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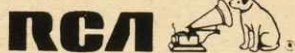
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Olympic retrospective

Women and the Olympics

By LISA TIMPF

Betty Baxter gained some insight into the world of international sport as coach of the Canadian women's volleyball team several years ago.

She was given another perspective on international sport as one of Canada's delegates to the International Olympic Academy in 1984.

Baxter was able to bring this combined knowledge with her when addressing the Olympic Academy of Canada in August, as she examined the problems of women in sport in relation to the Olympic Games.

According to Baxter, the statistics tell the story: the Olympic Games are unbalanced in favour of both male participation and male power.

The International Olympic Committee is controlled by men; only three of the IOC's 85 members are women. Of the 12 IOC executive members, one is a woman, 11 are men.

In terms of executive members of International Amateur Athletic Federations, 70 are men, two are women.

On National Olympic Committee boards of control around the world, there are 305 men and three women. And on the Canadian Olympic Association's Board of Control, there are 36 men and two women.

Women, in short, are all but invisible within the hierarchy of

power in the Olympic movement. This is a reflection of a general tendency of women involved in sport to be under-represented as coaches, administrators, and decision-makers. Since fewer women have moved into administrative roles in sport, fewer women have been able to equip themselves with the skills and experience to take on "power" roles within the organizational structure of sport, and the Olympic movement is no exception to this trend.

Within Canada, the problem is being attacked through such programmes as the Internship Program for female athletes/administrators, WINTO (Women in Non-Traditional Occupations) and Fitness and Amateur Sport, Women's Program. Yet both in Canada and abroad, there is a long way to go.

Instituting quota systems for women's involvement in administrative roles is not the answer. Increased encouragement of women to take on leadership roles, increased publicity of those women who do succeed as leaders to serve as role models, and flexibility in work hours for administrative jobs to accommodate women who have maternal responsibilities are all steps that could be taken to improve the situation.

As well, the media and society at large need to be educated toward greater acceptance of women in competitive, coaching, and administrative roles in sport.

With respect to participation patterns in the Olympics, the number of events open to women compared to those open to men continues to represent an imbalance in favour of male competitors. This relates to both historical and social factors.

The Olympics of Greek times were exclusively a celebration of male athletic excellence. Women were permitted to be present in the role of priestesses, but not as competitors or spectators. The penalty for a woman discovered watching the Games was death. However, history records that one woman who disguised herself as a male trainer so that she could watch her son compete was spared the penalty on account of her bravery and dedication.

When Pierre de Coubertin initiated the Modern Games, it was with the expectation that they would celebrate male prowess primarily. While women were not to be put to death for attending or competing, they were not initially particularly welcome to the Modern Olympics Boys' Club.

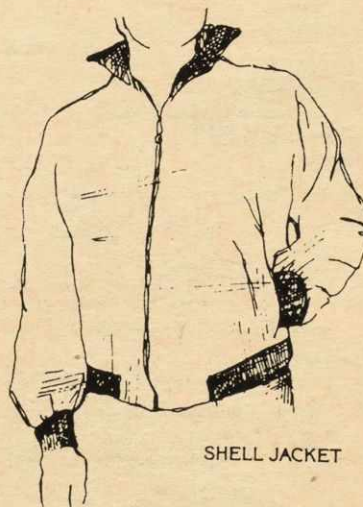
The philosophy of the late 19th and early 20th centuries was that women could not be expected to display much energy or expertise in athletics; an attitude which was reinforced by restrictive clothing styles and role expectations.

Although women's participation in the Games gradually became more acceptable, the number of women's events offered on comparison to men's events continued to represent an imbalance.

Even in the time period from 1968 to 1984, of the 48 new events added, only 11 were women's events.

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