After all the excitement and euphoria, the spills and disappointments, one encouraging fact stood out at the Olympics in PyeongChang: Britain had their most successful Winter Games in history. Their five medals topped the number both at the first Winter Olympics in 1924 and in Sochi in 2014, when four were won on each occasion.

PyeongChang was a particular rollercoaster of a Games for Britain in emotional terms. There was Elise Christie, a double world champion in short-track skating last year, both failing to get a medal and also being injured in a series of accidents, injuries and disqualifications. Her experience contrasted with the joy of Lizzy Yarnold, who retained her skeleton title, with another Briton, Laura Deas, taking the bronze in the same event.

With a record £28 million put towards the four years of preparation for the team, there was always the expectation that Britain would reach their minimum target, set by UK Sport, of five medals. That they did so is a testament to the diligent preparations both by the individual sports and also by the British Olympic Association.

Yarnold had not been necessarily expected to be on the podium, let alone win the gold, following her triumph in Sochi four years ago. After a year out from racing in 2015-16, she had a steady if unspectacular return to the sport and it was her ability to reach her peak at the Olympics that brought her a second title.

She duly became the first Briton and the first skeleton racer to win two successive golds at the Winter Olympics. When the final run had ended, she was able to say: “As each minute passes, it (victory) becomes more of a reality but it is still an unbelievable series of events, of everything just coming together.”

And to complete her and Britain’s happiness, her team-mate, Laura Deas took third place. As Laura said: “I do not think many people get to share an Olympic podium with one of their best friends. Before each run, we would give each other a very purposeful nod, as if to say ‘You know what, let’s do this, we can do it’.”

Britain’s fine record in this sport over recent Games was consolidated with a bronze medal through Dominic Parsons in the men’s competition. A former 400 metre runner, he switched to skeleton in 2007 and had been a consistent performer, albeit not an outstanding one internationally in recent years. Nicknamed ‘The Walthamstow Wizard’, since a team member had added a wizard’s cap to a picture of Parsons on Snapchat, he had come fourth in a World Cup race in January and then like his two female compatriots, timed coming to a peak with perfection.

Izzy Atkin took Britain’s first-ever skiing medal at the Winter Olympics, when she came third in slopestyle. Born in Boston, Massachusetts to an English father and Malaysian mother,
The Chairman’s Message
Jos Hoyt-Smith

I wish to congratulate Team GB’s PyeongChang 2018 Olympic athletes for the most successful Winter Games in history and welcome many of them as new members to the GB Olympians. I am particularly looking forward to welcoming as many of you as possible to our flagship event, the Olympians Westminster Mile which will take place on Sunday 27 May. You’re all invited to take part or to watch from our VIP place in October. We are delighted to announce that this has proved so popular that it is now oversubscribed. At our AGM, details to follow in the coming months, we are planning to present as many C tits to those who have applied and received their CTit certificate. Use the link on page 7 to sign up for your accreditation.

I want to finish my note by thanking you for taking the time to keep in touch through our Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter pages. I am grateful, as always, for any feedback about how you think we can best support our members.

The women lost their semi-final 5-10 to Sweds before Japan in the bronze medal match.

The Olympic disappointments of Elise Christie and Lizzy Yarnold in her three events, the 500 metres, 1000 metres and 1500 metres, only seemed to highlight the triumphs elsewhere. Short-track skating is notoriously unpredictable, with accidents so frequent that forecasting is almost as hazardous mentally as the races themselves.

Norway just pipped Germany for the top place in the medal table with 14 gold medals, with Britain finishing probably as high as could have been reasonably anticipated and certainly fulfilling the expectations. And now to Beijing in 2022.

By John Goodbody
As a GB Olympian and your family can purchase Toyota vehicles and genuine Toyota accessories from any Toyota Centre at a reduced price on top of any existing Toyota retail offers. Toyota are an IOC sponsor and are keen to support Team GB and the GB Olympians Programme. For full details please log on to the Olympians Hub at http://hub.teamgb.com or contact christine.bower@teamgb.com

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Olympians: get your kit on & run

IT’s that time of the year again, when we older GB Olympians take those creaky joints, or what I think are my creaky joints, up to the left, by-pass the Christmas decorations to bribe the door of luggage from Tokyo, Lilleshall, Sapporo, Mexico and Los Angeles. Mouldy kit is tentatively removed to stop it falling to pieces and then put on.

A glance in the mirror reveals that 30, 40, or even 50 years haven’t done anything to stop you looking a prime physical specimen, capable of taking on all those younger Olympians...the ones who really are in their prime. Yes, the day of the Olympians’ Westminster Mile is fast approaching once again.

This year will be the fourth annual running of the event and it is hoped that the field will be larger than ever. The race will take place on Sunday, May 27, with an expected start time around 1 p.m.

To give a bit of history, the inaugural event in 2015 was the result of an off-the-cuff chat between the London Marathon’s Lisa Thompson and me to see whether they might be interested in we Olympians taking part in a capital city 10k.

As a committee, we were very keen either to develop our own event or piggy-back on something already established. Lisa thought this was a great idea that would fit well with the London Marathon ethos, but quite rightly she added an appropriate dose of reality saying “…a bit far for your lot, Dave, how about the mile?” For some time now the Marathon has organised a series of Mile races for a host of different categories around the iconic Mall and Bedeguar Walk course, using Buckingham Palace as the dramatic backdrop to the finishing line.

Personally I think the deal was sealed when we came up with the stipulation...and you’ll have to wear your original Olympic kit if you can.” The idea was rubber-stamped at our next committee meeting and that was that. The 2015 race was hastily arranged and won appropriately by Steve Cram, 30 years after he’d set the world mile record. Setting the scene for what was to follow in subsequent years, fencers ran with swords, hockey players knocked a ball between each other for the mile’s duration and winter sports athletes completed the course in full-body suits complete with helmets and bobsleighs.

In 2016 by fencer James Williams and hockey player Jason Lattes. Jo Mersh took the women’s race just outside Shrieen Bailey’s 2015 record of 6 minutes 3 seconds. Last year, Constantine ‘Stan’ Louloudis, fresh from his Rio rowing triumph, demolished the men’s course record with a 5:05 clocking – beating Sae Coe and Jo Pavey by 55 seconds in the process. But first across the line has never really been the point in this event.

In 2017, ice-skater Stacey King ran despite being 8 months pregnant, as did 1992 Helsinki Olympic Frank Dobson, and the incredible Eric Shirley, who was timed in 10:01 for the mile at the age of 88!

The key to all the successes of the day has been the fantastic relationships which have developed between the GB Olympians old and new and between us and the London Marathon team. Without Lisa’s work in tandem with that of Penny Dam and with the support of Hugh Brasher, the whole initiative would have stayed at the pipedream stage.

So I ask you to come to London on May 27 to take part in YOUR Olympians Mile. You will have a great time, meeting old friends and making new ones from across a huge range of Olympic ages and sports, plus it’s absolutely free. Why not encourage your former Olympic team members to do likewise - get a group together and stage your own reunion?

To Hugh Brasher, the director of the Virgin Money London Marathon and Weekly Westminster Mile Event, says: “The Weekly Westminster Mile is all about inspiring people of all ages and abilities to come and take part. In 2017, we saw a record number of entries with more than 8,500 people signing up to what is a fantastic event, taking place on the Mall with a finish in front of Buckingham Palace.

The Olympians’ Mile makes the day even more special. We get to watch the legends of British sport, of all ages, run, jog or walk their way round the course, wearing their kit from the Olympics in which they competed. It is a remarkable and heart-warming sight.”

By Dave Long, marathon runner 1988 and 1992 and Olympians Committee member

As a GB Olympian you and your family can purchase Toyota vehicles and genuine Toyota accessories from any Toyota Centre at a reduced price on top of any existing Toyota retail offers. Toyota are an IOC sponsor and are keen to support Team GB athletes and Olympians in the UK, with this car scheme. They are a sponsor until 2034 and also a partner of the Team GB Ambition Programme.

For full details please log on to the Olympians Hub at http://hub.teamgb.com or contact christine.bower@teamgb.com

Enter Here https://app.realbuzzregistrations.com/events/lmen/2018-vwm-olympians/profile/
The True Athlete Project (TAP) aims to unleash sport’s powerful potential for social change. We do this by delivering programmes, which are designed to improve athletic performance, nurture mental health and cultivate a more compassionate society.

TAP’s mentoring programme aims to match 10 Olympic/Paralympic athletes with 10 aspiring, young competitors. Both mentor and mentee will be led through a ground-breaking, year-long programme that includes modules on performance, mindfulness, identity and values, nature and connectedness, and community responsibility. Mentees will also receive a six-week Mindful Sport Enhancement course, delivered by its creator, Dr. Keith Kautman.

Based on the philosophy that sport is a powerful vehicle for human development, and that too often the experience of sport does not live up to its potential, this programme seeks to give an opportunity for the best role models of that philosophy to pass on their wisdom to those who need it most.

Mentoring sessions will take place via regular video and audio calls with the aim of building a positive, supportive relationship, together with sharing experiences and ideas. The structure and unique offer of the project comes as the mentor leads the mentee through the modules of the TAP curriculum. The mentor and mentee will set and work towards goals and better understand themselves and their own role and responsibility as athletes.

Frances Houghton, five times a British Olympic and the longest-serving member of the British rowing team, is one mentor. She says: “It is fantastic to be involved in the TAP project and to meet Max, my first mentee. I am really excited to get started - to share my experiences as well as learn from Max. Well-being, balance and thriving as a parent are integral part of ultimate performances and getting the most out of sport, so it’s a real privilege to be able to contribute to this project.”

In recognition of the current work and vision of this programme, the World Olympians’ Association has awarded a Service to Society Grant of $1,500 to the TAP in partnership with GB Olympians. The symbiosis between these organisations is clear, as TAP’s holistic, developmental compassionate philosophy rings true with the Olympic values. The GB Olympians are fertile ground for world-class athletes with a passion for passing on their wisdom and using sport for social change.

It is hoped that this partnership will entice more British Olympians and Paralympians to apply to become a TAP mentor, to nurture and support a young, future potential Olympian in their journey through elite sport. But it’s not just the mentee that benefits from mentoring. It is clearly evident that the mentor also gets a huge amount out of building a personal relationship with their mentee and in getting the chance to pass on what they learned over so many years of dedication and hard work.

As Simon Sinek has said: “The only true way for any of us to grow, to truly fulfill our full potential, is when we work to help others do the same.”

To learn more or to apply to become a TAP mentor, follow this link: https://www.thetrueathleteproject.org/mentoring.html

Project worth backing

By Laurence Halsted
Fencing London 2012

Christine honoured

Christine Bower, who is the Athlete Services Co-ordinator at the British Olympic Association, was appointed on MBE in the New Year’s Honours List. Christine has worked tirelessly for the BOA and the Olympians over the years.

She started at the BOA in 1977 as an office junior, before becoming secretary to the Deputy General Secretary and then PA to Dick Palmer, the General Secretary. When he retired in 1993, Christine worked with the Athlete Services Team, her role including the Athlete Passport Scheme (now the Team GB Gold Club), the BOA Athletes’ Commission and The Olympians. In recent Games, she has been responsible helping the athletes’ friends and families in the “nearest and dearest” programme, supporting them with information and advice. She says that her two outstanding memories over the last 40 years were being present in Sarajevo at the Winter Games when Jordy Dean won their ice dancing gold medal with their famous interpretation of “Bolero,” and the other was carrying the Olympic torch inatham in 2012. That was a great honour. “Nothing more than she has deserved for all the tasks she has carried out for the Olympic Movement over more than 40 years.”

OBITUARIES

Sir Roger Bannister (athletics)

As Sir Roger, who died in March aged 88, often said, if he had taken the 1500 metres gold medal at the 1952 Olympics, he would have retired and not become the first man to run a sub-four minute mile. In Helsinki in 1952, he came fourth in a race surprisingly won by Josy Barthel of Luxembourg.

Two years later, paced by his two great friends, Chris Brasher, the 1956 Olympic steeplechase champion, and Chris Chataway, later in 1954 to set the world 5,000 metres record, Sir Roger ran 3 minutes 59.4 seconds. When Australian John Landy in a race with Chataway in Finland did 3 minutes 58.0 seconds, all was set for what became known as the “Miracle Mile.”

In 1964 at the Tokyo Games, Bannister finished first with both runners going under four minutes again. The Briton concluded his track career by taking the gold medal in the 3000 metres at the 1954 European Championships.

Sir Roger later had a distinguished career in medicine as a neurologist, Master of Pembroke College, Oxford and the first independent chairman of the British Sports Council.

Oly Pins

All Olympians, who have been registered and have been awarded their Olympic certificate, will be able to receive their Oly Pins at one of the GB Olympians events in 2018, including the Olympics Minister Mike on Sunday, May 27, the Mexico/Central reunion on October 14 as well as at our Annual General Meeting. To register, go to the website of the World Olympians Association and click on the section marked OLY. It takes about a minute to complete.

Sir Durward Knowles (sailing)

Until he died in February, aged 105, Sir Durward was the oldest Olympic gold medallist, being victorious in 1944, one of the eight Games in which he participated in sailing. Nicknamed ‘The Sea Wolf,’ he finished first in Star Class at the 1946 World Championships and then because the Bahamas was not recognised by the International Olympic Committee, competed for Britain at the 1948 Games, where his boat was fourth, despite suffering a broken mast in one of the races.

With the Bahamas now part of the Olympic Movement, he took a bronze medal in the 1956 Games before the gold in 1964. His last Olympic appearance was in 1988. He was a philanthropist and noted worker on humanitarian causes for which he received a knighthood.

Alan Geldard (cycling)

Alan Geldard, who died aged 90 in February, was a member of the British pursuit team, who took the bronze medal in the 1948 Olympics. Riding with David Ricketts, Tommy Gardiner and Wilfred Walters, they finished behind France and Italy in the event held at the Hammersmith Track.

Geldard took three weeks off work as a commercial artist to prepare for the Games but on his return to his firm, he was sacked.

In 1948, he was the national 25 mile track champion, a feat he repeated the following year. He competed for England at the 1950 British Empire Games in New Zealand but punctured. Later, he was a successful coach at two Manchester clubs. In 2012, he took part in the Olympic torch relay, handing over to Sebastian Coe.

Other deaths

Audrey Hancock (swimming - 1936)

Peter Wells (athletics - 1952 and 1956).
It remains not just an indelible image from the 1968 Olympics but one from the entire panoply of British sport. It is of David Hemery, coming over the last barrier at the Mexico Games, alone and unchallenged, about to set a world record in the 400 metres hurdles with the winning margin of 0.90, the biggest in the event since 1924.

Hemery’s triumph was partly unpredictable because he had only the sixth fastest time among the finalists but, even more unexpected was his performance of 48.12 seconds, a world record by almost 0.70 seconds, giving him such a huge margin of victory. The performance earned him the award of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year and seldom has this accolade been carried with more grace either before or since.

When asked about the mental state in that race, he spoke about how he was “running scared. It is the fear they [his rivals] are gaining on you and will overtake you.”

Four years later, he was to make a valiant attempt to defend his title, despite a damaged hamstring, suffered 10 days before the Games and needing a cortisone injection, while admitting that he was not prepared mentally for the occasion. However, his bronze medal behind the world record of Uganda’s John Akii-Bua and a silver in the 4 x 400 metres relay completed a career of rare sporting success, which continued with two triumphs in the British Superstars and one in the Past Masters Superstars.

David’s life both while growing-up and during his athletics career had always been shared between Britain and the United States, gaining academic qualifications at Oxford, Boston and Harvard Universities. And between 1976 and 1983, he studied, taught and coached athletics at Boston, a period, which he remembers with particular affection.

He recalls: “I enjoyed coaching the sprints and hurdles immensely. There was a camaraderie, it was like being in a family. There was a total variety of talent, men and women including ‘walk-ons’, who just wanted to improve their athletics”. In 1981, he married Vivian, with whom he has had two sons, and wrote several books in that decade, including instructional books on sport.

In the last 30 years, he has been immensely busy, including being the first President of UK Athletics, vice-chairman of the British Olympic Association, organising conferences and co-developing and teaching Performance Coaching for business management.

During the 2012 Olympics, an event “which totally fulfilled my expectations”, he was ideal to act as an escort to leading sponsors, the Princess Royal as well as Prince William and Kate. The latter has, he says: “a real passion for athletics. She was a high jumper at school with a best of 1.63 metres at 16 years-old.”

Seb Coe had asked David to set up the 21st Century Legacy, initially stimulated by London getting the Games in 2005. This has involved sending speakers into schools, although he took the advice of teachers that if there were a focus on sport, we “would lose about 20 percent of the pupils.” “We took as our mantra the words: ‘Be the best you can be, rather than the best.” The intention has been to engage, inspire and empower the pupils. We have encouraged them to follow their dreams with passion whatever they are”.

Teachers received a day of training and coaches were also helped to become better mentors. David explains: “Apart from the technical side, they need to engage the mind of the competitor for him or herself to take greater self-responsibility and become more self-aware.” He gave examples of athletes, who always look towards the coach, rather than often taking decisions themselves.

So far 250,000 kids have been engaged in the eight-year programme. The next stage is to continue this in a collaborative approach with the Royal Society for Public Health. Meanwhile, in Wiltshire, where David lives and where he is Deputy Lieutenant of the County, he is working with local authorities to get sport, exercise, health and mental well-being all on the same website.

It is the same thoughtful approach to situations that he initially showed the world in preparing for that unforgettable triumph in October 50 years ago.