



ALL YOU WANT, OR NOT, TO KNOW ABOUT THE OLYMPICS

By Kerry Schmidt

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Well, the multi-billion dollar expenditure is nearly over.

And though it was a fantastic show overall, I for one am ready for it to end. It was good, but enough 24/7 news about wins/loses, drug tests and NBC showing stuff claiming to be live when it was not.

Only problem is, it will now just get worse, much worse. For the next two weeks, we will be subjected to first the Donkey's convention and then the Elephants.

And what will really make this terrible is that every channel will be carrying it, not just NBC and a few off-beat affiliates.

I have two Robert Ludlum books, each over 700 pages, so hopefully that will get me past the incessant, total crap that will be spewed forth into households.

Thus, on Sunday, the closing ceremony will cap the \$90 billion commercial for China.

There were many really cool moments

To encapsulate, you could say that week 1 was the Michael (Flying Fish, as the Chinese have named him) Phelps week, and week 2 was the Usain (lightening) Bolt week.

But before we get into my worthless opining (say what?) nonsense, a couple of critical facts.

1. Exactly 100,000 condoms were made available for the athletes. According to the report, that averages 9.5 per athlete. What the hell does one do with half a condom?
2. USA's Jason Turner sneaked into a bronze medal in the very exciting sport of 10-meter pistol shooting. Why? He was 4th, but Kim Jon Su of North Korea was expelled for failing a drug test! Wow, must have been a very heavy pistol.

But inside the games, you had some fantastic, record-breaking stuff. Outside, that was a different story, as China virtually shut down the entire city of Beijing for "security," thus about all you could do was walk straight.

As I said, week 1 belonged to Phelps. In the single greatest achievement of an Olympics, Phelps went 8 for 8 on gold medals.

His feats were near Herculean. His win in the 100 meter butterfly was unreal. He took a half stroke at the end while Milorad Civik coasted to the computerized touch point. Live, and even in the next 3 replays, it looked like Civik had won, but the stop-action underwater camera showed Phelps' (up yours) middle finger touching first. By one one-hundredth of a second.

Just a few Olympics ago, the technology would not have been there to prove Phelps won, so he owes a thanks to the geeks.

Also, he certainly owes thanks to his teammates. Especially Jason Lezak, on the 4X100 medley relay.

Lezak, swimming the final portion, started a full body length behind, but he overtook his opponent to win by .58th of a second. Without Lezak's own Herculean effort therein, Phelps would not have swept.

So, Phelps was excellence personified, but lady luck, a big middle finger and great teammates helped immensely.

NOTE: It is estimated Phelps will make over \$50 million from these Olympics! Not bad for going swimming.

Bolt was truly lightening in a 6'5' – 195 pound body.

But Bolt did not totally endear himself to his competitors. Before every race, he would clown around robustly.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

On his win in the 100 meter race, with a world record of 9.62, Bolt was so far ahead that he slowed up fully 10-15 meters before the finish, extended his arms out and thumped his chest. Had he not shown off, experts said he would have run around 9.59.

And at times during the qualifying, he would often look back at his opponents and smile. Several later said they were not happy with that behavior.

Yes, Bolt was a clown - not demeaning really, just clowning, before, after and even during his races, but, well, as former Dallas Cowboy QB great “Dandy” Don Meredith once said, “It ain’t braggin’ if you can back it up.”

Bolt then went on to win the 200 meters in 19.30, thus breaking the world record of Michael Johnson set in 1996 in Atlanta. And, he did so into a slight headwind. He thus became the first Olympic sprinter to win both the 100 and 200 and set world records in each.

His 200 was about 11 PM Beijing time, just one hour before his 22 birthday.

By now, he will have anchored Jamaica’s 4X100 relay, and baring some major upset, likely another world record.

So while numerous athletes shined brightly, Phelps and Bolt were the hottest.

Another feel-good story was US free-style wrestler Henry Cejudo (pronounced Hoo-doh). Like the Who Dat Nawleens Saints.

His parents were undocumented immigrants. Cujedo was raised, along with 6 siblings, by his mother. His father, who died last year, never made it to the US. His mother was just 15 and pregnant with Henry when she arrived in America.

His mother moved frequently to find work, so Cejudo attended school in LA, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.

He won four high school state championships in Arizona and Colorado. He turned down a college scholarship to train for the Olympics.

He was told he was crazy, go to college.

But fast forward, and this highly motivated young man won the gold medal.

Afterward, he unfurled and American flag and tearfully paraded around the mat.

“This is the greatest country in the world, and it is the land of opportunity. The streets of America are paved with gold. I’m living the American dream.”

Another feel good story is American swimmer Dara Torres. She won two silvers – one where she took 2nd by one one/hundredth of a second – and a bronze. In one, she had the fastest ever split in a women’s medley relay. So what, you say?

Torres is 41 years old! Most of the swimmers are in their early 20’s, and the gymnasts are 16-24, except for the Chinese who may be 14 or so.

There were many, many other stories, some grand and some not so grand.

The U.S. Softball team, unbeaten in about a hundred years, beat Japan to get to the Championship game. But for some reason, they did not pitch their untouchable star, Cat Osterman. As such, Japan defeated the U.S., 3-1, in probably the biggest upset of the Olympics, if not more so.

And, the U.S. Boxers, who came to Beijing with grand expectations, nearly totally bombed out. Of the 14 fighters, only heavyweight Deontay Wilder is left. He is guaranteed at least a bronze, but could win gold.

The U.S. boxing teams have won 53 more Olympic medals than the next closest country over the years.

The “performance” of Rau’shee Warren pretty much sums up the team.

Going into the final round, he thought he was ahead, so he did not attack, he just protected himself. He lost, 9-8.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

Likewise, the U.S. track team. Though they lead the Olympics with a total of 20 medals, (including four gold), they threw away a number of chances to earn many more. Most noting were both the men's and women's 400 meter relays. Heavy favorites, both dropped the batons on the final hand off, thus ending their hopes. For some 50 years, the Americans have owned the sprints and pretty much dominated track and field. Not anymore.

Now Bolt and several other Jamaican sprinters had a bit to do with their medal total, but 4 U.S. runners were disqualified for various reasons, and Baton Rouge's Lolo Jones, the heavy favorite in the 110 meter hurdles, clipped the 9th hurdle and finished next to last. In quick summary, the U.S. will not medal in any of the sprint relays for the first time in modern Olympic history. And, likewise again, the U.S. failed to win a gold in any of the individual four major sprint events, another first.

Full of big names and high expectations, many said the U.S. could win as many as 20 golds here. Of the mere 4, three were by mere virtual unknowns.

With 15 events remaining, America's team is in danger of earning the lowest number of golds in any Olympics, which were seven in 2000.

An overall look at the Olympic sports.

Gymnastics and diving are beautiful to watch. The incredible twists, turns and jumps, along with the strength of the men's rings, are a sight to behold.

But there is one huge problem.

All of these events are judged subjectively. It's not where there is a clear winner.

As former Olympic coach great and current NBC commentator Bela Karolyi said, "Most judges know very little about the events. They simply look at the deduction possibilities and go from there. It is really unacceptable."

In the uneven bars individual, USA's Nastia Liukin finished tied with China's (not 16) He Kixen. But after three unfathomable mathematical formulations later, Liukin ended up 2nd. Note: Family affair. Her father won 4 medals in 1988. Liukin matched him.

Another worthless sport is fencing.

You stand there in what looks like a ghost buster costume, with a metal stick and you poke each other. If you "score," a red light comes on and a bell rings in your helmet.

Very exciting.

Horse jumping is another I could not miss. I wonder if the horses get their own medals.

The Lopez family, as mentioned last week: Steve won his second gold, Mark a silver and Diana a bronze in Taekwondo.

Both USA beach volleyball teams won gold. The women's were best to watch because it was raining and the view of their, ah, bikinis, was great.

And I think it is pretty safe to say the US will win the basketball golds.

All Olympic athletes train a lot.

How about the Chinese?

Promising Chinese athletes are taken from their parents as early as 3 years old. They are put into training camps (prison) where there every moment is tightly controlled.

They are only allowed to visit their family once a year, for 2 days. No dating. Have a spouse" Too bad, can't get together.

At the age of 16, they move to the central training center in Beijing. They are housed in small rooms, bunk beds and no TV or computers. They train 8 hours a day, and are not allowed contact with outsiders.



OFF THE WALL SPORTS

As one brainwashed athlete said, “It is for the motherland. That is more important than anything. That is our family.”

I’d pass.

There are some “capitalistic” ventures in Beijing. Scalpers. Over 100 arrests have been made, but it is estimated nearly 500 entrepreneurs abound.

Also scams, most notably the “tea” scam.

You are in the streets, and a young Chinese woman comes up and asks if you could help her with her English. She takes you to a café and you have tea. When the bill comes, the charge for the tea is over \$100! Café and women split the pot.

Another glimpse of the tight shutdown in Beijing. There is a government office wherein you can apply for a protest permit.

Police said 77 permits had been applied for. 74 of them were “voluntarily withdrawn.” In fact, not a single permit has been allowed. And worse, it is estimated that over 100 individuals who requested a permit were “detained” and have not yet resurfaced.

I could write another complete column on the near pathological pursuit of the Chinese government to make sure the city appears to be just fine and dandy. To the purest detail.

Besides not allowing anything, it is estimated the Chinese used 56,000 roles of duct tape. They taped over any/all names of manufactures on hundreds of urinals, soap dispensers, fire alarms and thermostats. Any logo outside the set “Olympic Corporate Family” – that means you, American Standard toilets - is hidden by the grey sticky stuff. A government by duct tape!

Before the Games the government promised free speech and openness.

Right. Absolutely nothing that is not marked with a government logo is hidden.

It’s like they kept asking themselves, “What else can we make disappear?”

And of course, the worthless IOC, along with totally docile NBC folk, pretend all this is well and wonderful.

NBC, while putting on a good show of events and coverage, has completely ignored everything outside of their carefully directed cameras. It’s as if nothing beyond the Birds Nest and Water Cube even exist

I give NBC a F- for their lack of even the minutest shots of the solemn, even dead-like atmosphere outside the arenas.

Last note on the “underage” Chinese gymnasts. The IOC and FIG – both about as effective as the UN – said they would “conduct a thorough investigation” (Yea, right) on the official Chinese government documents provided by the NY Times showing the three gymnasts to be underage. China’s own Yang Yun, a double bronze medal winner in Sydney, said during an interview on state broadcaster “China Central Television, that “I was 14 during the 2004 games.

But like the duct tape and NBC, I am quite sure that this is pure lip service, only given now that the games are safely over.

Great sports. Terrible sportsmanship.

This is too long, but hey, the Olympics only come once every 4 years.

Maybe we should award the 2016 Olympics to Iran.

Definitely single malt time. And given what will fill up our TV’s for the next two weeks, I best stock up on a couple of bottles.