

Participants in the Olympic Games



RICHARD POUND, Q.C.

Five times Canadian champion (in 1958, 1960, 1961 and 1962), Richard Pound was a finalist at the 1960 Games of the XVII Olympiad in Rome, where he came sixth in the 100m freestyle and fourth in the 4x400m medley relay. Two years later at the Commonwealth Games, he won the gold medal in the 110 yards freestyle, two silver medals in the 440 and 880 yards freestyle relay and a bronze in the 440 yards medley relay. He served the Canadian Olympic Association (COA), as secretary

general from 1968 until 1976, and as president until 1983. He played an active part in organizing the Montreal Games in 1976, where he was coopted as an IOC member. Elected to the Executive Board in 1983, this barrister from Montreal was named IOC vice-president in 1991, and was re-elected to the Board one year later. Among his other roles in the IOC, he chairs the Commission for New Sources of Financing and is in charge of television rights negotiations (except for Europe and Asia).

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

My earliest recollection of the Olympic Games was as a young boy growing up in northern British Columbia, in a small town called Ocean Falls, where we had a 16-metre swimming pool, but because of good coaching, from a town of 3,000 people, we produced many Olympic swimmers. In 1952, almost everyone in town waited on the wharf at night in the rain to meet the boat that was bringing some of our swimmers home from the Helsinki Olympics. They were local heroes. I was not sure what the "Olympics" were, but I knew they must be something very special because I was allowed to be up long after my normal bed time to meet the boat. By 1956, I had a much better idea, and only four years later in 1960, I was a participant in the Rome Olympics, which was a magnificent experience - everything for which I could ever have hoped. To be in two Olympic finals was a dream come true.

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

Oddly enough, my two favourite (from among hundreds or thousands) memories of the Olympic Games are of closing ceremonies. The first is from the Games in Rome in which I participated in 1960, when spectators began, spontaneously, to burn their programmes as their own Olympic "torches". Some genius who controlled the lighting in the stadium extinguished the lights, so that the only light came from the burning programmes, and the scoreboard announced "Arrivederci a Tokyo 1964". It was a tremendously emotional experience. The second was in Seoul in 1988, when the ceremony was over and I



stayed in the stadium after the VIPs had gone, to reflect on what a miracle had occurred to ensure that the Games were a triumph for the Olympic Movement, against what had appeared at times to be insurmountable political odds.

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

The real significance to me of the fact that the Centennial Games will be celebrated in 1996 is that the expression of an ideal has been able to survive and flourish over the course of a century which has seen the most dramatic social and political changes in the history of mankind. The concept of gathering the youth of the entire world in friendly competition at the highest levels of sport and fair play is so expressive of the desire of the people of the world that it has withstood enormous pressures which might easily have destroyed any other international endeavour. The people of the world earnestly want there to be such occasions, even if only to show that they are possible and that youth, through sport, can provide an objective lesson to those who exercise even more important powers in other fields of activity.

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

Sport is a universal activity, one which has an innate appeal to the human psyche. Olympism refines that instinctive human characteristic by adding to it the sense of fair play which raises sport to the highest ethical level of human activity and which demonstrates that, without its ethical content, sport is incomplete. It adds to this an appreciation that sport must be a part of an integrated life within society, not merely an activity pursued in isolation from the society and culture of the participant. Sport and Olympism demonstrate, in a manner which can be extrapolated into all fields of activity, that self-respect and respect for others are both desirable and possible in everything we do and say, whether on or off the field of athletic play.

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

It is an undeniable characteristic of the human condition that we thrive upon and respond to challenge. As we approach a new Millennium, the challenges and the pressures we face will undoubtedly increase. The pace of life and the nature of the changes thrust upon us have never been more frenetic; they would be incomprehensible to earlier generations. But, it is our fundamental strength that we will be ready to adapt and to deal with them. If we can do so with a positive attitude and with confidence in our fundamental ethical values, the evolution which is bound to occur will contribute to the betterment of the human condition.

My message to our youth: move toward the challenges; treat them as positive opportunities, but not as a game; measure what you do against your obligation to make the world better for others.