Warm up

Vox populi or vox Dei?

P McCrory

It may interest readers to know that Australia has had an unexpected fall-out of the 2000 Sydney Olympics—an increase in the population! At a time when politicians are calling for an increase in birth rates, it is pleasing to note that sports medicine is doing its best for the nation. A recent newspaper report noted that 35 overseas athletes who came to Australia for the Olympics did not actually go home. These foreigners, from 26 different countries, flew to Australia on Olympic Travel Authority for the Games, however, according to official immigration department records, two years after the closing ceremony they remain in the country.

One whole team from Myanmar is not recorded as leaving the country. Other countries with missing athletes or officials include American Samoa, Brazil, Columbia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Hungary, Cote d'Ivoire, India, Kuwait, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Slovenia, Somalia, Sudan, Taiwan, Tonga, Ukraine, and Venezuela.

Given the worldwide angst that accompanies the debate on illegal immigrants and boat people, we seem to have a new category of folks that should cause immigration ministers a few sleepless nights, Olympic athletes who have done a runner. This secret Olympic immigration programme solves two problems—more gold medals for the host country and an expansion in the population. In fact for the potential immigrant or refugee with an eye on the main game, arriving on an Olympic travel deal, seeing the sights, having a run around, and then forgetting to get to the flight home sounds much more comfortable than a ride in a leaky boat across the ocean or stowing away in an airtight container with the likely prospect of some time in a detention centre after arrival.

This issue of immigration comes into sport in more than one way. I must admit that the recent Commonwealth Games in Manchester caused me a little consternation. Whilst the swelling pride I felt as we won several hundred gold medals

notwithstanding, more than a few of our athletes seemed recent immigrants. I must admit that living on the coast as I do gazing over the ocean may make me somewhat removed from sports medicine news stories but I recalled from previous Games that many of our weightlifters seemed to have previously won medals and championships for other countries. Now our successful shooters, divers, and other teams seemed to have taken a leaf from the weightlifters arrival guide. I guess this is the way of the world in sport now. We have had tennis players decide not to play for Australia seeking greener pastures elsewhere and other countries similarly seem to acquire overseas athletes to boost their medal prospects. Perhaps, in the not too distant future, an international draft system could be applied. Many of the football codes seem to have a system down pat that could be easily copied by the IOC. In fact if the IOC did this, I am sure they could sell the television rights, get sponsorship for the naming rights and make a quid out of it.

I look forward to the Melbourne Commonwealth games in 2006. With a little forward planning, Australia could top up its medal count by recruiting athletes from the few sports that we didn't win medals in and hey presto, the Olympic travel programme revisited. A politician whose name escapes me once said of Australia that we must "populate or perish". Forget that, just hold a few more Olympics and world championships.

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Note to readers

Since February 2001, we have included colour pictures of sporting activities on the cover of the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. We hereby solicit your ideas and contributions for future covers of the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. Original artwork, photographs, and posters may all be considered. We will credit the photographer and athlete(s)/team on the contents page of the issue.

Please send ideas and submissions (original artwork or high-quality, camera-ready photographs) to Josie Stephenson, BMJ Publishing Group, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR, UK. Electronic submissions (TIFF files, with a minimum resolution of 600 dpi or high quality JPEG files) can be sent via email to editorialservices@BMJgroup.com.

Expression of concern about content of which Dr Paul McCrory is a single author

This paper is authored by Dr Paul McCrory. During 2021 and 2022 there was an investigation by BJSM and BMJ which found that some of his work was the product of publication misconduct. Such misconduct includes plagiarism, duplicate publication, misquotation and misrepresentation in publications in respect of which he was listed as the sole author.¹ We are placing a notice to readers on all content in relation to which he is identified as the sole author to alert them to the conclusions of our investigation.

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REFERENCE

- 1 Macdonald H, Ragavooloo S, Abbasi K. Update into the investigation of former BJSM editor-in-chief Paul McCrory. *Br J Sports Med* 2022.