
Free opinion

It is worth noting that a Government whose country boasts elite sport at the highest international level, such as Manchester United Football Club, takes particular interest in physical education and school sport. Furthermore, the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is one of the few Government leaders to have consistently replied to Olympic mail concerning various matters of sport and Olympism.

This extensive work is of importance to every country wishing to develop sport and improve the well-being of the youth. With all the continental and world championships for the under-17s to 21-year-olds organized by International Federations and Confederations throughout the world, school and university sport should be the nucleus and main source of nourishment for these competitions. There would also be no need to lie about the age of players as is sometimes the case in certain African and Asian countries.

Olympic Solidarity has also been innovative in awarding study scholarships to different groups of young people to prepare them for their participation in the Olympic Games.

The university basketball championship in the United States, which is televised and attracts a huge audience, is a success story. In fact the best example in the world of school and university sport is the United States. Most Americans have practised sport in educational institutions and the best have distinguished themselves in national, international and Olympic Games. Another remarkable example is the Caribbean Games, known as CARIFTA, launched in the seventies in Barbados by IOC member Austin Sealy, with athletics as the main sport. The games, organized by different countries in turn during the Easter holidays, two editions of which I have had the opportunity to attend, bring together young boys and girls of different ages and take place over a few

days. The spirit of competition and camaraderie among the young participants and the solidarity between the leaders are exemplary. Instead of asking for 'wild cards', some NOCs would do better to put pressure on their Ministries of Education, Youth and Sports to promote inter-school competitions and take inspiration from the Caribbean model to develop each sport by placing the emphasis on young people. The active solidarity of the Olympic Movement with the recognized school and university sports organizations should also be more consistent.

Only after a great deal of hard work and close cooperation between the public authorities and the volunteer sports movement can the development of sport, with school sport as its basis, be guaranteed in the long-term. This would lead to the hoped-for results and the joie de vivre of children, adolescents and youth in general.

News

Albania

The National Opera in Tirana hosted a show entitled *We are Olympians*, which was produced by the Mehmet Akif and Turgut Ozal schools, in collaboration with the Albanian Olympic Academy. The programme included sports demonstrations and an Olympic quiz, as well as poetry, dance and music.

The show also provided an opportunity to promote and support the cause of disabled people. The large audience included political and sports personalities such as the Minister for Culture, Youth and Sport, Esmeralda Uruçi, the NOC president, Arben Jorgoni, and secretary general Stavri Bello.



A scene from the show *We are Olympians*.