

I am honoured by the trust you put in my opinions and feel duty-bound, under the circumstances, to follow the dictates of elementary - not excessive - prudence in formulating an answer which is respectful of your feelings, worthy of your intelligence, one which does not lead you into a dead-end.

True, the sports facilities are there, but they would need preparation, even readaptation in order to meet the requirements of the various Olympic disciplines since, in a number of cases, they have been altered so that they might be suitable for regular activities. Transport, housing, food, furnishings and sports equipment, technical, professional, service and sports personnel, manual labour, office staff, doping detection, world-wide communications and telecommunications, medical facilities, safety of athletes and of the public, the actual organization of an extensive number of activities and services of all types - this is just a very limited list of the areas which require a time-consuming effort. There is no room for improvisation as the consequences involved would be too serious in all respects. National - or bi-national - honour would be at stake and could be seriously jeopardized, as would be the very future of the Olympic movement. I really do not have the right to lead you to any other conclusion.

Nothing is said here of the financial aspect of the undertaking since your question expressly precluded that particular aspect of the problem.

Nothing is said here either of the participation of the athletes from the 130 national committees which are members of the Olympic movement, since your question did not bear on that subject.

This last matter remains of paramount importance. At the Winter Olympic Games to be held at Lake Placid next February the International Olympic Committee will meet. The international federations and the national Olympic committees will also consider this matter.

Until that time and even after that, let us hope that minds will open to the idea of a psychological truce, so that the Olympic movement may express itself in a spiritual climate free from those fears and constraints which tend to bring human beings into conflict with one another.

Let us allow the Olympic movement to proceed in freedom and in peace. Let us not stand in its way as it moves up. Let us rejoice in the knowledge that a non-governmental organization should thus have asserted itself, for close to a century, as an agent of promotion and international relations in the world of sports. Its achievement brings to mind a number of other endeavours which exist and function successfully, thus relieving governments from the need to initiate them.

Should it be said that there is more shadow than light in the picture I have drawn, then I would suggest that you answer by saying as I would that "there is greatness in believing in light in the midst of darkness".

Mr. Prime Minister, I trust that my remarks will be informative and of value to you in your consideration of this matter.

regards.

Please accept my warmest personal

Mayor of Montreal

Better late than never

By Ruud Paauw

You become Olympic champion but you only receive your gold medal 62 years after the Games ...

It seems to be an incredible story but this is what happened to the Belgian riders Lode Wouters, Leon De Lathouwer and Eugene Van Roosbroeck who won the team event in the cycling road race at the 1948 Games, held in Windsor Great Park.

In the individual standings of the 194 km race Wouters finished 3rd, De Lathouwer 4th and Van Roosbroeck 9th. These results gave them the first place as a team. But that was not clear immediately after the race. The judges had to calculate the times of tens of riders and without a computer it took them many hours to work out the ranking. Strangely enough there was no medal ceremony for the teams at all.

According to Van Roosbroeck more than sixty years later "there was complete chaos after the race" and that is why they jumped quickly on the double decker bus back to the army barracks that served as the Olympic Village. A day later they were back in Belgium. "It was

only afterward we heard we were the best team. None of us thought of the medal which went with the victory. The honour was enough for us", said Lode Wouters. "There was no one to wish us well when we left and no one to welcome us when we returned." The shadows of war were still present.

The years went by. One day in 2010 Van Roosbroeck by now 82 years old, read a newspaper article which caught his eye. Belgian sailor André Nelis had won silver at the Melbourne Games in 1956 and bronze at the Rome Games four years later. Both these had been lost in a fire. IOC President Jacques Rogge had presented him with replacements. "Then I thought: now is the time to ask for my medal of 1948." He telephoned the Belgian Olympic Committee but nobody knew where the original medals were and why they had never distributed. So a copy of the medal was struck for Van Roosbroeck and on June 4, 2010 he finally received his gold medal in Brussels from the IOC President. Later a copy was also given to Lode Wouters. Unfortunately it all came too late for the third rider, Léon De Lathouwer who had passed away in 2008.

Sources: De Standaard, Thierry Bousse, The Daily Telegraph



After 62 years the Belgian cyclist Lode Wouters received his Olympic gold medal, which he had earned in 1948 in the road race along with his teammates. Right: Gaston Roelants, Olympic 3000 m steeplechase champion of 1964, and now as Baron Roelants President of the Federation of Belgian Olympians.

Photo: belga picture