

Management Of High Performance Sport

Chairs: Andreas Christoph Weber, Swiss Federal Institute of Sports Magglingen SFISM; Hippolyt Kempf, Swiss Federal Institute of Sports Magglingen SFISM

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Weber, Andreas Christoph¹; Kempf, Hippolyt¹; De Bosscher, Veerle²

¹Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen SFISM, Switzerland; ²Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium
E-mail: andreas_christoph.weber@baspo.admin.ch

The Olympic Games are a dynamic competitive environment for nations to compete in. This dynamic is characterised by an increase of nations competing and winning medals, as well as nations increasing their investment in high performance sport (Chappelet, 2014; De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek, & Van Bottenburg, 2015; Houlihan & Zheng, 2013; Weber, Kempf, Shibli, & De Bosscher, 2016). These dynamics are described in the literature as an ongoing global sporting arms race between nations (De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, Van Bottenburg, & De Knop, 2008; De Bosscher et al., 2015).

Nations are challenged to adopt to this competitive environment and to manage their high performance sport system accordingly. Within the national system, the National Sports Agency (NSA) is the leading decision-making organisation on the national level of sports, or high performance sport in particular (Sotiriadou & De Bosscher, 2013). Working together with other governmental, non-profit and for-profit organisations of a national elite sport system (Weber, Güntensperger, Lichtsteiner, Stopper, & Renaud, 2015), these hybrid or non-governmental organisations are responsible for, among other things, the allocation of (financial) resources to the different sports, which are supported on the national level. The NSAs generally aim at increasing (or at least stabilising) their medal success at the Olympic Games and possibly build a competitive advantage in the longer run (Reiche, 2016; Sam, 2012; Zheng & Chen, 2016).

Given that the expenses for Olympic success are increasing, this thematic symposia focuses on the following questions:

- Which strategies do nations apply to increase their success at the Olympic Games?
- Which role does the National Sports Agency play in the elite sport system?
- How can National Sports Agencies implement their strategies in their national system — Challenges and best practice?

These questions are addressed by taking the perspective of scientists and of practitioners. The first perspective is reflected by Prof. Dr. De Bosscher (Vrije Universiteit Brussels VUB) who puts in context the sporting arms race and the NSA's taking decisions on the national level to increase their nation's international sporting success. Dr. Zheng (Hong Kong Baptist University) presents the strategic approach of China notably increasing its success at both, the Olympic Summer and Winter Games. China has shown an incredible increase of Olympic success since the Olympic Glory Plan has been introduced in the 1990s. The Chinese Ministry of Sports applies a strategy summed up by the 'Five-Word principle', i.e. Small, Fast, Women, Water and Agile.

The perspective of a practitioner is adopted by Mr. Kojonkoski (Director of the Finnish Olympic Committee) and Mr. Stöckli (Head of elite sport and Chef de Mission of Swiss Olympic). Olympic success of Finland has notably declined at the Winter Games in the last two decades. Since the 2001 Finnish doping scandal at the FIS Nordic World Ski Championships in Lahti, the Finnish elite sport system has been challenged and extensively analysed. The Finnish Olympic Committee is in the process of developing and implementing strategies, which aim to stop the decline and to restore the Finnish success in the upcoming Winter and Summer Games. Switzerland has been traditionally performing more successful at the Winter Games than Summer Games, but the top 3 ranking in the medal table of the 1988 Calgary Winter Games could not be repeated since. Keeping up in the ongoing nation's arms race, Swiss Olympic managed to significantly increase public funding from the lotteries and the Federal Office of Sport in 2017.

Hence, both practitioners provide insights in the challenges of their working environment. The learnings of the management of the Finnish and the Swiss elite sport system are discussed in a table round and put in context, given their limited resources. This discussion is led by Mr. Minder (Federal Department of Finance,

former Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport). Thereby, the role and strategies of these two NSA's, which are challenged to respond to the dynamic competitive environment of the global sporting arms, are exemplarily examined in this symposia to possibly identify best practice.

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