

Reflections on the Day

Andrew McAlister from the Australian Olympic Committee indicated that IOC audience research suggested that there is a problem with the commitment of Gen Y to the Olympic Games and Olympic symbols and brands. Unfortunately, the figures (which presumably are confidential) on which this opinion was based were not made available so members of the Academy who were none the wiser as to the extent of the problem.

To the credit of Olympic authorities some policies have been developed to address such the youth 'problem'. (It would be interesting to know whether FIFA or the IRB have similar concerns). Three solutions to this Olympic youth problem were suggested during the day.

Solutions

1. The staging of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Singapore from 14–26 August 2010. Based on the experience of the Australian Youth Olympic Festival that had been held every two years since 2003 (check?), it was evident youth Olympic festivals provide a pathway for many elite athletes to Olympic representation.

However, it became clear during discussion that the event would be unlikely to achieve mass television coverage and interest the large majority of non-Olympic youth. The benefits of YOG appear to be limited to an elite band of youth athletes.

2. Sport for all initiatives, It was suggested during the day that if the IOC and AOC wished to enhance the sports interest of the majority of Gen Y it should organise youth fun runs or similar events. This would help increase the commitment of Gen Y to sport in general and may enhance the status of the Olympic Games

with this age group. However, it appeared that no such plans were in place to initiate any youth sport for all initiatives.

3, New media. Damien Moston from SMAM suggested that there had been a large expansion in new media at the time of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games which included mobile telephony, internet streaming and even chat rooms involving athletes in the Olympic Village (though there were limits to what athletes could actually say).

Ambiguities

It was noted during the day that the likely inclusion of two new sports, golf and rugby, in a future Olympic Games would do little to attract youth to the Olympic Games. The likely inclusion of these sports seems to run counter to the inclusion of 'youth' sports such as triathlon (2000) and bmx (2008).

Gen Y and its interests

There was much debate during the day about what interests Gen Y and how it might differ from Gen X.

Further issues for consideration

The Academy raised as many issues as it answered. Some further questions for consideration are:

What will be the outcomes of the Youth Olympic Games?

Is the increasing use of new media having an impact on the appeal of the Olympic Games to youth?

How does Gen Y regard the Olympic Games and sport in general?

