

Participants in the Olympic Games



OLEGARIO VÁQUEZ RAÑA

A member of the Mexican shooting team at every edition of the Games of the Olympiad from 1964 to 1976, and all the world championships from 1966 to 1979, Olegario Vázquez Raña has a rich history as an Olympic athlete. He holds the national record in several shooting disciplines and was world air rifle champion in 1973. His experience in the world of sport led him to var-

ious positions of authority in national and international sports organizations. He was vice president of the Mexican Sports Confederation in 1963, president of the Mexican shooting federation in 1975 and president of the International Shooting Union in 1980. An IOC member since 1995, he is also a member of the Commission for New Sources of Financing.

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

I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the thousands of young athletes and by their desire to show the world their abilities in disciplines which had forced them through long tests and training, to a point where others would have lost heart. The crowd they formed was full of fellowship, with no ill-feeling but instead an overflowing optimism and a single desire: to outdo themselves. It was very gratifying for me to be chosen in my sport to represent my country. Competing with the best strengthened my will to win.

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

During the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, on the rest day when the shooting range was closed, I was so eager to compete that I could not bear to lose a single day of training. So I set up a target on a 50-metre range in the Olympic village garden to do an hour of what shooters refer to as “dry shooting”. But after just 15 minutes, I found myself surrounded by security guards, not understanding a word they were saying. Finally, one of the officials who spoke English told me that I must have been crazy to do target practice in the garden. I explained that the gun was not loaded, and that all shooters practised dry shooting to maintain their physical condition and “follow through”, which means keeping the weapon steady after firing. They said that they would have to take me to the central office of the Olympic village. I told them that I was just practising, the same way I had always done when the shooting range was closed. They decided to call the head of the Mexican delegation, General Clark Flores. He immediately sent for Professor Guillermo Montoya, and everything

was settled, but he asked me to do my practising inside my room in the future.

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

I think it is very important that we are celebrating the Centenary of the Games of the modern era, because they constitute one of the achievements of humankind. Sport in modern history has followed a distinctly upward-moving path, and has become a phenomenon that will transcend our time. Its solidity and influence on society attract not only young people, who benefit from taking part in sport, but also all of the sciences and arts, technology and communications. Consequently, the Centenary of the Olympic Games will be the occasion for a special celebration to show that Olympic sport will continue in the future as a great and positive force for humanity.

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

Sport is a universal language which knows no borders and which is not obstructed by linguistic barriers or difficulties due to private interests or historical antagonism. The ancient spirit of Olympia was the basis for a special truce. And in keeping with the symbolism of the five Olympic rings, it is safe to say that, since virtually every country in the world participates in the Olympic Games today, sport is a part everyone's life. Olympism has made it possible for sport to develop over time and become an integral part of people's lives. It is now so solid that as a force, it is capable of maintaining the world order, attaining peace between nations and improving every aspect of human life.

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

My message would be ultimately to urge young people to practise sport. Being an Olympic athlete requires discipline, effort, tenacity and dedication. These qualities give young people character and personality, and form the basis of their success in the same way as a higher education does. If they possess them, they will naturally be successful in sports, but they will also learn to appreciate fundamental values and will be able to handle the different situations in all aspects of their lives. They will be winners.

