

In Memoriam

TO MASAJI KIYOKAWA

Honorary Member of the International Olympic Committee and Member of the ISOH

By Bob Miyakawa.

The Olympic Movement has lost a man of strong conviction in the Olympic Ideals, a man of courage and conscience and a great leader in sports.

He was the type of man whom the International Olympic Committee needs now, when it faces the giant task to restore its image in the eyes of the public and reshape its whole structure to meet the challenge of the next millennium.

I only knew him as an Olympic hero, as - when he won the Olympic 100 metre backstroke title in Los Angeles in 1932 - I was only seven years old.

Our paths did not cross until the Olympic Movement brought us together.

He became an IOC member in 1969, and the first Asian member to be elected as IOC Vice President.

Seven years later, in 1975, I became a member of the IOC Press Commission.

This was the start of a strong friendly relationship, from which I learnt literally the ideals of the Olympic Movement - and that from a great Olympian.

He also was a modest person.

When - after President Juan Antonio Samaranch assumed his post in 1980 - he became the chairman of our IOC



Masaji Kiyokawa's golden Olympic moment took place at the Los Angeles Games in 1932. Kiyokawa is on the right.

Press Commission, he said he was an 'amateur' in the media field, but the Commission members admired his keen insight into media matters, and expert handling of the Commission meetings.

When the Organizing Committee praised the Commission's work and advice, following the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul, his words to the Commission members were: "I did not do anything myself. It was you, the members, who did all the work!"

A strong believer of the Olympic principles, he fought, although in vain, against the boycott of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow by the National Olympic Committee of his country.

When the boycotts, which started with the Olympic Games from Montreal 1976, continued for three consecutive times until the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1984, it was he, who proposed the calling of an 'Extraordinary Session of the IOC', which took place on 1/2 December 1984 in Lausanne, to cope with political interventions in the Olympic Games.

He was deeply concerned about the latest crisis within the IOC, created by the Winter Games candidates' scandals.

When I last talked to him in late February - he had just come out of hospital after a bout of pneumonia - he said he was planning to attend the Extraordinary Session on 17/18 March in Lausanne, as an Honorary Member.

He said: "I have to go. It is my duty!"

This was not to be. The words were the last he spoke to me and they will be etched forever in my heart.

Mr. Kiyokawa, You were modest, dignified and an extraordinary man, and - a true Olympian to the last!"



Kiyokawa's ultimate Olympic moment. Seoul, 1988.