



INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC ACADEMY



*Olympic Medallists and Olympians
as Role Models: Their Educational Role*

4th INTERNATIONAL SESSION
FOR OLYMPIC MEDALLISTS OR OLYMPIANS



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2-9 JULY 2018

Editor

KONSTANTINOS GEORGIADIS
Professor, University of Peloponnese
Honorary Dean of the IOA

ANCIENT OLYMPIA

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FOREWORD

The 4th successive International Session for Olympic Medallists or Olympians that took place from 2 to 9 July 2018 in Ancient Olympia has established an additional link in the effort to incorporate the new special theme session into the IOA educational programme launched in 2007, to attract the international community of Olympians to the cradle of Olympism, Ancient Olympia. While still in the process of developing, this Session aims to become the most important pole of attraction for Olympians, whether medallists or not.

In the modern Olympic Movement, just as in antiquity, athletes have been and continue to be the core of Sport. Hence, the importance of establishing this Session, which over time will provide fertile ground for the presence of elite athletes in the International Olympic Academy. By acquiring knowledge through the programmes offered by the IOA, the Session's participants will be able to exchange ideas on Sport and Olympism at an international level.

This year's Session focused on the role of athletes and Olympic medallists as social and educational models. A subject that has been at the centre of debate in recent years and concerns the impact of the image of Olympians at the national and international level. It is clear that the question of the athlete as a role model, despite its different readings, remains a very attractive open field of research and debate.

For the International Olympic Committee itself, the role of the Olympian is considered crucial to the idealistic image of the modern Olympic Movement and for this reason it gives special attention to the support and promotion of Olympians and Olympic medallists as role models for society, particularly through Olympic education programmes and of course the newly created institution of the Youth Olympic Games.

In this year's Session, there were 24 Olympians and nine lecturers. Very interesting discussions took place on the subject of the athlete as a role model and the many positive and negative constraints it entails. The debate revolved

around the theme of the key speakers, athletes and the central discussion panel between participants and lecturers, namely archaeologist Dr Vassiliki Tzachrista, professor Dr Paul Gaffney, Olympian and member of the IOC Athletes' Commission Aya Medany, professor Dr Stephan Wassong, professor Dr Katia Rubio, Olympian Chryssi Biskitzi, Olympic Medallist Sarah Walker, Chief Executive Officer, IOC Olympic Broadcasting Services Yiannis Exarchos and the panel discussion coordinator, president of ISOH, David Wallechinsky. The in-depth lectures and views of the above created a warm atmosphere for discussion and theoretical debate.

The Session left open the request for the continuing and greater participation of athletes from all over the world, enabling the Olympic narrative to attract an ever-greater number of readers and co-creators! This is the message that the International Olympic Academy sends to all Olympians!

Prof. Konstantinos GEORGIADIS
*Dean, School of Human Movement
and Quality of Life Sciences,
University of Peloponnese
Honorary Dean of the IOA*



Opening Ceremony

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, 3 JULY 2018



OPENING ADDRESS
of the Session Proceedings
by the President of the International Olympic Academy
Isidoros KOUVELOU

Dear friends, participants and lecturers of the 4th International Session for Olympic Medallists or Olympians,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Ancient Olympia and the International Olympic Academy and I feel particularly fortunate to have the honour of hosting elite athletes from Greece and abroad, who have participated in Olympic Games and whose performances have written some of the most glorious moments of the modern Olympic Movement.

The Session for Olympic Medallists or Olympians is one of the most important Sessions for the International Olympic Academy for two reasons:

- First, because it provides the opportunity to Olympians from the world over, from various Olympic Games, to get together, not on the track or at the Olympic Village, but in the calm and peaceful environment of Ancient Olympia, the land where the Olympic Games were born.
- And second because the IOA offers the potential for a joint look into and discussion of sporting, professional and social concerns that are particularly relevant in the post-competitive life of elite athletes and the Olympic Movement, in general.

Your presence is semantically particularly symbolic and definitive, as athletes, such as you, constitute the crowning glory of Sports and Olympism.

The subject of this year's Session is particularly important and through the scientific and experiential presentations and the discussions over the following days, light will be shed on important aspects of concern to the Olympic Movement with respect to Olympic athletes acting as role models and showcasing their educational role.



The IOA President, Isidoros Kouvelos welcomed the Olympians during his opening address.

The sports-loving public considers Olympic medallists to be their favourite protagonists in the Olympic Games, the most ancient and popular sporting event of the ancient and modern world. Each Olympic medallist is an idol and a hero in the hearts of spectators and children worldwide, both on a national and international level.

However, this raises the reasonable question about how acceptable and simple it is for the athlete to be considered as a role model and how a role model can become an educational tool in the education of youth.

It is clear that the Olympic Movement strengthens and showcases the educational role of Olympians through its educational and cultural programmes internationally. And this is a role acceptable to society. Olympic athletes, due to their visibility, act as role models, inspiring our youth.



Standing for the Olympic Anthem. From left to right: the IOA President, Isidoros Kouvelos and the IOA Honorary Dean, Prof. Konstantinos Georgiadis.

This fact, of course, constitutes a considerable responsibility for the athletes themselves, as it may possibly subject them to ongoing criticism by the public and become a burden, which in certain instances they are not prepared to shoulder.

Indeed, as I just noted a few days ago at the opening ceremony for the 58th Session for Young Participants, what makes distinguished athletes into role models to be emulated, is not their much-publicised success in sports, but a combination of their success in sports with their overall education and general behaviour.

And I illustrated my point with an example, namely that of professional basketball player Charles Barkley, who was extremely famous (at least amongst people of a certain age), who said: “I am not a Role Model... just because I dunk a basketball doesn’t mean I should raise your kids”.

Dear participants, I know that for athletes being a role model is not easy, as modern sports are rife with enormous challenges stemming from competition, and striving to be placed on the winner’s podium can in fact affect one’s char-



A short briefing.

acter. In numerous instances athletes, who were idolised, became negative role models over night, with catastrophic consequences for the lives of thousands of young people.

Nevertheless, the issue of role model athletes remains a matter with many parameters and approaches.

This specific Session will be able to highlight significant aspects of the matter, particularly as you Olympians are in fact the most competent to respond to questions pertaining to the role model athlete. The Olympic Movement could have no better interlocutor than yourselves.

Dear friends, I wish you every success in the proceedings of this Session and I am certain that you will all be given the opportunity, participants and lecturers alike, to express views and discuss in depth the various facets related to this serious subject, which is of such magnitude and such great concern to the modern Olympic Movement.

Far from the track and playing field and away from the winner's podium, without track suits and medals, let us share common concerns in this wonderful land of Ancient Olympia and the International Olympic Academy.



After the reading of Pierre de Coubertin's writings, the Olympians laid wreaths at the Coubertin stele and the John Ketseas and Carl Diem monument.



The Olympic athletes were guided around the archaeological site of Olympia.





Proceedings

LECTURES



The opinions of the lecturers do not necessarily reflect those of the International Olympic Academy. Out of respect for multiculturalism and diversity of scientific research, we do not intervene in the way each lecturer chooses to present his/her bibliography and footnotes.

THE OBSTACLES OLYMPIAN WOMEN FACE

Aya MEDANY (EGY)

Three times Olympian, Silver Medallist in World Championship for Modern Pentathlon 2008



Obstacles that I face:

Sport and religion often have an uneasy relationship.

- The International Federation for Modern pentathlon made me wrestle with the needs of sport and the requirements of my Muslim faith ever since the International Swimming Federation banned swimming bodysuits. I began wearing the Hijab after the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, despite the fact that it gives me a disadvantage whilst running and swimming. I considered retirement from the sport following the 2012 London Games due to the ban on full-body swimsuits imposed by the swimming federation FINA, from which the pentathlon takes its swimming rules. I want to swim in an outfit conforming to the Muslim faith, while the swimming requirements state that outfits “shall not cover the neck, extend past the shoulder, nor extend below the knee”.
- The Egyptian Revolution was a hard situation in Egypt especially before and after the revolution as everything stopped in the country during the time that I really needed the support of my country to achieve my goal which was Olympic medal, but it was impossible at this time. Since the revolution, the Egyptian pentathlon programme has received very little funding, and two major pentathlon events that were to be held in Egypt in 2011 had to be moved. After maybe a month from the revolution we were supposed to travel to a sports camp for a competition where there was a world cup in Egypt but it was canceled and we stayed there



Aya Medany, a member of the IOC Athletes' Commission presented her speech on the obstacles Olympian women face during their sports carrier.

approximately for two months. We couldn't travel anywhere because there was a problem with money and with the airports. You could not travel and you could not come back.

- Education: in schools and in colleges only 5% of teachers and professors understand what your duty is as a professional athlete, because they never played sports or understand it or taught it.
- Injuries: doctors who treated us don't have the experience to deal with athletes so they can put your legs in plaster for more than three months and they don't care, because they never played sports or understand it or taught it.

THE OLYMPIC MEDALLIST AS A TRANSCENDENTAL MODEL IN ANTIQUITY AND IN THE MODERN AGE: ASPECTS AND APPROACHES

Dr Vassiliki TZACHRISTA (GRE)

Archaeologist, International Olympic Academy



Esteemed speakers and participants in the Session of Olympic Medallists, I too would like to welcome you to the International Olympic Academy and wish you a pleasant stay in Ancient Olympia. It is with particular pleasure that I am here today as a speaker and I would like to thank Mr Kouvelos, President of the IOA, and Dr Georgiadis, Honorary Dean of the IOA, who offered me this opportunity to address such a brilliant audience - an audience of Olympic Games participants. The personality and successes of an Olympic-level athlete and particularly an Olympic medallist, principally inspire admiration and awe, which is indicative of the unconscious influence athletes at that level have on our lives, both during their athletic career but also in their post-competitive lives.

This influence is exerted on multiple levels and is linked to the archetype of the eminent person, the ideal hero, the leader personality, the sporting and social role model, the Olympic star and the educational standard. All these elements that compose the distinguished portrait of an Olympic athlete are encountered throughout all historical periods, both in antiquity and in the modern era. The form, however, of this timeless model of an Olympic medallist and the values connected to that model do not historically constitute a straight line or a unified whole.

Thus in Ancient Greece winners at the Olympic Games expressed in their

persons and symbolised the ideals of the Ancient world and correspondingly, since the Games were recreated in 1896 and to the present day, they shape the ideals of modern society. The historical background of antiquity with the narratives of travellers, authors and poets, as well as the evidence provided by monuments and works of art, offers us an exciting narrative about the model of an athlete / Olympic Games winner. Correspondingly, the narrative in the modern world is completed actively by the media, which play a role in the communications image of sporting idols and is clearly different from the ancient model. However, before examining aspects of this Olympic model in antiquity and the modern era, let us first look briefly into two basic issues. The first concerns defining and reporting the basic features of the concepts of model and archetype, as well as the social necessity of adopting role models, mainly through education. The second is to examine why the IOC, the IOA and, by extension all the other sporting and Olympic bodies through their educational and sporting actions focus on and highlight the Olympic medallist / athlete as a role model.

As regards the concepts utilised, a role model means somebody who is “exemplary, perfect: somebody who has achieved a degree of excellence in a certain characteristic quality that provokes our admiration and our desire to copy them and therefore serves as an example to emulate”¹. The term archetype “means the original type, i.e. the one used as an exemplar, role model. Archetypes guide us in certain basic behaviours, acting as representatives in their most characteristic features of images, ideas, experiences and emotions. Scholars of various schools find archetypes to be the foundations for various expressions of humankind, including myths, literature, art, symbolisms and all the basic concepts of science, while the existence of archetypes has been already accepted, directly or indirectly by many sciences”².

1. http://www.greek-language.gr/greekLang/modern_greek/tools/lexica/triantafyllides/search.html?lq=%22%CF%80%CF%81%CF%8C%CF%84%CF%85%CF%80%CE%BF%CF%82+-%CE%B7+-%CE%BF%22&dq=

2. Gavalas Dimitris: “The sunken world of archetypes – The progress of archetypes in the history of thought (O vythismenos kosmos ton archetypon – I poreia ton archetypon stin istoria tis skepsis)”, Newspaper *To Vima*, 10-08-1997. See also Leslie A. Howe: “Sisyphus and Olympism: An existential approach to Models”, a presentation at the *58th International Session for Young Participants of the IOA, Olympia, 17-29/6/2018*, IOA Archive.



Lecture by Dr Vassiliki Tzachrista, IOA Archaeologist, who approached the Olympic medalist in antiquity and nowadays.

On the issue of how the importance of role models is determined in a society, we have to refer to the theories of Albert Bandura, leading Canadian psychologist and Stanford University professor. Bandura, one of the five greatest psychologists of the 20th century, introduced and developed the social cognitive theory of learning, which focuses on learning that takes place directly or indirectly by emulating individuals, who are considered to be behavioural models (modelling)³. These role models, he contends, are distinguished into

3. “Bandura observed that people learn through emulating models of behavior of other people, real or imaginary situations, as they are presented in films, on television, on the internet, in books. This kind of learning is encountered in all people. We all have the tendency to adopt behaviours that are rewarded or are socially accepted and, on the other hand, to avoid forms of behavior for which others are despised, punished or even experience marginalization. To observe and learn the consequences of a particular behavior that someone exhibits, without ourselves experiencing it ourselves, constitutes very powerful motivation to lead us to adopt it or avoid it”, Bouras Ioannis: *Educational software based on the Albert Bandura’s Theory of Social Learning (Ekpaideftiko yliko vasismeno stin Theoria Koinonikis Mathisis tou Albert Bandua)*, Post-graduate disser-

positive and negative⁴. Bandura posited that “social learning is based on emulating models and is not carried out with daily lectures and advice from an authority, but from everyday actions and living examples. As such the importance of models as postulated by Albert Bandura for social for social cognitive learning is decisive”⁵.

In line, therefore, with this theory of the value of models, it is commonly held that sport is a basic social institution that shapes individual and collective models and cultivates social values. Olympism in particular, as the philosophy of the Olympic Games through Olympic education, constitutes a system of values with a positive contribution to society⁶. In order to achieve the goals of Olympism, the International Olympic Committee makes use of Olympic medallists as role models for sport, education, and culture for youth. It is the second issue in the study, as we already mentioned, and concerns the decision made by the IOC, IOA and by all the Olympic and sporting bodies in general to place the athlete / Olympic medallist at the centre of their educational and sporting policy, as a role model for youth and for society in general.

This event, however, is not new in the history of the Olympic Movement. As Stephan Wassong notes, it is “an old and yet also new educational idea”, which was also supported by Pierre de Coubertin, who brought back the

tation, University of Piraeus – Department of Information Technology, Post-graduate Studies Programme in “Informatics”, Nov. 2017, p. 13.

4. “As positive role models we designate those whose actions are rewarded by their social environment, gaining recognition, a higher public profile, acceptance, etc. As negative role models we designate those, who with their actions gain penalties, rejection, even expulsion from their social circle due to their behavior”. Bouras Ioannis: *Educational software based on the Albert Bandura’s Theory of Social Learning (Ekpaideftiko yliko vasismeno stin Theoria Koinonikis Mathisis tou Albert Bandua)*, Post-graduate dissertation, University of Piraeus – Department of Information Technology, Post-graduate Studies Programme in “Informatics”, Nov. 2017.
5. Pappa Monika: “Albert Bandura, Social cognitive learning through models: paedagogical and psychological dimension”, in the journal *Efarnosmeni Paedagogiki (Applied Paedagogy)*, Periodical Electronic Publication of the Hellenic Institute of Applied Paedagogy and Education (ELL.I.E.P.EK.), issue 6, pp. 3-4. 34.
6. On theories concerning sporting role models see Francisco Javier Lopez Frias: “Theories concerning sports role models and the characteristics of programmes to create role models”, presentation at the at the *14th Joint International Session for Presidents or Directors of NOAs and Members of NOCs, Olympia, 6-13 May 2018*, IOA Archive.

Olympic Games, and who considered that “an Olympic athlete has to take over the responsibility to act as a role model to disseminate the educational value of sport”⁷.

This early position required that sport be amateur and that sportspeople underwent professional and educational training. As the Olympic Movement progressed this model of athlete role model changed and was interwoven with the twentieth century changes in sports. These changes concerned the professionalization, commercialization and the politicization of the Olympic Games. In line with this, the IOC, in order to safeguard the integrity of sport and its educational orientation, constructed a new profile of a role model athlete, highlighting the importance of the double career of an athlete through educational procedures and the significance of their moral fibre within the framework of the Olympic Movement, issues included in the Olympic Agenda for 2020⁸.

It is worth noting that the joint Athlete Career Programmes was developed by the IOC and the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) with the Adecco International Group, which is a global leader in human resources solutions. This programme has supported more than 35,000 athletes from 185 countries, providing sportspeople with educational opportunities, career development and job placement opportunities, which are needed to transition to the workplace⁹.

The International Olympic Academy, this most significant international foundation for Olympic education and one of the main branches of the IOC, recognised the role of Olympic Medallists and Olympic participants as ambassadors for Olympic values, included them in its educational programme - the

7. Wassong Stephan: “The Olympic Athlete as a Role Model: An Old and New Educational Idea”, p. 107, at <http://library.la84.org/SportsLibrary/ISOR/isor2014v.pdf>, downloaded 10.4.2018. Also see concerning this Clément Anicet Guiyama-Massogo, “The position and role of Olympic Athletes in the philosophy of Baron Pierre de Coubertin”, presentation at the *14th Joint International Session for Presidents or Directors of NOAs and Members of NOCs, Olympia, 6-13 May 2018*, IOA Archive.

8. Wassong, *ibid*, pp. 107-112.

9. For more see “IOC/IPC Athlete Career Programme”, at <https://www.adeccogroup.com/sustainability/social-responsibility/iocipc-athlete-career-programme/> and IOC, “Athlete Career Programme (ACP)”, at https://www.olympic.org/athlete365/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/CIO1444-1_Programme_interactif_vfinale_EN.pdf, downloaded 5.5.2018. Accessed on 4.4.2018.

original idea behind the Session at which we currently find ourselves¹⁰. During 2018, the previous sessions of the National Olympic Academies and the Young Participants had as their general and special topic *the Olympic medallist as role model*. Twenty lecturers in total –from the above-mentioned sessions– from Greece and all over the world discussed diverse aspects and social manifestations of this model. The presentations were in each instance accompanied by interesting discussions, which gave rise to many questions on the topic.

All this public discourse is certainly linked to the staging of the Third Youth Olympic Games in 2018 in Argentina. At these games, more than 50 athlete role models will travel to Buenos Aires in October to support the next generation of young athletes, who will compete at the Youth Olympic Games¹¹. One of these will be a Greek athlete and Olympic medallist, Anna Korakaki, who was chosen by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) as a model shooting athlete for the Third Youth Olympic Games for her distinctive personality and unimpeachable character. The selection of role model athletes was carried out by the IOC in 2014 for the Nanjing Games and underlines the importance the IOC places in athletes as leading role models. To this I would also like to add the decision of the IOC to inaugurate the Olympic Laurel, a new distinction for athletes who are devoted to the Olympic ideals. This distinction is inspired by Ancient Greece and was awarded for the first time in 2016 in Rio to Kipchoge Keino from Kenya, a distinguished track and field athlete and

10. "For this session, the IOA cooperates closely with the National Olympic Committees, the National Olympic Academies, the International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Medallists Associations and the International Sports Federations. The purpose of this cooperation is the broader participation of Olympic Medalists and Olympians and their training in the cradle of the Olympic Games in order to help them respond to their "post Olympics" social role. Special subjects of the International Sessions for Olympic Medallists or Olympians (2007 – to date): (a) Propagation of the Olympic Idea by the Olympic Medallists; (b) The social and professional life of athletes during and after elite competition; (c) Communication methods of Olympic Values by Olympian role models; (d) Olympic Medallists & Olympians as role models: their educational role". The above information is set out by the IOA in their official site at <http://ioa.org.gr/diethnis-synodos-olybionikon/?lang=en>, accessed on 20.3.2018.

11. For more see: IOC, *Sports stars to gather at the Youth Olympic Games*, at <https://www.olympic.org/news/sports-stars-to-gather-at-the-youth-olympic-games>, accessed on 2.4.2018.

gold Olympic medallist in 1968 and 1972, who established many schools and charitable organisations for the orphans of his country.

Of course we must note that this IOC policy goes hand-in-hand with “the idealistic aspect that distinguishes the Olympic Games from all other sporting events, which may be governed by rules, but have no philosophical or ideological foundation ... The same criteria also hold for the athletes: both male and female Olympic Games athletes differ from the athletes who compete in other events, or at least they appear different. First, because they are obliged to accept the principles of Olympism and to behave accordingly. Second, because they are promoted as national and worldwide models not solely on the basis of performance but mainly on the basis of personality: because performance is combined with ethical qualities. Finally, they represent their country and not themselves and therefore their victory, their defeat, their struggle, their behaviour all reflect upon the national identity. On the Olympic playing field the athlete’s identity therefore showcases the values of their country and their people. And this is the reason why Olympic medallists become national heroes”¹².

Let us go further back and see what took place in antiquity. Athletes in antiquity did not seek out records as they do in the modern games. The greatest distinction at the Olympic Games was to be pronounced a victor, an *olympionikes*. The trophy for victory was a simple wreath made of wild olive leaves. The official award ceremony for the victors took place at the close of the Games at the vestibule of the temple of Zeus. The *prytanis* of the *Hellanodikes* called forth each Olympic victor, pronouncing his name and his place of origin and crowned him to the cheers of the crowd. Wearing the wreath and pelted with flower petals and leaves, the victor took on a fraction of the glory of the gods and heroes, who were the first mythical victors at Olympia. Pindar calls the Olympic Games the “Leaf-bearing games”, (*Fylloforoi agones*).

The name of the Olympic victor was recorded in the official archives of the people of Elis and he had the right to order his statue and place it in the precincts of the sanctuary of Olympia. This supreme privilege, which the *hellanodikes* awarded to victors ensured their eternal glory and fame. Pausanias mentioned that in the mid-second century AD, when he visited Olympia, there were 230 statues of victors in Altis, a literal museum. It is not hard to imagine

12. Koulouri Christina: “Olympic Values and disqualification (Olympiakes Axes kai apokleismoi”, *To Vima* Newspaper, 12.8.2012)

the sense of euphoria and beauty that flooded visitors to the Games, who were fortunate enough to walk through the sacred grounds in amongst these superb works of sculpture¹³.

It is obvious that sport and by extension the model of the athlete Olympic victor played a major role in forming and developing the art of sculpture in Ancient Greece. Artists were able to visit *palaestrae* and *gymnasia* and study fit naked bodies of athletes and to depict them realistically. They viewed these as the ideal role models and standards of beauty, health and strength. From the beginning of monumental Greek art, in the 7th century BC, up to the Classical era, sculpture was dominated by the model of the male nude with characteristic heroic nudity, the freshness and beauty of eternal youth. This idealized sporting image of man at the crossroads between puberty and maturity constituted a model for depicting gods, heroes and men¹⁴. The depiction of the athletic male nude in sculpture constitutes a high standard of aesthetics; defined the links between physical exercise and nudity; and served the humanistic ideal of *kalo kagatho* beautiful and virtuous. The pinnacle of sculpture that condenses within it all these values is considered to be *The Doryphoros* or *Spear Bearer* by Polycleitos (440 BC).

The glory and fame of the Olympic victors through the centuries was assured not only by the art of sculpture but also by poetry. Victory odes commissioned from the leading poets of antiquity heaped praises on the achievements of the

13. Tzachrista Vassiliki: *Museum of the Modern Olympic Games: The history of the Olympic Games through the exhibits of the Museum in Ancient Olympia (Mouseio Synchronon Olympiakon Agonon, I istoria ton Olympiakon Agonon mesa apo ta ekthemata tou)*, Crete, IOA-HOA, 2000, pp. 22-24.

14. Valavanis Panos: *Sports athletes and prizes – The Olympic Games and sports in Ancient Greece (Αθλα αθλητές και έπαθλα – Ολυμπιακοί αγώνες και αθλητισμός στην Αρχαία Ελλάδα, Athla athlites kai epathla – Olympiakoi agones kai athlitisimos stin Arhaia Ellada)* Athens, Erevnites, 1996, pp. 66-67. See also more generally concerning the links between sport and Art in antiquity: Yalouris N. Nikos: “The contribution of the games to the development of the arts and letters (“I symvoli ton agonon stin anaptyxi ton technon kai ton grammaton”)” in the magazine *Αθληση και Κοινωνία (Sport and Society)*, Department of the Science of Physical Education and Sport – Democritus University of Thrace, Kommotini, Salto, 1996, issue 14, pp. 43-52 and Kakrides Th. Ioannis: “Sport and Poetry” – M. Andronikos, “Sport and Art” in. N. Yalouris (ed.) *The history of the Olympic Games, (I istoria ton Olympiakon Agonon)* Athens, Ekdotiki Athinon, 1976, pp. 142-146 and 146-151 respectively.

winners and their home cities, not only in the Olympic Games but also in the other Panhellenic Games. Poets would be well rewarded for praising the winner, his ancestors, writing victory hymns that rendered the athlete *aoedimon* (praisable in song) for the following generations. Leading poets of this kind were Pindar of Thebes, 44 of whose poems are still extant (Victory odes for the Olympic Games, the Pythean Games, the Isthmian Games and the Nemean Games), as well as Simonides of Ceos, who besides victory odes wrote mainly epigrams¹⁵. Besides sculpture and poetry, the themes of the games and sports constituted a leading topic in the art of ceramic painting on vases, with a host of athletic depictions both in black-form and in red-form ceramics by leading painters of the times.

When athletes arrived home, the city received them in a manner comparable to a general or war hero. They would tear down a segment of the city walls through which the athlete would enter on a decorated chariot. He would cross the city receiving accolades to reach the sanctuary where he would offer a sacrifice to the gods. This symbolic action declared that if a city had such men to defend it, it did not require walls. The moral reward of an Olympic winner was followed by financial offers, and social distinctions.

It is worth noting that besides the praise that was forthcoming with an Olympic victory, there was no lack of criticism, mainly from the intelligentsia of the time about the excesses of sport, which concerned promoting physical attributes to the detriment of mental and spiritual virtues. First of all the poet Tyrtaeus in the 7th century BC mocked the wealth and the rhetoric of sport and supported courage in war as the dominant virtue. At the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 5th century BC, Xenophanes from Colophon protested in his texts, that the lords of the city heaped greater honour on their athletes than on virtuous and wise men who offered greater benefits to society at large. A short while later the poet Euripides bitterly condemned the clan of athletes as the worst of all evils. Without a doubt the dominant nature of the Games had changed and the professionalism that reigned from the end of the 5th century BC was critiqued by thinkers of the later age. The ideal, however, of noble sportsmanship did not stop inspiring coming generations up to the final years of the ancient world¹⁶.

15. Tzachrista, *op. cit.*, p. 24, Valavanis, *op. cit.*, p. 67, Kakrides, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-146.

16. Cf. Ingomar Weiler: "Feats of athlete-heroes in Antiquity: the social and educational value of athletic excellence", lecture at the 58th International Session of the IOA for

Therefore in antiquity an Olympic victor appeared as leading figure with significant social and political influence. In certain instances, in fact, their reputation approaches myth and deification¹⁷. However, the Games in antiquity were not an “unrumpled athletic paradise”. Just as with all other human activities, the Games also show elements of similar behaviour: nobility, morality, culture, but also vanity, greed, bribery, cheating and envy¹⁸.

From antiquity to the modern era, role models and archetypes of heroic figures of athletes and particular Olympic victors did not cease to constitute a source of inspiration. Through the timelessness of this model of the myth and the power of role models we achieve, in essence, a dialogue with the past. The archetypal mythical narration is transcribed into the contemporary present and interpreted by contemporary athletes, who function as agents of semantics and qualities of another age. Thus the decorative identity of Olympic victor Spyros Louis, who took first place in the contemporary event of the marathon race in the 1896 Olympic Games, is coloured by the myth of the ancient marathon runner, who raced from Marathon to Athens to convey the message that the Greeks were victorious in their battle against the Persians. This archetype of the hero warrior, who ran burdened by his arms, was the basis which gave rise to the marathon race, which was the inspiration of French philologist and lover of the ancient world, Michel Bréal¹⁹.

Young Participants, *Olympia, 17-29/6/2018*, IOA Archive.

17. Concerning the role and position of Olympic winners in ancient society, as well as the criticism to which they were subjected, see interesting data in Simopoulos Kyr.: *The Olympiads – myth, deception and barbarity, (Mythos, apati kai varvarotita oi Olympiades)* Athens, Stachy, 1998, pp. 38-79 and Scharff Sebastian: “Ancient athletes as heroes: the social and educational values of sporting excellence”, an presentation at the *14th Joint International Session for Presidents or Directors of NOAs and Members of NOCs, Olympia, 6-13 May 2018*, IOA Archive; and Miller G. Stephen: “Athletes as Celebrities in Ancient Greece”, presentation at the *58th International IOA Session for Young Participants, Olympia, 17-29/6/2018*, IOA Archive.
18. Nikolaidou Eleni: “Olympic Games in antiquity – the unseen aspects (Olympiakoi Agones stin archaiotita – oi atheates plevres”, *To Vima* Newspaper, 11.5.2012.
19. In line with the revival and the national symbolisms, the marathon has gained particular significance. MacAloon focuses on the great national response to the marathon within the framework of an international institution, such as the Olympics and interprets this phenomenon through national mythological correlations: the marathon is an event “without compare in the modern era and even less in the ancient world”, which essentially constituted the “activation of the myth of the soldier/courier, who raced from

In looking back over the pantheon of athletic role models, other Olympic Games victors have embodied with their victories symbolic role models. For example the participation and victory of marathon runner Abebe Bikila in the Rome Olympics in 1960 marked his country's resistance to Italian colonisation and he was a role model legitimising Africa in the age of decolonisation. Similarly the victories of black track-and-field Olympic athletes, Jesse Owens in Berlin²⁰ in 1936 and Tommie Smith and John Carlos in 1968²¹, constituted an expression of victory against Nazism and racism and became timeless models of resistance, not solely for their athletic prowess, but also for their political and social positioning against social discrimination and social intimidation.

Also significant is the positive role models of women athletes, who fought major battles to become equal partners in the Olympic Movement, overturning male stereotypes and their exclusion from the Games²². One of the predominant female athletic figures of the Olympic Games, a female athlete role model,

Athens to Marathon to announce the victory over the barbarians and who, as soon as he had done his duty, collapsed and died", MacAloon John: "Modern Olympic Games" in Efthymis Kioumourtzoglou (project manager), *Olympic Games: references – approaches (–Olympiakoi agones: Anafores prossegiseis)* Athens, Ellinika Grammata, 2001, Livanis, 2001, p. 215.

20. "I had all the things that every poor person could wish for in his life: The love of the people, and a good reputation. And I enjoyed the congratulations and the privileges of a champion. That satisfied all the dreams I had as a child on the cotton plantations of Alabama, where my family lived in injustice and repression", from "Jesse Owens: The Olympic athlete who humiliated Hitler", 31.3.2018 at tvxs.gr (excerpt from his autobiography).
21. On 14 September 2016 the unveiling took place of the statue of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, depicting the historic moment on the podium, at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. On 28 September 2016 in a symbolic gesture to rehabilitate them, the two emblematic athletes went to the White House, invited by the US Olympic Committee to a dinner given by President Barack Obama for the team mission to the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. See Kakaouki Maria: *Efimerida ton Syntakton* Newspaper, "The 'Black Panthers' at the White House", 27.9.2016 and an article by the similar title "The 'black panthers' at the White House" on CNN Greece, <http://www.cnn.gr/news/kosmos/story/48109/oi-mayroi-panthires-ton-leyko-oiko>, accessed on 10.12. 2017.
22. On this topic see Argeitaki Xenia: "Significant differences in the manner in which athletes of different genders are promoted as role models", presentation at the *14th Joint International Session for Presidents or Directors of NOAs and Members of NOCs, Olympia, 6-13 May 2018*, IOA Archive.

was Dutch track-and-field athlete, Fanny Blankers – Koen. She became known as the “flying housewife”, and with her unprecedented performances in the London Olympics in 1948 she embodied the model of an athlete, wife and mother in the post-war years. She was a historic figure for the Olympic Games, as she became the first woman to win four gold medals in a single Olympiad. In 1999 she was voted “Female Athlete of the Century by the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) and in 2018 Google honoured her with a doodle on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of her birth²³.

In line with this, women athletes from countries which have limited representation in the Olympics and who are still battling social and religious prejudice constitute powerful role models. Paralympic Games athletes, who are fighting for equal participation in sports as well as in the social sphere constitute values role models. The Paralympic Games are considered to be “the celebration of human willpower” and Paralympic athletes to be role models who prove conclusively that the power of will is greater than bodily frailty²⁴.

In the field of positive sports role models we would like to record two other leading international sportspeople, whose presence in the sporting world excites public feeling. They are international soccer player Mohamed Salah and basketball player Giannis Antetokounmpo. The former became particularly recognisable through the Champions League and the Soccer World Cup and the latter through his career in the popular sport of basketball. Both bear strongly archetypal significance and constitute powerful national and trans-national role models. Salah, from a poor Egyptian family became a sports and social role model with his football performance and his humanitarian activities in his country. He is promoted in Egypt, as well as internationally, as a national symbol with the archetypal characteristics of the Pharaohs, and is a star that young people look up to and worship like a god²⁵. Antetokounmpo, a child

23. Besides these four Olympic medals, Blankers won five European medals, 58 Dutch championships and broke or equaled 12 world records – the last record in 1951 at the pentathlon at an age of 33, *I Kathimerini* Newspaper, “The Google Doodle is dedicated to the “flying housewife” and 20th century athlete Fanny Blankers-Koen”, 26.4.2018.

24. See also, Brittain Ian: “Paralympic athletes as Role Models in real life”, a presentation at the *58th International IOA Session for Young Participants, Olympia, 17-29/6/2018*, IOA Archive.

25. See, “Mohamed Salah, more than a footballer (Mohamed Salah, kati perissotero apo enas podosfairistis)”, <https://tvxs.gr/news/kosmos/moxament-salax-kati-perissotero-apo>

of Nigerian immigrants, grew up in Greece, struggled to survive, faced racism and prejudice and took a hard path that led him from a working class Athenian neighbourhood to the best basketball team in the NBA, having gained Greek nationality. He is presented as a trans-national sporting role model with his performance and amazing physique (the Greek Freak), but also as a social and national role model in Greece²⁶. Moreover, athletes at that level serve as financial role models, as they are paid astronomical sums²⁷.

Certainly the idealised world of sports role models has its grey aspects. Another side of the coin of the positive role model depicts all the negatives of sports, mainly deriving from the use of anabolic steroids and improper social behaviour. The dominant issue of anabolic steroids on the one hand highlights the crucial issue of the health and life of athletes who resort to doping to achieve success and, on the other hand, the moral and ethical question of use of unfair means to gain victory. The instances of leading athletes like Ben Johnson in Seoul in 1988; Marion Jones in Sydney in 2000; Kostas Kenteris and Katerina Thanou in 2004; Irene Kozalenko also in 2004 in Ancient Olympia; but also many many more throughout the history of sports, distort the ideals of Olympism and *good sportsmanship* and are stigmatised as negative role models for sports. Of course the instance of the greatest living cyclist, Lance Armstrong, who won seven Tour de France titles, is also characteristic and overturns sports mores. Armstrong was considered a role model athlete for many years not solely for his exceptional sporting performances, but also for his battle with cancer. The revelation that he used cutting-edge doping in his career turned him from a hero to a fraud who was best forgotten. This turnaround was followed by social ridicule.

-enas-podosfairistis, 1.6.2018, accessed 10.6. 2018.

26. See, "Giannis Antetokounmpo, a miracle of nature (Giannis Antetokounmpo ena thavma tis fysis), <https://tvxs.gr/news/athlitika/giannis-antetokounmpo-ena-thavma-tis-fysis>, 18.1.2017, accessed 20.4.2018. His body creates yet another role model with references to the Renaissance, as he is photographed over the renowned Leonardo da Vinci drawing of the "Vitruvius Man", which was drawn in 1490 on one of his diaries. It depicts a nude male form with two overlapping positions for the arms and legs outstretched and at the same time inscribed in a circle and a square. The drawing and text are frequently referred to as the Rule of Proportions, in http://www.asda.gr/lyk11per/Computer_Lab/davinci/davinci.htm, accessed on 22.4.2018.

27. According to Forbes Magazine, Antetokounmpo is one of the 10 highest-paid NBA players.

In the sphere of anti-role-models, at the same time as Armstrong another athlete, South African Paralympian Oscar Pistorius, known the world over as the fastest man without legs, killed his companion in 2013, which caused shock-waves in the international community and in a single night changed him from a hero to a murderer. His idealisation by the media throughout his sporting career changed into a crucifixion of an idol under the gaze of a shocked public opinion, which believed, as in the case of Armstrong, in a human myth, created not only through the athletic performances but by the media star system.

In concluding this dissection of the dark and labyrinthine conflict between sporting role models and society by debunking their myth, we prove that everyone in life can be a form of hero in a novel, perhaps because fiction shows we all have a dark side, which we may not yet be aware of. Dear friends, for active athletes the future, even if it is bright, remains uncertain and it requires great devotion on a personal, sporting and social level to be protected and to manage to maintain integrity and a beneficial profile both for themselves and for society, which easily embraces and sanctifies role models, but equally finds it hard to forgive them and comprehend their fall.

Of course, as to the eternal question, whether professional athletes should be social role models or not, it appears that, even if they do not choose to be, the attention and admiration of the public endows them with the obligations of a role model²⁸. Unfortunately that admiration hides the studied naïveté or inability of the public to comprehend, that the sporting ideal which at one time was embraced by lovers of innocent amateurism, has been replaced by professional athletes, “who are worshipped as magicians and rewarded like kings”²⁹ in a tough competitive environment. In order to comprehend this, I believe that we need to re-signify the concept of a sporting role model, as the quintessence of sport and Olympism in line with the transformations that have taken place throughout the twentieth century and in the beginning of the 21st. If we do not, what will remain is the modern utopia of a corrupt idealism.

28. Francisco Javier Lopez Frias, “Theories on sporting role models...”, *op. cit.*

29. Tsoukalas Konstantinos: “The side-effects of championship-level sport”, *To Vima* Newspaper 27.8.2000.

AGON AS AN IDEAL: THE DEFEAT IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

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Two Moral Lessons

I begin with a fact of athletic life: If you engage in competitive sport for any length of time, at some point you are going to lose. Even if you have an exceptionally successful career, you must learn how to respond to defeat because that is part of the package. You will almost certainly deal with some initial frustrations and then some later failures as your skills and physical abilities begin to diminish, as inevitably they will. On the other hand, I do not make a correlative suggestion that competitors can also expect to win. It would be nice if we could promise some balance of outcomes, as if to say: “You will win some, and you will lose some”. But there is no guarantee of that because athletics is not a matter of chance. To put the point bluntly: we can imagine an athlete who never wins in the course of a career, but we cannot imagine an athlete who never loses.

This seems to be a rather grim start. If nothing else, however, it underscores the importance of learning how to lose. But what precisely does that mean? I want to distinguish two responses to defeat. The first I call the *sportsmanship* response and the second I call the *competitive* response to defeat. (I use the term “sportsmanship” because it is simple and familiar, but of course it includes the responses of both sportsmen and sportswomen.)

1. The sportsmanship response is one of acceptance, respect, and grace. Because defeat is a real possibility in any genuine competition, and a virtual certainty over the course of a career, I must embrace these values.

In both victory and defeat I show respect for the social practice that allows me to engage in this activity. The social practice is larger than the individuals within it, and therefore is properly an object of our respect. Respect for the sport includes respect for opponents, officials, the rules of the contest, and, especially, oneself as a participant in the engagement. Ultimately, everyone who participates in sport is responsible for maintaining this attitude of respect, for we are always both participants and stewards of this social practice. An attitude of stewardship is especially appropriate for experienced participants, perhaps as a manifestation of the gratitude they feel for the social practice that they have enjoyed.

Some writers argue that sportsmanship requires a proper perspective on sport; that is, one should not get too high when one wins, or too low when one loses. There is some wisdom in this advice, if only as a matter of sustained participation. However important sport is –and I think it is profoundly important in its proper domain– it is still different from, and in a sense less necessary than, the real issues of life.

But sportsmanship does not require us to lower the stakes of competition; it does not require us to diminish the importance of sport or even the importance of victory in sport. Within the event, I think it really does matter if we win or lose. But how do we keep a perspective that allows us to accept defeat with grace? To this question, Scott Kretchmar (2012, 110) has offered an understanding of competition that encourages us to see each particular event or competition as part of a narrative within the social practice. Each event possesses integrity and importance, but no matter what the result of today's contest is, we live to play again. Competitors pick themselves up, take away what lessons they can from this encounter, and get ready for the next contest, which is almost always waiting. Both the winner and the loser have something new to prove in it. What is admirable about Kretchmar's understanding is that it maintains perspective and encourages sportsmanship but it does not diminish the importance of the activity.

2. What I am calling the competitive response is, in one sense, opposite to the sportsmanship response. Whereas I have emphasized acceptance and humility as a mark of sportsmanship, the competitive response does not so easily accept defeat, and rightly so. In fact, one of the most

important lessons I learn from defeat is that I don't like to lose, and I will do everything in my power to avoid losing again.

Part of my competitive response is strategic: What can I do better? What shots or techniques could I include in my game that would improve performance? What can I do to train harder or more effectively? Strategically, I need to think about what new tools I could include in my repertoire to counter my competitor's efforts. For example, if I am tennis player with a weak second serve, I should go back and work on it – not merely to improve it, but make to make it a positive strength of my game. Part of my competitive response is self-examination: Did I lose concentration under pressure, perhaps because of lazy training habits? Did I lose my confidence in a big moment? Did I push myself as hard as could have when fatigue set in? Have I truly given myself to this pursuit, body and soul?

The relationship of sportsmanship and competition

Now that I have distinguished two responses to the experience of defeat, I want to discuss them together. Specifically, I want to address two possible misunderstandings about the relationship between sportsmanship and competition.

1. First, it is tempting to consider the sportsmanship response to be the specifically moral response, and the competitive response to be something else, such as a matter of self-interest. Such a distinction, however, profoundly misunderstands the moral significance of athletic competition. In fact, sportsmanship and competitiveness are both moral principles. Of course it is essential to exhibit good sportsmanship regardless of the outcome, but if the morality of sport consisted simply in rule compliance and good comportment, it would set the bar much too low.

In fact, one could argue that the more characteristic and challenging virtue in competitive sport is this drive to excel. When I go to the ball field, or the track, or the court I don't go primarily to exhibit good sportsmanship, however essential that is. I go to challenge myself to be the best that I can be in this special place that sport carves out for us, a commitment that requires courage, intelligence, perseverance, and humility. I admit that the best I can be might still not be good enough to win, but generally speaking, my competitive success gives some rough measurement of this



Attending the lectures.

effort. If we fail to appreciate the achievement of the athlete who refuses to accept anything less than his or her very best effort, we fail to appreciate the special goodness of athletic competition.

My argument here draws from the moral theory known as perfectionism, which is an implication of the Aristotelian doctrine of virtue. Aristotle teaches that the fundamental principle of moral life is excellence or *eudaimonia*, which means we make every choice and every effort in order to achieve our perfection or fulfillment. This is our principle moral responsibility, that from which all other values flow. It follows that it is blameworthy to waste our potential and opportunities, a lesson that translates well to athletic education.

2. A second mistake would be to think the sportsmanship and the competitive responses are somehow in tension with each other, as if more competitiveness implies less sportsmanship. I have made some suggestions that might encourage this misunderstanding, such as my claim that the sportsmanship response and the competitive response are in a sense opposite to one another. But although they can be described as



The lecturers answered to the participants' questions within the framework of a panel discussion.

opposed in some sense –one is characterized by acceptance, and the other characterized by non-acceptance– they are not in conflict, that is to say, their relationship is not zero-sum. On the contrary, one should be perfectly sportsmanlike and intensely competitive, simultaneously, and all the time.

Again, I am reminded of a lesson from Aristotle's doctrine of virtue. As everyone knows, Aristotle teaches that virtue is a golden mean situated between two vices. Courage, for example, is the virtuous habit with respect to the emotion of fear, situated between the vices of cowardice on the one hand and that of recklessness on the other. It is important to understand precisely what is being said here: While it is possible to have too much or too little or just the right amount of the emotion in question, it is not possible to have too much or too little of the virtue. Recklessness, for example, is not too much courage; it is not courage at all. There is, by definition, no such things as too much courage. Similarly, there is no such thing as too much sportsmanship or too much competitiveness, because they are also virtues.

Given that sportsmanship and competitiveness function as Aristotelian virtues, how should we understand their cooperation in athletic life? I suggest that they are complementary expressions of a more fundamental ideal that grounds these values in the athletic arena. This is the ideal of agon.

Agon as ideal

We can conceptualize agon as a paradox: On the one hand, competition naturally seeks to resolve itself; participants enter into this struggle endeavoring to establish their superiority in the contest, and they do everything possible to end the struggle efficiently, decisively, and even mercilessly. But on the other hand, once the struggle is resolved, both the winner and the loser experience some sense of disappointment, particularly if the victory has been achieved too easily or decisively.

This structures the paradox: As a competitor I try to do everything I can to overcome my opponent and to win as decisively as I can, yet on some level I want my opponent to respond successfully to my efforts, at least to some degree. I want my opponent to be excellent so that I can have the satisfaction of a meaningful victory. And of course I am at the same time providing the same challenge to my opponent. Together we decide to engage in this struggle to give ourselves this experience. Athletic competitors are simultaneously both antagonists and collaborators in this struggle, because they make possible a form of life and a human good not otherwise available. This is what Robert L. Simon meant when he defined competition as a “mutual quest for excellence” (2010, 24).

The struggle, therefore, has inherent value. I can enjoy many good things in life without struggle, at least to some degree, but I certainly cannot know the pleasure of victory in any meaningful sense without struggle – in fact, the more difficult the struggle, the more rewarding the victory. It is precisely because my opponent is trying, with every ounce of energy he can summon, to make me a loser that he affords me the opportunity to become a winner. No one else can do that for me – not my coach, not my friends and family, and not my supporters, precisely because they all want me to win. The relationship between competitors represents a special kind of bond – even a kind of love.

Defeat is thus a real possibility in every genuine struggle. Let us ask this

question: What would athletics be like if one never risked losing? Such a prospect might sound like a dream come true, but the reality would be much closer to a nightmare. We can imagine something like an athletic version of the King Midas story in which an athlete is granted special power to guarantee victory in every event. Although it has initial appeal, I believe this version would quickly reveal itself as similarly tragic and self-defeating. The true competitor would quickly regret the decision immediately and would wish to return to an athletic world where all is not gold.

In conclusion, I want to tie together the two parts of this discussion. In the first part, I distinguished the sportsmanship response, which was one of acceptance, and the competitive response, which was a response of non-acceptance. It should be obvious that is a paradox to recommend that one should simultaneously accept and not accept defeat. This is directly related to the paradox of agon, which I outlined in the second part. Competitive athletes simultaneously seek victory and the struggle that makes that victory difficult to achieve. A true competitor seeks out a challenge that presents the real possibility of defeat; he or she embraces that experience as an indispensable part of the enterprise.

These paradoxes are rooted in the ideal of agon, which grounds an athletic engagement. Agon is therefore logically prior to and more basic than the specific values of victory and defeat, which are unquestionably important in themselves. But it is the struggle itself—the effort the athlete makes, the cooperative endeavor with opponents dedicated to the same ideals, and the love of the engagement for its own sake—that gives the enterprise its ultimate intelligibility and value. We properly understand the meaning and the educational significance of victory and defeat only in this context.

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THE VISION OF THE OLYMPIC ATHLETE AS A ROLE MODEL AND THE ATHLETES' COMMISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

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Introduction

Athletes' associations are not an invention of modern sport, which started to coin its professional structure with the impact of industrialisation in England during the 19th century. Information exists outlining that as early as the 4th century BC associations of athletes on a local level had been established. By the middle of the 1st century BC, further developments saw athletes begin to organise their representations in professional associations in the ecumene. To gain membership to such an athlete association, one had to demonstrate both excellent athletic ability and of equal importance good character traits. A large amount of our understandings of these initial associations come from the inscriptions found within Ancient Olympia. Therein, of greatest significance was the excavation of the building that housed the associations located outside of the *altis* south of the *leonidaion*¹.

The nationwide operating athletes' associations were organised professionally with three high priests acting as what we would refer to today as presidents. The priests were supported by an official representative of the respective sport festival (*Xystarch*), two assessors (*archons*), a treasurer and the general secretary of the respective local athletes' association. All officials had to be former outstanding

1. Sinn, U.: *Das Antike Olympia. Götter, Spiel und Kunst*, München 2004, 130-131; 241.

athletes, which was above all true for the three high priests who were often *periodonikes*. The main responsibility of the athletes' association was to provide victorious competitors with official documents on their victories at the Panhellenic Festivals and local festivals. The athletes could use these documents, which had to be signed by all board members of the athletes' association, to request money and social privileges for their victorious athletic achievements from their hometowns².

In consideration of the Session's topic and its specific target group – namely Olympic athletes – the focus of this article will now shift from ancient to modern times, or to be more concrete from the ancient athletes' association to the Athletes' Commission (AC) of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). The first time that this commission, its foundation, profile and objectives was addressed here at the International Olympic Academy (IOA) was in 1982. This address came in the form of a speech delivered by today's IOC-President Thomas Bach on the IOC's AC³, which had only been founded at the meeting of the IOC's Executive Board in Sarajevo in December 1981⁴. Since Bach's speech in 1982, the IOC's AC has been a frequent topic of numerous speeches held by officials, lecturers and participants of the different sessions. Upholding this tradition – and guided by the overall topic of the session, this article sets out to analyse how the IOC's AC has made and continues to make a contribution to further developing the vision of the Olympic athlete as a role model.

Foundation and Key Institutional Turning Points of the IOC's Athletes' Commission: A Brief Overview⁵

In 1973, the previous tradition of organising Olympic Congresses was revived in Varna, Bulgaria. Under the motto *Sport for a world of peace*, the Xth Olympic

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2. Decker, W.: *Sport am Nil. Texte aus drei Jahrtausenden ägyptische Geschichte*, Göttingen 2012, 146.
 3. Bach, Th.: "The participation of athletes in the XIth Olympic Congress". In: International Olympic Academy (Ed.): *Report of the 22nd Session, 11–25 July 1982*, Lausanne 1985, 184-189.
 4. Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 2-4 December 1981, 1981, 45-46. Archive of the IOC's OSC.
 5. Relevant information in this chapter are based on a research article which Stephan Wassong has published for the special issue *Sport Development and Olympic Studies* of *The International Journal of the History of Sport* in 2018.



Posing questions and expressing views in the amphitheatre.



Congress brought to an end a 43-year abstinence, whereby the last congress had been held in Berlin in 1930. Although before Berlin, Olympic Congresses had only been organised on an irregular basis: 1894 in Paris (known as the founding Congress of the Olympic Games), 1897 in Le Havre, 1905 in Brussels, 1906 in Paris, 1913 in Lausanne, 1914 in Paris, 1921 in Lausanne and 1925 in Paris. The decision to both revive and re-invent the Olympic Congress, however, had already been made in 1968 at the IOC Session in Mexico City. The main objective of this re-invention was that of utilising the Olympic Congress as a communication platform to strengthen communication processes between the IOC, National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and International Federations (IFs)⁶.

The Olympic Congress in Varna constitutes a significant milestone in the organisational role of Olympic athletes due to that this was the first time athletes were invited to participate. The initiative came from the IOC's Tripartite Commission (TC), which at the time was comprised of three IOC Vice Presidents, three members each from NOCs and IFs, and the Bulgarian Organising Committee for the Olympic Congress⁷. In total, eleven athletes were invited; with the exception of two, all of the athlete participants were gold medallists at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. Welcomed by the then IOC President Lord Killanin in Varna, this list of athlete invitees included: U. Meyfarth (FRG, gold medallist high jump)⁸, A. Medved (USSR, gold medallist wrestling super heavyweight)⁹, R. Kárpáti (HUN, six times Olympic Gold medallist in fencing at the 1948 London, 1952 Helsinki and 1960 Rome Olympic Games)¹⁰, L. Viren (Finland, gold medallist long distance run 5000 metres)¹¹, S. L. Neilson (USA, gold medallist 100 metres free style, 4x100metres relay freestyle and 4x100 metres, combined)¹², T. Stevenson (CUB, gold medallist boxing super heavyweight)¹³,

6. Müller, N.: *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses 1894-1994*, Lausanne 1994, 139-150.

7. Minutes of the IOC's Tripartite Commission for the preparation of the Olympic Congress, 28th August, Munich 1972, Annex 3, 11. Archive of the IOC's OSC.

8. Kluge, V.: *Olympische Sommerspiele. Die Chronik III. Mexiko-Stadt 1968-Los Angeles 1984*. Berlin 2000, 254.

9. Kluge: *Olympische Sommerspiele. Die Chronik III*, 272.

10. Kluge, V.: *Olympische Sommerspiele. Die Chronik II. London 1948-Tokyo 1964*. Berlin 1998, 71, 218, 539.

11. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 237, 239.

12. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 324, 331, 332, 417.

13. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 278, 401.

S. Maury (France, gold medallist sailing finn-dinghy), J. Zapędzki (Poland, gold medallist Olympic pistol)¹⁴, W. Nordwig (GDR, gold medallist pole vaulting)¹⁵, M. E. Peters (Great Britain, gold medallist modern pentathlon)¹⁶, and D. Wolde (ETH, bronze medallist marathon)¹⁷.

It should be noted that while inviting athletes to Varna could be regarded as a revolutionary step at the time, they were only given the status of observer. Hence, they were not permitted the right to deliver a speech or contribute to the discussions on the future profile of the Olympic Movement. Only a few delegates criticised the imposed passivity on the athletes, however. Next to R. Pound, the then Secretary General of the Canadian Olympic Association, who claimed that ignoring the perspectives of athletes would bypass authentic reform processes of the Olympic Movement¹⁸, it was above all R. Mollet, President of the Belgian Olympic Committee, who stressed the importance of increasing the athletes' representation within the IOC:

It [the Belgium Olympic Committee] recommends that the IOC study the creation of an "Athletes Committee" having a consultative role. This committee among other things would be responsible for an enquiry immediately after the Olympic Games on the reactions of their colleagues¹⁹.

Killanin reacted to Mollet's proposal here in a diplomatic but passive way through the concluding remarks of his speech held at the end of the congress. According to the IOC President, the responsibility should rest on the NOCs and IFs to strengthen dialogue with athletes. An athlete's representation within the IOC or the establishment of a commission at least was probably regarded as a too challenging reform step at the time, especially taking into account that a comparable body did not exist elsewhere and that they had no prior experience in working with athletes in such a capacity.

The IOC decided to change this passive policy for the XIth Olympic Con-

14. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 293, 405.

15. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 244, 383.

16. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 257, 221.

17. Kluge: *Sommerspiele. Chronik III*, 239, 380.

18. IOC: *10th Olympic Congress. The Olympic Movement and its Future. Sport for a World of Peace*. Varna 1973, 91-2.

19. IOC: *10th Olympic Congress*, 125.

gress held in Baden-Baden, Germany in 1981. Under the title of *United by and for Sport* and with the strong support of J.A. Samaranch, who was elected IOC President in June 1980, a total of 30 athletes were invited to the congress. Unlike in Varna however, the selection of athlete participants was not made solely by the IOC but was the result of a collaboration with its Tripartite Commission. The main selection criteria therewith included, amongst others, an age range of the athletes between 18 and 30, a reasonable balance of female and male athletes and an athletes' representation of almost all Olympic Sports²⁰.

Like at the Congress in Varna in 1973, the invited athletes held the status of observers. But unlike in Varna, six athletes were awarded the right to speak at the Congress in Baden-Baden. An interesting point in this regard, which should be stressed, was that of the process of selecting the athlete speakers. Therewith, the invited athletes were asked to nominate who should be awarded the right to speak amongst themselves. Returning to Bach's address at the IOA in 1982, he gave specific reference to this process, signifying its importance to the development of the AC. In addition to this, Bach also listed the selected athletes and their contributions to the different congress topics: I. Formar (NOR, C), S. Otzetiva (BUL) and Th. Bach (FRG) addressed the topic "The future of the Olympic Games". K. Keino (Kenya) and V. Tretyak (USSR) represented the athletes in the session on "The Olympic Movement in prospect". Lastly, S. Coe (GB) was selected as speaker for the concluding statement of the athletes delivered at the end of the congress²¹. With reference to the idea to implement an Athletes' Commission, Coe said the following:

... we strongly suggest that this group of athletes be regarded as the consulting body to help us attain the way in which athletes can participate in the decision-making processes of our movement. To accomplish this we ask for your support in organizing a group meeting next year so that we may continue our work²².

Voicing the athlete group's wishes, Coe's words clearly resonated with

20. IOC: *11th Olympic Congress in Baden-Baden 1981*, Vol. 1. Lausanne 1982, 20-21.

21. Bach, Th.: "The participation of athletes in the XIth Olympic Congress". In: International Olympic Academy (Ed.): *Report of the 22nd Session, 11-25 July 1982*. Lausanne 1985, 185. Please refer to appendix 1 for more information on the athletes. For more information on the chosen athletes refer to appendix 1 please.

22. IOC: *11th Olympic Congress in Baden-Baden 1981*, Vol. 3, Lausanne 1982, 103.

Samaranch, who expressed his desire to aid the athletes' venture. Explicitly, he gave the assurance that the IOC felt responsible for supporting athletes to "organise themselves, in the group formed, to follow the discussions begun here in Baden-Baden between themselves and the Olympic World"²³.

Preparations for establishing the AC commenced directly after Baden-Baden and it was not long before they came to fruition. Specifically, it was at the meeting of the Executive Board in Sarajevo in 1981 that the AC was officially created. The first members of the IOC's Athletes' Commission were Bach, Coe, Formo, Kipchoge, Otzetova, Tretyak and IOC member P. Tallberg as chair²⁴.

Although Samaranch had adopted a much more proactive stance than Killanin, he was no less cautious. He pledged support for establishing an AC within the IOC on the basis of his combined confidence in the athletes and that of the IOC retaining institutional control over their future actions: the representation of athletes in the IOC was guided by the president and hence less tangible in its sphere of influence. Like with all the other IOC Commissions such as, amongst others, the Medical, Finance, Eligibility or Olympic Solidarity Commission, the members of the AC were appointed by the IOC President and only permitted a consultative role²⁵. With the exception of the chair, who was appointed by the IOC President, none of the AC became a member of the IOC.

The next significant milestone within the development of IOC's AC could be attributed to the creation of the IOC's 2000 Reform Commission. Herewith, specific mention must be given to the changes that occurred concerning the decision-making process on the composition of the AC as a result of the commission's work and recommendations. Athletes are now given the opportunity to elect among themselves twelve representatives for the AC, three up to eleven athletes are appointed by the IOC President and fifteen out of the maximum of twenty-three members are appointed IOC members; among them, twelve of the elected athletes and three of the appointed athletes. The chair of the AC

23. IOC: *11th Olympic Congress in Baden-Baden 1981, Vol. 3*, Lausanne 1982, 107.

24. Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 2-4 December 1981, 45-46. Archive of the IOC's OSC. See also appendix 1.

25. The impact of this consultative role is an interesting field of research by which results the profile of the AC can be stressed.



Professor Konstantinos Georgiadis coordinated the works of the Session in the amphitheatre.

comes from the ranks of the commission members but is appointed by the IOC President; he or she is member of the IOC Executive Board²⁶.

Since its implementation in 1981, the AC has dealt with a large breadth of different tasks. As superordinate activity fields, one can name the following two:

1. Strengthening and expanding the intra- and interinstitutional representation of athletes.
2. Supporting athletes in both their athletic and professional careers.

In both fields, the AC addressed the leitmotif of the Olympic athlete as a role model either explicitly or implicitly. Of course, this would have been appreciated by Pierre de Coubertin, who held the belief that Olympic athletes should serve as role models to stimulate the masses to engage in sport during leisure

26. Koss, J., Peel, A. and Orlando, A.: "Athletes' Rights and Olympic Reform: A Discussion with Johann Koss, Ann Peel and Alexandra Orlando." In: Dichter, H. and Kidd, B. (Eds): *Olympic Reform Ten Years Later*. London and New York 2012, 21-30.

time²⁷. But now, the question arises as to how the AC has been trying over the decades of its existence to protect Coubertin's vision of the Olympic athlete as a role model in a modern and continuously changing world of sport. This will be explained with two examples in the following chapters.

Questioning the Amateur Athlete as a Role Model

Until the 1980s, the eligibility of athletes to compete at the Olympic Games was based on the codex of amateurism²⁸. Only athletes who were free from any commercial influence and did not depend on a medal to earn their daily living were seen as fair and integer athletes. They were regarded as the role models representing the values of fair play, honesty, respect and loyalty. The professional was said to not meet these honorable expectations, as professional sport was thought of as tainted by corruption and exaggeration in order to secure winning – even at all costs. This assumption was clearly coined by Coubertin and safeguarded by his successors until Samaranch assumed the presidency of the IOC in 1980. For IOC President Brundage, who served in this office from 1952 till 1972, the death knell would ring for the Olympic Movement if the doors were open to commercialisation, respectively professionalism. Already in 1984, Coubertin disapproved of professionalism by stating the following:

“Sporting can only produce good moral effects, can, indeed, maintain its existence, only as it is founded upon disinterestedness, loyalty, and chivalric sentiment”²⁹.

The sticking to old-fashioned amateur rules by the IOC was, however, completely out of touch with the reality of the changing times. The world of modern sport with both growing commercial and political influences required a revised understanding of the situation of the athletes as, in some respects, it was near

27. Wassong, St.: “Demands on athletes to display excellence”. In: International Olympic Academy (Ed.): *Olympic Values: The Value of Excellence as an Educational Tool. 13th International Session for Directors of National Olympic Academies*, Athens 2016, 41-50.

28. Llewellyn, M. P. & Gleaves, J.: *The Rise and Fall of Olympic Amateurism*. Urbana 2016.

29. Coubertin, P. de: “The Re-Establishment of the Olympic Games.” In: *The Chautauquan XIX (1894)*, September, 699.

impossible for them to combine practicing top level sport with educational or professional training. But, as the IOC did not respond to this, the consequence was that of the development of a disguised professionalism. To be eligible for participating at the Olympic Games, professional athletes were camouflaged as college- or, respectively, state-amateurs. Hidden “under-the-table-payments” made to athletes became an open secret. E. Glader comments on this situation, which had rapidly developed since the 1960s, with the following statement:

“Many felt that the rules were so rigid, restrictive and aristocratic that there were in actuality very few, if any, amateurs participating in the Olympic Games during that period”³⁰.

The amateur athlete, who was to have been a role model for honorable athletic excellence, was tempted to become a cheat by outdated amateur rules. Actually, it was the professional athlete who was the integer person but he or she was excluded from the Olympic Games due to the amateur codex³¹.

At the XIth Olympic Congress in Baden-Baden, the issue of amateurism was addressed. Among the athletes who were given the right to speak, it was above all Bach and Coe who spoke in favour of a pragmatic liberalisation of the eligibility rules³². This position was also stressed during the foundation of the IOC's AC. This reason for this was because its members perceived the issue as particularly relevant and thought it necessary to recommend to the IOC's Executive Board an eligibility code which corresponded with the athletes' situation in a continuously changing world of sport³³. Eventually, this resulted in the almost complete opening of the Olympic Games for professionals. Starting with the 1984 Winter and Summer Olympic Games in Sarajevo, respectively Los Angeles, eligibility policies were more and more liberalised and finally

30. Glader, E.: *Amateurism and Athletics*. West Point, N.Y. 1978, 158.

31. Bertling, Ch. & Wassong, St.: “Striving for Athletic Excellence: A Core Value and Challenge for the Profile of the Ancient and Modern Games”. In: *The International Journal of the History of Sport*33(2016)4, 434-450.

32. Müller, N.: *One Hundred Years of Olympic Congresses 1894-1994*. Niedernhausen 1994, 170-171.

33. Palacios, P., Mont-Roig, E. & Surroca, J.M.: *President Samaranch. 21 Years in the Presidency of the IOC that changed Sport throughout the World*. China 2016, 133-134.

abandoned altogether. The Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 were the first “open” Games in Olympic History³⁴.

The discussions and recommendations of the IOC’ AC contributed much to the development of the modern interpretation of the vision of the Olympic athlete as a role model. Now, the professional who did not resort to a tricky camouflage to participate at the Olympic Games was the honest and fair athlete and hence accepted when taking over the responsibility as a role model. This profile of the athlete has enjoyed a further expansion since 2000, for which the IOC’s AC was once again instrumental. Looking to the future, the concept of an athlete pertaining a dual career appears to be the desire of the Olympic Movement for coining the image of an athlete role model.

Initiatives of the IOC’s AC to Promote the Dual Career Concept

It has to be admitted that dual career programmes in sport do not constitute an original idea of the IOC. Many National Governing Bodies of Sport such as the United States Olympic Committee or the German Olympic Sport Association had implemented athlete career programmes prior to the initiatives of the IOC³⁵. However, as the world governing body of sport, the IOC wished to expand this concept and felt that it had a responsibility to introduce an international educational programme accessible to all athletes.

The basic idea of the IOC’s educational concept is to pave the way for athletes to start or prepare for a career after sport. By this, the athlete should be protected from following a unilateral focus on athletic success. Such initiative should be perceived as important as one has to reflect critically on the alternatives if athletic success is short, which can easily happen due to various reasons, including injuries, psychological blockades or even as a consequence of unexpected situations in competition. In addition to this, the pursuit of a dual career is essential for the majority of the athletes to survive financially after top level sport.

In view of the above, the position of the IOC is that the athlete who manages a smooth transition from athletic to post athletic life has to be valued as a role model. Without doubt, it is no small feat for an athlete to have successfully combined intensive training and packed competition calendars with educa-

34. Bertling & Wassong: “Striving for Athletic Excellence”, 434-450.

35. Stambulova, N. B. & Ryba, T. V. (Eds.): *Athletes’ Careers Across Cultures*. London 2013.

tional/vocational training. This has not gone unnoticed by the IOC, respectively its AC, whereby evidence for such includes the numerous initiatives started by the AC or strongly supported by it. Throughout all of these activities, the importance of starting and following a dual career has been greatly emphasised. One can refer, amongst others, to the various editions of the International Athletes' Forums³⁶ or to the Athlete Role Model Programme in particular³⁷. Both of these initiatives are useful dialogue platforms at which the concept of a dual career with both its objectives and challenges are discussed. Practical support is provided to athletes through the Athletes' Career Programme (ACP), which was launched in 2005 and continued to develop its global reputation ever since³⁸.

It is vital that members of the IOC'S AC promote these initiatives and contribute to their further development. This is particularly true for the ACP, which is carried out in collaboration with the Adecco Group. The IOC's AC does not have the capacity to run this programme but its members can give valuable input to develop it in the most desirable way. One way in which they can make a valuable contribution in this respect is to provide evidenced based knowledge from their own experiences as athletes. This is an example of implementing practical based knowledge to influence governance, which oftentimes is more valuable than that of placing a too greater emphasis on theoretical models and proposals. Of course, one can and should find value in theoretical strategizing but only in combination with the lived experiences of athletes – mostly represented by the members of the AC.

Conclusion

The concept of the Olympic athlete as a role model is a traditional element of what has become popular as Olympism. De Coubertin's philosophy and its pro-

36. <https://www.olympic.org/news/athletes-break-new-ground-at-ioc-international-athletes-forum>, accessed 11 May 2018.

37. <https://www.olympic.org/news/role-models-whose-commitment-goes-beyond-their-careers>, accessed 11 May 2018.

38. https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/What-We-Do/Protecting-Clean-Athletes/Athletes-Space/Athlete-Career-Programme/EN-ACP-IOC-Athlete-Career-Programme-ACP.pdf#_ga=2.40534946.1429505279.1526029654-1925155058.1524209209; accessed 11 May 2018.

file has changed and adapted to the continuously changing world of sport. This capability of Olympism to transform is essential as only by this can the concept be perceived as effective and not merely political window-dressing in public. Since its implementation, the IOC's AC has been instrumental in modernizing the concept of the Olympic athlete as a role model.

In conclusion, one can say that the IOC's AC is an interesting field of research, which warrants further attention. To date, there is sparse research on the activities carried out by the AC prior to 2000. Undertaking an in-depth examination of this research period, which encompasses the years from 1981 to 2000, could prove to be of great significance to our understandings of governance and the role of athletes. The author believes that such enquiry could prove to be very insightful as we continue to learn more about the status of the AC and its impact on decision-making processes in the IOC.

Appendix 1: Founding members of the IOC's Athletes Commission (1981)

Name	Sport	City	Medal	Event
S. Coe (Great Britain)	Athletics	1980 Moscow 1980 Moscow 1984 Los Angeles 1984 Los Angeles	silver gold silver gold	800m 1500m 800m 1500m
K. Keino (Kenya)	Athletics	1968 Mexico 1968 Mexico 1972 Munich 1972 Munich	gold silver gold silver	1500m 5000m 3000 steeplechase 1500 m
S. Otzetova (Bulgaria)	Rowing	1976 Montreal	gold	women's double sculls
Th. Bach (Federal Republic of Germany)	Fencing	1976 Montreal	gold	men's foil, team
V. Tretyak (USSR)	Ice Hockey	1972 Sapporo 1976 Innsbruck 1980 Lake Placid 1984 Sarajevo	gold gold silver gold	men's ice hockey
I. Formo (Norway)	Ski	1972 Sapporo 1972 Sapporo 1976 Innsbruck 1976 Innsbruck	bronze silver gold silver	men's 15km men's 4 x 10km relay men's 50km men's 4 x 10km relay

THE MYTHIC RELATION BETWEEN THE ATHLETE AND THE HERO: THE CONTEMPORARY SPORT IMAGINARY

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Transformed into spectacle since the second half of the 20th century due to the multiplication of media, the organisation of sport has lived deep transformations with the passage from an amateur to a professional system, which imposed to its very protagonists, the athletes, a role changeover, thus reinforcing a mythic heroic condition. The role that these athletes perform as representatives of a community, frequently transposing obstacles that seem insurmountable to the other members of their social group, supports the construction of the heroic condition and the expectation of rare accomplishments (Rubio, 2001).

Among the various phenomena that modern society has been producing for the emergence of heroic attitudes, sport has occupied one of the most outstanding places. The athlete evokes an inevitable association with the myth of the hero because it is used as a projection reference of someone who has faced the hardest trials and the worst enemies, and therefore carries the mark of victory. However, even though his deeds are splendid and earn a secular record, the quest pursued by him has a high cost.

Hero is the name given by Homer to those men who have courage and superior merits, the favorites among the gods; to Hesiod, they are the sons who arise from the union between a god and a woman or a goddess and a man. To Vernant (1983), heroes are the warriors who fight and die in war, they comprise a race that is regarded as fairer and, at the same time,

with more military value. The warrior, who is by his own nature turned to *hybris*, is opposed by the fair warrior who, recognising his limits, accepts to be submitted to the superior order of the *dike*¹. The hero, who is frequently honored by his community for his accomplishments, is remembered through oral tradition, and is represented based on a moral or physical point of view, depending on the objective of this representation. A hero is, according to Campbell (1990), someone who finds or accomplishes something exceptional, who surpassed the spheres of his own reality. So, he is preserved, often associated with a feeling of sacredness, opposing to rationality and better expressing himself through affection. The connection with the hero can be established through the relationship of values, in the identification between the inner self and the outside world, which makes the individual, away from the battlefield or the sports environment, feel united to the one whom he admires, thus satisfying the conditional need to avoid isolation and moral loneliness (Fromm, 1977). That is why Alvarenga (2009) states that the hero is defined “by the deed performed. Hero and feat, feat and hero are merged, generating a name of its own. In this name lives his strength and splendor. The hero is a paramount character, who does what only he can do. It is the possibility for the human being to become a unique person, to become an individual, to be translated into singularity.” That way, the hero manifests him or herself as an archetype, or as the man or the woman who managed to overcome his or her historical, personal, and local limitations, and has achieved normally valid forms, human (Campbell, 2008), that is to say, the visions, ideas, inspirations of these people come directly from the primarily sources of life and from the human thought. In other words, this scheme has a psychological meaning both for the individual – in his effort to find and affirm his personality –and for society– in its analogous need to establish a collective identity.

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1. According to Junito Brandão *areté* is the expression of what could be defined as excellence or superiority that are revealed particularly on the battlefield and assemblies, through the art of the word. The *areté*, however, is a bestowal of Zeus: it's diminished, when one falls into slavery, or it's severely punished, when the hero commits a *hybris*, some violence, an excess, exceeding his measure, the metric, desiring to equal himself to the gods. Logical consequence of *arête* is time, the honour that lends itself to the value of the hero, who constitutes the highest compensation of the warrior. It's the *dike*, the justice, that does not allow the growth of the *hybris* or the immoderacy.



Professor Katia Rubio focused on the relation between the athlete and the hero.

In sports practice this representation is amplified, as it enables the representation of the possibility of becoming. Rubio (2001) affirms that athletes who are already well-established had to, inevitably, go down an ordinary path, and accomplished deeds at a certain moment that raised them to a level which differed from that of their peers, becoming a role model for the youngest and an object of admiration for the elders, thus achieving the position of national or international idols.

The spectacularisation and rationalisation of the sports spectacle has led sports and athletes to be seen as just another consumer product. The consequence of this exploitation is the rationalisation of his mythical properties. In the myth, the

hero dedicates himself to helping others, to external causes, to the salvation of humankind. In the rationalised version, he becomes a character who is necessary to the system, and has his feats aimed inwards, denoted in signs manifested signs in a life of pseudo-wealth. And then the Olympic Games arrive, as a moment when they are actually put to the test and “must” show who they are in fact, what in fact they can do, for a collective that knows little about and knows nothing of the immensity of humanity inhabited by that heroic person.

To the contemporary society the mythic reference of the hero has been largely used to justify competitive attitudes. In the specific case of sport, which stands out as one of the cultural manifestations of greater visibility, this reference gains a double strength, since the athlete’s maxim is to win. Protagonist of the sport spectacle, the athlete is a beloved public figure, respected and used as a reference for the individual, for having faced the hardest trials and the toughest opponents, sometimes winning, sometimes losing, but always fighting until all his resources are depleted. However, even though these achievements are great and gain a secular record, the quest for an ideal comes at a high cost for those who venture this endeavour.

Myth and History, as myth and sport, are intertwined since the earliest beginnings, but the relationship between both remained inseparable, even throughout the transformations that humanity has undergone over the past four thousand years. One of the key elements for the identification of the athlete with the hero myth can be credited to the capacity and disposition to face danger and the unknown, to the fearlessness in combat and the incessant quest for the goals proposed to this uncommon being.

The athlete approaches the hero myth by identifying himself as rare, one in thousands, by rejoicing in prestige and social projection, as the portion of the population who practice sports and is able to reach such levels of performance and exposure that would justify this idol condition is very minimum. This extraordinary condition, that inevitably involves the overcoming of limits, turns the athlete into an aim for identification, getting him to be adored by his crowd, and respected and feared by his opponents. In the same way that the image of the hero evolves to reflect the diverse stages of the development of human personality, sports were also transformed throughout human history. If considered this way, the hero-athlete from the Ancient Age still influences the construction of the athlete's heroic condition in the Olympic Games of the Modern Age, in spite of the transformations that occur in the duties and role performed by this character in social life (Rubio, 2017).

Acknowledged as those who stand out amongst the strongest, fastest and most skillful, who are able to overcome every obstacle to be victorious, ultimately prototypes of almost perfect creatures, athletes who attain the highest place on the podium usually live under solitary, tough and monotonous conditions in their own point of view, but are deemed by the general public to have a life full of privileges and perks. An athlete's career isn't only the result of individual talents and willingness, of the affirmation of a latent desire or the determination to strive for goals. Countless social and environmental factors can influence this journey that transforms an aspiring sportsman into an athlete. Once the trajectory is initiated, other elements add up to this and allocate the athlete among those who have fame and status and become the present reference of the sport both for those who are aspiring to have a sports career, and the great public, who needs victorious and successful characters in their construction of a sports imaginary and for the endless pursuit of their own objectives.

Subject to an exhausting routine of training and matches, the athlete sees himself surrounded by issues such as the absence of contact with his family,

overexposure in the media, and the impossibility of admitting –to himself and to his audience– his fragilities, distresses, and uncertainties, because even though he is a mythic figure, this contemporary hero does not inhabit the Olympus, nor does he drink ambrosia with the gods; instead, he establishes affective relationships, and struggles with the disorders that surround the life of an athlete who is also a citizen. These situations are experienced and verified during the Olympic Games and during the World championships of the most popular sports in different nations, when sports coverage get a huge space in the media and invades even the lives of those whose are not competition fans (Rubio, 2004). Transposing it to the present date, we have high performance athletes as a kind of hero, for whom sports courts, fields, swimming pools, and running tracks resemble battlefields in the days of major events.

It is in this sense that Hillman (1993) proposes not to look for the gods at the Olympus, or in ancient cults, temples or statues of the past. The author indicates that, at present date, gods are seen in our everyday events, in our private and public disorders.

It's not only the contest that makes the athlete identify himself as a hero. The path to the development of this identity involves steps that are common to the myth, according to Campbell's (1989) proposal for the nuclear unit of the monomyth: there's a call for the sports practice, which in many cases means leaving behind the parents' home and facing a world that is unknown and, at times, filled with dangers. His arrival at the club represents the initiation per se, a trail of tests that require persistence, determination, patience and a little luck. The crowning of this stage is the participation in the national team, whatever the sport, which is a place reserved for the real heroes, where there's the enjoyment of this condition. And, finally, there's the return, often denied, because it takes the hero back to his mortal condition, and in trying to refute this condition magical escapes are attempted (such as the demotivation in coming back to his original club), although, as paradoxical as it may be, it is only at this moment that he finds freedom to live (Rubio, 2001).

For this reason, we believe that the athlete who reaches a professional level has a *daimon*, as affirmed by Hillman (1997); in other words, his life is not disguised as an empiric fact, but it is openly affirmed as a myth. Seen in this respect, the athlete gets close to the paradigm offered by Pearson (1994), in which the identification with the warrior figure has strength as a goal, courage as a task, and fear as a weakness. And it is not surprising, then, that his

life is tragic. Authors such as Russel (1993), Harris (1994), Mangan & Holt (1996) study the athlete's heroic condition in contemporary society and seek to establish a taxonomy to identify the athlete, pointing as constituent elements to this character the ability to win and satisfy the group's needs, extraordinary performances, social acceptance and a spirit of independence. Such interest is due to the importance that sports gained since the end of last century, with social, economic and psychological developments that have a wide reach, having become a key activity in modern societies, with an own set of values to be observed and analysed.

Converted into spectacle by the media with the advent of live transmissions since the Olympic Games of Tokyo, in 1964, the sport delivers like few other phenomena an image of virtuosity, success and accomplishment, ideals pursued by the average population. Andres and Jackson (2001) affirm that sport is lavishly introduced as a metanarrative: media recounts the sports events, turning them into stories with stars, characters, heroes and villains. And in this process of audience construction the national and patriotic questions are strategically placed and are revealed in discursive practices that touch on identity issues of a people or nation. Hence, it is necessary to be attentive to pleas like "we have won or will win", or "our athletes" are competing to win, which are widely used by the broadcast announcers.

The relationship between the athlete and the spectacular figure of the hero occurs since the Ancient times, when competitions were called athletic practices, and not sport. The ability to face danger and the unknown, the fearlessness for combat, and incessant strive for proposed goals resemble the trajectory of the athlete who has lived the competitive experience since the end of the nineteenth century, and also point to one of the defining milestones for the sport, which is its agonistic nature, present in the myth since its creation. The agonistic is like an extension of the heroes' struggles on the battlefields, because in the *ágon* too the contenders make use of instruments, and depending on the feud, they expose themselves to death, although, in theory, agonistic is not aimed at eliminating the opponent.

The athlete experiments all the power in living the hero's archetype, through many situations in which his virtues are put to test, in demonstrations of strength and courage. And it cannot be denied that it is on the top of the podium, at the moment of celebration of an achievement that the rite affirms the myth, and the athlete becomes a hero.

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THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE DISSEMINATION OF MESSAGES

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The Olympic Games are no longer only the biggest mass media global event, they are also the biggest hypermedia event accessible through the Internet, mobile phones and social media. Beyond being an athletic event, they are the biggest global example of inspiration and the confrontation of challenges.

This lecture is intended to present the relationship between the new media and the Olympic Games. It will examine how the rapid development of new means of communication is influencing the Olympic Movement and all bodies involved, as new forms of communication are developed opening new horizons in the dissemination of the Olympic values, new forms of collaboration with sponsors and new upgraded content accessible to all users. However, free and uncontrolled reporting on the Internet is also presenting many challenges, requiring research into how it should be dealt with.

How can the Olympic Movement use new technologies to its advantage, protecting and promoting all it stands for, without affecting the ideals and values of Olympism, and without affecting the balance with the holders of broadcasting rights? What policies must be made in this direction? Is it possible for potential dangers to be recognised and tackled effectively?

The IOC has strict values that it wishes to maintain in all areas of the social media; these forbid abuse and infringements of individual rights, and all partici-

pation must be in accordance with the “spirit of the Olympic Games” (Olympic Charter 2015).

Today, the way we communicate has changed dramatically. We no longer dial a number to communicate with friends, we go on Facebook, Tweeter or Instagram to communicate with our global network. We share, consume and examine news, pictures and thoughts on a 24/7 basis, and for active participation in discussion we must go online. The way we receive information has also changed. The public is no longer willing to seek out information, it waits for this information to be provided. Fans today not only wish to follow athletes and events in real time, they wish to experience participation through social media like Facebook, Twitter, blogs and the ever-increasing apps on mobile phones.

Sport as a global language has the power to draw together a host of different cultures, customs and traditions.

The Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement are, by their very nature, open to public participation. This tendency to involve the public in general, and especially young people, is the essence of the Olympic Movement, rendering the new social media, and in particular social networks, tools with a huge strategic ability to connect with the public and enable it to share the Olympic values and ideals, as was acknowledged by former President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge (Koop, 2011).

Indeed, the Rio Olympic Games marked a crucial turning-point in the history of Olympic broadcasting, featuring changes in the established uses of the media with the extension of their digital technology, providing spectators with more choices than ever before, with regard to how, when and where sports fans were able to follow the Olympic Games (Marketing Report IOC Rio 2016).

The Olympic Games have always been a sphere for experimentation with, and the application of, new audio-visual and telecommunications technology. At the same time, they operate as a showcase for the dissemination and promotion of technological progress to the wider public. (Emilio Fernández Peña, 1996-2012)

In this modern age, research by Stephen James Hills (2015) shows that the IOC is attempting to benefit from digital communication platforms to perform many basic strategies in the management of Olympic television collaborations; strategies such as:

- supporting Olympism by attracting the world’s younger generations;

- approaching and accessing as wide a public as possible, having as a base the achievement of equal access for all to the Olympic Games;
- extending the Olympic window, (e.g. increased coverage) to boost Olympic retransmissions;
- advancing sport through the unique characteristics of the Olympic Games, and
- facilitating the commercial interests of partners to make strategies more effective, with mutual benefit to the IOC and these companies' coverage of the Games.

How does the IOC attract the younger generation?

The IOC's strategy for promoting the Olympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) includes efforts to create young generations of athletes with an ethical approach to sport, and with strong values and principles.

The most important online media used by the Olympic Movement to reach the public are its official website through the Olympic Broadcasting Services, together with the Multi-Media Olympic Library. However, what has made the dissemination of Olympic information really take off is the creation of the Olympic Channel.

The creation of the Olympic Channel was one of the basic recommendations of the Olympic Agenda 2020, aimed at offering a new means of participation for young people as the fan base of the Olympic Movement, while simultaneously promoting the Olympic values on a continuous basis. The Olympic Channel offers live broadcasts of sporting events, news and stories about athletes, as well as broadcasting historic Olympic videos and official films from the IOC archives. Emphasis has also been placed on the orientation of youth education programming, on sports science and diets for a healthy and active way of life.

The Olympic Channel also offers its Global Partners (TOP) the opportunity to contact, create relations and collaborate with a vast number of Olympic fans, as well as provide a platform where they can set up their own content and narratives. With the Olympic values able to reach the entire audience at all times, the Olympic Channel finally constitutes the main means by which the IOC can continuously promote the Olympic Movement while achieving a more sustainable and long-term vision for the future.



Chryssi Biskitzi, a rowing Olympian spoke on the role of social media in the dissemination of messages within the Olympic Movement.

For the athletes, the main purpose of the Youth Olympic Games is the enjoyment of the event. Several related programmes have also been created, such as the “Reporters” programme and the “Ambassadors” programme, which offer invaluable experience and education in Olympism. The programme “Culture and Education” (CEP) has been designed to promote the development of skills, social responsibility and self-expression of participants in the YOG via the digital communications media. The “Culture and Education” programme (CEP) has been set up to create an environment for inspiring athletes to see their opponents not simply as opponents but as lifelong friends.

As part of its campaign for establishing contacts with the young, the IOC has created a global, digital initiative entitled: “The Best of Us Challenge”. This was put into practice after the Olympic Conference at which it was decided that the Olympic Movement must create the next generation of Olympic athletes with the assistance of the latest digital media. (IOC Marketing Media Guide – Vancouver 2010)

A recent development in the efforts to engage the young (May 2017) via social networks and specifically Facebook, was the collaboration between the

“Olympic Channel” and “Messenger”, through which an automatic messaging mechanism named “OLY” informs users of the latest Olympic news concerning athletes, live competitions and videos on the Olympic channel, while simultaneously providing an opportunity for testing their knowledge with the game “Trivial”. The exchange of messages, preferably with an Olympic content, promotes optimal personal communication coverage and optimal youth involvement in the Olympic Movement. (Olympic Channel, 2017)

Why does an athlete choose to have a presence on social media?

- Social media enable the creation of a fan base.
Social media not only allow an athlete to connect with fans, they also provide an opportunity for connecting with people that he or she has never encountered, such as other fans of the team, supporters from the wider home country or simply people who like the sport.
- Social media facilitate the securing of sponsors, chatting and other opportunities.
- Social media connect athletes with traditional media.
- Via social media, athletes are able to tell their own stories.

Every journalist who covers a sport has an agenda or seeks a specific angle, which may conflict with the image the athlete wishes to project. Social media allow for cutting out the “middle man” and for the athletes’ stories to be told directly in the way they wish. (Social Media Toolkit)

The swimmer Michael Phelps is the most distinguished Olympic athlete of all time, but he has gained yet another title: that of the athlete most discussed on Facebook during the Rio Games.

Facebook published data compiled over the period 5 to 21 August 2016 relating to users’ activities and the Olympic Games. According to them, a total of 277 million users interacted with Olympic Games content on Facebook during this period, through 1.5 billion “interactions” or features, comments, “likes” and the watching of videos.

In sharp contrast, some athletes fell into Olympic-sized traps. The use of social media negatively influenced some athletes who had not heeded the IOC’s warnings about responsible communication, and were removed from their national teams after sending racist messages.

Let us now see what traps are hidden within the Internet and what concerns arise regarding free expression during the Olympic Games.

Hutchins and Mikosza (2014) consider that the development of the social media will continue to be a concern for Olympic officials attempting, through new policies, to control athletes' digital communications. They also recognise the fact that no level of preventative measures is going to eliminate athletes' use of "...the unforeseen, of socially orientated and participatory digital means". However, the fundamental question here is the athlete's freedom of speech and the consequences for sport generally, the significance of which researchers are only just beginning to investigate.

By-law 3 to Rule 40 of the Olympic Games Charter expressly forbids athletes to use social media information for promoting personal sponsors; this limits athletes to expressing themselves on a platform that of course provides users with an honest "platform of communication". Rule 40, in the age of Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, is not popular among athletes, many of whom have only a short time in which to earn money and publicity from the attention they receive. Article 40, revised by the IOC in February 2015, allows athletes to appear in general advertisements, provided there is no direct reference to the Olympic Games, or any use of exclusive Olympic and Paralympic intellectual property, including the Olympic and Paralympic symbols, as well as specific terms, which include "Olympic Games", "2016", "Olympics" and "Gold".

As noted by Yuyu Chen (2016), the new directives have opened the door to more sponsors interested in the marketing potential of the Olympics.

The Internet – Another powerful new medium for Marketing the Olympics

"There is no human being on the planet who does not recognize the Olympic Games and their significance". This claim reflects the global recognition of the Games and indicates why sponsors invest in such an event (Redgate, 2002). Attracting consumers from different backgrounds constitutes a major challenge for international companies. The cultural differences, the rules and conventions of each society, make commercial messages difficult to interpret. The Olympic Games present an enormous opportunity for high-profile companies to spread

their messages effectively, applying marketing strategies which promote their connection with the Olympic values (Redgate, 2002).

Anna Laura Rezende (2010) considers that, if we analyse the strategies of TOP sponsors, it is correct to claim that all of them have looked into the characteristics promoted by the IOC on its communications platform. However, can we be certain that they have a true commitment to Pierre de Coubertin's educational mission? The sponsors of the Olympic Games must contribute to the success of the Olympic Movement's targets for education, the environment and cultural and humanitarian issues. (IOC, 2008)

In what substantial and effective ways can the Olympic Movement improve their relations with the new information media?

Given that the influence of social media continues to increase so rapidly, new tools will appear for fans, athletes and sports organisations to have even more opportunities for strengthening their communications experience.

It is impossible to control the operation of social media. Sports organisations must integrate the social media into their structures, developing a strategic plan, training staff to apply it, and helping the athletes, who are the ambassadors of sport, to learn and to use the plan to their benefit.

Sports organisations must develop strategies and policies for social media, which clearly define and fulfill the basic values of the organisations. It would also be desirable for them to be flexible and up-to-date in order to keep in step with the development of new tools and trends in social media.

A full-time specialist in the use of social media is required in large sports organisations, who will monitor social networks for what is being said about it and retain the interest of all those who receive information from or are involved in the organisation. All staff must be familiar with plans and policy and must understand the ways they are being implemented.

Sports organisations develop a momentum during the Olympic Games, which must be subsequently maintained, keeping in touch with fans that have become connected with the sport. Understanding the aims of athletes and fans is crucial. Sport lovers and fans easily lose interest when they have no contact through interesting and relevant information.

All athletes must be trained in the use of social media tools. Many of today's

top athletes use social channels to connect with their fans and supporters, to increase sponsorship programmes and to upgrade their profiles, particularly the athletes in less popular sports. Understanding how social media function might ensure better results for athletes.

Negotiations between sports organisations and the Olympic Movement which manages procedures should aim at preserving the concept of integrity, and promoting the basic values of sport, which are peace, brotherhood, cooperation and tolerance. Thus, a great step forward would be to promote social education in the media for people in the Olympic Movement, to prepare them for the challenges that may bring about and foster a stronger connection with their base. But this must start from the top.

Finally, the digital social network phenomenon is irrefutably topical due to its dynamic growth and on-going consolidation as a new social phenomenon. However, its volatility will always make it an object for study and research by the scientific community.

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ATHLETE ROLE MODEL AT YOUTH OLYMPICS

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Intro

Thinking of yourself as a role model is a bit daunting at first. I know I didn't dream of becoming a role model, I dreamt of becoming an Olympian. I dreamt of finding a sport I enjoyed and loved. Through that passion for sport and fulfilling my dream to become an Olympian, somewhere along the way I became a role model. I didn't really understand why, I was actually just being selfish. Just focusing on my dreams and what I needed to do to succeed. But both my parents are teachers and I guess it is ingrained in me to teach, to share information.

When you think about it – sport allows us to learn a lot of different things that can help us with our personal development.

We learn about failure.

We learn about the importance of giving 100% to a process.

We learn about having pride in what we do and who we are.

Failure

Failure is probably the hardest. At a pinnacle event, it becomes even harder.

Am I good enough? Have I done enough? What if I lose?

In order to accept failure as an option, I was challenged by my sports psy-

chologist to practice failing. It definitely wasn't easy and failing still hurts, but being ok with that outcome allowed me to let go of the fear and go all in.

It's scary to think that your absolute best might not be good enough. It's nicer to think that there's a reason why something didn't go well. An excuse. But then the "What ifs" creep in. What if I did this? What if I did that? Being ok with failure allows you to give 100%. Take the gym for example – if I have to do a 100kg for six reps, and I can only do five and a half, then I know without a doubt, that it was my absolute max effort. Failure is proof I'm giving 100%!

There are moments when failure is harder to accept. Injury is probably one of them. I have broken a total of eighteen bones in my career as well as four concussions. My worst crash was in 2014 where I broke both my arms in six places, had surgery on two of the breaks and suffered a moderate head injury. During my recovery, I wasn't sure if I'd ever be able to ride my bike again.

After five months of uncertainty, I was given clearance to ride again and something unexpected happened. Instead of being more afraid to crash and get hurt, I appreciated the opportunity to ride, more than I ever had. I looked at jumps I had never done before (because of fear) and thought that I may never get to try them again, so I would rather try and fail, than not try at all. Instead of fear, I felt excitement. And the more things I tried, the more confident I got in my ability and I went on to become the fastest I had ever been.

In my career, I've finished 4th by .1 of a second in Beijing 2008, I won Silver in London 2012 and I got injured before Rio 2016 so didn't even qualify.

In each of those Olympics, I failed.

In Beijing, I failed because I didn't believe in myself enough. In the moment, I had excuses that helped me feel better about finishing fourth. I did everything I could in that race to medal and there was nothing I could do to change that result. But looking back with what I know now, I should have been more courageous; I should have aimed higher and believed I was capable of winning a medal.

In London, I failed because I didn't win Gold. But, what I had learnt in the four years between Beijing and London was the power of setting a scary goal and building up the belief that I was capable. I also learned that it was ok if I fail at my goal, as long as I give 100% and enjoy the ride. So, in London, I remember being up on the BMX start hill, looking out to the crowd and taking a moment to be proud that I was in the Olympic final. I smiled. Instead of being at the start line with fear of losing, I was excited to go out there and see what 100%



Sarah Walker, an IOC Member and Member of the IOC Athletes' Commission spoke about the athlete role model and his/her mission at the Youth Olympic Games.

looked like. When I crossed the line in second place, it felt like I had won. I had managed to perform to the best of my ability in the race that counted, and on that day, in that lap, there was one person who was better than me and that was absolutely ok! To make things even cooler, my best friend from the Netherlands won the Bronze medal so it was incredible to share that moment with her.

In Rio, I failed because I didn't even qualify. After being the fastest I had ever been at the start of 2016, I crashed and broke my arm in two places requiring surgery on both breaks. Ten weeks later I was at the World Champs knowing that I had to perform if I was going to qualify for Rio. In practice, my arm wasn't strong enough. As I took off a jump, it collapsed and I flew into the air sideways before falling to the ground. I thought I had managed to roll out of it ok, so I got back on my bike and attempted to keep riding. Within a few minutes, more pain kicked in and I had a gut feeling that I was done. Rio was over. But I wasn't ready to give up because we don't know for sure unless we try.

So, I turn up for racing the next day and gave it 100% of what I was capable of in that moment. Now in BMX, we start with three races against the same

people before progressing to the next round. Before the first race, my chances of qualifying were already slim, but I went to the start gate and did the best lap I could. My best lap was fifteen metres behind where I needed to be to qualify through to the next round. But there were still two races to go. So I came back and gave the best lap that I could. Again, I was fifteen metres away. As I went up for the third and final heat, I knew it was almost mathematically impossible to qualify but I wasn't going to give up while there was still a chance.

I failed. Rio Olympics was fifteen metres in front of me again. This failure hurt. But as I started reflecting on my journey, I had actually still given 100%, just this time, the result was different. Reflecting back on this moment, I am actually just as proud because I never gave up. Through every moment of adversity, I gave my absolute best and that is something to be damn proud of.

So really, is failure such a bad thing? I don't think so. Accepting that I could fail has given me some of the proudest moments in my life.

Process

In my experience, focusing on a process allows me to have less distraction from the emotions of a moment. It allows me to be more consistent in my performance. Whether I am happy, sad, excited, nervous, upset, angry, etcetera, my process remains the same no matter what the emotion is. Whether it is a training session by myself, a local race, the World Champs or the Olympics, my process remains the same.

In order for me to get my best start, I need to roll onto the gate straight, clip into the pedals, adjust my pedal height, set my body position, roll my wrists forward and then breathe. When the gate call starts, I focus on my breathing through the call, and as soon as I see the red light, I go.

I'll admit this is easier to do without pressure but it becomes more and more important as the pressure comes on. Out of all the techniques I have tried, having something for my brain to focus on stops it from getting distracted.

Pride

As you may have noticed in my stories, being proud is such an important part of what I do and being happy with who I am as an athlete and a person. But,

having pride about what we do doesn't always come easily. As athletes, we are trained to find the mistakes; we find it easy to point out the things we do wrong, things we need to work on. Every day we can find things that weren't perfect and beat ourselves up.

Finding the things that we are proud of can be much more difficult. Sometimes it feels like nothing went right. In those moments, maybe the thing we are most proud of is that we didn't give up when it got tough.

There are two questions that have helped me grow as an athlete the most in my career.

What are you proud of? Not, what did you do well or what went good... What are you proud of? The question is almost the same but the answer is usually different as well as the feeling it brings.

The other question is what did you learn that can help you be better next time? Not, what didn't go well, or what wasn't good. Figuring out the learning in any situation allows massive growth. It allows you to look at weaknesses or frustrations in a positive way.

Sharing

If you could go back to the start of your career and know everything you know now, would your career have been different?

Learning about failure, learning about giving 100% and learning to be proud, are often learned with experience. Being able to pass on those learnings to up and coming athletes is a privilege.

In February of 2016, I met a young pole vaulter who had just qualified for the Rio Olympics. I asked her about her expectations and her reply was a lot like mine before my first Olympics. She was excited and just looking forward to the experience. She didn't expect to medal as her goal was the next Olympics in Tokyo 2020. She already had excuses for why she wouldn't medal and I thought back to my Beijing experience and told her to challenge herself, because we don't know what we are capable of unless we try.

Over the next six months, she talked me through the process of doing a perfect jump and began to make that process part of her routine. We talked about failure. Getting a no height, finishing last, getting an injury. We talked about accepting they were possibilities, but so was jumping higher than she

ever had before, so was winning a medal. They were possibilities too. We also talked about being proud. Proud of the good days, but proud of the bad days too. Every experience, good and bad, was preparing her for Rio 2016. I learnt a lot about pole vault over the next six months and it was very cool to watch her growing as an athlete.

In Rio, I watched and could visually see her going through her process. Talking herself through that perfect run up. More importantly, she enjoyed that moment. And well, she got a personal best. Under the ultimate pressure of the Olympic Games, she gave it 100% and on that day, she won the Bronze medal becoming New Zealand's youngest Olympic medallist.

BMX and pole vault aren't exactly the same sport. But what I have learnt in my career isn't specific to BMX, or even sport. And all the lessons each of you have learnt aren't specific to your sport either.

Role models

At the Youth Olympics, there are athletes at the beginnings of their careers through to athletes who are at the pinnacle of their career.

Having athlete role models at Youth Olympics gives another level of support to the athletes that are competing. It connects sports champions with the young and aspiring athletes. Each role model has their story, their learnings, their experiences that provide mentorship, education and inspiration. To have the opportunity to share that experience with Youth Olympians is pretty special. Knowing that your experience could change someone's path in a positive way.

Helping them with pre-competition tips, celebrating their success and supporting them in their failure as well as encouraging them to live true to who they are. To me, seeing people be their authentic self is so awesome and inspiring, and I know that we will see these role models being great examples of that. They are successful athletes, on and off the field of play and are motivated to give back to sport.

The athlete role models will be involved right through the different experiences of the Youth Olympics – from attending training sessions and playing sport with the local youth, through to contributing to the sport presentation and giving the mascot to medallists during the Victory Ceremonies.

Another great initiative is the “Chat with Champion” events, where there will

be panel discussions between the Youth Olympic athletes and the role models in the Village. With 62 athlete role models confirmed, there is going to be plenty of opportunity for learning.

Summary

As athletes, we all have stories about lessons we've learned or experiences we've had. Lessons that don't just allow us to be better athletes, but lessons that allow us to be better people. My biggest learnings have been accepting failure, the importance of a process, being proud of yourself and enjoying the moment!

My question to you all; What are yours?

ATHLETES AND THE NEW MEDIA

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Executive Director, Olympic Channel Services



From “new media” to simply “media”

Humankind’s desire to communicate is fundamental to our existence. Thousands of years ago, prehistoric paintings on the walls, floors and ceilings of ancient caves acted as the means of communicating shared ideas and experiences between the earliest humans. Today, with one flick of the finger we can easily have face to face contact with friends and even strangers, millions of kilometres apart.

What we know as mass media, our primary means of communicating to a wide global audience, is constantly changing.

At the start of the 20th century newspapers were the main source for citizens to keep abreast of the local and international news of the day. By the start of World War II, radio was expanding and transmitting the human voice wirelessly around the globe, and by the end of the century words, sounds and pictures had combined as television became the primary form of mass media.

The evolution continued, driven by the development of digital technology, which allowed news and entertainment to be made available not only on demand, but also in real-time and by multiple devices. This new and far wider reaching form of media was in short, referred to as “new media”.

The term became commonplace in the 1990s when computer-based media began to increase in number thanks to the development of the internet and

the growth in the number of homes that owned personal computers and at the same time, had access to the expanding global network.

Whereas newspapers, television, radio, books, cinema, wired phones, records and CDs seemed relegated to being “old media”, the growth of online services meant that these industries had to adapt to changing consumption, giving way to television, music and film streaming, email, mobile phones, online newspapers, blogs and social media. All of which are now considered the main components of the broadly termed “new media”.

Of significant importance was the improved speed of internet connections that occurred in the first two decades of the 20th century. From dial-up modems, to DSL broadband connection, first with copper cables and then fibre optic cables, speeds increased exponentially.

A report by the USA’s Office of Science and Technology Policy & The National Economic Council (1) showed that between 2009 and 2013 broadband speeds in the USA doubled, while a report from Akamai (2) showed that in the first quarter of 2017 there was an average worldwide internet connectivity speed of 7.2 megabits per second, a fifteen percent increase from the same time period in 2016.

This has resulted in quicker uploading times for all facets of new media and provided a sustainable platform and basis for the growth of social media channels. Facebook was founded in 2004, YouTube was launched in 2005, Twitter was created in 2006 and Instagram went live in 2010.

About the same time, the launch of smart phones, notably the iPhone in June 2007, offered an additional device to host new media content. Their increasing speed and sophistication of the apps available allowed new media providers, especially those which include sound and video, to film, edit and publish their work from the same device.

Increased network internet speeds mean that upload and delivery times will continue to increase, even without a WIFI or broadband connection. In the decade since the launch of the iPhone, smartphones have gone from 3G to 5G, with the PyeongChang 2018 Olympic Winter Games the first to be 5G compliant, much to the delight of those that used it.

The generation of children born since the year 2000, certainly in the developed world, have only known a planet with the existence of digital technology. For them, “new media” is the norm, with little or no awareness of a bygone analogue era.

Media in all its forms will continue to evolve because it always has. In fact, it is likely to evolve at an ever-increasing pace thanks to the development and importance of digital technology in our daily lives. That means what was once considered “new media” will one day, like its predecessors before it, be considered “old media”.

The Olympic Games as a shared experience

Traditional media has always played a significant role in transporting the Olympic Games around the world and into people’s home, highlighting the action and achievements of the globe’s greatest athletes. For many years, television, radio and newspapers invited the world to be part of the Games, to witness what was happening, to cheer on their heroes and to understand the stories behind an athlete’s success.

Until the start of digital television coverage, home viewing was constrained to the number of channels made available by each Rights Holding Broadcaster.

For many years the BBC alternated Olympic coverage across its two channels, BBC1 and BBC2, with breaks added for the news and other popular programmes. However, with digital coverage, website and smart phone apps, the BBC and other Rights Holding Broadcasters now have no such limitations in programming, ensuring that every second of Games-time action is provided to viewers.

For the London 2012 Olympic Games, the BBC offered 24 live digital streams from across the Games’ venues, and a 24-hour channel featuring rolling news and highlights from the Olympics. While BBC1 and BBC2 covered the biggest stories, fans could watch direct and uninterrupted content from 24 live streams on their television, or laptops via the website, as well as tablets and smartphones via the BBC Sport app. (3)

Four years later, the BBC increased their level of coverage for the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games, providing 3000 hours of coverage up from 2,500 in London. (4)

Rio 2016 set additional marks, with 356,924 hours of coverage offered across all platforms, a 96.7 percent increase from the 181,523 hours provided for the London Games. Furthermore, the 243,469 hours of digital coverage in Rio, represented a 198.6 percent jump from London 2012. (5).

Looking at the Winter Games, PyeongChang 2018 set new record figures for



The CEO of OBS and Executive Director of the Olympic Channel, Yiannis Exarchos gave a lecture on the relationship between the athletes and the new media and received the IOA commemorative pin by Prof. K. Georgiadis.

television and digital coverage. In total, there were 157,812 hours of television and digital coverage in PyeongChang which represented a 38 percent increase from the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games. (6).

Alongside televisual coverage of Olympic Games, Rights Holding Broadcasters are able to offer extra content and coverage via their social media channels that enhance a viewer's Games-time experience.

This growth of coverage on Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook has continued hand in glove with the growth of television and digital coverage and means that the two are now intrinsically linked.

Broadcasters offer a wide range of services across their traditional channels, digital channels, and social media that ensure they hold their viewers' attention throughout an event and then return there. In fact, new and more varied content is something that viewers are not only accustomed to, but now expect.

Whereas viewers may begin by watching one of a Rights Holding Broadcaster's linear channels, they are then directed to what is being shown on the broadcasters' digital channels and social media.

“Over on....,” is now a phrase commonly used by presenters to direct viewers to their broadcasters’ other channels, while segments where footage, handles and comments made on social media are shown is now a common part of a Games-time show.

It means that the viewers’ experience is a mix of the traditional viewing on television, whether linear or digital, and social media where they are able to watch further content, see what others are saying about an event or race, and comment themselves.

By offering these channels before, during and after competition, anticipation is built, and as a result viewing figures are driven upwards. In short if you’re excited by a race or match you are more likely to make the effort to watch it, and that means more viewers watching not only on one of the Right Holding Broadcaster’s linear channels, but also viewing or interacting with other content provided via their digital platforms.

During Rio 2016 there were more than 7.2 billion views on official social media channels (5), while during PyeongChang 2018 there were 300 million users, more than 1.6 billion video views and three billion minutes of footage viewed on official social media channels. (6)

For the past four Olympic Games there has been an exponential growth in how viewers can enjoy coverage of the event. Coverage of Athens 2004 was only available on television, while for Beijing 2008 viewers could also watch on their laptop. For London 2012 viewers had the option of watching on their tablet and smartphone, while by the time the action moved to Rio 2016 it was possible to watch footage via social media. (5)

It all adds up to an enriched, deeper and more comprehensive viewing experience. The question remains, what further innovations can be expected in the time leading up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

Athletes, sports and media – a symbiotic relationship

A cursory glance through Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Google Plus and Sina Weibo show how important social media have become to athletes, sports teams, federations and all those involved in the coverage of sport.

For athletes, social media allows them to develop their own narrative, show off what they do behind the scenes, build their own brands, and raise aware-

ness of initiatives that are important to them. In turn social media has drawn in new fans to an athlete's sport and provided those reporting on sport with new channels and new material.

Behind the scenes footage remains one of the most popular aspects of social media. For many years, spectators and fans saw very little beyond the field of play. Now new media has provided access to changing rooms before and after a match, post-match celebrations, and footage from training and an athlete's downtime.

For those involved it is a simple process and underlines the link between improved internet speed and access, and more sophisticated filming and editing apps on the most recently released smartphone. Athletes can film and edit a piece on their smartphones, 4G access allows them quick uploads and within minutes the video clip or image is available for the public to view.

One such example of how popular behind the scenes shots are came at Rio 2016. Not long after Michael Phelps had won gold in the 4x200m freestyle relay he posted to his Instagram account a photo of the quartet celebrating in the athletes' area with six members of the USA's basketball team. (7). It received 268,478 likes and was commented on 2,983 times.

Social media has also allowed athletes the chance to promote companies and their goods, be it sport-related or away from the field of play. It plays a vital part in the building of their brand and ensures that they maximise their earning potential from a sports career that is likely to be over before the age of 35.

Bolt may have retired with eight Olympic gold medals in his trophy cabinet, but with 8.4 million followers on Instagram (8) and 5.3 million on Twitter (9), he is a huge draw for companies and he continues to promote the likes of Puma, Virgin Media and even 'Usain's Insane Hot Sauce' on his social media channels.

Fitness issues have long been at the forefront for professional athletes. The competitive drive to achieve a spot on an Olympic team means that they push themselves harder on the training ground and in the gym than is sometimes thought possible.

Before new media, in particular social media, the work that went into earning selection was heard about, but rarely witnessed. Now athletes are able to film and edit their often eye-wateringly hard gym workouts to show the public and team selectors exactly how much effort they are putting in.

One such athlete who did this was US skier Lindsey Vonn. In December 2017 she crashed during a race in St Moritz and in doing so suffered a back

injury (10). It meant she faced a race against time to be fit in time to defend her downhill gold at PyeongChang 2018.

Over the following weeks Vonn regularly posted updates of her recovery to her 1.5 million Instagram followers (11), her 1.06 million Twitter followers (12), and the 1,350,000 who like her Facebook page (13).

The story did have a happy ending. After she was selected, Vonn went on to win downhill bronze, and after sharing a photo of her with the medal on Instagram, it received 227,228 likes. (14)

The Olympic Channel

What the continued growth in Olympic Games viewing and greater social media engagement with Olympic athletes showed was that there is an enormous appetite for consuming footage and news about the Olympic Games and Olympic sports outside Games-time.

To that end the International Olympic Committee launched the Olympic Channel in August 2016 as part of its Olympic Agenda 2020 project, something that shows how new media and the Olympic Games have fully meshed.

The idea of the Olympic Channel is to provide a platform for the continuous exposure of Olympic sports and athletes beyond the Olympic Games period. This helps to create anticipation of future Games and allows viewers to re-live and re-watch their favourite action from past Games.

The Olympic Channel showcases content from around the world representing all Olympic sport disciplines and 206 countries. It is a channel about sport, not necessarily a sports channel and offers original programming, news, live sports events, social media and interactive content.

The Channel reports on athletes from sports outside the Olympic Movement, including those from its 75 Federation Partners, as well as a diverse array of subjects. (15)

The Olympic Channel is constantly working to develop new ways of enjoying the Olympic Games experience. Earlier in 2018 the Olympic Channel broke new ground when it live-streamed coverage of PyeongChang 2018 to India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. (16)

It was the first time that the Olympic Channel aired live Olympic Games

coverage on its global digital platform and was available at olympicchannel.com and on mobile apps.

It ensured that there was coverage of PyeongChang 2018 in a part of the world where Olympic Winter sports are not traditionally popular, notably in India where they were able to cheer on countryman Shiva Keshavan who competed in his sixth Olympic Winter Games.

At its heart the Olympic Channel is a medium for the IOC to provide a new way to engage with a younger audience and attract a new generation of fans of the Olympic Movement, notably the 16 to 35-year-old audience.

To this end it is fully digitally compliant, is available via mobile apps for Android and iOS devices, on olympicchannel.com, and has handles on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and YouTube where viewers can find extra content and footage from the most recent Games to the oldest.

As of June 2018, the Olympic Channel has more than 1.7 billion video views and 7.7 million social media followers. Thus far, more than 11,000 pieces of content have been created and the Channel has broadcast 1,300 live events. (17)

Of those who do engage with the Olympic Channel on its social media platforms, 82 percent are younger than 35, making social media a key strategy for finding new and younger audiences.

This engagement on social media means that fans and viewers are able to find and enjoy new content and footage and share it instantly across social media, which helps engage a new wave of fans of the Olympic Games who regularly interact with the Olympic Movement.

What the growth of the Olympic Channel and its various broadcasting channels has shown is that new and old media are now interlocked parts of broadcasting, both driven by technological development.

As such with viewers having more and more viewing options, the Olympic experience has gone from one enjoyed every two years to one that is fully-interactive, and lived 24 hours, seven days a week.

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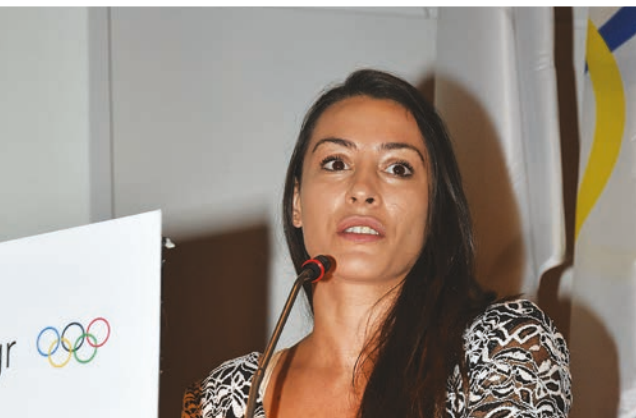
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**SHORT PRESENTATIONS
BY THE PARTICIPANTS**



The Olympians present their Olympic experiences and their aspects on the Session's subject.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ATHLETE AS A ROLE MODEL FOR SOCIETY

Angeliki EXARCHOU (GRE)

Olympian, Swimming

To begin, I would like to express my satisfaction at seeing and finding myself in the company of such distinguished people from all over the world, who are either active athletes or, with love and diligence, assist in promoting the Olympic spirit, each according to his or her capacity.

I believe that today, within the framework of the 4th International Session for Olympic Medallists or Olympians, we should be talking about the significance of the athlete as a role model for society, about his/her role in inspiring, especially young people, with dreams and hard work. However, are today's champions ready to fulfill this role?

Permit me to present my own idea of the symbolic athlete, something not only achievable but absolutely necessary. And it is absolutely necessary for the smooth development of the individual athlete's personality as well as for his/her educational activities' impact.

In particular, I would say that an athlete's career must always be combined with his or her own education, so that the move from competitive sport to a different professional career and social life is made as smoothly as possible.

In Greece, positive measures have been taken towards recognition of the sacrifices made by athletes. More precisely, outstanding Greek athletes are given free access to university. However, if the athlete achieves, let's say, 7th or 8th place in the Olympics or at a World event, he/she does not have the right to choose a faculty, but may only study in a Faculty of Physical Education and Sport Science. Fortunately, we all recognise that the qualities of strength,

patience and discipline find an application in whatever we choose to do in life, and not only in the role of sports coach.

There are many striking examples of athletes such as Kevin Love at the NBA, the swimmer Ian Thorpe, the diver Wendy Williams and others who have faced difficulties in their personal and social lives in spite of money and fame. Research indicates that one of the reasons for this is the uncertain future that follows the end of an athlete's career.

Many champions confront difficulties when it comes to education, either because of their long training hours or the rigidity of a university programme. At this point, the coach has a decisive role to play since the athlete needs to be encouraged in this dual task.

The European Union has established the European Athlete as Student programme since 2004. The EAS is directed towards helping European athletes to combine high levels of performance and education. Educational institutions and sports schools can provide European athletes with practical support by declaring their participation in this programme.

It would also be useful for discussions to take place between countries about what other ways exist to create channels of communication between nations, universities, Sports Federations and of course athletes. The result would be for champions to continue being healthy role models, ready to pass on the values and ideals of sport.

I will close with this quote which perhaps reflects everything I have said: "Great athletes 'are built' in stadiums, but great personalities 'are built' everywhere".

SUPPORTING ATHLETES AND OLYMPIANS IN THEIR LIFELONG JOURNEY

Jovina CHOO BEI FEN (IOC)

*Project Coordinator – Athletes' Section
International Olympic Committee*

Let me begin with a short self-introduction. I represented Singapore at the Rio Olympics in sailing and I am currently working with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as a Project Coordinator with the Athletes' Section. My area of work focusses on the various athlete programmes and services offered by the IOC. In a couple months, I will be switching roles and working with the World Olympians Association (WOA) in developing the National Olympians Associations in the Asia region.

During my time with the IOC, one of the programmes I work on is the IOC Athlete Career Programme (ACP). Created in 2005, ACP is an initiative of the IOC Athletes' Commission. The aim of the programme is to support athletes to prepare for and to go through their career transition. This means that as they step off the competitive sports stage, they are prepared for a different career; this could be a career as a coach, sports administrator, or also outside of the sporting realm, such as an entrepreneur, doctor, lawyer, politician and tons of other jobs out there. I believe the crucial message is that no one is a professional athlete forever. Hence, ACP provides resources and training to enable athletes to develop life skills and maximise their educational and employment opportunities. The IOC does this through three delivery channels.

Firstly, the National Olympic Committees can form partnerships with Ad-ecco to implement an Athlete Career Programme tailored for their country. The second channel is to organise ACP Outreach workshops whereby IOC trained expert facilitators conduct workshops tailored to the needs of the athletes,

covering topics such as balancing sports and education, networking skills, how to write a CV and so on.

The third way that athletes have access to the online resources available to them is through Athlete365. Athlete365 unites all IOC athlete initiatives and they are hosted on one website. It is an open and free platform that anyone with internet can educate themselves with online learning courses, connect with the IOC Athletes' Commission, get inspired by stories of athletes and Olympians around the world, find information on the Olympic Games and so much more.

In addition, there are offers available exclusively to Olympians and they include a free 2-hour career counselling session with an Adecco expert, free entry to the Olympic Museum and discounts at the Olympic Museum stores. Every year, there is also an internship position with the IOC catered for Olympians.

Athletes can also be involved by giving their voice to contribute to the Athlete Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. It is a collective document that highlights the issues faced by athletes globally, and these are important topics of our times: clean sport, safeguarding from harassment and abuse, integrity and fair play, to name a few. With this document, it hopes to inform athletes that they do have rights, and conversely, it is also our responsibility, as athletes, to ensure that we abide by the rules of the games, speak up for ourselves and also for others.

To continue on a similar note, the World Olympians Association (WOA) is an organisation whose mission is to be of service to Olympians, thereby empowering them to make the world a better place. We, as Olympians, have the ability to create ripples. And if enough of us create ripples, hopefully, we can bring about a wave of change to better the lives of fellow human beings.

Initiatives of WOA include the provision of a certificate bearing the post-nominal letters OLY to Olympians in recognition of their participation at the Olympic Games, as well as an Olympian.org email address made available to all Olympians.

OLY. Three simple letters that empowers us as a unique group of individuals that through hard work, talent and a little luck, have had the opportunity to bear our country flag and compete at the Olympic Games. It is a badge of pride that we should embrace.

Another WOA initiative is the recently launched Retired Olympians Musculoskeletal Health Study. And I would like to encourage each Olympian to complete the survey so that with the global data collected, WOA will be able to

identify risk factors, and use the information to develop recommendations and promote guidelines to protect the health of the future generation of athletes.

To conclude, as Olympians, there are actions we can take, be it big or small, in whichever area of work we do, to contribute to our fellow athletes, Olympians, community or society. IOC and WOA have programmes and initiatives that we can tap on for support and likewise, we can also support these initiatives by being a part of it and help others benefit by spreading the word.

LIFE AFTER AN OLYMPIC SPORTS CAREER

Leslie KLEIN (USA)

OLY USA 1984 Kayak

United States Olympic Committee

Do you wish you had help guiding you through the retirement process after your Olympic career? I want to talk to you about the process of transitioning to life after an Olympic sports career and how you can make a difference. Olympians are looked up to as role models in our society. We are strong, focused, determined, driven and goal oriented. These traits got us to the Olympic Games and defined you as an athlete. Apply these traits and your path to success is very clear; jump higher, paddle, run, swim, ski or pedal faster, get stronger, refine your technique, be more aerodynamic, add one more rotation. Then comes the big question. How does one translate these admirable traits into a successful and fulfilling life after sport? That path is not so clear or defined. The first step is to determine who you really are. If an athlete is who I am and I am no longer competing, then who am I now? Athletes are often completely defined by their sport and their results. The reality is that you have always been much more than your athlete-self. By examining your core values, personality traits and motivators each Olympian can explore career and life paths that will be as fulfilling, rewarding and challenging as your sport has been.

In my current role as Director of Athlete Career and Education for the United States Olympic Committee, I have found fulfillment making a difference in the lives of many elite athletes. I get to build programs to connect national team athletes, Olympians, Paralympians with career, education and life skills resources to help them on their Olympic quest and beyond. These resources include education grants, career preparation assistance, part-time jobs for current athletes, full-time jobs for retired athletes and programs in entrepreneurship.

We are developing life skills programs like public speaker training, financial literacy and sponsorship education. Our mentorship program pairs successful retired Olympians, Paralympians and other professionals with current and retiring athletes.

Each of you has been through a transformational journey. You each have your own story and your own experiences. Although athletes are trained to be tough and self-reliant, their coaches play an important role in their success. Somehow in this transition period, athletes remember the tough and self-reliant part but forget to seek out a coach or mentor. At the USOC, we are encouraging athletes to plan for life after sport early in their athletic careers with education, internships and part-time job experiences. This will best prepare athletes for life after sport. We have also developed a program we call Pivot to help athletes through this difficult identity transformation in retirement. Although athletes often struggle –somehow– we have found that many athletes think they are the only one who is struggling and going it alone makes it even more difficult. Some athlete quotes I have heard “After the Games, it felt like I went over a waterfall”. “I felt like I was thrown off a cliff”. “I went for a year-long walk alone in a dark forest”. “I was stuck on the couch – there are so many options that I didn’t know where to start”. As we bring athletes together in the Pivot workshops, they are amazed to find out that:

- 1) They are not alone!
- 2) All these feelings are normal!
- 3) This transition is not an event but a whole process!
- 4) There are steps they can take to move forward.
- 5) People are available to help them.

What can you do after you leave Olympia to make a difference and help other athletes as they transition to their lives after sport? You do not need to be a trained educator, facilitator or mental health professional. You just need to be willing to share your story with another athlete and listen to their story. Reach out and help them take their first steps toward the rest of their lives. Connect them with your Olympic, professional and social networks then watch them soar as their Olympic traits propel them to their next big adventure.

DEDICATING MYSELF TO MY SPORT

Cătălina PONOR (ROU)

When my name is uttered, Cătălina Ponor, many people immediately associate it to an image of me at the gym, Olympics or other international competitions. However, this career included a lot of ups and downs, many ordeals which I overcame only by keeping the love for gymnastics in my heart, the love for high performance and especially for the Romanian flag. For 25 years I have dedicated myself to this sport and I kept rewinding this period in my mind, from the beginning to the end, repeatedly. I decided to no longer keep this beautiful story only in my soul, but to put it into words, to let you know it and to make sure it would remain untouched over the years to come and that I would never forget any little detail.

I was born on a summer day, on 20 August 1987, in Constanța. Four years later I stepped in a gym for the first time. It was all by chance. I remember as if it was yesterday, that I was walking with my granny on a street where there was a gym and I knew I had a strong wish to enter that building. I was curious to see what was happening there. I entered with my granny and I was fascinated by all the equipment there. We were welcomed by a very kind coach I would never forget. She screened me from head to toe and she told me I was perfect and ready to go training. My heart jumped with joy and that was the moment I totally fell in love with gymnastics. I felt at that very moment that I met my destiny. If other people are choosing what they would do in life, in my case it was just the opposite. I did not choose gymnastics, but it definitely chose me.

I was so fascinated by everything I learned in training that I turned the house we were living in into a gym. The long hallway was used for flicks and the dining room was the ground. I was in love with the balance beam even then, so my

grandfather brought me a wooden one at home and I started to train on the equipment that subsequently brought me so many medals. Nadia was one of the champions I was looking up to with admiration and longed to be as good and as loved as she was.

At fourteen years old I left home for the Olympics Centre in Deva as I had the chance of being selected by Octavian Bellu and Mariana Bitang as a member of the Olympics team. Some of my highest satisfactions were at the 2004 Olympics in Athens, where I won three gold medals, for teams, for balance beam and for the ground.

In 2006, the ups and downs started. Then I withdrew for the first time, for eight months, both because I needed a break, and because I was physically exhausted, which caused medical issues. The thought about 2008 Olympics in Beijing made me wish to come back to the gym. In 2007, I decided again to give up, and not because I was not a fighter, but because a herniated disc knocked me down. In 2009, I went for training to the United States of America, at the school of the former champion Teodora Ungureanu. At the end of 2010, I asked Mariana Bitang to bring me back to the team as I wanted very much to reach the London Olympics. I had to prove that I could get back my physical condition and that I deserve my place in the team. I managed to win a bronze medal for teams and a silver one for ground and Romania's flag was waving up again where it belonged, for the pride of the whole country.

After London I withdrew again, also due to the physical issues which, no matter how hard I was trying to ignore them, were running me down. It was very hard to stay away from the gym, I was longing to go to trainings, to wear the competition suits and it was hard to look at the competitions from an armchair, in front of the TV. It was also hard to hear that I was too old for gymnastics and so, in 2015, at 27 years old I wanted another chance, I wanted to prove that I could still do something for Romania. I have said it several times; gymnastics was like a drug for me, one that I could not give up easily. I went back to the gym, I resumed the training schedule and that made me feel wonderful. I wanted to overcome the physical pain just one more time, to be able to perform in gymnastics for Romania. I was also motivated by the dream of performing at Rio Olympics. Unfortunately, Romania was not qualified, to the deep disappointment of everyone, but I had a great satisfaction as I represented the country on the place of honour and carried the flag during the opening ceremony. My

last efforts were crowned by success at Cluj, at the 2017 European Gymnastics Championship where I won the gold medal for balance beam.

Now, at 30 years old I decided to finally end my gymnastics career. This ambition and endless love for this sport made me the longest-lasting gymnast of Romania. There have been 25 years of satisfactions, joy and sadness, but when I look back, when I remember the sound of Romania's anthem with me on the podium, when I look at the wall full of medals, I realise that any effort I made was fully worth it.

Thank you and to all those who have supported me along all these years, who believed in me and rejoiced and suffered together with me!



During the Session a panel discussion took place, coordinated by the ISOH President, David Wallechinsky.



**CONCLUSIONS OF
THE DISCUSSION GROUPS**



The discussion groups analyzed further the topics raised during the lectures.



DISCUSSION GROUP 1

1. What makes an Olympic role model?

There are many aspects that define a role model. To some it is about honesty towards your inner self, your fellow athletes and towards society. To others it is about strengths and weaknesses and an athlete's capability to use these in the best way to function as a role model. There is also a dependence on both the environment and the point in time; during or after a career.

Definition

In general a (athletic) role model is defined as an example for a certain group of people, someone who people can identify with and who inspires us. Athlete role models form the personification of both a hero and a human. Through role models, you can indirectly experience your dream. A role model is someone who is out of this world, but at the same time remains human.

Opportunity and responsibility

Role models require the right combination of effort, self-awareness and social environment to be influential. When all are present, then there is an opportunity; a role-moment. Olympic athletes can take advantage of this opportunity, this inspirational power and even evolve. However, it is not necessarily an obligation to become a role model.

Identification and authenticity

To be a role model, people need to identify or relate to some part of the athlete. Sharing their life, their struggles, their realness, successes and failures, demonstrates the values they live up to. Showing athletic identity in combination with

the human authentic side and vulnerability enables athletes to be effective role models.

Serving as or being a role model

To enable athletes to serve as role models, they need to understand their core values. Self-knowledge and being in touch with their authenticity are necessary. Also, Olympians need to be made aware of their position and potential impact on society. If possible, this awareness should be raised in an early stage. Then they can be trained to tell their unique story to best deliver their message. Athletes can choose to make conscious use of the opportunity to be role models, not having to live up to images that are created, but being able to be truly inspirational.

2. What are the primary factors influencing the composition of the Olympic programme?

Current Process: Olympic Programme Commission recommends to IOC Board based on:

- Develop a programme that maximises popularity
- Adaptation to modern taste yet respecting history
- Close cooperation with International Federation(s)
- Agenda 2020

Athlete Perspective:

- Olympic sport should be about humans trying to push physical and mental boundaries
- Need for more transparency
- What influences decision making the most?
 - Finances/Sponsorship/TV/Media/Broadcasting
 - Interest of the public/younger generation
 - Long term sustainability of the sport
 - History and tradition
 - Athletes/ Athlete Commission input
 - Olympic values compatibility
- Maintain the Olympics as the most prestigious sports event
- The IOC should take a proactive approach and create a vision to drive

changes to the sports the Olympic programme impacting the sports landscape.

- Innovative ideas for formats and programmes can keep existing sports relevant to viewers/new media
- When integrating new sports, respect the sports origin, identity and values

Athletes' perspective on E-sports and the Olympics:

- Current sports require body, mind and equipment. E-Sports adds technology to the mix.
- E-sports technology must be sustainable over a fixed period to become an Olympic event.
- E-sports could be in the Winter and Summer Olympics.
- Is it possible or fair for men and women to compete against each other?
- It is possible to mix E-sports and regular sports. Is this desirable?

3. Are the IOC and other governing bodies responsible to live up to the Olympic ideals?

Top priorities are:

- The IOC/NOC/IF leadership should live up to the same high standards athletes are held to and lead by example
- Olympic values create an important framework and must be respected by leadership
- Zero tolerance for bribery, corruption, misconduct
- Equal representation across gender, geography and sports
- Consider independent body for ethical decisions



Presenting the conclusions derived from the works of the discussion groups.



DISCUSSION GROUP 2

- 1. Social media is a fast-growing tool gaining more and more publicity and influence on society. What are the pros and cons of it? Which strategies can be applied to help athletes use their social media in the most appropriate way to get the right messages across?**

Using the social media power nowadays the athletes can definitely make a strong impact on society. To assist athletes to use this power we can at least provide them with directions and encourage them to contribute in promoting sports, ethics and Olympic values and give inspiration in the best possible way as good examples for the youth. Some of the pros and cons of social media use are mentioned below:

Pros:

1. Reach out to big groups of people fast and easy
2. Pass personal messages on from their sporting experience
3. Generate income from sponsors
4. Networking for more business and social opportunities
5. Direct communication with elite athletes. Humanise and identify with real life situations outside of sports
6. Promotion of the sport and themselves
7. Sharing the life of an elite athlete's road to success

Cons:

1. Freedom for harmful expression of speech
2. Adding more pressure on the athletes to stay on the top level performance-wise, thus creating more stress for victory

3. Failure is also more stressful because it is shared with audience that has greater expectations from the athletes
4. Dealing with negative comments
5. Public criticism
6. Distraction of some team-sports athletes of whose success relies on all team members
7. Bad content can damage the image of an athlete
8. Some posts can be distorted and turned into drama and negativity

Strategy:

Within the growing world of social media, the IOC needs to approach role model elite athletes and encourage them to use their media for a more constructive and influential way to project all the positive messages to children, youth and society in general. As we cannot interfere with the freedom of speech nor control differing personalities, some guidelines need to be provided by the IOC, as a strategic way to guide media usage. The better the guidelines are from the IOC, the more chances there are to have a win-win situation. The next step would be the IOC to forward these guidelines to the NOC's and also to all the National Athletes' Commissions to eventually reach all the athletes. Additionally, special seminars should be organised primarily by the NOCs for further briefing and guidance. Some strategies include:

- Projecting and give exposure to the positive aspects/parts of situations instead of the negative ones
- Respect that he/she is a representative of the Olympic spirit and accept that they are carrying this heavy responsibility
- Hiring a social media manager
- Training by a social media specialist on what Olympians need to publish within the Olympic spirit, values and ethics. Governing bodies such as the IOC, the NOCs, National Federations and the Athlete's Committees need to pass on these guidelines to Olympians on how to handle their public profiles and posts in the most appropriate way
- Taking advice and insight information from active athletes who are actually on social media for the last 5-6 years
- Consultancy from a sports psychologist to prepare for unexpected crisis situations

Media can make you or break you. There is no control over it except to control your actions and yourself. On the other hand, your personal social media is under your control and it's the athlete's responsibility to maintain a positive image no matter what. Athletes need to do their best with this "power" held in their hands and realistically project what is happening backstage in their life.

2. How can role models contribute to giving hope to vulnerable groups of people and help them intergrate into society?

Speaking of vulnerable groups of people we would first have to state that each one of these groups is unique and needs a different kind of approach. Some of these groups include:

- Refugees
- Prisoners
- Juvenile prisoners
- Orphans
- Disabled people
- Kids with chronic diseases
- Drug and alcohol addicts

Role model athletes are not only examples for younger athletes succeeding in their sports. They also play a big part in developing others and passing on important values to children and people in general. Through their own experience and success they can teach others ways to overcome all their difficulties and life obstacles by giving them strength, guidance, inspiration and especially hope for better life. Athletes can specifically show them how to believe in themselves and help them build up their self-confidence. One of the most important aspects would be helping these vulnerable groups to integrate into society and this can be achieved through sport.

Everything is possible as long as you can believe in your inner strength!



*Around
the IOA
premises.*



DISCUSSION GROUP 3

To start the answer to this topic of Educational role of Olympic Medallists and Olympians as Role Models, we had to define what a “role model” is depending on the expectation of the public and the image we have of ourselves. After defining the role model, we had to find out what an effective role model is or how to become an effective role model.

Once we had more understanding of a role model, we were interested to have further research into the impact that role models can have across society.

What constitutes a good athlete role model?

A good athlete role model will possess some of the following:

- A story of adversity and/or having overcome great obstacles that demonstrates their virtues and lessons learnt as an athlete that can be emulated by others.
- Believes in Olympism and the Olympic values of friendship, respect and excellence.
- Characteristics including courage, resilience and persistence; ability to deal with failure and adversity; ability to go beyond the ordinary; have a good work ethic and is diligent; proactive and constantly striving for excellence; being humble, genuine and true to oneself; has integrity and is respectful.

A good role model has dealt with challenges that could include injury, losing, bad media yet they do not let these adversities stop them from pursuing their passion. Even if he or she makes a mistake, they are willing to acknowledge their faults and are truly remorseful and would take the steps necessary to give back and go beyond. It is not necessary to be an Olympic medallist to be a role model. On the flip side, when they are successful, they are gracious and humble.

An example of a bad role model will be someone that is arrogant and disrespectful of the rules of sport and society, their competitors, or officials.

Finally, it is important to realise that sometimes, an athlete becomes a role model not of their own choosing. It is important to acknowledge that they are a public figure and the way that they live is observed which might also affect their private life. Hence, there is a responsibility to portray a positive image to be an inspiration to the next generation.

What makes an effective role model?

Firstly, an effective role model needs support to deliver the message accurately. Support can come from clubs, federations, NOC or IOA. For example, in Belgium, there are ambassadors of the NOC who are provided with opportunities to present to the sponsors and their message is developed together with their NOC.

Secondly, role models should be educated. They should be informed on the impact that they can have on the life of others. It would be vital to provide them tools early in their career, and also at the subsequent stages as their needs will vary. Also, the way they present themselves is an essential part of being an effective role model. Media and social media are tools that they have at their disposal but need to be used in the proper manner.

Some points that could be useful when making a presentation include

- Adequate preparation before delivering a message
- Knowing the audience and adjust the message to match the needs of the audience
- Have confidence in speaking through practice and self belief
- Make the presentation interesting through the use of images and videos, props such as sports equipment, medals etc.
- Use questions for more interaction
- Create their message using their life lessons of their Olympic journey and their motivations and highlights. This is not only limited to within the realm of sports
- Charisma is helpful but is not a necessity
- It is important to note that just because we were an athlete, it does not mean we are experts in all the fields.

How do you measure the impact of a role model?

To establish the effectiveness of a good role model, we discussed ways to measure the impact a role model can have. When asking the question of impact, it naturally leads to asking more questions.

There are two ways of measuring this impact. We found that it would be easier to measure the short term impacts of the role model. There were three main areas that we discussed that could be measured for short term.

In society we can measure it by the number of role models visiting schools.

- How many people attended?
- How many learnt something?
- How many schools have athletes speaking?

We can ask the same question about motivational speaking outside of the school environment.

In the sport environment, the number of people in the sports club turning up for training when the role model is present or the new members of the sports club or federation can be measured as short and medium term impacts.

In social media, the number of followers or the increase (and trend) of followers can indicate the level of impact a role model can have. For active athletes, social media is an easy way to take control of their message and see the impact it is having. The number of likes, comments, shares, messages for each post will indicate the level of engagement.

The interest of journalists through the number and quality of the articles contribute to the measure of the impact of a role model. Search engine results are another way of seeing what people are interested in and whether there is high or growing interest.

Long term impacts are more difficult to quantify, but the impact of the role model can be of a higher quality. Measuring long term impacts would be more inclined to survey feedback. It means that the NOC or Federation would have to have an interest in order for the surveys to be resourced. Generations of Athletes and Olympians have been inspired by Olympians that have been before them, but this information could not be collected without asking the athletes.

Observing an increase of depth at the elite level (of the role models sport/discipline) can be evidence of the long term impact they have had on their sport.

An example of a long term impact that our group heard was a story of kids who improved their level of reading because they were interested in reading

more about their role models. Another example would be the presence of facts related to the athletes' journey within the school curriculum.

We can say an increase in funding, resources and recognition can be a direct way to show the impact of the role models. However, the responsibility of the research will be up to the different stakeholders and the relevance to them.



Practising sports and enjoying in between the works of the Session.

An aerial photograph of an ancient Greek temple complex. The central feature is a large, circular theater with a tiered seating area and a stage. In the center of the theater is a courtyard with a large, ornate fountain. Surrounding the theater are several long, rectangular buildings with classical architectural features like columns and arches. The entire complex is surrounded by lush greenery, including many palm trees and other tropical plants. In the background, there are rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky.

Closing Ceremony

ANCIENT OLYMPIA, 7 JULY 2018



*The Olympians received their participation diplomas
by Prof. Konstantinos Georgiadis.*



CLOSING ADDRESS
on behalf of the Session's Participants
by Jan ROODZANT (ARU)

Speaking on behalf of the participants of the 4th International Session for Olympic Medallists or Olympians, I would like to express my gratitude for being here and give special thanks to all the people responsible for giving us this unique opportunity to participate in this Session.

First of all, I would like to thank the IOA president Mr Kouvelos for the great hospitality and organisation at the very well maintained campus of the International Olympic Academy. We had an amazing time and felt very welcomed by everyone here from the first second we arrived till the last moment of goodbye. Another big thank you to professor Georgiadis, for leading the lectures and discussions, as well as his own input of precious knowledge, without forgetting to mention his great soccer skills!

During the career as an athlete, we focus on the future, we set our goals and try to make dreams come true; to participate at the Olympic Games, to reach the final or win the most prestigious medal of all, a golden Olympic medal.

To become this hero, and make history, there needs to be history. We saw where it all started during a perfectly guided tour in ancient Olympia. We listened and learned about all the history behind it and actually stepped on the birth place of the greatest sporting event around the world. This magical feeling was indescribable.

In addition to this, the lectures gave us a lot of information about the history of the Olympic Games, the philosophy aspect behind it, the obstacles we need to overcome and the tremendous influence of the media – not only the broadcasting part, but also the fast growing sector of social media. The lectures were not only informative, but also emotionally intense as we saw and felt how the lecturers were themselves emotionally attached to their subject. Who wasn't

looking for their sunglasses during the lecture of Prof. Dr Rubio? Who actually made us shed a few tears ourselves.

As every event, it is not made possible without people working behind the scenes; our thanks go out to the IOA staff and all the people who helped this session become real and successful.

Above all, big thanks to all of you –the Olympians– for accepting the invite and coming here to meet each other. It gave us the opportunity to share our experiences, our stories, our limitations, our expectations for the future, but also all the fears we had –and still have– to deal with.

Now, we are going home with knowledge, having the opportunity to give back to society. Spread the values of Olympism worldwide. We are in the position that the world can listen to and have an impact on. Holding on to these special passionate feelings given to us by ancient Olympia, the lecturers and the participants we can make a difference. Both in our own future and society.

And now we are going home knowing each other with worldwide friendships. We all know we are a special group called Olympians and a special group has special opportunities. Look for those opportunities and use them wisely. We can help each other. Don't be shy of sharing problems and ask for help. We all want to help; otherwise we would not be here. We have a common vision to share and we hold the position to do that in order to have a positive impact on society.

Thank you all for one more time and I wish to each one of you good luck in your future endeavours. See you soon my friends!

CLOSING ADDRESS
on behalf of the Session's Lecturers
by Prof. Katia RUBIO (BRA)

Throughout these days of work and coexistence it was possible to know and understand a little more about who Olympic athletes are, and what drives these extraordinary human beings. Determined to seek the best of themselves every day, they devote many years of their lives to accomplishing the heroic feat of belonging to a select group that holds Olympic status. Still, even breaking records, accomplishing Olympic standards, and gaining notoriety, Olympians, as role model athletes, are all too human and suffer with the same anguish and fears as other people.

If agonism is the driving force of those who consider competition as their *raison d'être*, the heroic attitude of facing daily battles and overcoming pain, injuries, defeats and errors, as humans, immortalises every Olympic athlete – regardless of his other final achievements.

On behalf of the professors and speakers of the 4th Session for Olympic Medallists and Athletes, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to learn a little more about Olympism through the protagonists of the Olympic Games. And once again remind you that you are the greatest legacy of this important event.

To conclude, I would like to offer you a poem that refers to resilience, coping with adversity, and the beauty of persisting in the face of difficulties.

Still I rise
(Maya Angelou, 1928-2014)

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like tear drops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

CLOSING ADDRESS
of the Session Proceedings
by the Honorary Dean of the International Olympic Academy
Prof. Konstantinos GEORGIADIS

Spending approximately one week together at the IOA and organising this wonderful session, an amazing workshop of public discourse on the issues we dealt with, lecturers and participants created an exceptional environment with their comprehensive speeches and interesting questions, the athletes' personal narratives and the discussion panel which closed the programme of this session. I am certain that many aspects of the athletic and Olympic model and its role in the modern Olympic Movement have emerged thanks to your own specialised participation.

However, the issue of the athlete – role model remains exposed to the challenges it will face in the future from society itself at international level. Nevertheless, I believe that with regard to these challenges you have a role to play as to how you want to define yourselves within the framework of this role model. The IOC and other international sport organisations will certainly continue to support athletes and create the conditions for their valorisation in the context of sports and education. Those of you who will attend the Youth Olympic Games in Argentina will have the opportunity to be a living example for young athletes there. The Olympic Movement could not ask for better interlocutors.

Dear friends, before I say goodbye, you will allow me to personally thank the distinguished lecturers of the session for their comprehensive presentations, which highlighted various aspects of the role of the athlete: Professors Paul Gaffney, Stephan Wassong and Katia Rubio, athletes Aya Medany, Chryssi Biskitzi and Sarah Walker, the CEO of the Olympic Broadcasting Services Yianis Exarchos, the archaeologist of the IOA Dr Vassililki Tzachrista and finally our very dear David Wallechinsky, President of the International Society of Olympic Historians and author, for his outstanding moderation of the panel.



*The Olympians received their participation diplomas
by Prof. Konstantinos Georgiadis.*

It is with great honour that I declare the closing of the proceedings of the Session and I would like to express my warmest thanks to all of you and to the staff of the IOA because with your presence here you demonstrate the love and respect you have for a place that for some 50 years has been a centre of education, culture and sport training. I want to believe that thanks to the works of this Session, we all have gained knowledge and feelings about the issues we dealt with.

I wish you a safe journey back home and all the best for your future life!

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