Sport & the environment

Naoko takahashi
Diving into action

Monica Seles

Kip Keino

Frankie Fredericks

Phil Craven

Manuela di centa

Green goals

For young people, by young people, about young people
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This magazine is printed using vegetable-based inks on paper made from 100 per cent recycled waste material. It is bleached without any damage to the environment.
Nearly 70 years ago, a young African-American sprinter named Jesse Owens attracted worldwide attention for his exploits at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, setting three Olympic records and winning four gold medals. For the first time and thanks to the influence of film and radio, his feat reached a global audience and he became a symbol of the power of sport to transcend barriers.

In the years since Owens took the world of athletics by storm, television and the Internet have further revolutionized the way we communicate, and sport has become a business that touches the lives of just about everyone on the planet. Events such as the Olympics or the soccer World Cup are watched around the globe, while companies such as Nike, Reebok and Adidas are household names the world over.

During the same period, the world’s human population has nearly tripled and there have been profound changes in the global environment. Climate change, atmospheric pollution, land degradation, water scarcity and the loss of biological diversity are now issues of global importance.

Reversing environmental decline is not just a matter for the world’s politicians. It is something that demands action from everyone. That, for example, is why the Olympic Movement has incorporated the environment into its charter, recognizing it as one of the three pillars of Olympism alongside sport and culture.

Many issues link sport and the environment. On the one hand, a degraded environment is detrimental to our health and sporting performance. On the other hand, the multi-billion-dollar global sports industry is a major consumer of natural resources.

It is the cross-cutting, cross-cultural nature of sport that makes it such a potentially important influence for good – or for bad. The way sports events are run, how the sports industry does business, and the manner in which sports stars conduct themselves on and off the field, can have far-reaching effects.

This issue of Tunza features the voices of sportsmen and women who are speaking out in defence of the environment. It also reports practical examples of how sports events, the sports industry and consumers such as ourselves can become more environmentally friendly.

Sport is about the challenge to excel. As Jesse Owens once said, ‘the only victory that counts is the one over yourself’. The goal is always to improve one’s own performance. The challenge for our generation is to improve on our performance as stewards of this planet, our one and only home, so that children growing up 70 years from now can enjoy their sport in a clean, safe environment.
tread softly and leave no footprints
Flying the Ecoflag

If you see this flag at a sporting event, you will know that the players and organizers are caring for the environment as they compete. It flutters at matches, races and tournaments - and hundreds of school sports days - all over the world as a way of using the popularity of sport to reach huge crowds of fans.

Among those who fly it are yachters using biofuel technology, farmers working without chemical pesticides and fertilizers, cycle couriers, and schools and artists recycling waste and equipment. Others include fans at the Oita Trinita stadium who are trying to make theirs the most environmentally friendly stadium in Japan. They run garbage collection and separation, and reuse-a-cup schemes, and held a mass clean-up at the stadium in March.

The ecoflag was flying at the King and Queen of the Beach, a BEACH VOLLEYBALL event in Brazil. Beach volleyball is hugely popular in Brazil and this was a great opportunity for increasing environmental awareness and action. Paper, glass and can recycling activities took place, with children joining in to learn about proper garbage and recycling practices.

The Global Sports Alliance partner ‘Local Beach Global Garbage’ was at the 2004 International Surfing Association WORLD SURFING GAMES, which took place in Salinas, Ecuador in March. Some 300 participants from 27 countries took part and Local Beach Global Garbage founder, Fabiano Barretto, was there to ‘plant a seed’ of environmental awareness among the many surfers and fans that attended the event. A surfer himself from the age of nine, Fabiano became increasingly concerned about the amount of garbage that was washing up on Brazilian beaches, and began photographing and cataloguing the type and country of origin of the garbage. This year Fabiano has also been flying the ecoflag, connecting beach sports enthusiasts in South America with the Ecoflag Movement.

What is the ecoflag?

The ecoflag symbolizes a commitment to the environment of sports lovers and everyone who knows the importance of nature. It is a symbol of our commitment towards leaving a beautiful planet for future generations. Ecoflag is an initiative by the Global Sports Alliance with the support of UNEP.

POWER = PEOPLE x AWARENESS x ACTION!

The aim of the ecoflag project is to increase environmentally oriented activities and create a power base for environmental action. Furthermore, the ecoflag.com website serves as a forum to show the variety of activities taking place in our communities and for the active exchange of ideas. The power we harness from these activities will go towards solving global environmental problems.

The Global Sports Alliance, also in Japan, is imaginatively REUSING SPORTS EQUIPMENT, sending old tennis balls to schools all over the country to be put on the feet of tables and chairs to keep the classrooms quieter - and giving the students, and their teachers, a valuable lesson about waste.
Thousands of people will descend on Athens’ beaches and waters to clean them up on World Environment Day this year, just in time for the world to come to the ancient city for the Olympic Games.

Groups of school children, members of the World Olympians Association and divers will clean the beaches and shallow waters of the Greek capital’s coastline, whilst tugboats with cranes pull up some of the bigger objects submerged further out to sea. The waste will then be separated and recycled or disposed of carefully.

The clean-up is part of a huge effort initiated by the Athens 2004 Organizing Committee and the Athens Environmental Foundation to put the environment at the heart of the Games and to take the opportunity of their return to their original home to ‘green’ the city.

‘We need to stop using the ocean as a garbage can,’ says Jean-Michel Cousteau of the Athens Environmental Foundation. ‘The pollution that we are inflicting on marine life ends up hurting every one of us and the quality of all our lives. If we protect the ocean we protect ourselves.’

Over the years young people have created art, essays and poetry on the theme of the day, and exhibitions of their work, street marches and parades have done a lot to raise awareness. Trees have been planted, art and fashion crafted from waste, wells dug, botanical gardens created and rivers, parks and beaches cleaned up – among a host of practical environmental activities. Then there are public debates and discussions on environmental issues between people from the media, art, academic, business and sporting worlds, and many others.

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World Environment Day was started at the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, and has been celebrated internationally since 1987. It was set up to raise awareness and encourage environmental action, and it prompts activities by all sorts of people all over the world.

Last year people in 110 countries took part in activities to consider how we use and treat water. The theme was ‘Water, 2 billion people are dying for it’. This year we are thinking about water again, but this time about the seas and oceans and the life that depends on them, as we ask ‘Wanted: seas and oceans, dead or alive?’

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Why should Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, be interested in sport? Surely he has for too much on his hands with wars, international emergencies and the growing crisis in the world environment to be bothered with it?

Yet he said at the Winter Olympics two years ago: ‘Sport can play a role in improving the lives of individuals – not only individuals, I might add, but whole communities. I am convinced that the time is right to build on that understanding, to encourage governments, development agencies and communities to think how sport can be included more systematically in the plans to help children, particularly those living in the midst of poverty, disease and conflict.’

And he set up the Sport for Development and Peace Responsibility Centre, and appointed a special advisor, Adolf Ogi, to encourage the use of sport in work with refugees, child soldiers, delinquent youths and communities in conflict.

**WHAT GOOD CAN SPORT DO?**

On a practical level, it improves health, making the body more resilient against disease. It also provides something to do in places where there is little else, helping to reduce drug use, crime and violence.

Playing sport is a ‘school for life’ – teaching such qualities as leadership, fair play and confidence, often to people who cannot get other forms of education. Over time it is a powerful tool in development.

The United Nations also hopes that its ‘neutral playing field’ can provide a site for peace and conflict resolution. Sport brings people together on a common ground. Peace keepers hope that by forging relationships and relating to each other when they are having fun, conflicting groups will start to resolve differences and to abandon prejudices.

The United Nations is liaising with programmes working to integrate refugees and resident groups in Thailand, to encourage Roma children in Romania to attend school, to give an outlet for energy and frustration to young people in detention centres in Brazil, and to improve the strength and skills of disabled people in Kenya so that they can work – to mention just a few.

**CHAMPIONS’ WREATH**

History is being made by Olympians and school children on every continent planting trees to create a ‘wreath’ around our planet to honour the Olympic homecoming to Greece, and spread a message of peace and goodwill. Organized by the Athens Environmental Foundation (AEF), the planting will ripple around the world until the Games begin in Athens, in August 2004.

In Baghdad school children and Olympians Mohamed Taher, Fakher Al-Jamaly and Hassan Bahriya planted their tree at the Al Jadriya College, in the presence of members of the Coalition Provisional Authority and Iraq’s Olympic Committee executive board.
Phil Craven lost the use of his legs in 1966, aged only 16, in a rock-climbing accident. Just days later he caught sight of a team of wheelchair basketball players, and his life changed again.

Since then he has lived, not as a wheelchair-bound disabled man, but as a world-class sportsman, competing five times in the Paralympic Games. A former captain of the Great Britain wheelchair basketball team, he is now the president of the International Paralympic Committee (IPC).

With a fantastically successful sporting career behind him, and his current fulfilling life, he wants to change things so that others can enjoy life as much.

‘If something’s wrong in the world, that’s a reason to change it,’ he says. ‘I am an activist, a revolutionary.’

Able-bodied people often unintentionally, and without malice, deny people with disabilities the freedom that they themselves enjoy by right, Phil says.

‘Access problems for the disabled are out of sight and therefore out of mind,’ he says. ‘Education is required to replace ignorance.’

The people of Athens, where the next Paralympic and Olympic Games will take place, are having to make a lot of changes to make access possible. At the moment you can’t get down some of Athens’ streets in a wheelchair because the cars are parked up so high on the pavement.

‘Athenian car drivers are not against people in wheelchairs or the partially sighted, but until recently they have never been told what is required of them. There is a great need to raise awareness. Otherwise the city authorities in Athens will build wheelchair access ramps and people will continue to park in front of them.’

The IPC sees this as a key part of its work. Phil says: ‘The aim is to inspire and excite the world: to effect change in practical surroundings, in attitudes towards people with disabilities and in the attitudes of people around the world. We must reconfigure assumptions and expectations.

‘People with disabilities are just as capable of being top-class athletes; they are fully capable, responsible and ambitious people. It is important that ALL people are allowed to live life to the full, to appreciate nature, or to do something as simple as go on a walk in the country.’

Paralympic sport has brought improved attitudes and opportunities for people with disabilities in all aspects of life, he explains.

‘We know that two hours of Paralympic sports from Athens every night on British television puts Paralympic athletes in the public eye, and we’re jolly glad about that,’ he says. ‘We’re also very pleased that through the IPC’s agreement with the International Olympic Committee, bidding cities for future Olympic/Paralympic Games have to prove that an environmentally friendly city will await Paralympic athletes when they compete in the Games. Ensuring easy access at Games venues, city buildings and transport facilities will be a key environmental legacy that will benefit people with a disability for years to come.’

He adds: ‘The Games attract millions of participants and supporters, male and female, young and old; so educating people through sport is a key role for them. The resources that are pumped into the city and country of the Games present tremendous opportunities to leave behind important environmental legacies. That potentially can be both good and bad: we have to harness this energy to make sure what we leave behind is beneficial to future generations.

‘This world of ours can either get better or it can get worse. What are we closest to? It’s got to be the ground that we live on. And what do people cherish most? Water, food and their homes.

‘Caring for the environment is incredibly important. We can’t just think about people right here, we’ve got to think about people 15 kilometres down the road. The Paralympics is about maximizing what you’ve got. We can effect change so that all people can do that.’

Paralympians, like Phil, are inspirational. It takes something extraordinary to become an athlete – to find that level of commitment, to train so regularly and so hard. It takes similar strength to overcome things that could hold you back because of a disability. The example of the Paralympians can inspire their fellow citizens to look outside the box of their own lives, and their – and particularly other people’s - environments, even further than 15 kilometres away.
MANUELA DI CENTA – former world and Olympic cross-country ski champion

I have chosen to dedicate my life to sport, and in particular cross-country skiing, because I feel at ease in the environment in which I move, suffer and live. It was also love of nature, the desire to feel closer to nature through physical hardship, that led me to discover extreme and unique environments.

I was brought up in the mountains, and I continued to live there even when everyone around us seemed to be moving to the big city. Today, I live in the natural park of Stelvio. I have always been aware of how important it is to respect the environment in which we live, and am convinced that we ourselves are the expression of our own environment.

I began skiing when I was four, and have enjoyed a long and fruitful career, participating in five Olympic Games and winning seven Olympic medals, seven world titles and two world cups. For more than six years I chose to wear the uniform of the National Forestry Association to do my bit to help protect the environment.

Finally, on 23 May 2003, I achieved the greatest height of all: the peak of Mount Everest. I was the first Olympic medallist to climb it, and did so with a small Olympic flag bearing the five circles: a tangible sign of the union between nations.

The athlete experiences an intense bond with nature through training and racing. However it is the confrontation between opponents, not that between humans and nature, which comes first: the natural obstacles along the way - which need to be overcome in the quickest time possible - are a means, and not the end, of the competition.

This contrasts completely with conquering a peak considered the roof of the world. Here, nature imposes itself on you; its vastness and strength condition all your movements and choices. The paths on Everest are not marked out by people: we have only those that mother nature provides. We can follow the paths of mountain climbers who have gone before us, amongst whom, let me tell you, there are not many women, but the traces of their passage are continually cancelled by fresh snow, ice, wind... or by the heat of the beautiful sun. Mountaineers can only rely on themselves to find the strength and will to conquer the mountain.

Under these conditions, victory is not so much a dream, as sheer madness! The opponents you must defeat are natural adversaries, which are not so much 'easy' or 'difficult' as 'possible' or 'impossible.' With every step, as you gradually ascend, the basic elements of life become precious: oxygen, water, heat. Even the simplest physical exercises - such as keeping good posture while walking - become strenuous: walking itself becomes a challenge.

You learn to understand that if you succeed in arriving even halfway to your destination, it is because nature was on your side: what you were able to accomplish might not have been possible one minute later.

Much depends on how well you are able to accommodate mother nature's presence and power, in order to coexist with her, respecting her role. By far the most meaningful victory is not the conquest of the highest peak but that extra step taken towards a greater knowledge of humanity and its relationship to nature.

After this experience I asked myself: what can I do, as Olympic champion and member of the International Olympic Committee, with my skills and professional knowledge, to contribute towards preserving our environment?

The answer was to combine sport and television journalism by initiating a new project: 'The flag of the 5 Olympic Circles'. I will set out to climb a mountain on each continent, with the flag of unity of the International Olympic Committee, thus combining sport, culture, environment and tradition. The project will be broadcast on international television to communicate the value of preserving and conserving our environment.
Sadili Oval – an award-winning sports camp for children from the slums around Nairobi, Kenya – is one of the first nature and sports camps set up by UNEP and the Global Sports Alliance. These give children the chance both to learn many sports with the proper equipment and training they would not ordinarily be able to obtain, and to become environmentally conscious and responsible.

The children take part in all kinds of activities – such as debating, drama and dance – that teach them valuable skills and build up their confidence. By discussing and looking for solutions to such environmental and social problems as waste, water, sanitation, pollution, health and HIV/AIDS, the young people become aware of things that are important in their community and can work to improve them as they grow older. Already they are hard at work cleaning up natural areas, planting trees and recycling.

The results are promising. Drug taking and truancy have decreased. Girls are performing better in school and staying there. Twenty-six children have reached the national tennis leagues. The Sadili Flames is the youngest team in the Premier Basketball League, and the camp has provided a number of national chess champions. And besides all this there is the fun the children are having, the lessons they are learning and the cleaner environment they are creating where they live!

LEARNING THROUGH SPORT

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The Mathare Youth Sports Association project – started in 1987 to give children of the Mathare slums in Nairobi, Kenya, a chance to play football – now has 14,000 players in 1,008 teams.

The Mathare area – home to 700,000 people – is one of Africa’s largest and poorest slums. It has many problems with drugs, prostitution, AIDS and gang violence – and is prone to disease brought on by polluted water supplies and by waste in the streets.

So, as at Sadili Oval, the young people become involved in helping themselves and others as well as playing sport.

In order to join the club the young people either have to coach younger children in football, or take part in environmental clean-ups. Since 1988, 25-30 teams of players have been cleaning up the slums on Saturdays, borrowing wheelbarrows, rakes and spades from the municipal council. This helps build good relations between the children and the rest of their communities. And it earns them points towards their ranking in the football leagues.

The association has developed an HIV programme, raising awareness among young people about the disease that is ravaging Kenya. It works to feed, care for, and assist the release of, children in jail. It provides some school scholarships. And it gives training in photography, film and journalism so that the children, many of whom live in slums, can document and find pride in the stories of their lives.

All this means that the association has a pretty great reputation – and, more importantly, so do its members. They are known as ‘the good kids’, and they really do look as if they are kicking their way out of disease and hardship towards a better future.

Giving Back

Kipchoge ‘Kip’ Keino – one of the all-time athletic greats – spends much of his time, energy and money looking after poor children in western Kenya.

Keino established Kenya’s tradition of world-class runners, and is now on his country’s National Olympic Committee. He set world records in the 3,000 and 5,000 metres in 1965, and won a gold and a silver medal in both the 1968 and 1972 Olympics.

But for more than three decades he and his wife, Phyllis, have been caring for homeless orphans in the city of Eldoret – a centre for high-altitude training – where he lives. ‘They need love and shelter, a father and a mother – and a vision,’ he told Tunza.

The couple now look after about 60 children in a family-like setting, though at times the total has touched 90. Keino has also established a school, which educates the orphans and other local children, and a farm to feed them and provide a surplus to sell to raise money.

Keino says that all this is a way of giving something back to the poor. ‘I feel I came to this world with nothing, and I will leave with nothing,’ he says. ‘If I invest in those who need assistance, it is an achievement to live together and to let them live like human beings.’
As the project manager I am involved in planning and organizing the environmental activities. We have a Turtle Tagging Awareness Programme, where we educate people about the turtles of the UAE, including taking them to help tag the turtles. Our Coral Monitoring Project involves training divers on monitoring the life of the corals, identifying potential threats and keeping an eye out for indicators of coral stress.

I am a 21-year-old Lebanese living in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. I hold a degree in environmental health science and am an active environmentalist, working at the Emirates Diving Association, a group involved in educating young people and adults from the diving and the non-diving communities about the importance of conserving the sea.

Salamo alaykom (Hello/peace be upon you)

Germany - which hosts the next World Cup, in 2006 - is working to make it as eco-friendly as possible, strictly limiting its use of chemicals, energy and other resources, and its production of emissions and waste. It will monitor the chemicals used to treat pitches, limit packaging on products sold during matches and insist on maximum recycling of rubbish. Stadiums are to be modified to conserve heat, and park-and-ride schemes will limit traffic and pollution. Much of the energy will come from renewable sources, and water supplies will be conserved and preserved. Every business involved will be required to conform to the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA)'s environmental guidelines.

And as the event will still cause an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, measures to offset them
We encourage our volunteers to take part in underwater clean-ups and hold competitions to see who can collect the most trash. This gives them a sense of closeness to the marine world. They begin to see the effect of throwing a drink can into the sea, and learn to give back to the marine environment while practising a sport they enjoy.

Besides being passionate about the environment, I love sports, playing in a women’s soccer league and enjoying basketball, squash and running. And, of course, I am a certified scuba diver.

Sport and environment are highly related. A good sportsperson needs good health, healthy lungs and good stamina. If we live in an environment with air badly polluted by cars and industries, all the particulates, chemicals and other hazardous material will end up in our lungs, since we tend to inhale more as we exercise. So an unhealthy environment can both damage our health and prevent us from playing as hard and as well as we could.

My motto is: Respect the nature that you were given, for it is nature that always gives but does not take; when you take care of it, it will take care of you.

Ma’Alsalamah (Goodbye)

Lara El Saad is a UNEP Tunza Youth Advisor for West Asia.
Q: In what ways does sport damage the environment? Hanna Klein, Germany

A: Sport is not a major polluter, compared to industry, for example. But, like any human activity, it has effects on the environment. These include: deforestation for ski slopes and other sports venues; pollution from motor sports; changes to landscape and nature through constructing stadiums and sports grounds; excessive water consumption to keep grass green at golf courses and other sports venues; waste produced by spectators; and pollution by travel to and from sport events. Some sports, like swimming or ice hockey, require much energy for heating or refrigeration. And huge amounts of paper are used for advertisements and media coverage.

Q: How can we use sports events to educate other young people on environmental issues? Juan I. Chong Ortiz, Peru

A: Sport has a vast following and can therefore serve as an important vehicle to promote environmental awareness. Globally and regionally, sport can be used to reach millions of people with targeted environmental messages. Locally, a sports event is sure to attract many young people, providing opportunities for spreading environmental messages to participants and spectators. Such events can be used to encourage people to cut pollution and to get them involved in campaigns linked to the sports event. Using local and international sports personalities can also be an effective way of sharing environmental messages with the public.

Q: I gained my appreciation of the environment by visiting natural areas, but know that my presence caused them harm. I had to drive there, causing pollution and a need for roads, and my activities had negative effects hiking over exposed roots, climbing on rock that had bolts left in it, etc. I would not now be working toward conservation of the natural world without those experiences, but is that worth the cumulative damage I've caused? Deia Schlosberg, United States

A: Hiking and rock-climbing have helped you to gain a true appreciation for nature and your environment. As long as you behave in an environmentally sensitive way, you should not feel guilty about such damage as you have caused. Nor should you give yourself a hard time about using roads that have already been constructed. However, you could try to use alternative methods of transport – such as public transport, a bicycle or car pooling.

Q: I know the most sustainable method of transportation is bicycling. What can I do to convince my local government to make cycle lanes and cycle racks more widespread? Bushra Razack, South Africa

A: Don’t be afraid to approach elected officials. Use all the resources available to you to draft a proposition. Explain how you, your family and community are affected by the lack of cycle lanes and racks and their long-term benefits. Remember that it is in the local government’s interest to reduce traffic congestion. Your proposal may present it with a solution.

Q: How can sporting events be used to raise money for and draw attention to environmental initiatives? Nidhi Shree, India

A: You will certainly gain the attention of the participants and fans if you send out environmental messages or information on environmental initiatives during the events. And it will be easier to get sponsorship for an environmental activity if you integrate sport into it.
Greening the Games

Elisabeth Helseth talks to Tore Brevik
(UNEP Special Representative for Sport and Environment)

The Olympic Games are spectacular and entertaining, but they can also threaten the environment – especially in the host city or country. Fortunately, over the last ten years there has been a growing focus on the environmental aspects of the Olympics and other large sporting events.

Tore Brevik, UNEP’s Director of Communications and Public Information until 2002, has been at the heart of helping to make the Olympics – and sports in general – more environmentally friendly. He says that ‘greening the Olympics’ had a breakthrough with the Lillehammer Winter Games in 1994. There had been earlier awareness-raising events, including a tree-planting ceremony at the 1972 Munich Olympics. But it was Lillehammer that first showed it was possible to have two weeks of sports and fun, hosting people from all over the world, and still care for the environment.

Tore says that Lillehammer started with an advantage in becoming ‘the first green Olympics’ because Norwegians have a strong tradition of taking care of nature and the environment. At the time, 67 per cent of the people of Lillehammer put the environment as their top priority, far ahead of jobs, better roads, or even Norwegian gold medals. Cooperation between the different groups involved in the Games was equally important. The environmental authorities, the organizers and pressure groups ‘instead of fighting each other, worked together to solve the problems’, he recalls.

Largely as a result of this success, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided in 1995 that environment should be seen as the third dimension of the Olympics, together with sport and culture. That same year IOC and UNEP signed a cooperation agreement calling for action on sports and the environment.

As the environmental emphasis grew, says Tore, ‘the selection of Sydney was to a large extent based on environmental practices’. The 2000 Sydney Games were seen as the ‘greenest Olympics ever’. Now every candidate city for the event must present an environment programme as part of its bid, and the media and environmental groups like Greenpeace help ensure that host cities live up to their promises. He adds: ‘Today you can’t have any big sports event, and certainly not the Olympic Games, without paying attention to the environment.’

He explains that the Olympic Movement has its own version of Agenda 21 – ‘Sport for Sustainable Development’. This is a follow-up to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, an action plan ‘about what environmental considerations we have to take into account when we are doing sports’. But he adds: ‘Of course organizations need such papers and documents, but what is important is that a practical way of thinking about the environment filters down to small local sports clubs, their members and individual athletes.

‘You cannot do any kind of sport if you don’t have a good environment with fresh air, clean water, etc. We want to make the sports leaders and athletes aware, so that they don’t take a good environment for granted.

‘Sport interests all of us, even if some just follow it on television. We all have a tremendous interest in the athletes, which makes them important role models. So UNEP works with them and sports organizations: if they set a good example, this will be observed by the public and have a beneficial effect.’

He predicts that the United Nations will put more and more emphasis on the importance of sport, and play – now recognized as human rights. He points out that sport can be used to help build peace, give people a chance of education in developing countries and help in reaching the millennium goals of the United Nations.

He says that the most important thing is: ‘to make people aware, to give them information on what is happening to our planet, and what we can do about it’. And he ends on a note of optimism: ‘I think young people today are much more aware and interested in the environment than before.

‘We all can make a difference!’
Since Lillehammer, the International Olympic Committee has pushed forward with dramatic improvements in the way the Olympics affect the environment, led by its Commission for Sport. To succeed, cities have to carry out environmental impact analyses, keep pollution and resource use as low as possible, develop transport systems, avoid damaging protected natural areas and important habitats, reuse facilities and restore derelict areas.

**Turin 2006: under a green banner**

Rossella Quaranta

The next Winter Olympics, hosted by Turin, Italy, in February 2006, will take place under the banner of sustainability, and will be committed to environmental protection. It will be the first public sporting event to apply the environmental management criteria laid down in the international standard, ISO 14000.

TOROC (the Turin Organizing Committee) and UNEP will seek to reduce the environmental impact of the increase in traffic and waste, through long-term planning and continual monitoring on the ground. They also have a ‘green’ purchasing policy, selecting products carrying the eco-label.

More generally, Turin is determined to demonstrate its solemn commitment to ensuring adherence to these criteria. In this way it will show the importance of taking the issue extremely seriously and will set an environmental precedent for future Olympic events.

**Beijing 2008: clean up or clear out**

Beijing has already begun a massive clean-up for the 2008 Games. It has launched a five-year pollution control plan. This involves developing its public transport system, controlling emissions from vehicles and promoting environmentally friendly ones, building natural gas transfer projects and cracking down on polluting businesses. Industries must clean up or be relocated out of town. Since 1998, 147 of them have been removed in this way, or shut down.

The Chinese Government has pledged the massive sum of $17.9 billion to make the city’s environment and infrastructure fit to host the Olympics. Of this, $6.6 billion will be used specifically for protecting the environment and developing clean energy sources.

Besides protecting existing natural environments, Beijing will also create many more. It plans to cover 23,000 hectares of the city with newly planted trees, mainly along waterways and highways. Green spaces are planned for another 12,500 hectares, and will include a second ‘green belt’ around the city.

Air quality in the city is still poor. Too much coal is burned and there are too many cars on the roads. But the improvements are significant, not least because other cities want to join in.

The city of Tianjin, for example, has included itself in the developments as part of a common ‘Beijing-Tianjin Ecological Zone’. It reminds us that ‘air and water do not recognize administrative boundaries’, thus extending the environmental challenge to the whole country – and the world.
How it all began...

Greece is preparing to welcome 160,000 athletes and over 4.5 million spectators, journalists, officials and judges in August, as the Olympic Games return home. They were first held in Olympia 2,780 years ago to try to bring peace and unity to the people of Greece.

Three kings – Ititos of Elis, Cleosthenes of Pissa and Lykourgos of Sparta – took the advice of the famous Oracle at Delphi, and signed the Olympic Truce or ‘Ekecheiria’. They agreed that every four years armies would lay down their arms and battles would cease, from seven days before until seven days after the Games. Time in Ancient Greece came to be calculated on the basis of this four-year interval, the ‘Olympiad’. So the Olympics were not just about sport, but about peace, politics – and religion.

The Games were dedicated to the ancient Greek gods and were held in Olympia, close to the Temple of Zeus, the king of the gods – where the Olympic torch is still lit. The temple housed a 14-metre ivory and gold statue of Zeus that was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Winners got just an olive wreath and the gods’ blessings – but were glorified for the rest of their lives. The Games were held, every four years, for a thousand years, until 393AD, when they were banned as pagan by the Byzantine Emperor, Theodosius. The Olympic Movement still places sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, working with culture and the environment.

THE MARATHON

The 2004 Olympic marathon will be run along the route first run by a young messenger, Pheidippides, in 490 BC to bring news of the victory of the Athenians over the Persians. He ran all 42.195 kilometres – dying the moment he had passed on his message.

Bringing the Games Home

At 23, with a degree in geotechnology and environmental engineering, I am preparing for a postgraduate environment course in the United Kingdom, starting this September. I deal with the environment I live in, and try to protect and enhance it.

I participated as a Volunteer for the Environment in the Archery Event at the Kallimarmaron Stadium, Athens, in August 2003, as I wanted professional experience. The Environment team was really friendly – we shared a common goal and tried to achieve the best results. Our responsibilities included controlling energy and water consumption, waste separation, plastic bottle recycling and keeping the site clean – invaluable experience.

The environment is a combination of natural and human factors that interact and affect the quality of life, the development of society and the ecological balance in general.
Although I am happy to join in wherever I'm needed, the Athens Olympic Games are very special. It's not just the work - it gives me a sense of pride in my country, Greece. I wanted to take part because the Olympics are coming home, to the country that gave birth to them, and to Athens, the city where they were revived in 1896. Working for the Athens Olympic Games is something I shall cherish for the rest of my life.

Green Renewal
Christina Theochari, Environment Manager, Athens Organizing Committee, Athens 2004

From Greece, home of the Olympic Games, and from Athens, the host city, we ask all young people to contribute to the protection of the environment by adopting environmentally friendly behaviour!

The Games are a universal event. Having the Games back in Athens gives us an especially emotional burden, and our main obligation is our commitment to their success.

But there was also a need to radically change the environment of our city. The legacy of the 2004 Olympics will therefore include such improved infrastructure as the tramway, the suburban railway, the Attiki ring road and other works like the renewal of the public transport fleet and the rehabilitation of Athens' sea front.

We have introduced environmental management, systematic recycling and the dissemination of awareness brochures at Olympic venues. Spreading the message to all those working with the Athens Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, introducing environmental criteria into the procurement of products and services, and special Olympic environmental education in schools are all important parts of our work.

The Olympics have provided an opportunity to renew Athens, and they offer a unique chance to raise environmental awareness in all people, whether in Greece or throughout the wider world.

Who could compete?
Originally, only Greek-born males, who had not committed murder or heresy, were allowed to take part in the Games. Later, Romans were also permitted to take part. Women were forbidden to compete and married women were banned from entering the stadium to watch the Games because, from 729 BC, participants competed nude to prevent cheating.

In modern times, competitors and winners have come from all backgrounds. In 1896, John Boland, a student from England's Oxford University, travelled to watch the first modern Games. Enrolled in the tennis championships by a Greek friend, he played in his only shoes - leather ones with heels - and won two gold medals!

Jesse Owens surprised crowds at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. Hitler had hoped the Games would prove the superiority of the white Aryan race, but Owens - an African-American - won over the crowds with three gold medals in three days, in the 100 m, 200 m and the long jump, arguably the three most prestigious events. Four days later, he helped the US 4 x 100 m relay team set a world record that would last for 20 years.

1896 1900 1904 1908 1912 1916 1920
First modern Olympic Games, held in Athens
Paris: Women first allowed to participate
St Louis
London: Opening ceremony
Stockholm; Last Olympics to use medals made entirely of gold
Not held due to First World War
Athwerp

IOC OLYMPIC MUSEUM

ATHOC / PHOTO: K. VERGAS

BERLIN, 5 AUGUST 1936. GAMES OF THE XI OLYMPIAD. GOLD MEDALIST JESSE OWENS OF THE UNITED STATES AT THE START OF THE MEN’S 200 M. OWENS WON THE EVENT IN AN OLYMPIC RECORD TIME OF 20.7 SECONDS.
What is Athens doing to care for the environment?

Greece is one of the smallest countries to hold the modern Olympic Games. When they are on, Athens, the capital, will see its population double. But the city is rising to the challenge, considering the natural world at each stage of building and development.

Any huge event can damage the environment. Hosting the Olympics requires building new accommodation, sports tracks and venues, and vastly extending the transport system to cope with millions of visitors. The Environment Unit of the Athens Organizing Committee (ATHOC) was set up to protect and improve the environment of Athens, Greece, through the Games. It aims to ensure that the inevitable extra use of resources - and air, land and water pollution - are kept to a minimum.

The impact that each sporting venue now has on the environment is being assessed. Inspectors are looking at the use of lights, air conditioning and water; the efficiency of drainage, irrigation and insulation; methods of waste disposal and recycling; pollution by hazardous chemicals and fuels; and policies and rules for businesses and spectators at the events.

Taking care of the environment in a big operation is always a difficult and complicated job. There are some areas where we could have done more and other areas where we believe that we have made a major improvement in Athens, such as: REDUCING TRANSPORT POLLUTION by taking the opportunity of the Games to develop Athens’ public transport system and cutting the number of polluting vehicles within the city. A new tramway is being built and its rail and metro network extended. Ticket holders will travel free to the Games on the highly environmentally friendly tramway which produces no emissions and uses minimal energy. ATHOC will be using environmentally friendly vehicles throughout the Games, including the Hyundai ‘Santa Fe’ fuel cell hybrid electric vehicle, and promoting Shell’s new diesel fuel which contains 15 per cent liquefied natural gas and so emits less sulphur, nitrogen and smoke. And 20 new buses - running on natural gas which emits half as much nitrogen oxide as normal and no dangerous particulates - have been added to the public transport fleet.

Meanwhile a new motorway is being built to take traffic around Greater Athens, cutting inner city pollution even more.

The Events

Originally the Games lasted just one day and had only one event, the running of one stadion. Gradually more were added. By the 5th century BC, the Games lasted for five days. They included running, chariot racing and horse racing; boxing and wrestling; the pankration, a mixture of the two; and the pentathlon, which included the discus, javelin, wrestling, running and jumping.
PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES. Some 300,000 trees, 1 million shrubs and 11 million saplings are being planted before the Games throughout the 1,500 hectares of Greater Athens. They will all be both indigenous to the area and require little water. ATHOC is also working to reduce the use and waste of water, collecting rainwater in reservoirs and using it, with other recycled water, for general irrigation.

PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY. Regular corridors of land will remain untouched to encourage the nesting and migration of animals, as part of an attempt to protect Greece's rich plant wildlife as much as possible. Habitats inevitably damaged by building work will be rehabilitated. The ATHOC replanting programme will supplement some thriving habitats and restore areas made arid through centuries of deforestation.

LIMITING AND PROCESSING WASTE. ATHOC is working on limiting the waste produced at Olympic venues. Over the 60 days of the Olympics and Paralympics, an estimated 8,000 tonnes of waste will be produced. Organizers are setting up a system to separate out waste that can be recycled. This system will remain after the athletes and spectators have left.

SPREADING THE MESSAGE. Athens is giving all visitors information on the environmental aspects of the Games. Stalls will be set up, booklets handed out and community and youth clean-up activities held to convince people of what they should do. The Olympic Youth Camp will invite 450 young people from all over the world to join in clean-up activities and excursions around Attica.

Since July 2000, Athens has recycled 108 tonnes of paper, saving 1,836 trees and reducing the water needed to treat the paper pulp by 3,402,000 litres. It has cut energy consumption by 442,800 kW, saving 272.17 cubic metres of landfill space.

The Games Return!
Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a Frenchman, restarted the Games because he liked the way the Olympic ideals combined sport with moral and social education - similar to the educational ideals of France. The International Olympic Committee was founded in 1894, and the first modern Games were held in Greece in 1896.
Hungary – protecting the environment through sport

Rita Koban, the multiple kayak world and Olympic champion, is leading a drive in her country, Hungary, to protect the environment through sport. Short green films - made by the Hungarian Olympic Committee’s Environmental Section, which she chairs - are regularly shown during the breaks in major sports events on Hungarian television. The Section also distributes flyers, leaflets, posters and other information materials at such occasions. It has developed detailed environmental programmes for particular sports events – including the 2003 World Gymnastic Championships in Debrecen, Hungary – emphasizing rubbish collection, energy-saving transport and communicating the importance of environmental protection. It also arranges games and meetings where Olympic champions discuss the issue with young people, and plans to set up an ‘Athletes for Environment’ award.

Saving Their Breath

Sportspeople and athletes are particularly at risk from air pollution, despite their healthy lifestyles. People breathe more frequently when they are active, and draw the air deeper into the lungs. They therefore take in more pollution and bring it into the areas where it can do most damage. People also tend to breathe through the mouth when taking exercise, so pollutants escape the natural filters in the nose. They often exercise near main roads during, or soon after, peak traffic hours when pollution is greatest. And they also tend to go out on hot, sunny days when pollution from ozone is at its highest.

More than 80 current and former Canadian national team and Olympic athletes have signed up as Clean Air Champions, to speak out against air pollution. All depend on their health and their lungs for their performance; some suffer from asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory illnesses.

The Champions act as role models and spokespeople, particularly to the young. They make public service announcements on radio and television, give media interviews, and speak at schools and corporate events. Their mission is to improve the quality of the air by motivating and educating Canadians to adopt practices and lifestyles that enhance both environmental and personal health.
The Voice of Sports

Celebrities today command more influence than ever before. In particular, sport celebrities are making their presence felt beyond their chosen field. For about three decades, their opinions in political and social arenas have been increasingly listened to by the general public and decision makers alike.

Sport heroes have both a responsibility and a right to articulate the concerns we all share. Poverty, human rights, global peace and a healthy environment are important to everyone, but our voices are not equally strong in expressing hopes and fears. Stars in sports are among a select group who can cut through the red tape and rhetoric, whose message can transcend the barriers of nationality, culture and class. A growing number of athletes are using their celebrity status to raise awareness about issues that affect us all.

Isao Aoki

“The rough bunker stands out in contrast with the green up ahead. Sadly, the world is becoming all bunkers.”

In addition to winning numerous domestic tournaments, Isao Aoki has achieved international fame for wins in golf’s 1973 World Match Play, the 1993 Hawaiian Open and European Open, and the 1989 Coca-Cola Classic. Aoki is one of the greatest golfers in Japan’s history, and he continues to play on the Senior Tour, for players aged over 50.

Monica Seles

“As an athlete that flies around the world, I hope for peace in every place that I land.”

From her debut at 15, Monica Seles established herself as a champion. In 1993, Seles was becoming one of the strongest women’s players of all time when she was attacked and stabbed by a spectator. Two years later she was back, and after winning her first tournament, was on her way to an eighth Grand Slam victory. There are four Grand Slam tournaments in a year, and winning one of them represents the highest level of achievement in tennis; to win eight is outstanding.

Yuichiro Miura

“Working step by step toward one’s dreams is the foundation of youth, but how long will nature be able to continue sustaining its youth?”

Yuichiro Miura became famous for skiing down the highest peaks of seven continents including 8,000 metres down the southern slopes of Mt Everest. Some 33 years later, in May 2003, he became the oldest man to conquer Everest at the age of 70, on an expedition with his son Gita Miura.
Greg LeMond

“A bicycle isn’t a machine of war. It is a machine for feeling the wind in your face and for challenging the spirit.”

Greg LeMond is a three-time winner of the Tour de France. In 1986, he became the first American to win the event and, after a near-fatal accident a year later, came back two more times to win in 1989 and 1990. LeMond popularized what had been up until that point a minor sport in his home country. He is a tireless road racer and innovative cyclist and is a hero to the people of the United States.

Naoko Takahashi

“Clean air is vital to our bodies. We can do nothing without it, so we all need to act to protect it.”

Naoko Takahashi has set several records including winning the gold medal at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Because she was the first Japanese woman to win a gold in athletics, and the first Japanese athlete to win the marathon, she was awarded the National Medal of Honour. Takahashi was also the first woman to break the 2:20 hour marathon mark, a long-standing hurdle for the world’s top women marathon runners.

Ilhan Mansiz

“Playing fields allowed soccer to become a part of my life. Sadly, they are gone from today’s cities.”

Ilhan Mansiz debuted for the Turkish national team in 2001 in the qualifying rounds for the FIFA World Cup. He scored three goals in the 2002 FIFA World Cup, leading his team to third place. He was the highest scorer in the Turkish league in the 2001-02 season, and was instrumental in making his club team, Besiktas, league champion in the 2002-03 season.

Shaun White

“If global warming turns the mountains to summer, where am I supposed to snowboard?”

Shaun White is ranked the number one snowboarder in the world. He started snowboarding at the age of five and won the Arctic Challenge halfpipe in 2001, at the age of 14. He has won numerous tournaments and is fast becoming a legend in the world of extreme sports.