

Participants in the Olympic Games



ARNE LJUNGQVIST

Professor Arne Ljungqvist was Swedish junior and senior high-jump champion and a member of the Swedish national athletics team in 1951 and 1952, when he took part in the Games of the XV Olympiad in Helsinki. During his medical career (he is currently Rector of the Swedish University for Sports and President of the Swedish Cancer Research Foundation), Arne Ljungqvist has also occupied sports offices at the highest levels. He has served as Pres-

ident of the Swedish Athletics Association and the Swedish Council of Sports Research. He has been President of the Swedish Sports Corporation since 1989, Chairman of the Medical Commission of the IAAF since 1980, and he became Vice President of the IAAF Council in 1981. A member of the IOC Medical Commission since 1987, Professor Ljungqvist was elected as an IOC member at the Session in Paris in September 1994.

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

The book I received as a Christmas gift at age 5 (in 1936), which described in words and pictures the Olympic Games of Berlin. At that age, the pictures were of course more important than the text, and I remember that I placed transparent paper over the pictures of athletes in action and traced them with a pencil, so that I would have some “pictures of my own”.

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

They are actually two, and both are from the Olympic Games in which I took part (Helsinki 1952). The first “event” was the appearance of the “peace angel” in the Olympic stadium during the opening ceremony, who waited on the podium for Mr von Frenckell, the chairman of the organizing committee, to approach her and offer his arm to escort her out. The second memory (and best sports memory) is of watching from the stands of the Olympic stadium on one of the competition days and witnessing two world records simultane-

ously: I saw the hammer when it flew through the air and hit the ground beyond the 60-meter line for the first time ever, and the Brazilian athlete da Silva when he raised the world triple jump record to 16.22m.

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

[It lies in] the fact that the Olympic Movement has, for one hundred years, shown its inner strength and power. Despite the two World Wars and many serious political complications [...], the Olympic Movement has not only survived but, indeed, it has grown even stronger.

In short, the Centennial should encourage people’s optimism, for it stands as an example of the power of good, even in evil times.

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

I think one has to differentiate between sport in general and Olympic sport in particular. Sport in general (i.e. popular sport) is important as a basic factor in promoting health and physical and mental well-being

amongst the population at large. It gives them, and especially the young generation, a meaningful leisure-time activity. Olympism in particular, which encompasses both elite sport and popular sport, must also be recognized as one of the strongest forces in the promotion of understanding between peoples of different nations and cultures, and it is therefore one of the greatest forces for global peace.

OR : What message would you like to Rive to today’s youth?

A very broad question, indeed! I have many messages to give. In regard to a message based on Olympism, my advice would be to respect the Olympic ideal and preserve the Olympic



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Games into the future. I feel it is highly important for the credibility of the Olympic Movement that elite sport should be free from the negative side effects that are apparent in

other parts of society, such as financial manipulation, excessive commercialism, violence and drug abuse. It may be utopian to wish for elite sport to be completely free of negative side

effects, but it is up to the next generations to fight against all such tendencies in order to protect the Olympic ideal for the future.
