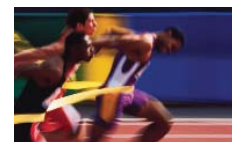




EDITORIAL

By Jens Sejer Andersen, Director of Play the game



“ *If sport is to be freed from its maladies, the cure is at hand. Open and unrestricted dialogue, good and transparent governance and delegation of power ... to all stakeholders who care about human values in sport* ”

A home for the homeless questions

Before the opening of the third international Play the game conference, we, as organisers, were eagerly awaiting the answers to three questions.

Would the speakers again be sharp, enthusiastic, well prepared and willing to take risks?

Would the participants again work tirelessly to build new networks and forge new friendships?

And most importantly: Would the homeless questions of international sport – questions that are not asked openly, much less answered – still be in evidence?

As this publication will hopefully show, Play the game was able to answer a clear 'yes' on all three counts.

Questions of vital importance for all sports lovers - athletes, coaches, administrators, and members of the public - are still not welcome in great parts of the sports society.

In spite of internal reforms in the IOC and a promising degree of transparency in the World Anti Doping Agency, many powerful sports leaders are actively seeking to stifle open debate about topics that will define sport's future.

The example of soccer is second to none.

In early 2003, the respective heads of European, African and Asian football levelled major al-

legations of mismanagement against FIFA president Sepp Blatter. They even reported their own chairman to the police.

But when a few weeks later Blatter was re-elected, an epidemic of silence hit in the soccer world.

And it still prevails.

Of the six speakers who committed themselves to speak on FIFA-related issues at Play the game, four withdrew before or during the conference - this after half a dozen key UEFA and FIFA figures had earlier declined invitations.

Football's leaders – those whose prestige and power comes from being elected by millions of players - are denying information to their constituencies on an issue which they themselves raised as sport's potentially biggest mismanagement scandal.

Is this a healthy way to practice democracy?

But the malady of silence is no privilege of soccer alone. It has dominated world sport over the past 30 years. As revenues from TV and sponsors have abounded, so has the power concentration and the lack of openness.

Sport has become a perfect breeding ground for political and financial corruption.

If sport is to be freed from its maladies, the cure is at hand. Open and unrestricted dialogue, good and

transparent governance and delegation of power ... to all stakeholders who care about human values in sport.

So let us show our appreciation for the independent minds in the sports world who bravely defy threats to their career and reputation when launching relevant criticism of the power brokers in sport.

And let us equally pay respect to those accountable sports leaders - like Sweden's Gunilla Lindberg and Britain's Craig Reddie, both from the IOC - who have the courage to join the debate as it unfolds at Play the game and elsewhere, although this choice may not improve their standings among all their fellow sports leaders.

A special thank you must go to the Chinese hosts for the forthcoming 2008 Olympics. They displayed forward-looking leadership and professionalism by entering the sensitive debate on sport and human rights.

Until the next edition of Play the game, we invite you to join the thousands of journalists, experts and sports lovers that use www.play-the-game.org as meeting place and knowledge bank.

With your help, we may be able to give more than a few days' shelter to the homeless questions in sport.

www.play-the-game.org

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