



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ATHLETES, THE CLUBS, FEDERATIONS AND THE NOCS

CARLOS ARTHUR NUZMAN

NOC representative • Comitê Olímpico Brasileiro



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First I would like to thank the President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Mr Jacques Rogge, for the opportunity to contribute to this important Olympic Movement event, and the President of the Association of National Olympic Committees (ANOC), Mr Mario Vázquez Raña, for proposing that I speak on behalf of my NOC colleagues at this breakout session. It is an honour for me to share this moment with all our Olympic Family, and to address this very important theme, which is the “Relationship between the athletes, the clubs, federations and the NOCs”.

It is well known that athletes begin their careers in sports associations, clubs, schools and gyms or in other words, at the base of the pyramid of the sports system we are familiar with.

As they develop their sports abilities, athletes rise within these different entities. When their performance reaches an outstanding level, they begin seeking sponsors and other support, granting rights to use their image, and so on.

Subsequently, they join regional, national and international associations, and ultimately their NOC or even the IOC itself.

The intention of athletes is to improve their performance. That is what they strive for incessantly, and in order for them to achieve this goal, they seek partnerships with the abovementioned entities. All of them, in turn, want to help athletes and promote them, and that is where conflicts arise.

This multiplicity of relationships is inevitable in the current sports system, where even individual, independent athletes are obliged to be members of clubs as well as national, regional and international associations in order to participate in the official sports calendar, whether at a local, regional, national, continental or global level.

Unfortunately, this profusion of relationships generates an inevitable overlap of rights and obligations, giving rise to numerous conflicts of

interests and rights, since there are no clear limits to each party’s scope of action. Precise and objective rules are needed, as in sport itself. Who has the right to what, when and for how long?

Each contract – particularly those involving sponsors, supporters, suppliers and the granting of rights to images – agreed with each one of the entities that has a relationship with an athlete, has a direct impact on that athlete, who, in turn, will be in the process of becoming a professional and entering into his or her own contracts with sponsors, supporters, suppliers and holders of rights to his or her image. In other words, athletes have numerous responsibilities and any conflict between contracts will end up harming them.

Athletes must be protected, and it is up to the Olympic Movement – meaning National Federations (NFs), International Federations (IFs), and NOCs – to seek a solution that provides athletes with a more secure and predictable environment in which to compete and exploit their potential.

Establishing clearer and more specific rules about the rights and responsibilities of each member of the Olympic Movement will benefit athletes above all, since they all want to work professionally, but the conflicts which take place during their professional lives most often emerge when they are not yet at professional or elite level.

In addition, a clearer and more precise definition of rights and responsibilities will benefit all parties involved in the process, and sport in general, as it will lend more legal security and professionalism to relationships within the Olympic Movement.

This security concerning what can be done and what cannot be done at each rung of the athlete’s career ladder will thereby preserve and strengthen the autonomy of sports entities, supporting the principles contained in the Olympic Charter.

As a result we – the NFs, IFs and NOCs – must meet to establish clearer and more precise rules concerning the rights and responsibilities of each member of the Olympic Movement, and together set limits of scope for each member, thereby facilitating the lives of our athletes.