



TMSS – Commonwealth Games Delhi 2010 by Michael A. Smith

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With the 2010 Delhi Games four months away, I am doing my part to help the members of team Canada prepare for what many expect to be an exciting but challenging set of Games.

I undertook a number of changes in 2000 - many of which had significant and positive consequences for me - so much so that I attribute them to the reason I am where I am today. Specifically, I graduated from law school and returned to my hometown of Ottawa to work. I made the difficult decision to end my competitive wrestling career so that I could focus on my new legal career. The timing was significant in many ways. As the new kid on the sports scene with Athletes CAN, I was quickly identified as an upcoming talent in the world of sports administration. This led to my work at the 2001 Canada Games and subsequent election to their Board.

In 2002, I was selected as the Athletes Advocate as part of Athletes Services while on the Mission Staff at the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, England. From that point on, there was no looking back and I have continued to represent Canadian athletes at the Olympics, Pan Am and Francophonie Games.

I am proud to say that I am heading to Delhi, India in October 2010 for my 4th Commonwealth Games. I will, however, be wearing a different hat at these Games. I will act as the Team Leader for Team Member Support and Services (TMSS).

Commonwealth Games Canada (CGC) has taken a different approach for these Games. The 'friendly games' will have a different feel and focus for Team Canada. The creation of the various units making up the Mission Staff is meant to assist and ensure podium success at these Games.

The CGC organization and our unit are taking an aggressive approach to help the athletes and coaches prepare for the Delhi Games. One can see the link that is being created between the success experienced at the Vancouver Olympics, and what Commonwealth Games Canada is hoping to achieve in Delhi.

So what is the Team Leader and who does that person lead? This is very different role than I am accustomed to. I will head up the TMSS, a team comprising seven individuals including myself. Combined, the members of this all-star team have participated in every multisport Games, either as an athlete, coach or mission staff member. This is a situation that I am very excited about.

The team is responsible for providing services and assistance to the athletes, coaches and team members while in Delhi. They will be required to "do it all" - from greeting the athletes at the airport, getting through the Village, providing opportunities to acknowledge their success and even connecting them with their families, friends and fans. I have the challenge of keeping it connected, excited and successful.

My experience as an athlete and advocate for team Canada is helping me lead the TMSS. The focus on these Games for me and the team is to prepare the athletes and members of Team Canada to the extent where problems become reduced significantly. To that end, I have taken a slightly different approach than has been used a previous Games. TMSS will be connecting with each athlete rep on a regular basis in the months leading up to the Games. The objective is to build excitement for the Games, provide information about what to expect in Delhi and updates



with the progress of the preparation for the Games. Additionally, we are looking to gain valuable information from the participants about their personal or team preparation and for them to identify any issues for themselves or their team, specifically, team dynamic, team selection or issues with the NSO/staff. We are doing the same outreach to the team managers or leaders that will be attending at the Games.

There is a greater effort being made for these Games to connect with the participants well in advance of leaving for Delhi. Athletes and managers are being engaged and contacted to determine what they need to ensure their success, but more importantly what they will need to know in order to properly prepare for the Delhi experience.

The team ombudsman, is a member of the TMSS and will be in place by early June 2010. He will play a vital role as all ombudsmen have in previous Games. Since the 1996 Games, Canada has been providing services to team members at Major Games by providing a lawyer for the team to assist with any and all disputes that may arise while at the Games. With the participation of an ombudsman, we have seen fewer incidents at major games over the last number of years. I attribute that to a number of things. First, the education that Canada provides to its athletes, coaches and NSO/NSF. Secondly, the proactive approach that has been taken in identifying issues before athletes depart for Major Games. And finally, the NSOs and MSOs openness to share information and “lessons learned” with each other has been instrumental in reducing what has historically been embarrassing moments for Team Canada at Major Games. I am not suggesting that we are perfect at this and that the need for an ombudsman no longer exist, it is more of a situation where we can be proud as a nation that we have done and continue to do good work in this area.

It has been a busy, challenging and rewarding experience for me as the team prepares. There are many more conference calls and meetings to attend, but the learning has been more than one would experience in a university course. I anticipate a number of challenges in Delhi but I am of the view that we can take preventive measures to ensure success. Such preventive measures include directing the athletes to sources of solution for any issues identified prior to the Games, providing them with access to guides/resources about Delhi and the team prior to departing.

To that end, I am enthusiastic about the success that team Canada will have at these Delhi Games and encourage athletes and coaches to be vigilant in their approach leading up to and during the Games. So if you are looking to avoid issues or problems, I suggest that as participants, parents and NSOs you ask questions, stay informed and take an active role in the preparation for the Games.

For information prior to Games, participants will have access to Zeus (www.commonwealthgames.ca/games/index_e.aspx?DetailID=842) and can contact us through that system while gaining valuable information about the Games. Because of our proactive approach, they will be receiving emails from me and my team in addition to phone calls.