

# “SHAPING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER”

## The Power of Change

### Comments by:

**Dr. Liston Bochette**

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Minister **Leeflang**, President **Millerson**, Mr. Corsen, distinguished guest, friends and fellow Olympians... **Devon, Cor...**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today here at this most important conference; Shaping our Future Together. This activity draws on the best people prepared and willing to lead. Hopefully, those unable to attend will receive a positive report on your behalf when you see them again. Let there be no misunderstanding why we are together. We are here to listen to one another, share concepts, pass critical analysis and lay a clear path for the future.

I am especially pleased to see those of you I have come to know and trust over the years. May our new acquaintance blossom into the same fellowship as the days pass.

They say that the second greatest fear humans hold is to be eaten alive by wild animals.... The first and greatest fear though is speaking in public! I imagine there are some people who prefer to be eaten than to speak their mind. **Devon Harris** is certainly a man without fear of beast or any public audience.

My presentation to you was especially designed for this day. It blends three topics that have relevance and urgency to each of you in some fashion; Time, leadership, and community. I hope that my thoughts will create further conversation, and carry over beyond the confines of these walls. Ponder my words, question my ideas, and apply what best serves you. As Henry Ford said; “If you think you can or you think you cannot.... You are right.”

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While growing up between Florida and Puerto Rico I found that I was neither the best athlete nor the best student among my peers. However, blessed with a little talent and excess desire I began to surpass my colleagues who simply failed to apply themselves. Five Olympic Games and two doctorate degrees later I realized what **Thomas Edison** called his formula for success to be “10% inspiration and 90% perspiration”. Hard work certainly pays off. To paraphrase the a Greek poet; The road to success is strewn with the names of good intending souls who gave up or gave in only because they were unwilling to make the effort needed to reach the goal.

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Of all the mankind’s discoveries since antiquity one stands above all others. It is not a cure for a disease, exploration of a distant galaxy. Rather, it is the realization of time itself. Imagine a world whereby people could not think in terms of years, or months, days, or even hours or minutes. The grasping of time allows us to understand our past, enjoy our present, and plan for our future. Where we stand today is but a turning page in life. Everything changes. Rivers run dry, ice caps melt, empires rise and fall. Each morning the glow of the sun greet us slightly different that the way it bid us adieu the dusk before. We should not fear what tomorrow holds in store for us but welcome the challenge a new day will bring. Change is natural, change is expected, and change is inevitable. The best we can do is to be prepared ourselves to make the most of it. Failure to change means surrender and death.

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Yesterday we heard our friend from **CUROIL** tell us that investing in people creates new leaders, new ideas, and new successes. He certainly understands the clock of life. One modern philosopher said; “what does not destroy you will make you stronger”. Another said “adapt or perish” and yet another said “the only value life holds is in the struggle to succeed”. There is truth in this as people who reach the top of their profession know. The captains of industry, finance, and politics all realize that the joy of an effort made outweighs the spoils of the rewards rendered.

There are two tragedies in life; not getting what you want... and getting what you want. In the end they cause the same feelings. Most people are disappointed with what they get when they finally get it and wish to return to the days when their dreams filled their hearts. Maybe that is the artist in us all. Creation is far more rewarding than completion. Life is either a work in process or it is over and finished.

A recent advertisement says that there should be an ‘easy button’ when times get tough. I can tell you that there is no such magical button in sport. Success is first and only a result of dedication and discipline in action.

At the 1968 Olympic Games the world witnessed three individual acts that redirected the world:

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- **Al Oerter** won his 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive gold medal proving that dreams are a sustainable quality.
- **Dick Fosbury** won the high jump leaping head first and backwards over the bar proving that new solutions are there for the taking.
- **Bob Beamon** shattered the world record in the long jump by nearly a meter proving that limitations are only in our minds.

Leadership means taking risks. Olympians are risk takers. Olympians spend their time proving to the world that the quality of life one lives is far more important than the quantity.

Sharing is a fundamental element in the Olympic creed. Athletes gather together to test one another in an elusive quest for excellence. On any given day the graces of victory or the despair of defeat may seize the competitor. Sport is in essence a collection men and women testing themselves against an allusive scale. Their differences are overlooked as the world focuses on their similarities. The friendships that spring from the field of play defy the stigmas of race, creed, or color. Athletes bond with each other through the mutual respect fostered by playing by the rules. From the glow of the stadium lights, a partnership for a better world is forged among Olympic athletes.

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The first stage in producing a citizen athlete comes through the teachers and coaches in local school yards and play grounds. Young athletes learn through basic education principles to enjoy the physical activities provided for them. Whether in organized ball games or simple foot races, young people learn and appreciate one another through participation.

The second stage of producing a citizen athlete comes through established sports programs. Many youths learn the values of working together when they join a team effort. Here they improve their physical and mental skills while practicing as a unit.

The third stage comes about at the highest level of performance. Elite athletes demonstrate their refined abilities to achieve a specific goal. This means following a plan and being dedicated to see its outcome. These three stages produce the citizen athlete we call an Olympian.

Becoming an Olympian means more than going to the Olympic Games. An Olympian enters the stadium as an athlete but leaves as an ambassador of sport's highest ideals. From the sixteen days in Olympic Village and the years of preparation to get there, an athlete acquires a sense of social responsibility unlike any other. After the days of competition have passed many Olympians care enough to teach the next generation of aspiring youths the lessons of success needed in society. They also volunteer for community service projects, from environmental clean ups to combating domestic violence, to promoting cultural programs. They rarely sit down and watch the world go by.

There are three types of people:

- Those who say; "What happened".
- Those who say; "What is happening".
- And.... Those who say; "Let's make it happen".

Olympians accept a challenge and inspire others to do the same. They are some of today's best role models by taking personal responsibility for their actions and committing to a common cause.

It takes time to turn a young athlete into an Olympian. For every 100 children on the play ground perhaps half will participate in sport. Half of those will enjoy having a coach. Half yet may pursue sport beyond the basics. Maybe one in a hundred will become a serious athlete. Maybe it is more like one in a thousand. Every four years 10 thousand new Olympians are parade across our TV screens. The chance of making it to the Olympic Games is remarkable small. With a global population of five billion inhabitants only one in every five million people are make their team.

They come from all foreign lands and from all walks of life. More know poverty than they do luxury. Most Olympians live below the United Nations line of material standards. Having been a guest lecturer at the United Nations I can assure you that the material poverty they speak of is far less a problem than the intellectual poverty than is afflicting people in all lands. Education is the only escape from the clutches of economic indentured servitude.

For many youths the only hope of making something out of their lives is through sport or the arts.

The famous baseball coach Tommy Lasorda was asked how he wins so many championships. He replied that he understands that 60% of the people want him to lose while the rest don't even know what baseball is. In essence winning is an attitude that champions learn. Winning anything requires a positive attitude and a positive self image. Aspiring to be the next best is admitting to failure. As long as a person strives to do their best they can be said to live the Olympian way. Doctors, lawyers, teachers, firemen, policeman, shop keepers, mechanics, monarchs and parents alike can be called are Olympians when they expect and accept nothing less than their best every step of the day.

Words do not make heroes, actions do. Medals do not make champions, actions do. Excellence is determined by faith and Faith without action is nothing short of failure.

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The Challenge for sport to keep pace with popular interests is an ongoing effort for those involved in sport at every level. Sport is rapidly shifting from being seen as a way leading to greater recognition and opportunity to a way of guaranteed delivery. The faltering socialization of sport is a byproduct of the 'me generation'. Unwilling to spend the time needed to develop skill in sport is bleeding over to school lessons. Many young people say that; 'that they want it all, they want it now, and they want it for free'.

Education forms the foundation of the Olympic Movement and must be promoted in a positive fashion in order to encourage young people to participate. The IOC Charter places Olympism at the service of mankind... and in doing so seeks to move people forward to a more active and changing lifestyle.

Without a pedagogical purpose the Olympic Games could be considered passive entertainment in an age of voyeurism. Sport is more popular than ever to watch but is it still popular to participate in? Many youths are simply unwilling to make the effort. The markers of decline in physical education have been documented in countries across the map. A growing avoidance of sport participation has been brought about as a result of the multimedia revolution; most notable video and computer games. Technology has caused a massive redistribution of leisure time away from physical activity. Many youths today consider exercise a form of punishment rather than a measure of greater health and happiness. The fundamental benefits of sport participation have been progressively undervalued while public attention has been diverted towards material acquisition.

The results are demonstrated by the dramatic drop in social and interpersonal relations among youths and a rising pattern of anti-social conduct. How to affectively engage youths in a sport learning process, while not objecting to modern market desires, is a major concern for civic leaders. Although academic studies have positively concluded that physical exercise significantly contributes to the physical and mental well being of all people. The message is not reaching those who need it most; youths. Spiraling obesity rates, Attention Deficit Disorder, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancies rates, and other maladies are reducing the quality of life among our youngest citizens. The fundamental obstacle facing educators is how to alter prevailing attitudes regarding exercise and realigning motivation toward participation in sport.

A set of universal attributes accompanies the teaching of sport disciplines; task planning, time management, resource allocation. Goal orientation, strategic thinking, cooperative contributions, as well as respect for the system of rules and authorities. No longer do youths respect titles earned by their elders but rather feel compelled to contradict them and disregard their expertise. Authority plays a significant role in the future a person's life. Without access to an Olympic based education, many sport programs could be eliminated, go unnoticed, or even eliminated. A new focus that emphasizes popular social trends must be incorporated into a grass roots educational effort.

There are basically two ways to advance the philosophy of Olympism. The first is to construct a universal curriculum available through national educational institutions. This is a formidable task on a global scale because of the enormous costs and coordination entailed. Curriculum design is the lesser problem compared to program implementation. Few school officials have an in-depth knowledge of the Olympic Games to create a sustainable classroom environment.

The second method is far easier to engage. Employing athletes as role models and messengers of Olympic principles provides an affective and economical solution to confronting the sedative social stigma. Efforts should continue to build a universal Olympic educational curriculum in the classroom. Special attention must be placed on addressing a wider audience through the demonstration of practical merits by Olympians, coaches, and administrators alike.

Construction of a sport savvy approach to learning is critical for youths as time gradually distracts and dilutes their focus away from traditional systems. Current data indicates that elite athletes have an increasing influence over popular culture and individual personal conduct. Role modeling by athletes, although a proven factor in the development of social trends has already been designed to serve a school setting in line with long range goals. Utilizing the Olympic Family 'on site' speakers offers a wide variety of benefits. An organized campaign of personal contact with youths contributes to more healthy social conduct in the majority of countries considered.

#### Method

Positive results have been produced through a number of pilot study tests that included Olympians as teachers. A comprehensive review of knowledge, combined with a random sample survey among Olympians and non-Olympians contributed to the establishment of the program. The formation and implementation of the program was drawn from practical and theoretical models. The mobilization process used followed a progressive series of constructive stages.

#### Table I (Making it happen)

1. Formation of the organizing committee
2. Creation of major points of interest
3. Enlistment of qualified Olympians
4. Establishment of target schools
5. Coordinating sessions with authorities
6. Implementation of program with youths
7. Assessment of results

#### Table II (What is presented)

1. Introduction of Olympian and their background
2. History of the Olympic Games
3. Personal experience at the Olympic Games
4. Presentation of program theme and relation to Olympic values
5. Questions and answers

#### Table III (sample program themes)

1. Sport For All
2. Fairplay
3. Equal opportunity (women in sport)
4. Sport and the environment
5. Personal health
6. Education
7. Culture

## Results

Initial information reflects a high rate of qualitative success as determined by independent supervisors. Participants reported a surge in motivational factors to be involved in overall community based sports activities. Reasons of improved personal and collective social, mental, and physical health were cited as primary reasons

## Conclusions

The early stages of establishing the program proved to be easy. The design and delivery of programs was more difficult due to inadequacies at the leadership level at the schools. Olympians who participated proved to be very effective in delivering the content information once they understood the plan. The overall program should be expanded to reach more youths. This community based service system provides a way to restore current social trends away from sport and in turn enhance sports participation for progressive generations.

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I would like to close by sharing a new project a group of Olympians and myself have embarked on. Discontent with the public information about the spirit of Olympism we have begun to build a permanent center for Olympic values. This signifies a dramatic change in the way sports may be viewed in the future. Then again sport has the power to change everything.

Thank you for allowing me to share some of your time here today. We live in a time and in a place where we have the freedom to express ourselves, contribute ideas, and design our own future. Let's be sure that we do this with wisdom and vision for the future, anticipating and knowing that tomorrow will bring us new adventures in society, in sport and in our lives itself.