

The Olympic scam

Athletic competition in the nineties has taken a turn for the worse. Formerly an arena for Darwinian competition — survival of the fittest — the Olympic games have spiralled into the muck of corporate allegiance and pandering to the media.

Recent who hasn't undergone a recent lobotomy can see through this farce called the Olympic Winter Games.

Look at poor old Ross and snowboarding. The introduction of the 'outlaw' pastime as a viable competitive sport was done for one reason: attracting younger viewers. It's not hard to picture the International Olympic Committee sitting around, decays in hand, trying to capitalize on the babyboomer's offspring.

"Give them snowboarding, and you're guaranteed relative security into the 21st century," they say. But then they almost fucked it all up.

Enter Ross. The IOC stripped him of his medal for trace amounts of marijuana in his urine. Why they did this is hard to fathom. Obviously the IOC did not consult their PR team. First, it tarnished the sport they badly needed to help solidify young viewers. Second, it made the committee look like doddering old goofs. The spokesperson's comment that in certain circumstances marijuana could be a performance enhancing

drug is ludicrous. Any stoner who has sat in front the TV and enjoyed the complexity of the Weather Channel can attest to that.

Ross is old news, but his sport isn't.

The 'demons of the alpine', as many skiers call them, feel they live in a world much unlike anyone else's. There's the attitude, the stylin' duds,

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the music and the lingo all shouting to those not part of the group, "We're keepin' it real." But it is a farce. The truth is that snowboarding had to grow up overnight in light of becoming an Olympic calibre sport/event, and the snowboard companies seemed more than antsy to comply.

The half-pipe competition highlighted some of the most interesting corporate scams in all the sports at Nagano. After their turn impressing spectators with McTwists and 720s, the riders would strap their boards and duly raise them for the cameras. There, before millions of viewers worldwide, these outlaws would stand with shit-eating grins, proudly displaying their sponsor's name on the bottom of the board. No coincidences here, folks. The logos were strategically placed at the top of the board with just enough room

for the TV station's graphics (name, rank, country) to fit snugly below.

And what about *during* the competition? A camera placed on the edge of the pipe's lip caught riders up close. But no one did any of the stupefying aerials in front of them. Instead they chose to prolong a tail-grab, giving their board manufacturer maximum exposure for the folks back home and any impressionable 10-year-old who was thinking of pestering their parents for equipment.

"Mommy, I want a snowboard. A *Burton* snowboard."

With all this negativity towards the newest Olympic sport, one might think I'm a skier. But the men's downhill also deserves attention.

Postponed for three days, Olympic organizers were in a panic to run the games' most popular event. Mother Earth was flexing it's muscle over us puny humans, yet some felt the race should be run despite the crazy elements. Namely, the media.

Brian Williams, CBC's animated sports hero, let a small detail slip during his myriad babbling between events. He said during the media scrum around downhill officials, reporters and executives hollered "Run the race anyway!" for fear of losing the all-important viewer to Nagano's cruddy weather. They got their wish.

The race was held despite dangerous, gusting wind. The course was ill-prepared; the snow on the flats were like a Slurpee (slowing the average skier by half a second) and the first lip was so dangerous, seven racers lost control and crashed. One of them had to be air-lifted from the mountain.

The officials flagrantly disregarded the safety of the skiers, choosing to pander to the demands of the media, their deadlines, and their advertisers waiting in the wings.

This year's Olympic Winter Games has left sport in the gutter. The powers that be have chosen to orchestrate a week-long soap opera — filled with dumb people, dumb decisions and behind-the-scenes manoeuvring similar to any episode of *As the World Turns*.

JOHN CULLEN

Letters

Nursing in the nineties

To the editor,

"What exactly is a nurse?" is a question I was recently asked by a patient. Well, I had to think a bit; I thought it was self explanatory.

A nurse is an individual who provides health care. The extent of participation varies from simple tasks to the most expert professional techniques necessary in acute life threatening situations. We are highly trained professionals with the ability to function in self-directed judgments and to act independently.

We adhere and follow Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics provided by the professional association. The role of a nurse constantly changes in response to the growth of biomedical knowledge changes in patterns of demand for health services and the evolution of professional relationships among nurses, physicians and other health care professionals.

This brings me to my next point.

We nurses have been in a position to collectively bargain as of Nov. 1, 1997. We have been told many times to re-evaluate, reorganize, reprioritize, "just cope with it" (patient care load), or to "make the best of it".

We nurse caring for our patients. I went into nursing to care for people, to make a difference and to have an impact on someone's health. I feel that nurses have been put in an awful position by the provincial government and must take drastic steps such as a strike vote. This is 1998!

Many of my peers are single moms, sole providers of families who have been pressured by economics to work a full-time and an additional part-time position to try and make ends meet within a family.

Not only are we dealing with the increasing patient workload and short staffing, we are also affected by emotional stresses. We cannot put our patients in a drawer and deal with them the next day, like one can with paper work. We take care not only of patients but their families as well. This is a demanding task.

It is our turn for a collective agreement that ensures our profession with clauses such as 'workload'. We want to make sure that the employer agrees to make every effort to maintain or improve safe standards of patient care at all times.

The issue to provide safe and adequate care has not been dealt with by the government. We are experiencing daily unsafe conditions where standards of care cannot be provided. We fear for the patients.

This tells us that we are forced to take extreme measures such as a strike vote. We also want an outstanding raise. We have endured wage rollbacks, wage freezes, healthcare cutbacks, layoffs, and have been lacking a collective agreement since 1992.

It is time for nurses to let the government know that one in 50 voters is a nurse. We are not weak women and men; we are a strong force to be reckoned with!

As healthcare recipients, I ask all Nova Scotians to actively support nurses while we negotiate a fair settlement.

LILLO WESSELS
Critical Care Nurse

Kudos for Rebagliati

To the editor,

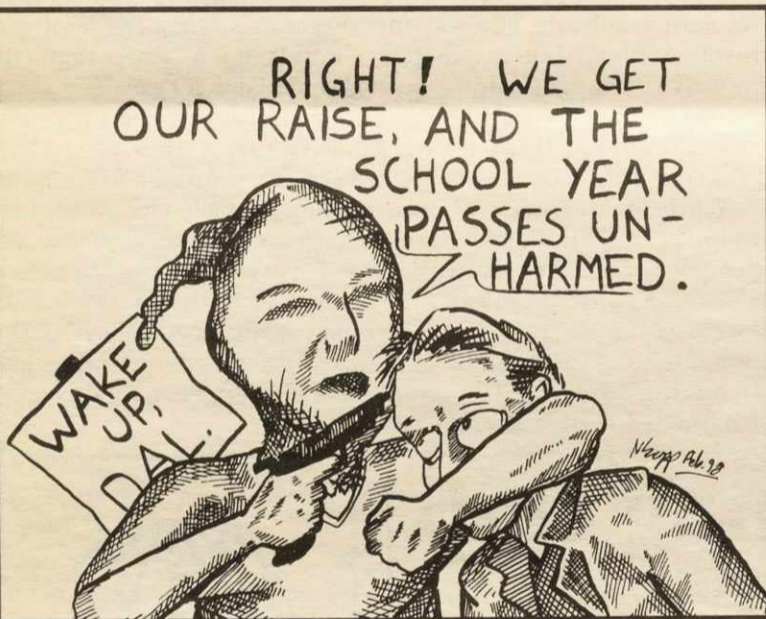
By now everyone has heard about Rebagliati, the Canadian gold medalist stripped of his prize because of a few traces of dope in his piss. Olympic athletes compete in the games and represent their respective countries. Thus far, Canadians have demonstrated their prowess in Nagano at the Winter Olympic Games.

But, then, all of a sudden, some smart-ass official decides that 17.8 nanograms per millilitre of marijuana in Rebagliati's urine is sufficient to rape him of his hard earned, and well deserved, Olympic gold medal.

Oh sure, Rebagliati probably cannot stop thinking about that last bong hit and wishes he hadn't taken it. The guy is a snowboarder for crying out loud; it's all part of the package. The Olympic committee should have realized what they were getting themselves into when they decided to make snowboarding an Olympic sport.

If anything smoking grass would probably hinder his performance. Nope, this headline has nothing to do with what the Olympic games stand for or whom Rebagliati represents.

It has nothing to do with his performance being enhanced by the use of drugs. What it comes down to is publicity. There was a great deal of controversy over making snowboarding an Olympic sport because snowboarders have always had a bad reputation.



THE DALHOUSIE GAZETTE

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Vol. 130 No. 20

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Student Union Building, Dalhousie University, 6136 University Ave., rm 312, Halifax, NS, B3H 4J2.
editorial tel. 902 494-2507, facsimile 902 494-8890, e-mail. GAZETTE@is2.dal.ca

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Founded in 1869 at Dalhousie College, the *Gazette* is Canada's oldest student newspaper. With a circulation of 10,000, the *Gazette* is published every Thursday by the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society, of which all students of Dalhousie University are members. The *Gazette* exercises full editorial autonomy and reserves the right to refuse or edit any material submitted. All editorial decisions are made collectively by the staff. To become voting staff members, individuals must contribute to three issues. Views expressed in the *Gazette* are not necessarily those of the editors or the collective staff. Unless otherwise noted, all text © 1998 the Dalhousie Gazette Publishing Society. ISSN 0011-5819

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