

- Your Roles
- Values in Sport
- Developing Your Personal Philosophy
- Theory into Practice

PART TWO *PHILOSOPHY*

You may think it strange to start a manual aspiring to be as practical as possible by talking about philosophy. Yet nothing is as practical as a well developed philosophy. Philosophy is simply the way you see situations and experiences. Whether you have given it much thought or not, you already have a personal philosophy of life. It is based on your ideas, opinions and attitudes from a lifetime of experiences. It determines your every thought, decision and action.

Your philosophy also applies to your work in athletics. Again, you may be aware of it or you may act without giving much thought to the reasons for your decisions. As someone with a position of responsibility in athletics, however, you have an obligation to conduct yourself and make decisions with the best interests of the sport and the athletes foremost in your mind. Having a well developed personal philosophy will make an important contribution to your effectiveness and your success in athletics – and in other areas of your life.

A

Your Roles

It is possible for managers and administrators in a federation to see their role as something which is narrowly defined by a written or assumed job description. However, those with experience working in athletic federations will point out that, no matter what their position, they may from time to time have to take on a large number of roles which might seem less obvious. These include:

- **Politician** – attracting support and dealing with opposing points of view.
- **Planner** – working out details for activities and projects.
- **Motivator** – generating a positive and decisive approach.
- **Organiser** – bringing together people and resources to accomplish objectives.
- **Fund Raiser** – appealing for money and other resources.
- **Financial Manager** – controlling spending, keeping accounts.
- **Liaison Officer** – communicating with and co-ordinating individuals and groups.
- **Publicity Agent** – working with the media to promote events.
- **Trainer** – imparting new knowledge, skills and ideas.
- **Technical Official** – running meetings.
- **Development Officer** – operating programmes to raise performance levels.
- **Team Leader** – taking responsibility for an international tour.
- **Disciplinarian** – determining a system of rewards and punishments.
- **Social Worker** – counselling and advising.
- **Friend** – supporting athletes, coaches and colleagues.

Some of these roles you will perform willingly, others you may find less attractive. In many situations you may find any or all of these roles are combined and in almost all situations you need to make decisions. One of the biggest challenges of your involvement with

athletics is making these decisions. This is because, whatever your position, you are there to serve athletics. You are a guardian of its values and the values of sport in general. Moreover, you have a responsibility to set an example and to help others develop sporting values which will benefit athletics and will be with them for the rest of their lives.

B Values in Sport

Sport and athletics are world-wide phenomena. They cross a wide variety of human boundaries, including political, social, economic, ethnic, etc., and they have become an important element of modern culture.

Among the many reasons for people's interest and support for them are benefits such as:

- Fun and enjoyment.
- Self knowledge, expression and fulfilment.
- Entertainment and excitement for spectators.
- Opportunities for participation and social interaction.
- Physical fitness and health.
- Financial gain.

One of the important arguments for participation in any sport is the belief that it creates situations which provide opportunities to learn lessons for life about desirable and undesirable conduct. This moral and educational aspect contributes to the positive development of individuals and, in turn, to the development of society.

Central to this process are the values of Sportsmanship and Fair Play. These involve much more than just playing within the rules. They are a way of behaving and thinking which incorporate friendship, respect for opponents and officials, maintaining self-control, dignity and integrity, and always competing in the right spirit.

Sportsmanship and Fair Play apply not only to athletes taking part in a competition but to all others involved in the sport – officials, coaches, and even the federation office holders. If these or other values

associated with athletics are not maintained, interest will eventually decline and the benefits the sport offers would be lost.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXAMPLE

One of the most powerful forces against the operation of values is the poor example of others – including, regrettably, coaches and some of the individuals running federations.

If athletes believe that most of their fellow athletes, aided by those responsible for looking after them, cheat in some way, it is difficult to put contrary values into practice. They may abandon the values which guide the rest of their lives because they think "everyone else does it" or "you have to do it to win" or "nice guys finish last". Such a lack of ethics and morality can seem to be very powerful.

However, as a leader in a national federation, you are responsible to ensure that values are maintained in the sport. The example you set will be seen by others and will influence how they act.

C

Developing Your Personal Philosophy

Your personal philosophy guides decisions which you are faced with in everyday life and in your work in athletics. It also makes it possible for you to assist others with developing their own values and philosophy. Having a well developed personal philosophy means knowing where you want to go and what you want your actions and work to achieve. In the same way that it is difficult to make a journey if you do not know the destination, it is unlikely that you will reach your objectives if they are not clearly known to you beforehand.

The key to developing your personal philosophy is knowledge of yourself. Thinking about your work in athletics there are many questions you could ask yourself: Why are you involved? How committed are you? What do you bring to the sport? What do you want to achieve? The answers to these and other questions define your philosophy in relation to athletics. In the following section we examine some



questions and ideas which can help form a basis for developing your philosophy.

1 *Why do it?*

Those responsible for the running of a federation have difficult jobs and must give large amounts of time and energy, most often for little or no financial reward. So what are the reasons they become involved? Some answers given by federation leaders are that they:

- Like the values of the sport and what it gives people.
- Want to make a worthwhile contribution to athletics and the federation.
- Think they are the best qualified for a particular job.
- Have been assigned the position as a part of their job.
- Want to be more closely involved or have more influence on the way things are run.
- Feel it is their turn or obligation to help out.
- Want to give something back to the sport.
- Like the social contacts and friendship.

Whatever an individual's reasons for becoming involved, the success of a federation is dependent on their realisation that they are in a service industry and they are there to serve the sport, the organisation and all the possible customers (athletes, coaches, judges, spectators, the media, the public, etc.). When this is arrived at by those involved it can be a great platform for building a sense of group involvement and common purpose. Moreover, the federation will project a positive image – and this cannot help but rub off on its customers.

Think about your own situation. What are the reasons for your involvement in athletics? Are you comfortable with the idea of being part of a service organisation? How might this realisation affect your function?

2 *Are you committed?*

Doing any job well requires a level of commitment to the organisation – what it stands for and what it is trying to accomplish – and to the work which must be done.

Commitment can be seen in the time someone spends on a task. It can be seen in the pride they take in what they do. Commitment can also be seen in the willingness of an individual to develop themselves for the benefit of others and the task at hand. For example, many sport leaders will go so far as to learn new skills in the hope that it will improve their effectiveness and the effectiveness of their organisation.

One very important form of commitment is the amount of effort someone will take to understand the values of the organisation, to help develop them and to work and live by them.

Think about yourself. What is the level of your commitment to your role in athletics? To the values which are central to the sport? What are you willing to do to improve the contribution which you can make?

3 *What are your strengths and weaknesses?*

The characteristics in the following table have been used to describe successful athletics leaders.

Circle the rating that others in your federation and community would choose if asked what you bring to the sport. Not what you would want them to choose, but what you think they would actually choose.

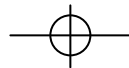
Place a mark against the areas you think you need to improve on.

4 *What are your objectives?*

If you ask federation leaders what they want out of their involvement, their answers will usually include:

- Better results in competition.
- Athlete development.
- Education and human development.
- Financial success for the federation.
- Greater visibility and prestige for the sport.

You may think that all of these are important, but which is the most important?



SELF EVALUATION

Characteristics	Low	Average	High	Areas to Improve
Knowledge of athletics	1	2	3	_____
Well organised	1	2	3	_____
Honesty	1	2	3	_____
Personal integrity	1	2	3	_____
Enthusiasm	1	2	3	_____
Hard working	1	2	3	_____
Punctuality	1	2	3	_____
Reliability	1	2	3	_____
Consistency	1	2	3	_____
Good listener	1	2	3	_____
Good teacher	1	2	3	_____
Patience	1	2	3	_____
Professional in appearance	1	2	3	_____
Sense of humour	1	2	3	_____

Many successful sports leaders place the athletes – their rights, needs for training and competing, enjoyment and personal development – as the single most important consideration. After all, federations have been established to serve athletes. It is the athletes who make up our sport, without them it would cease to exist. Seeing things from their point of view – or an athlete-centred approach – is highly compatible with the values of Sportsmanship and Fair Play and with the concept of the federation as a service organisation. It is also more likely to produce decisions in line with other values of sport and lead to more wide spread satisfaction than an over emphasis on any other objectives.

Think about your own objectives in athletics. Are they compatible with your own values? Are they compatible with the values of sport and the athlete-centred approach? If not, what could you do about it?

D Theory into Practice

Answering the questions above and developing a personal philosophy is not a difficult process.

However, as a leader within a national federation, it is important that you do so and that you put your beliefs into action. Your philosophy should be reflected in a code of ethics. Ethics simply tell you what is 'right' and what is 'wrong'. A personal code of ethics encompasses your personal standards and integrity. It is a practical guide which helps you determine your behaviour in all types of situations. It should be followed, not just in words, but in every action you take. This applies when things are going well, but more especially when they are not.

In addition to guiding your decisions and conduct in such a way that you can be proud of all you do in athletics, your well developed personal philosophy and code of ethics are an important resource for others in the sport. They will help you to apply consistent, clear reinforcement for desirable actions and take appropriate action against undesirable actions in others. Most importantly, they allow you to be a positive role model and demonstrate that the values of athletics such as Sportsmanship and Fair Play are operative in your federation – the strongest response you can make when others provide a poor example.



2

C H A P T E R

THE ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ATHLETICS

PART ONE
SPORTS
STRUCTURES

PART TWO
THE INTERNATIONAL
AMATEUR ATHLETIC
FEDERATION

