Original Article

Selection criteria for the Greek athletes who participated in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games

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Abstract:

Many athletes from almost all countries prepare for years aspiring to participate in the Olympic Games (OG). The responsibility to select the athletes who will represent the country in the Games belongs to the respective National Olympic Committee (NOC). In order to select those who have better chances to perform well in the Games some NOCs have established selection criteria. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the Hellenic Olympic Committee's (HOC) Selection Criteria System (SCS) for the athletes who participated in the Athens 2004 OG. The methodology used included review of relevant literature, interviews from key people and personal involvement in the process. The results showed that with the introduction of the SCS Greek athletes achieved better results at the international level, including the 2004 OG. It was concluded that the HOC succeeded in establishing fair and transparent selection criteria for the athletes aspiring to participate in the OG and allowed the organization to make easier and better decisions regarding the selection of the athletes who would participate in the 2004 edition.

Key words: International Olympic Committee, Hellenic Olympic Committee, Selection Criteria.

Introduction

The Olympic Games (OG) is the most significant sport event in the world and many athletes aspire to participate in the event, at least once in their lifetime. This is why the number of athletes who participate in the Games rose from 241 in the 1st OG of modern times (Athens, 1896), to 10.625 in the 28th OG (Athens, 2004) (www.olympic.org). In order to maintain the complexity of the Games in manageable proportions, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to put a limit to the number of participating athletes. To that extend, in 1993, in cooperation with the International Sports Federations (ISFs), the IOC introduced criteria for participation in the OG, which the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) presented to the National Sports Federations (NSFs). In order to achieve sporting success the NSFs receive money from their country's government, sponsors and other sources, hence their activities must be transparent and in accordance with the pertaining laws (Palmer, 2005). To that extend, fair and consistent criteria for assessing the work they do, which are communicated well in advance, should be applied to them, as well as to all stakeholders of the OG (i.e., NOC's, athletes, officials, medical teams, etc.) (Duncan, 2005).

Bearing in mind the fact that the 2004 OG would be held in Athens, Greece, the Hellenic Olympic Committee (HOC) established a plan, which connected the selection of the athletes with the NSFs' preparation programs. Considering the fact that there are many different sports / athletes / competition rules / recordings of results and, most importantly, perceptions of what success is, establishing objective and fair criteria for selecting athletes is a quite difficult task. The issue becomes more complex because it is associated with the distribution of money to the NSFs for the Olympic preparation of their athletes. Almost every time conflicts arise among the NSFs regarding these criteria, raising the issues of objectivity and transparency on behalf of the NSFs and of effectiveness and efficiency on behalf of the HOC.

Method

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the HOC's Selection Criteria System (SCS) for the athletes who participated in the Athens 2004 OG.

Methodology

This study was materialized using literature review (HOC's archives, the International Olympic Academy's library, and other relevant sources), interviews with an HOC Technical Advisor and personal involvement in the whole process.

Evolution of the HOC's policy on selection criteria

The HOC was established on 24 November 1894, to serve the purpose of organizing the 1st OG of modern times, hence it was the first NOC in the world (Koulouri, 2002). As sports were not organized in the country at that time, in order to select the athletes who would participate in those Games the HOC did not set any particular criteria. Instead, they organized national games at the island of Tenos and the winners of the events were registered in the OG (Chrisafis, 1930; Skiadas, 1996).

The first attempt to establish selection criteria for the athletes was made in 1978, when Mr. Nikos Filaretos, HOC's Secretary General at that time, proposed a system called "5 Olympic Cycles", which was based on standards established by the ISFs, similar to one adopted by the Belgian NOC. Mr. Filaretos' proposal was not endorsed by the HOC (www.hoc.gr).

Few years later, Mr. Ioannis Papadoyiannakis, Chairman of the HOC's Olympic Preparation Commission (OPC) [The Olympic Preparation Commission (OPC) constitutes of HOC Board members, assisted by two Technical Advisors, who function as links between the OPC and the NSFs] at that time, proposed an Olympic Preparation Program (OPP), which specified entry standards for athletes aiming at participating in the Seoul OG (1988). The HOC adopted the proposal and for the first time basic criteria for selecting athletes were adopted. However, because of time constraints they were valid only for that particular Olympic year (Plenary Session HOC, Decision 40/12.12.1987).

In 1991, the HOC announced criteria for the pre-Olympic and the Olympic year of 1992, mainly regarding the selection of athletes and not the distribution of money to NSFs. The goal set for those Games was merely "to do better than before" (www.hoc.gr).

In 1993, in cooperation with the ISFs the IOC introduced strict criteria for participation of athletes in the OG. The HOC followed suit and established an SCS on a quadrennial basis, paving the way for a better Team preparation and better results in the Games (OPC, 2003). The time between 2 OG was divided in 2 periods: a) the post-Olympic, which included the 1st and 2nd year after the last OG (during this period the selection criteria were not so strict and included athletes from the Youth and Junior categories) and b) the pre-Olympic, which included the pre-Olympic and the Olympic year of the next OG (during this period the selection criteria were stricter and concerned only sports / events included in the OG Program).

For Individual Sports the criteria were: a) the establishment of a new World, or European record, and b) the acquirement of a certain ranking at the following competitions (different for each sport) at least once:

- Previous OG (top 16 places, or in the top 50% of the athletes on the field).
- World Championships Men / Women / Junior.
- World Cups Men / Women / Junior.
- European Championships Men / Women / Junior.
- Mediterranean Games Men / Women.
- Selected International Contests (predetermined for some sports).

For Team Sports the inclusion was determined by the respective ISF and was valid until the completion of the pre-Olympic qualification tournaments.

In the beginning of each year the performances achieved by the selected athletes in the previous year were evaluated and those who were meeting the criteria were staying in the Team. Athletes not belonging in the Team could be included only after they produced results satisfying the criteria for that specific period.

The OPC connected the selection of the athletes with the NSFs' preparation programs and obliged them to submit the objectives of their OPPs. At the end of each sport year the OPC would compare those objectives with the results achieved and the results with the established Criteria. Based on the evaluation the Commission would allocate the money the NSFs should be receiving [In the process, the evaluation of the training programs did not play any significant role, as funds became available for those programs anyway]. According to the OPP presented by the HOC on 27 January 1998 the goals and objectives of this plan were to:

- Guide all NSFs in establishing a long-term plan regarding the preparation of the athletes.
- Plan, organize, lead, control and evaluate training projects for the years 1997 - 2000 in each discipline addressed to Olympic level athletes.
- Secure the smooth development of the Olympic Team activities.
- Financially reward the athletes and coaches over the period 1997 – 2000.

Criteria for selecting the athletes who participated in the Athens 2004 OG

For the Athens 2004 OG the first pre-Olympic Team was formed in 2001 according to the criteria presented in table 1.

Table 1: Criteria for the selection of the athletes who would participate in the Athens 2004 OG.

Criterion A: 1 – 3 in the OG 1 – 3 in World Championships World Record	Criterion B: 4 – 8 in the OG 4 – 8 in World Championships 1 – 6 in World Lists
Criterion C: 9 – 16 in the OG 9 – 12 in World Championships 1 – 3 in European Champ. 1 – 6 in World Champ. (J) 7 – 12 in World Lists World Record (J) European Record	Criterion D: 4 – 6 in European Champ. 1 – 3 in European Champ. (J) 13 – 20 in World Lists 1 – 8 in World Lists (J) Particular Distinctions in Major International Competitions
Criterion E: Participation in the Last OG	Criterion F: Directly Qualifying for the OG
Criterion G: Hopeful Athletes	

In order for individual athletes to be selected to participate in the 2004 OG they should: a) meet one of the criteria A, B, C, D & E and b) be in the quota number (In individual sports a certain number of athletes can participate, irrespectively of the number of athletes who have met the qualifying standard). However, in order to attract the interest of the host country's people the IOC allows as many individual athletes of the country as possible to participate in the Games. So, under criterion F they provided the opportunity to participate in the Games (over the quota number) to Greek individual athletes who had met at least one of the criteria A, B, C & D. Also, criterion G allowed athletes / teams to participate after proposal of their respective NSF. When the selection process was over a large and expensive team was created, while a control system was not introduced.

Results

Evaluation of the HOC's overall performance in the OG

The value of information depends on its quantity, quality, appropriateness, timeliness, objectivity (Anthony & Young, 1988) and the method used to analyze it (Baraldi, 1998). Valid information enables organizations to effectively evaluate their management practices and preserve the indispensable legitimacy with respect to the society through increased accountability. To that extent, state, national, and international organisations require the application of assessment and control systems for transparent and rational distribution of funding (Mandela, Bayle & Tome, 2005). In order to evaluate HOC's performance in the OG in relation to: a) its own performance over the years, b) all other participant countries and c) the effectiveness of the established criteria a research on the results of all modern OG until 2004 was conducted, a detailed database with all the necessary information was compiled and certain analyses were performed. The most apparent way for the success of an NOC at the OG to be estimated is by the number of medals won by the country's athletes (table 2).

Table 2: Number of medals won by Greek athletes in OG until 2004.

OG	Medals	OG	Medals
1896	48	1952	-
1900	-	1956	1
1904	2	1960	1
1908	4	1964	-
1912	2	1968	1
1916		1972	2
1920	1	1976	-
1924	-	1980	3
1928	-	1984	2
1932	-	1988	1
1936	-	1992	2
1940		1996	8
1944		2000	13
1948	-	2004	16

The high number of medals won by Greek athletes in the 1st OG could be explained by the fact that out of 241 athletes only 90 were from 13 other countries (Maritchev, 1996), who traveled long distances in order to go to Athens and compete, hence they were quite tired.

Coefficient Ranking (CR) in relation to the number of participant countries

In order to make the evaluation of the HOC's overall performance in the OG until 2004 more precise the number of participant countries in each edition of the Games was analyzed. This number was divided by the ranking (Ranking involves only the countries that won at least one medal during an OG) of the HOC in those Games to produce the CR, which provided a performance measurement in relation to other NOCs. The bigger this number is the better, with the optimal CR being equal to the number of participant countries. In the period before the establishment of criteria HOC's CR average was 2.19, while in the period after criteria were introduced the CR average increased to 10.99 (an improvement of 80.07%) (table 3).

Table 3: CR in relation to the number of participant countries.

OG	NOCs	Rank	CR	OG	NOCs	Rank	CR
1896	14	2	7,00	1952	69	-	-
1900	24	-	-	1956	72	38	1,89
1904	12	7	1,71	1960	83	23	3,56
1908	23	15	1,53	1964	93	-	-
1912	28	15	1,86	1968	112	41	2,73
1916				1972	122	30	4,06
1920	29	19	1,52	1976	92	-	-
1924	44	-	-	1980	80	22	3,63
1928	46	-	-	1984	140	32	4,37
1932	37	-	-	1988	159	49	3,24
1936	49	-	-	1992	169	26	6,50
1940				1996	197	16	12,31
1944				2000	199	17	11,70
1948	59	-	-	2004	202	15	13,46

Number of Individual Athletes and percentage of those who finished in the top 8 positions

Another interesting approach is the calculation of the percentage of the Individual Athletes who finished in the top 8 positions. In the pre-criteria period, when a low number of athletes participated, a relatively high percentage appears, while in the post-criteria period, when a large number of athletes participated, the percentage increased considerably (table 4).

Table 4: Number of participating athletes and of athletes in the top 8 positions.

OG	Number of participating athletes	Number and % of athletes in the top 8 positions	OG	Number of participating athletes	Number and % of athletes in the top 8 positions
1896	151	88 (58,28%)	1952	47	2 (4,42%)
1900	6	2 (33,33%)	1956	13	3 (23,07%)
1904	14	8 (57,14%)	1960	48	3 (6,25%)
1908	20	18 (90,00%)	1964	18	5 (27,77%)
1912	28	26 (92,85%)	1968	44	6 (13,63%)
1916			1972	60	7 (11,66%)
1920	49	23 (46,93%)	1976	36	5 (13,88%)
1924	39	-	1980	41	10 (24,39%)
1928	24	-	1984	64	32 (50,00%)
1932	10	5 (50,00%)	1988	57	6 (10,52%)
1936	40	4 (10,00%)	1992	70	10 (14,28%)
1940			1996	121	48 (39,66%)
1944			2000	146	41 (28,08%)
1948	57	4 (7,01%)	2004	438	200 (45,66%)

Number of Sports, which gained at least one place in the top 8 positions

The number of Sports, which participated and gained at least one place in the top 8 positions in the post-criteria period maintained a steady increase as well (table 5).

Table 5: Number of Sports, which gained at least one place in the top 8 positions.

OG	Sports	OG	Sports
1896	9	1952	2
1900	1	1956	2
1904	3	1960	1
1908	2	1964	2
1912	2	1968	4
1916		1972	5
1920	2	1976	3
1924	0	1980	4
1928	0	1984	7
1932	3	1988	3
1936	2	1992	6
1940		1996	9
1944		2000	11
1948	2	2004	22

Diachronic performance

In order to compare the performances achieved by athletes diachronically and in a broader perspective a point system was introduced, titled “Hellenic Olympic Point Evaluation System” (HOPES) (Interview with Mr. Iatridis, HOC Technical Advisor). This system assigned a numerical value to positions 1 – 8 (table 6).

Table 6: Hellenic Olympic Points Evaluation System (HOPES) for positions 1 - 8.

Ranking in the OG	Points
1	20
2	18
3	16
4	14
5	12
6	10
7	8
8	6

Until Seoul (1988), in 21 OG a total of 2.378 points were amounted to the HOC (average 113,24). In the post-criteria period, in 4 OG (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004), a total of 1.528 points were amounted to the HOC (average 382, which is an improvement of 70,35%). With the exceptions of the 1st OG (Athens, 1896, where 81 athletes achieved top 8 positions), the 22nd OG (Moscow, 1980, where 8 athletes achieved top 8 positions), and the 23rd OG (Los Angeles, 1984, where 17 athletes achieved top 8 positions), a low level but steady collection of distinctions can be observed until the 25th OG (Barcelona, 1992) (table 7).

Table 7: Results of the HOPES in all the OG (positions 1 – 8).

OG	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th	8 th	Total
1896	200	342	304	126	120	70	40	12	1.214
1900	-	-	-	14	12	-	-	-	26
1904	20	-	16	-	24	-	-	-	60
1908	-	54	16	14	12	20	16	-	132
1912	20	-	16	42	24	10	8	-	120
1916									
1920	-	18	-	28	12	-	16	6	80
1924	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

1928	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1932	-	-	-	-	48	-	8	-	56
1936	-	-	-	14	-	20	8	-	42
1940									
1944									
1948	-	-	-	-	-	10	16	6	32
1952	-	-	-	-	-	20	-	-	20
1956	-	-	16	-	-	-	8	6	30
1960	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
1964	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1968	-	-	16	42	12	-	-	6	76
1972	-	36	-	-	12	10	16	6	80
1976	-	-	-	14	-	10	16	6	46
1980	20	-	32	-	12	-	-	24	88
1984	-	18	16	28	36	60	8	18	184
1988	-	-	16	-	-	10	16	12	54
1992	40	-	-	-	12	20	8	18	98
1996	80	72	-	56	36	30	32	12	318
2000	80	108	48	28	36	50	40	24	414
2004	120	108	64	56	132	70	64	84	698

Evaluation of the selection criteria for the Athens 2004 OG

The number of the athletes in the 2004 pre-Olympic Team was increasing each year leading to the Games (table 8). The percentage rate of athletes who finally participated was quite high, as in some events / sports the IOC allowed more athletes to compete (i.e. in women discus 5 athletes were allowed to participate, exceeding the quota number by 2).

Table 8: Number of athletes in the pre-Olympic Team and number of athletes who actually participated in the Athens 2004 OG.

Year	Number of athletes in the pre-Olympic Team	Number of athletes who participated in 2004 OG
2001	Not available	Not available
2002	644 (608)*	272 (44,74%)
2003	661	310 (46,90%)
2004	671	372 (55,44%)

* Data was not available for 36 athletes who constituted the Men + Women Basketball Teams.

Leading to the 2004 OG the number of athletes who participated in the Games under criteria A – B – C - D (table 1) increased, while the number of athletes who participated under criteria E – F - G (table 1) showed a rather not steady flow (table 9).

Table 9: Participation in the 2004 OG per criterion.

	2002		2003		2004	
Criteria	Pre-Olympic Team athletes	Athletes participated in the Games	Pre-Olympic Team athletes	Athletes participated in the Games	Pre-Olympic Team athletes	Athletes participated in the Games
A	30	20 (66,67%)	36	26 (72,22%)	33	28 (84,85%)
B	82	49 (59,76%)	69	45 (65,22%)	89	66 (74,16%)
C	91	32 (35,16%)	100	50 (50,00%)	110	65 (59,09%)
D	47	26 (55,32%)	72	38 (52,78%)	67	41 (61,19%)
E	28	13 (46,43%)	25	9 (36,00%)	22	7 (31,82%)
F	112	50 (44,64%)	217	99 (45,62%)	167	113 (67,66%)
G	218	82 (37,61%)	142	43 (30,28%)	183	52 (28,42%)
Total	608	272 (44,74%)	661	310 (46,90%)	671	372 (55,44%)

Results of the Pre-Olympic Team athletes in the 2004 OG

Many athletes who belonged in the pre-Olympic Teams ranked in positions 1 - 3, 4 - 8 and 9 - 16. Table 10 presents these numbers, as well as the corresponding percentage (calculated in relation to the total of each year's respective pre-Olympic Team). It is observed that approaching the Olympic year the percentage of athletes selected in a pre-Olympic Team was gradually increasing.

Table 10: Results of pre-Olympic Team athletes in the 2004 OG.

Year	Athletes	Positions in the 2004 OG			
		1 - 3	4 - 8	9 - 16	Total
2002	608	26 (4,28%)	93 (15,30%)	91 (14,97%)	210 (34,54%)
2003	661	27 (4,08%)	120 (18,15%)	100 (15,13%)	247 (37,37%)
2004	671	31 (4,62%)	134 (19,97%)	117 (17,44%)	282 (42,03%)

The following table 11 presents an analysis of the results the selected for the pre-Olympic Team 2004 athletes obtained, per criterion. The results have been grouped as follows: positions 1 - 8, 9 - 16, over 16 and no participation in the Games.

Table 11: Results of pre-Olympic Team 2004 Athletes per criterion, as percentage of the total selected.

Athletes in criteria		Positions 1 - 8	Positions 9 - 16	Positions > 16	No participation in the OG
		Athletes	Athletes	Athletes	Athletes
A	33	14 (42,42%)	7 (21,21%)	7 (21,21%)	5 (15,15%)
B	89	47 (52,81%)	13 (14,61)	6 (6,74%)	23 (25,84%)
C	110	32 (29,09%)	24 (21,82%)	9 (8,18%)	45 (40,91%)
D	67	18 (26,87%)	9 (13,43%)	14 (20,90%)	26 (38,81%)
E	22	0 (0,00%)	0 (0,00%)	7 (31,82%)	15 (68,18%)
F	167	36 (21,56%)	52 (31,14%)	25 (14,97%)	54 (32,34%)
G	183	18 (9,84%)	12 (6,56%)	22 (12,02%)	131 (71,58%)

The differentiation of success is evident in the criteria of the 1st category from those of the 2nd category, with the exception of criterion F for ranking 1 - 16.

The following table shows the numbers and percentage of athletes who actually participated in 2004 OG and were in the respective pre-Olympic Team of 2002, 2003 and 2004 according to the position they achieved. A gradual improvement can be observed at all levels and all stages. It is important to note that 100% of the athletes who received medals were selected in the 2004 pre-Olympic Team.

Table 12: Numbers and percentages of athletes who actually participated in the 2004 OG pre-Olympic Team and were included in the respective pre-Olympic Team of 2002, 2003 and 2004, according to the position they achieved.

		2002	2003	2004
Distinction	Athletes	Athletes	Athletes	Athletes
Positions 1 - 3	31	26 (83,87%)	27 (87,10%)	31 (100,00%)
Positions 4 - 8	165	93 (56,36%)	120 (72,73%)	134 (81,21%)
Positions 9 - 16	138	91 (65,94%)	100 (72,46%)	117 (84,78%)
Positions >16	107	62 (57,94%)	63 (58,88%)	90 (84,11%)
Total	441	272 (61,68%)	310 (70,29%)	372 (84,35%)

The following table 13 demonstrates the «percentage of success» (positions 1 - 3, 1 - 8 and/or 1 - 16) in the 2004 OG of those selected in the criteria, per criterion, per year.

Table 13: Number of athletes included in the criteria (per criterion, per year) and the percentage of success in the 2004 OG.

	2002			2003			2004		
Rank	1 - 3	1 - 8	1 - 16	1 - 3	1 - 8	1 - 16	1 - 3	1 - 8	1 - 16
Criteria	Athletes								
A	8 (26,67%)	13 (43,33%)	16 (53,33%)	8 (22,22%)	14 (38,89%)	19 (52,78%)	8 (24,24%)	14 (42,42%)	21 (63,64%)
B	8 (9,76%)	30 (36,59%)	43 (52,44%)	10 (14,49%)	33 (47,83%)	41 (59,42%)	11 (12,36%)	47 (52,81%)	60 (67,42%)
C	1 (1,10%)	16 (17,58%)	27 (29,67%)	0 (0,00%)	20 (20,00%)	43 (43,00%)	5 (4,55%)	32 (29,09%)	56 (50,91%)
D	4 (8,51%)	11 (23,40%)	17 (36,17%)	6 (8,33%)	17 (23,61%)	25 (34,72%)	3 (4,48%)	18 (26,87%)	27 (40,30%)
E	0 (0,00%)	2 (7,14%)	6 (21,43%)	0 (0,00%)	2 (8,00%)	2 (8,00%)	0 (0,00%)	0 (0,00%)	0 (0,00%)
F	1 (0,89%)	6 (5,36%)	35 (31,25%)	0 (0,00%)	40 (18,43%)	82 (37,79%)	0 (0,00%)	36 (21,56%)	88 (52,69%)
G	4 (1,83%)	41 (18,81%)	66 (30,28%)	3 (2,11%)	21 (14,79%)	35 (24,65%)	4 (2,19%)	18 (9,84%)	30 (16,39%)
Total	26 (4,28%)	119 (19,57%)	210 (34,54%)	27 (4,08%)	147 (22,24%)	247 (37,37%)	31 (4,62%)	165 (24,59%)	282 (42,03%)

Discussion

Since 1988, the HOC made a number of attempts to introduce selection criteria for the athletes who would participate in the OG. It is obvious that from one edition of OG to the next the HOC's sport performance is improving, especially after the introduction of the SCS, the number of participant NOCs in the OG the coefficient ranking shows a steady increase and HOPES increases as well. Also, the number of medals, the size of the team, the percentage of athletes who achieved one of the top 8 positions, the number of sports which had at least one athlete in the in top 8 positions are noted to be at a good level, especially during the last 4 editions of OG.

Some interesting remarks regarding the criteria for the 2004 OG are the following: criteria A - D allowed 52 athletes from the Junior / Youth categories to be included in the 2004 pre-Olympic Team, out of whom only 40,38% participated in the Games and 21,15% of them achieved places 1 - 16. While in many cases it was apparent that athletes of those categories were not better than athletes in M / W categories their NSFs requested their selection in the pre-Olympic Team, justifying their choice with the argument that the funding they were receiving for the athletes of Junior / Youth categories classified in criteria A - D was bigger than for the athletes of M / W categories, who would obviously be classified in the criteria F, or G. A good solution to this situation might be for the selection of athletes in the pre-Olympic Team of the Olympic year to be considered records of the previous year only in M / W categories. The criterion G could cover any loss in the selection of hopeful athletes.

Criterion G contained the following provision: "Particular Distinctions in Major Competitions M / W". However, the terms "Particular Distinctions", as well as "Major Competitions" were not so well defined. As they do not organize a World or a Continental Championship every year, some NSFs proposed athletes to be included in this criterion considering as "Particular Distinctions" classification from 1st to 6th place at some international meeting and as "Major Competition" the Balkan Games. It is evident that the determination of the biggest competition for each sport and for each category (M / W / J / Y), every year should be more detailed.

The contribution of the criterion E (Participation in the Last OG) had minimal impact in the Olympic Team. It would be more productive if it was modified as follows: "Placement in the Top 50% of the Participants in the last OG" and be in effect as criterion only for the year following the OG.

With the institutionalisation of the SCS the NSFs' coaches and technical staff started to plan and implement training programs on time, there was an ongoing supervision by the OPC, in close cooperation with the NSFs, of the elite athletes' preparation and their physical condition, there was a continuing interest of the selected athletes for high performance results and the final selection of the athletes who would compete in the OG was facilitated.

Conclusion

With the introduction of the SCS, the HOC established fair and transparent selection criteria for the athletes who aspired to participate in the OG, which: a) prompted the athletes to achieve considerable success at an international level and b) allowed HOC to make easier and better decisions regarding the selection of the athletes who would participate in the 2004 OG.

However, the SCS could be further improved by: a) educating and training people in performance monitoring and evaluation, b) establishing procedures for data collection, analysis and evaluation of performance for each NSF, c) creating a centralized database designed for monitoring the performances of athletes, d)

analyzing the collected data to identify the needs for funding and the impact of funding to high performance results and e) establishing performance standards and measurement tools tailored for each NSF.

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