

Fair play in sport

'Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard for all rules and sadistic pleasure in violence: in other words, it is war minus the shooting.' – George Orwell.



Photo: Karpan Vaughn, Athlete Information Bureau

'Success is measured in endorsement dollars,' she says.

Ironically, at the time of the Seoul Olympics moves were already well underway in Canada to foster the principles of fair play in sport. These reached a peak in 1986 when the federal Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport formally established a Commission for Fair Play with the specific purpose of recapturing the concept of sportsmanship.

Reviving the Olympic spirit

Fair play is not a new concept. Its principles were alive and strong at the first Olympiad in the 5th century BC and they remain integral to the Olympic spirit today. 'The important thing in the Olympic Games is not winning but taking part,' said Baron Pierre de Coubertin when the Olympic movement was revived in 1896.

Geoff Gowan, President of the Coaching Association of Canada and Vice Chairman of the Commission for Fair Play, would like to see a return to the values expressed by Coubertin. 'Unfair play appears to be condoned simply because it isn't condemned,' he says.

He and the other 19 members of the Commission are drawn from the fields of sport, medicine, education and business. They, the staff of the organisation, as well as corporate sponsors, are promoting the concept of fair play by means of public meetings, national advertising campaigns, educational materials, newsletters, posters and brochures.

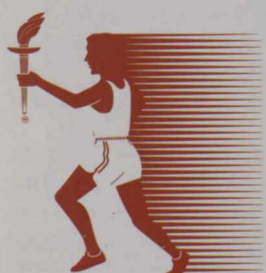
The Commission's message can be summarised under five headings: respect for the rules; respect for officials and acceptance of decisions; respect for the opponent; concern for access to equal and fair opportunity; and maintenance of dignity under all circumstances. It is aimed at participants, parents, teachers and coaches.

'We can't claim to help change the attitudes of high-performance athletes at this point,' says Tom Nease, chairman of the Commission. 'We have to influence the sports organisations.'

Few Canadians would subscribe to George Orwell's point of view. That's why a growing number of instances of cheating, doping, violence and unfair play in international sport is causing such concern. 'There's a lot of cheating going on,' says Canada's Olympic-bronze-medal winner Dave Steen. 'It's a real problem.'

The drug scandals of the 1988 Summer Olympics were particularly shocking to Canadians. In Seoul five of Canada's athletes were disqualified for taking performance-enhancing drugs in a bid to win at all costs. The most celebrated case was that of sprinter Ben Johnson who was stripped of his gold medal after setting a new world record.

The Ben Johnson controversy brought into the open the extent to which sports ethics have been eroded. Diane Jones-Konihowski, Canada's national pentathlon champion between 1972 and 1978, lays much of the blame for this on commercial pressures even at the amateur level.



THE OLYMPICS
AND
PLAYING FAIR

What is 'Fair Play'?

- A genuine desire to compete on equal terms.
- Being extremely scrupulous about the methods used to obtain victory.
- Rejecting the idea that the end justified the means.
- Treating both the officials and opponents with respect.
- Respecting the written rules of the game as well as the unwritten rules of sportsmanship.