

ATA Article for April 2014

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

Elsewhere in this edition of Trap & Field you will find details of how Americans can bring non-restricted firearms into Canada (i.e. long guns such as rifles and shotguns). I hope the information provided will help and that you will visit a club(s) in Canada in the near future.

At the time that I write this article, the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia have just concluded. In my opinion, it will be hard for any country to surpass the Sochi experience from its opening ceremonies to closing ceremonies and everything in between.

The Olympics is always a showcase of individual and team talent and competitive spirit. These are the "Athletes' Games" and as the IOC President Thomas Bach observed, Sochi had undergone an "amazing transformation" from somewhere that looked like a "Stalinist-style sanatorium city" in the mid 1990's to an Olympic host city with state-of-the-art venues. The IOC zero tolerance on doping seems to be working. Although firearms are used in the biathlon events, biathlon is not a shooting event, but rather a skiing event. There were more than 2800 athletes from 88 countries – both new records and featured 12 new events. I know I got very little sleep as live coverage of the events was captivating. The nine hour time difference meant that an event taking place at 2:00 pm Sochi time (for instance) could be watched at 5:00 am Eastern time.

As with any sporting event, even ATA, there are winners and losers. (Tiger Woods once commented that second place is the "first loser".) But the Olympic creed is what strikes me as a more important message: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph, but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered, but to have fought well."

Cudos to all Olympians from all participating countries. You make your countries proud through your effort, your sacrifice, your pursuit of excellence – to win a medal is only icing on the cake. Too much emphasis is often placed by too many on the "result", while ignoring the "struggle".

Since the inception of the modern Olympics (Summer Games) of 1896, look at the conflicts that have engaged so many millions of people on the battlefields of the world. Bitter enemies at wartime become the best of friends in time, and sometimes vice versa. So many lives lost and families destroyed. Some things may never change but to me it is important seeing the athletes of the world engaged on the playing fields of the world. Many of these young people will become the future political leaders of their respective countries. Just interacting in sport with athletes of other nations cannot help but give an appreciation and tolerance for other nations. Surely it is harder for someone to push the doomsday button if you know and respect someone on the receiving end. There are exceptions to all of this, of course – Hitler's Germany hosted the 1936 Olympic Games (both summer – in Berlin and winter 1936 in Garmisch–Partenkirchen), yet inside of three years, Poland was invaded being the "last straw" that erupted in the Second World War.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour in 1942 brought USA into the war on two fronts (Europe and the Pacific) yet in 1964 Japan hosted the Summer Olympics. The cold war between the Eastern Block and the West

came close to a global holocaust with the Cuban crisis in the early 60's yet Moscow was the host for the 1980 summer games (boycotted by the West over Afghanistan) and tit for tat, the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984 was boycotted by the Eastern Block.

The Olympic dream has not faded throughout all of this. Has it contributed to a better world? You be the judge.

By the way, on July 18, 2014, a few short months from now will be the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Great War (later known as World War I). This war raged for four long years and pitted Germany and Austria-Hungary against the Allies of the United Kingdom, France and the Russian Empire. Few expected that the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary (on June 28, 1914) would trigger ultimatums, aggression and the honouring of international alliances. Canada was at the time part of the British Empire and was brought into the War immediately. Some argue (I believe meritoriously) that Canada came of age as a result of the sacrifice by so many and the major victories accomplished such as the taking of the "high ground" – Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. The USA was officially neutral until April 6, 1917 when it entered the conflict and contributed significantly to the war effort. This leads me to questions you can answer for yourself:

1. Better to have armed hostile nations attacking their neighbours with apparent impunity because they believe there is no nation prepared and capable of challenging them or is it better to be the undisputed world military leader, not as an instigator, but as a deterrent to rogue military aggression?
2. Was the cold war between the Eastern Block and the West – the so called "stalemate", not better than the alternative?
3. Is a vibrant economy not important to military superiority or even sustainability? If so, is the West's economy not eroding at a perilous rate with outsourcing and an apparent reluctance to embrace the capitalist principles our two countries were founded upon? [If you get a chance, read "The Walmart Effect" by Charles Fishman. It was first published in 2005 but discusses whether the cheaper product prices resulting from outsourcing American jobs is a net advantage or disadvantage. Decide for yourself.
4. Now that the "sleeping giant" has been awakened and is flourishing with our willing complicity, how long will it take for it to become the undisputed world military power? Will it employ even handed deterrence and foster world stability? Not Likely!
5. Does anybody that has the power and influence to reverse this "slippery slope" even care?
6. What if anything can any of us do other than watch as the society so many of us take for granted erodes before our eyes?
7. Can international sport and the Olympic movement although "non-political", nevertheless be a catalyst for dialogue, moderation and mutual respect?
8. Will our children and grandchildren be better off than us?

Just a few things you may want to ponder as you are crushing clays.

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