

Olympians return from vacation

Sunday, 24 August 2008

It is hard to believe Macedonia didn't win a medal at the 29th Olympic Games in Beijing. I could have omitted my sarcasm, but just couldn't help it.

Given how criminally underfunded (if at all) sport is in Macedonia, it is an absolute miracle we had two athletes in Beijing that had an Olympic A norm. The other five athletes had neither Olympic A, nor B norm, rather, they were on a wild card, which is another word for a "guest". I could have been a guest, and placed last.

It wouldn't and it isn't fair to blame our athletes.

When there was funding, (in old Yugoslavia), Macedonian Athletes contributed 13 medals to the former country (boxing, wrestling, athletics). Yugoslavia knew that sport is the best arena for promotion of a country, billion people are watching, and sure spent lots of money in its athletes. It was not an accident Yugoslavia was if not the best, certainly in the top three countries in the world in over a dozen sports.

In early 1991/2 Macedonia sent 11 athletes, all of them with Olympic A norm. That number dwindled to just 2 over 17 years!? Instead of progressing and sending 40 or 50 athletes with full Olympic norms, we have regressed to a point that Macedonians are surprised to find out we are sending someone to the Olympic Games. It's not shameful to send none. In most cases, it's better.

Perhaps David Letterman's Latenight Show summed it up best when we sent 4 athletes at the Nagano Winter Games in Japan. It was a great, free publicity for us, even though we were mocked. Dave asked his Audience if that was the Macedonian "bobsled team" or the "hockey team".

Neither Dave, they were relatives, sons, nephews of someone at the MOC.

How low have we sunk?

We are importing foreign wrestlers! This is like importing peppers or watermelons!

Our naturalized wrestler, Ramazonov barely missed on the bronze medal. He doesn't live in Macedonia, doesn't train here, doesn't speak the language. Has anyone at the MOC mentioned to Ramazonov that Macedonia had the best wrestlers in the world? Wrestling was the number one sport for 50 years. Our wrestlers brought all the medals for Yugoslavia. Why isn't Ramazanov in Macedonia training young kids and transferring his knowledge!?

Borec of Veles was numerous time European Champion, so much so, we used to wage how many seconds the Russian or the Bulgarian would last on the mat against the Macedonian. Where are these wrestlers? Where is BK Borec, the wrestling club? Does it even exist? Where is the funding for talented wrestlers?

Just last night I was watching Beijing Kayaking, a sport that commentators struggle the most to make it 'interesting'. The commentator said Great Britain spends each year 10 million euros on development of their youth. 10 million euros for kayaking?

-It's a wood thing, with pedals and a bicycle helmet. 10 million euros on that, I thought. At least until I saw the huge training facility, full of special machines connected to computers to simulate kayaking for talents who can't spend time on the lakes in Winter time. And that yes, those machines cost money. Their investment paid off, Great Britain ended up getting several medals in kayaking, even though it was mentioned that this was the new British generation of kayakers and they are only getting better.

Have we spent 100,000 euros on development in any sport?? I seriously doubt it.

Granted, the Gruevski Government has done some tremendous steps in building sports arenas and pools across the country, but this was just recent and more needs to be done, plus they are in the process of building right now (few have been completed).

We sent the second best swimmer to Beijing? We sent Ristovski over Sergej Nikolovski, who has had better times than the first. We are so good, can afford not sending our best. It's just the Olympics, why send the best...

Ok, so Ristovski has some connections at the MOC, but you could have sent Sergej, since neither has the Olympic norm

and Sergej is the better swimmer.

The Agency for Youth and Sport promised our athletes 20,000 Euros for a Gold Medal. When you know no athlete will win a medal, why didn't you promise them 200.000 euros? At least you would have looked good on paper. Or perhaps you were afraid Ramazanov may get a medal so you had to keep the numbers down? Ah, the small people you are. Although I understand the Government has taken steps to fund 200 athletes, the monthly stipend given to these talents is not enough. You must do more, pay attention to these talents, meet their needs, improve the training facilities so we can see some results not in Vancouver, but at the London and Sochi Games. /Pero Stamatovski