

Epreuve écrite

Examen de fin d'études secondaires 2008

Section: B-G

Branche: Anglais

Numéro d'ordre du candidat

Athletes struggle to balance politics, Olympic decorum and sponsors

With growing protests in Tibet and pressure mounting on Olympic sponsors to denounce China for its policy on Darfur, socially conscious athletes said they were struggling to figure out how to honour their own beliefs while also respecting the purpose of the Olympic Games - the celebration of athletic excellence.

Jessica Mendoza, a 27-year-old outfielder on the U.S. Olympic softball team, does not hesitate to speak her mind about the killings in Darfur. But Mendoza stops short of publicly condemning China, which has close ties to the government of Sudan, because she believes it is impolite to criticize her Olympic hosts and because one of her sponsors, Nike, has a major marketing presence in China. "I feel like there's no one out there who would think that it's a controversial issue to talk about 400,000 people being killed in Darfur right now," said Mendoza, who helped the American team win a gold medal in Athens in 2004. "But I'm not about to go into China and tell their government what to do."

Brad Greiner, the co-founder of Team Darfur, based in Washington, and a former water polo player for UCLA, said these personal and business considerations had kept some well-known athletes from joining the coalition. "Many are wary of speaking out," he said.

"This is their one time every four years to make money for a lot of sports," said Greiner, 24, who added that the group would intensify its push to sign up top athletes in the months leading up to the Summer Games. "So they need to take that into consideration when making a decision about whether or not to speak about Darfur."

Athletes have few formal guidelines to follow when deciding whether to take a public stand while in Beijing. Rule 51 of the Olympic Charter, the constitution of the Olympic movement, forbids athletes from participating in a "demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda" at Olympic venues. When the International Olympic Committee identifies a possible violation of Rule 51, it asks the Olympic Committee of the athlete's country to investigate. Depending on the outcome, Olympians can be disqualified or sent home.

Some athletes say they are willing to do whatever it takes to draw attention to their cause, even if it means getting expelled from the Olympics. Emanuel Neto, who expects to make the Angolan national basketball team, said he grew up surrounded by war and famine and, as a result, has empathy for the people of Darfur. "I've seen what those kids are going through and it's really, really bad," said Neto, 23, a senior at Stony Brook University and a member of Team Darfur. "It doesn't matter at this point what will happen to me. What matters to me the most is that something has to be done."

Athletes have often used the Olympics to advance their political beliefs, said David Wallechinsky, an Olympic historian. In 1906, the Irish athlete Peter O'Connor, angered that he had been placed on the British team, climbed a flagpole and waved the Irish flag after winning a silver medal. In Berlin in 1936, two Korean athletes complained to the news media that the Japanese - who then occupied Korea - had forced them to take Japanese names and wear the Japanese uniform.

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Perhaps the best-known example is the story of the American sprinters John Carlos and Tommie Smith, who at the 1968 Games in Mexico City raised their clenched fists on the medal podium during the playing of the national anthem in a salute to black power. The action enraged the Olympic organizers, and Carlos and Smith were ushered out of the country. Now, 40 years later, their action is celebrated as heroic and was recently selected by Nike as one of the six most notable Olympic moments of all time.

"I just don't see how you can separate the Olympics from politics," Wallechinsky said. "The Olympics is part of the world, period."

Karen Crouse and Richard Sandomir contributed reporting.

Comprehension (30 m)

Answer the following questions (in your own words as far as possible)

1. What is the dilemma that some athletes find themselves in when taking part in this summer's Olympic Games in Beijing? (8)
2. What are the rules of the Olympic Charter and what are the risks that the athletes run when violating these rules? (6)
3. What is Emanuel Neto's position in this controversy? (5)
4. Give some examples from the history of the Olympic Games in which athletes have used the Olympics to demonstrate their political beliefs. (8)
5. What is so ironic about the story of John Carlos and Tommy Smith from the 1968 Olympics? (3)

Essay (30 m)

Write a well-structured essay on the following topic:

The modern Olympic Games are about money and politics rather than sporting excellence.

(250-350 words)

Indicate the number of words used.

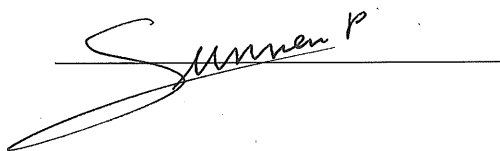
Questions proposées par:

Pierre Sunnen

Etablissement:

Lycée classique d'Echternach

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sunnen P', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.