

CHINA AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Introduction

Focus

This *CBC News in Review* story highlights the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, held in Beijing, China, and their impact on the host country and the rest of the world.

Did you know . . .

In 1984 and 1988, Canada won more medals than in Beijing, but these Games suffered from massive political boycotts. See "Politics and The Olympics" on page 28 for more.

Further Research

To learn more about these events, consider visiting the following Web sites: Government of China: <http://English.gov.cn>, International Olympic Committee: www.olympic.org, Canadian Olympic Committee: www.olympic.ca, and Vancouver 2010: www.vancouver2010.com.

On August 24, 2008, the XXIX Olympic Games came to a dramatic end in the huge Bird's Nest Stadium in Beijing, China. An impressive display of fireworks illuminated the skies as over 90 000 spectators and millions of television viewers worldwide watched in awe. The members of the Olympic teams from over 200 countries surged enthusiastically into the stadium. Some waved flags while others captured the moment on cell-phone cameras. Karen Cockburn, who won a silver medal in the women's trampoline event, proudly carried the Canadian flag. Canada's team had a special reason for celebrating, as its medal total rivaled the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games.

As the Olympic Torch, which had burned continuously for the 16 days of the contest, was extinguished, Spanish tenor Plácido Domingo and Chinese soprano Song Zuying sang a duet celebrating international goodwill, and a human mountain of dancers took down the "Memory Tower," which had simulated the flame. To China and the world, it appeared that the Beijing Olympic theme of "one world, one dream" had been realized.

Meanwhile, London, poised to host the next Summer Games, in 2012, staged a sister show from a trademark double-decker bus, starring rock legend Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin fame, popular singer Leona Lewis, and soccer superstar David Beckham. Shortly after the closing ceremony, Jacques Rogge, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), proclaimed the Beijing Games a total success, both for the host country and the world. Noting that the global television audience for the contest had risen 20 per cent since

the 2004 Olympics in Athens, he stated, "China has learned about the world, and the world has learned about China. It has been a long journey since our decision in July 2001 to bring the Games to China, but there can now be no doubt we made the right choice."

For a proud Chinese people and their leaders, the Olympics were undoubtedly a great success, in terms of both the sporting events themselves and the impact of the Games on the international scene. China's Olympic team had won 51 gold, 21 silver, and 28 bronze medals—more than any other country, including such former Olympic powerhouses as the United States and Russia. The level of competition had also been higher than in previous contests, with 43 world and 132 Olympic records falling. An unprecedented 2 173 events in 625 competing sessions were staged, resulting in the awarding of 308 gold medals. American swimmer Michael Phelps and Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt became international sports celebrities after their outstanding performances in the pool and on the track. And in a poignant moment that captured the true Olympic spirit of friendly competition, Nino Salukvadze, the Georgian bronze-medal winner in the 10 metre air pistol event, embraced silver medallist Natalia Paderina of Russia at the same time as their respective countries were waging war against each other. (See the October 2008 issue of *News in Review* for more about this war.)

But beyond the drama on the fields of competition, the Games had also been a dramatic success for China as it assumed its position as the emerging superpower of the 21st century. China's leaders had spared no expense in financial and

Did you know . . .

China spent a reported \$42-billion to host the event. China welcomed 500 000 visitors and 11 000 athletes to its first-ever Olympic Games.

human resources to ensure that the Games were an awesome spectacle for both their own citizens and the millions of foreigners who either attended the Games in person or viewed them on television. Over \$40-billion was spent on developing the infrastructure, including many new athletic venues and an impressive subway system. A concerted effort was made to deal with the country's serious pollution problem. The Games themselves were also relatively untouched by the kind of political conflicts and controversies that had marred previous contests.

Calls for an international boycott over China's policies in Tibet and its poor human rights record went unheeded. The senseless murder of the relatives of the coach of the U.S. volleyball team by a deranged individual shortly before the opening of the Games momentarily raised questions about security but failed to have a lasting negative impact. A dispute over the age of China's women gymnasts caused some complaints among competing teams but was downplayed by IOC authorities. And the promise of a "protest park" near the Olympic site where demonstrators could draw attention to their causes went unfulfilled as the authorities denied all of the applications made for it. But these were minor disruptions in what were otherwise an extremely well-organized and impressive Olympics. In the words of Liu Qi, the head of the Beijing organizing committee, the Games were "a testimony to the fact that the world

has rested its trust in China. They were a grand celebration of sport, of peace, and of friendship."

With the Games over, it remains to be seen what their lasting implications will be on a rapidly changing China and its relationship with the broader international community. Individual Chinese citizens had the opportunity to host visitors from around the world and learn more about the freedoms enjoyed by those from Western countries. One of the consequences of the Games could be an increase in demands for freedom of expression, especially via new means of communication such as the Internet, which a younger generation of Chinese people has enthusiastically embraced. There may also be calls for a lessening of the heavy hand of the governing Communist Party and a move toward greater democracy. On the other hand, the regime's claim that only a highly centralized and disciplined political authority could have ensured the success of such a mammoth project may shore up its popular support among the over one billion Chinese people. For ordinary citizens of China, the Olympics were a great source of national pride and global recognition of their country's growing economic, political, and military dominance on the international scene.

Source: "Summer Games closed," "Olympic host China strikes gold," and "IOC head Rogge satisfied with China's Olympics," *Toronto Star Online*, August 24, 2008, <http://olympics.thestar.com>

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Video Review

Did you know . . .

The number 8 is an especially lucky number in Chinese tradition. The Games were “five times lucky” because they opened at 8:18 of the eighth day of the eighth month in the year 2008. In Beijing, 16 000 couples chose to be married on that auspicious day.

Archives

To enjoy footage of Canada in earlier Olympic contests, visit the CBC Digital Archives at www.cbc.ca/archives and explore using the term *Olympics*.

Watch the video and answer the questions that follow.

1. What three things about China made holding the Olympics in that country a complicated affair?

2. In what respects are young Chinese today different from the generation that took to the streets of Beijing in political protests demanding greater democracy in 1989?

3. a) What is the name of the architect who designed the impressive Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium in Beijing?

b) What is his attitude toward the Games and the Chinese government responsible for holding them?

4. Why was the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics such a source of pride for people of Chinese background living in Canada and other countries?

5. Who were the two main athletes who attracted world attention at the Beijing Games? In what sporting events did they excel?

6. Who was the first Canadian athlete to win a gold medal at the Games?

a) How many individuals and groups applied for permits to stage legal protests at the Beijing Games?

b) How many of these applications did the Chinese government approve?

Did you know . . .

The most famous Canadian in China is Mark Roswell, of Toronto. He speaks fluent Mandarin and is a wildly popular comedian known as Dashan. His name means Big Mountain, and he was privileged to carry the Olympic Torch during its route in China.

8. What is different about the way the athletes enter the closing ceremony of the Games from how they enter the opening ceremony? What is the origin of this tradition? How does it exemplify one of the goals of the Olympics?

9. In what ways did the closing ceremony point to the fact that London will host the next Summer Olympics, in 2012?

10. What country and city will host the next Winter Olympic Games, in 2010?

For Discussion

After watching the video, form groups with your classmates to discuss the following:

1. From what you saw in the video, explain why the opening and closing ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics were such visually impressive events.
2. How does China's contemporary reality reflect both its ancient traditions and the forces of modernization that are transforming the country today?
3. With your classmates, discuss the following quotations from the video and state how you personally respond to them:

"[My parents'] first consideration used to be what society wanted them to do, what's best for the country. Now it's different. We're just thinking about what is best for us. A generation ago, China's young people wanted democracy and change. Today they want money, new cars, and better jobs. Priorities have shifted; politics are for politicians. Many haven't even heard of the events of Tiananmen Square, and those who have don't necessarily agree with what the protestors did." — Shang Hun

"The Chinese government was very corrupt at the time. I think what the students did was an important thing, but they were too radical. We just want to make money and after we get money, we want something else. It's hard to be completely satisfied." — Zu Guoning

"I have no commitment to China. If I have a little commitment, it is to life itself but nothing to China." — Ai Wei Wei, architect who designed Beijing's Bird's Nest Olympic Stadium

CHINA AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

China: Profile of an Awakening Dragon

China is the world's most populous country and an emerging global superpower. It is also the nation with the world's longest continuous history and culture, stretching back over 4 000 years to its founding by the Emperor Xin, who gave the country its name. Since 1949, the Communist Party has governed China, and under its firm leadership, the country's economy has expanded dramatically over the past few decades. Its population stands at 1.3 billion, according to the latest (2007) United Nations estimate, and its capital city is Beijing, the host of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games. Shanghai is its largest city and a growing centre for China's rapidly developing economic and commercial life. The main language spoken is Mandarin Chinese, but Cantonese is widely used in the south, and there are also many other regional dialects. The major religions are Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity. However, under Communist rule public religious expression has not been widely encouraged. However Confucianism, more of a philosophy of living than a religion, pervades much of Chinese society, with its emphasis on education, hard work, personal responsibility, respect for elders and concern for the common good.

The average life expectancy of a Chinese man is 71 years; for a woman it's 75 years. China's unit of currency is the yuan renmimbi, with 6.5 yuan worth one Canadian dollar. China's main exports are manufactured goods, especially textiles, clothing, electronic products and weapons. Its GNP per capita is USD\$1 740, according to a 2006 World Bank estimate. The country's head of state is President Hu Jintao, who was elected to the post in

2003 by the National People's Congress, China's highest legislative body. He was re-elected to the office in 2008. China is a one-party state, where the Communist Party exercises supreme authority without facing the challenge of any legal political opposition. The country's leaders reject Western charges that their regime is undemocratic, pointing out that governing such a huge and diverse country requires rigid control and supervision, especially at a time of great economic and social transformation. At the same time, they claim that the country is gradually moving in a more democratic direction, with its citizens enjoying greater access to consumer goods and information from other parts of the world.

China has been hailed as the economic success story of the new century, and it is modernizing and developing its economy at a truly phenomenal rate. For many Chinese, this economic growth has brought with it increasing prosperity and opportunity, but the benefits have not been equally spread among the population. The gap between rich and poor has widened dramatically, giving rise to the observation that China's claim to be an egalitarian communist society is far-removed from its contemporary reality. China entered the 20th century as a poor, underdeveloped country under the domination of the Western powers, and was nicknamed "the sleeping dragon." After a tumultuous series of events, including the 1911 revolution that overthrew the reigning Manchu dynasty and ushered in a republic, the 1931 Japanese invasion that brought massive destruction to the country, and the ensuing civil war between the Communists under Mao Zedong and their nationalist rivals, the victorious

Did you know . . .

The Communist Party of China actually has a special division for its members who are millionaires.

Chinese Communist Party proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Before a rapturous crowd in Beijing, Mao defiantly proclaimed to the world that "the Chinese people have finally stood up."

Mao became the all-powerful leader of the new regime until his death in 1976. Under his rule, many ambitious projects were introduced to modernize and develop the country while at the same time maintaining a rigid communist system. The so-called Great Leap Forward of the 1950s and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of the 1960s were sweeping, radical attempts to alter the country's economy and society. However, these came at a great cost, with tens of millions of people losing their lives in the process. After Mao's death, a new generation of more pragmatic and moderate leaders took charge. In 1978 Communist Party chairman Deng Xiaoping instituted a policy of free-market economic reforms. Under Deng and his successors, China's economy has grown by at least 10 per cent per year; its industrial production has expanded at an even higher annual rate: 17 per cent. As of 2008, China's economy is second in size only to that of the United States. By 2020 it is expected to become the world's largest economy.

After decades of self-imposed exclusion from the global economy under Mao's ironclad communist regime, the new China has enthusiastically integrated itself into international trade and commerce. Its share of world economic output has risen fourfold over the past 30 years. Deng and his successors continually emphasized the "four modernizations"—agriculture, industry, science and technology, and defence—and China has seen impressive growth in all of these fields. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (www.wto.org). Since then the export sector of its burgeoning

economy has risen to a quarter of its GNP, a five-fold increase from 1978. Imports have also risen, and China is now the world's largest importer of raw materials. In addition, China is becoming an emerging military superpower. This fact has aroused some concern among foreign-policy analysts in the U.S. who fear a looming confrontation between the two nations sometime in this century, possibly over trade and economic rivalry for natural resources.

This breathtaking process of economic and social transformation has brought in its train both positive and negative consequences for China and its people. A new generation of Chinese millionaires is enjoying the fruits of prosperity, and a wave of consumerism and love of all the latest Western material goods and fads are sweeping many parts of the country, especially in the major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. At the same time, however, hundreds of millions of Chinese have so far not seen their lives improve substantially. They continue to eke out a very marginal existence, particularly in the countryside. The rush to modernize the country has led to serious environmental degradation in many parts of China, leading to some concerns in the West about high pollution levels in Beijing and their negative impact on the staging of the Olympic Games. In addition, there are widespread allegations of rampant corruption among governing Communist Party officials, who are accused of taking bribes from foreign investors to promote economic development. Many young Chinese are becoming increasingly restive over the regime's refusal to permit greater freedom of expression, and over its controls of new communications media such as the Internet. Religious sects like the Buddhist Falun Gong experience harsh repression, and China's heavy-handed policy toward Tibet and the western region of Xinjiang, home to the

Quote

“China is like my mom and Canada is like my lover.” — Chinese-Canadian Diana Zhang (*Toronto Star*, August 8, 2008)

country’s large Islamic Uighur minority, has been the target of much international criticism.

China’s leaders are hoping that in hosting the Summer Olympic Games in Beijing they were able to present a positive image of their country to the world and showcase the impressive advances it has made in its economy and society. They brush aside international criticism of their poor human rights record and lack of democratic freedoms as unwarranted interference in the country’s internal affairs, pointing out that China refrains from levelling similar attacks at aspects of Western society that it finds unappealing. For most ordinary Chinese citizens, the fact that their nation hosted the Olympics is a source of great national pride. This is also true for the millions of people of Chinese background who now live in other countries, including Canada.

By opening their rapidly changing country to throngs of foreign visitors and global media outlets during the Games, both China’s leaders and its people hope that the international community came away with a favourable view of the country and the impressive economic and technological progress it has made over the past few decades. This is especially true in sports, where China hoped to rival the United States as the country with the highest medal count at the Beijing Games. At the same time, however, the leadership ran the risk of growing restiveness and dissent among the population as it became more exposed to Western societies and the freedoms their citizens enjoy, some of which are still difficult to exercise in China.

Source: “China’s economic miracle: The high price of progress,” CBC News In Depth: China, www.cbc.ca

To Consider

- 1. Why is China’s economic progress over the past three decades such an impressive phenomenon?

- 2. In what respects is it true to say that China is the emerging superpower of the 21st century?

- 3. What are some of the positive and negative consequences of China’s economic development?

CHINA AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Politics and the Olympics – Past and Present

Despite the widely held view that international sports competitions like the Olympic Games are no place for political conflicts, both the 2008 Beijing Games and their predecessors have been the scene of serious controversies and unfortunate incidents. According to Professor Rob Ruck, a sports historian at the University of Pennsylvania, “there is an irony that we tend to think that sport should somehow transcend politics, but it rarely does. Sport is infused with politics.” And Ruck’s observation is especially true for the Olympics, which bring together teams of athletes from over 200 of the world’s nations for an intense period of competition, highlighting their country’s prowess in sports as well as the political differences between them.

The ancient Olympic Games, which began in 776 BCE at Olympia, were originally designed as a way of bringing together the Greek city-states for peaceful competition. As a result, any wars being fought by participating cities were suspended for the duration of the contest. The founder of the modern Olympic Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French nobleman, had been sickened by the carnage of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. He hoped that his resurrection of the Games in the 1890s might serve as a peaceful alternative form of international competition. Unfortunately, de Coubertin’s dream proved to be a failure during the 20th century, when the Games had to be suspended during the course of the two World Wars.

Since the end of the Second World War, international political rivalries such as the Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union have cast a long shadow over some Olympic

Games. In addition, they have frequently been sites for the expression of other global conflicts and disagreements. Here is a selection of some Olympics of the past, profiling how politics and sports proved to be inextricably connected during the contests.

Berlin, 1936

Nazi Germany and its leader, Adolf Hitler, were the proud hosts of the 1936 Summer Olympics in the capital city, Berlin. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had granted Germany the right to host the Games prior to Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, and there was considerable international opposition to holding them there after the brutal face of the Nazi dictatorship was revealed to the world. According to David Wallechinsky, vice president of the International Society of Olympic Historians and author of two books on the history of the Games, there were plans for alternative Games in Barcelona, Spain, during the summer of 1936. However these had to be cancelled when the Spanish Civil War broke out. Sensitive to international criticism of his regime’s domestic policies, in particular its persecution of German Jews, Hitler ordered that public expressions of anti-Semitism should be suspended for the duration of the Games and hoped that the international community would see only the positive face of the Nazi state, especially the prowess of its Olympic team. But the Nazis’ racist ideology encountered a serious embarrassment when African-American athlete Jesse Owens won a gold medal in the 100 metre sprint. An outraged Hitler left the Berlin Olympic Stadium in disgust. Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels even went so far as to make

the ridiculous claim that the IOC should not permit black athletes to run against whites, arguing that Africans were closer to wild animals than people, and should therefore be competing against cheetahs or panthers, not fellow human beings.

Nonetheless, the 1936 Berlin Olympics were undoubtedly a propaganda triumph for Hitler and the Nazis. The regime's official filmmaker, the notorious Leni Riefenstahl, produced an impressive documentary of the Games, entitled *Olympiad*, which is still appreciated today for its cinematographic merits, despite its odious underlying celebration of the Nazi state and its racist ideology.

Mexico City, 1968

Mexico was the first and to date the only Latin American country to host the Olympic Games. Its ruling party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was keen to use the opportunity to present a positive image of the country to the world. Unfortunately, the Games were held during a period of intense international upheaval, with major demonstrations occurring worldwide over the United States and its war in Vietnam. Students were protesting against their governments in France and other European countries, and in Mexico itself a radical student movement was unhappy over the PRI's undemocratic policies. In addition, in late August 1968 the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia had triggered widespread international protest. In the United States, Americans had been traumatized by the increasingly violent course of the African-American movement for civil rights and the assassinations of two major political figures: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

A mere 10 days prior to the opening of the Games, Mexican troops fired on a peaceful gathering of students at Tlatelolco, just outside Mexico

City, killing over 250 demonstrators. Despite this outrage, the IOC refused to consider suspending the Games, or even criticizing Mexican authorities for the massacre. But during the Games themselves, a dramatic protest that was covered worldwide on television occurred when two black American athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, raised their fists in the "Black Power" salute while receiving their Olympic medals in the track and field competition. The outraged IOC president, Avery Brundage, ordered the U.S. team to send the two athletes home or risk expulsion from the Games. According to Wallechinsky, these events highlight the double standard the IOC follows when dealing with political controversies at the Olympics. "You can shoot down 250 people in the street, but don't ruin the medal ceremony. People are completely oblivious to the fact that people were massacred in the streets of Mexico City. It shows how images and the media can create our perception of an international event."

Munich, 1972

International terrorism marred the Munich Games of 1972, the first held in Germany since 1936. Eleven Israeli athletes and their coach were taken hostage by the radical Palestinian group Black September and lost their lives in a bungled attempt to rescue them. This horrific event cast a shadow over the Games and highlighted the severity of the political conflict between Palestinians and Israel in the Middle East. Israel vowed to avenge the slaying of its athletes and authorized an elite hit squad of its renowned Mossad secret service agents to track down those responsible for the atrocity and eliminate them. Recently American filmmaker Stephen Spielberg dramatized these events in a major motion picture entitled *Munich*.

Quote

"We speak out for a free press, freedom of assembly, and labour rights, not to antagonize China's leaders, but because trusting its people with greater freedom is the only way for China to develop its full potential."
— President George W. Bush (*Toronto Star*, August 7, 2008)

International Boycotts in Montreal, Moscow, and Los Angeles

The first serious international boycott to strike the Olympics took place in 1976, when Montreal was the host of the Games, a first for Canada. A number of African countries withdrew their teams in protest over the IOC's refusal to suspend New Zealand after its rugby team's tour of South Africa. At that time South Africa itself had been suspended from competition over its racist policy of apartheid, which prevented black South African athletes from competing in the Games.

But a far more serious boycott, involving almost every Western country, struck the Moscow Games four years later, when 65 countries, including the United States, Canada, and most of Western Europe, refused to participate in protest over the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan a few months earlier. In retaliation, the U.S.S.R. and the nations allied to it, including most of Eastern Europe and Cuba, did not send teams to Los Angeles in 1984. As a result, both of these Olympics were the victims of Cold War hostilities, impacting on the medal results. The Soviet Union and its allies dominated the 1980 Games, while the United States won a record number of medals in Los Angeles in these two lopsided Cold War-era Olympics.

Beijing 2008

China was the proud host of the 2008 Games, and its leaders planned to use the opportunity to showcase their country

and its dramatic progress. But a few months before the opening of the Games, Chinese troops violently suppressed an uprising in Tibet, leading some Western critics to call for a boycott of them. China was also being attacked for its poor human rights record at home and its refusal to intervene against the Sudanese government in the ongoing massacres in Darfur. Just prior to the opening of the Games, U.S. President George W. Bush issued a harsh rebuke to China's leaders on these and other issues, echoed by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

The Beijing Games should prove to be a major introduction to Westerners for the Chinese people, who are hungry for change. According to Susan Brownell, an anthropology professor currently researching the Games at Beijing Sports University, "the Beijing Olympics mark the moment in human history when China is incorporated into the world system to a degree never seen before. Because of the intense interaction and high level of collaboration with the outside world required to organize the Games, many Chinese people are just now realizing that their old way of doing things did not reach international standards—and that they did not understand the West as well as they thought they did."

Source: "Let the politics begin: Olympic Games often reflect historic events in the wider world," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. August 6, 2008, <http://post-gazette.com>

Inquiry

1. Why do many people believe that international sporting events such as the Olympic Games are not the place for politics? Do you think this view is realistic? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that the dream of the founder of the modern Olympics that the Games would help to replace war as a means of international competition has any chance of becoming a reality in the future? Why or why not?

3. In what way did either domestic or international political conflicts impact on the Olympic Games in

a) Berlin

b) Munich

c) Montreal

d) Moscow

e) Los Angeles

4. How do you think China's hosting of the 2008 Summer Games in Beijing will affect that country's political system and its relations with the West? Do you think this would be a positive development for China and the rest of the world? Why or why not?

CHINA AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Canada's Achievement at Beijing

Did you know . . .

An actual Olympic gold medal is worth about \$200 as of September 2008. Each Canadian gold-medal winner receives \$20 000 for the achievement.

Canada's Olympic team performed credibly at the Beijing Summer Olympic Games. Despite a slow start, this country's athletes brought home a total of 18 medals—three gold, nine silver, and six bronze. This was Canada's best Olympic showing since the 1992 Barcelona Games. According to Chris Rudge, the CEO of the Canadian Olympic Committee (www.olympic.ca), this positive result means that Canada is moving in the right direction in terms of its international sports objectives, but also that a great deal more has to be done to realize the potential of our athletes. As Rudge noted, "this is a point on a continuum. If we don't carry on from what we've accomplished here and we don't build on this in the future . . . we will have done a disservice to the Olympians of the future."

Canada's medal haul places the country 19th in overall Olympic standings, which the IOC bases on the total number of gold medals each country wins. But the Canadian Olympic Committee (COC) uses a different standard, counting equally all medals won. In this scenario, Canada came in 13th place, tied with the eastern European nation of Belarus, formerly a part of the Soviet Union. This represents a 50 per cent increase over the 12 medals Canadian athletes won at the Athens Games in 2004, which were relatively disappointing for this country's Olympic team.

Canadian sports authorities like Rudge believe that this country possesses a rich pool of potential Olympic-level competitors. In his view the problem lies in identifying likely talent and providing the necessary resources to groom it to international levels of competition.

As he notes, "all the good ideas in the world don't mean anything if you don't have the raw material there to get to the top. We need to get more athletes into the system." This involves greater funding, by both government and private sponsors, and the development of state-of-the-art training facilities, especially in southern Ontario, where over a third of the total Canadian population resides.

The COC uses a "conversion rate" to measure the performance of Canada's athletes in international competitions such as the Olympics. According to this, there were 27 Canadian competitors who finished in the top five of their respective world championships in 2007. The 18 medals won at the Beijing Games translate into a 67 per cent conversion rate. In Athens there were 35 Canadians in the top five of their competitions in 2003 who accounted for 12 medals; the conversion rate was only 34 per cent. Thus, according to this formula, Canada's team has doubled its competitive advantage between the Athens and Beijing Games, a cause for much satisfaction among COC officials.

Rudge hopes that the positive results from Beijing will encourage more public- and private-sector support for our athletes and a greater effort to identify and train potential Olympians. As a first step, he has called on the federal government to increase its annual support for sports from \$24-million to \$30-million. He also hopes that Canada will be successful in its bid to host the Pan American Games.

Source: "Medal haul solid base for Canada to build on," *Toronto Star Online*, August 24, 2008, <http://olympics.thestar.com>

Analysis

1. Do you think that Canada should be proud of the achievements of its Olympic team in comparison with the results that other countries achieved at the Beijing Games? Why or why not?
2. What steps do you think Canada could take to improve the performance of its athletes in international competitions such as the Olympics?
3. Identify some of your favourite Canadian athletes who won medals at the Beijing Games and briefly profile their achievements.
4. Do you think that Canada is doing enough to identify and train potential Olympic-level athletes from a young age? Why or why not?

CHINA AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Activity: Planning for the Olympics in Vancouver

Form groups of four or five to evaluate what you think were the factors that made the Beijing Olympics a success and what could have been done to make them even better. Apply these evaluations to the next Winter Olympics, to be held in Vancouver in 2010, and use them as the basis for a note to the organizers of the Vancouver Games, suggesting what lessons you think they could draw from the Beijing Games. You may contact the organizers of the 2010 Winter Games at www.vancouver2010.com/en.

You may use an organizer similar to the one below to structure some of your ideas.

Use the following criteria for consideration in your note:

1. What are the main differences between the Summer and Winter Olympics with respect to how the host nation and city can plan and organize for them?
2. How does Canada differ from China with respect to how it can respond to the challenges and responsibilities involved in planning and organizing an Olympic contest?
3. What advantages do you think Canada has as a potential host nation for the Winter Olympics?
4. What were the achievements of the last Winter Olympics Canada hosted, in Calgary in 1988?

Organizer

Positive Features of 2008 Summer Games	Negative features of 2008 Summer Games