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

As a sports official, he belongs to the FIS Alpine Committee and the FIS World Cup Committee. He serves as special advisor to the Japanese Amateur Sports Association, and is also a

member of the special advisory group of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sports.

Within the IOC, he has served on a number of commissions, including the Coordination Commissions for the Olympic Winter Games of 1992, 1994 and 2002, and the Evaluation Commissions for the XIX Olympic Winter Games in 2002 and for the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad in 2004. He was a member of the Executive Board from 1987 to 1991.

ply the world championship games for various sports. Since I was raised and brought up as a skier, I wanted very much to become an Olympic champion. So, first, I worked hard to get on the Japanese Olympic team, and then to become a medallist. I participated in three Olympic Winter Games - the VI Games in Oslo in 1952, the VII Games

in Cortina d'Ampezzo in 1956 and the VIII Games in Squaw Valley in 1960. I was fortunate to become the first non-European ever to win a medal in the Olympic Winter Games in the men's slalom event of Alpine skiing in Cortina. That was indeed the happiest moment of my life, as I had attained my long cherished boyhood dream.

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OR : What is your best memory or favourite anecdote from the Olympic Games?

At the Games of the XI Olympiad, which took place in Berlin in 1936, the pole vaulting competition was so intense that it went on endlessly, with no declaration of a winner. By the time Meadows, an American, won the gold medal, two Japanese - Nishida and Ohe - were still fighting for the silver and bronze. The two became so exhausted, they appealed to the referees to stop the competition. Strangely enough, their request was granted and the competition was ended without a winner in second or third place. The next day at the medal awarding ceremony, Nishida, a silver medallist in the previous Los Angeles Games, yielded second place to his fellow pole-vaulter Ohe. Later, Ohe felt this was not fair to his friend Nishida. So, to resolve the matter, he had the silver medal and bronze medal cut in half and then had each silver half welded to a bronze half. He then offered Nishida one half silver/half bronze medal and kept the other for himself. This story is remembered in Japan as a symbol of true fair play and friendship.

OR : In your opinion, what is the significance of the Centenary of the Olympic Games?

Over the past 100 years, three Olympic Games were interrupted by two World Wars and on more than a few occasions, the organization of the Games has been threatened for various reasons. However, the Olympic Games have successfully survived each time, and in 1996 they are celebrating their centennial. The future outlook is that the Games will continue to grow even stronger. Today, the Games enjoy the full support of people world-wide. I believe that this is because people really believe in the Olympic Games and have full confi-

dence in their contribution to world peace. Without this dedication, the Olympic Games would probably have disbanded a long time ago.

OR : What role do you feel sport and Olympism play in modern society?

Sport and Olympism have become one of the biggest and most influential movements in modern society, and have greatly contributed to world peace. Thanks to this movement, sports now has become more universal than ever. It gives people the opportunity to get together, which results in expanding friendship and deeper mutual understanding. In the past, we have seen how sports can help to melt cold ice and ease tension among different nations. Furthermore, the movement continues to pursue its cooperative efforts and works, together with various governmental organizations, to engage in peace-making activities. The Olympic Truce, which was recently unanimously supported by the United Nations, is one of the movement's noteworthy achieve-

ments. Indeed, the most important role that the movement is expected to play in modern society is to continue to contribute to world peace.

OR : What message would you like to give to today's youth?

The most important thing in life is to learn to live peacefully and in friendship with others, irrespective of differences of race, religion, political ideology and so on. This is the kind of ideal world that the people involved in the Olympic Movement, together with many other movements and institutions, are striving to establish. Let us join hands and work together to build a better world in which all can live more happily and to enjoy a peaceful life.



Chibaru Igaya at the slalom starting gate.

