Niels Nyholm in memoriam

On an early April day, shortly before this magazine went to print, Play the Game lost a close friend and collaborator, while sport for all lost one of its most important eyewitnesses. After a long struggle with cancer, Danish press photographer Niels Nyholm died at the age of 62.

From the first Play the Game event in 1997 and until our latest conference in Iceland probably no person has been present at as many sessions as Niels Nyholm. Over five conferences, he ensured that the impression of lectures, debates and corridor talks is preserved for much longer than it stands in our fragile memories.

In Reykjavik last autumn, it was hard to suspect that Niels was undergoing a long-lasting cancer treatment. Once again, he displayed his infectious commitment and care for the people surrounding him, working enthusiastically from early morning until late in the evening – only interrupted by a daily five km running route around Reykjavik.

A conference may not be the most appetising setting you can imagine as a photographer. But Niels transformed a presumably predictable task into a catching testimony that reflected the atmosphere, intensity and human interaction. Just as you will see in this magazine where all photos are his unless otherwise credited.

His legacy, however, goes much beyond Play the Game. It is marked by his outstanding efforts to draw a varied, compassionate, humorous and enganging picture of everyday sport as it unfolds far away from Olympic intrigue and media hype.

Niels had a unique talent for capturing the kindergarten child, the boy footballer, the elite gymnast, the pub footballer, the pensioner – all these apparently ordinary people – in the moment where they forget themselves out of commitment, thereby becoming extraordinarily relevant and meaningful for the rest of us.

Through thousands of pictures, Niels documented the endless opportunities embedded in the kind of sport that does not satisfy itself with blind ambition and narrow focus on achievement, but aims at developing complete people and fruitful communities.

We and many Play the Game participants will miss an excellent photographer, an inspiring colleague and a much-loved human being.

Jens Sejer Andersen

Pound backs coalition against corruption in sport

by Kirsten Sparre

“I think sport in general ought to consider a coalition against corruption in sport more consciously and overtly than it has to date.”

The answer to a question from a Play the Game delegate was carefully phrased but Richard Pound clearly supports the idea of a global coalition for good governance in sport that Play the Game has been a key proponent of for some time.

The idea is to build an agency along the same lines as WADA that can define minimum standards for transparency, accountability and democratic procedures that should be followed by all national and international sports federations, government and sponsors. The agency should also have a legal mandate and professional expertise to investigate cases of mismanagement and corruption and be able to impose appropriate sanctions.

Pound is no stranger to corruption. As IOC vice president, he was in charge of investigating charges of corruption against members of the IOC in the Salt Lake City bribery scandal in 1999, so it was fitting to ask him what he thought of the need for a coalition against corruption.

“There are financial and other aspects of corruption including judging. We have all seen examples of that. But I think a lot of the corruption has just been kept quiet – almost by consent or a similar kind of omerta that we have seen in doping,” Pound said at the conference.

Later in the conference, Play the Game’s director, Jens Sejer Andersen, picked up on Richard Pound’s remarks:

“A coalition against corruption in sport may not be possible in the world of sport of today, but it could be possible in the world of sport of tomorrow. And Richard Pound almost gave us a mandate when he said that a starting point for such a coalition could be here at Play the Game,” Andersen said in his closing speech to the conference.

“I am following your discussions on the internet and they are fascinating. Same arguments, different excuses; but at least through Play the Game and others not prepared to accept sport the way it is – awareness is raised and people can be held to public account”.

Michele Verroken, Director, Sporting Integrity, U.K.