

Brazil in the Olympics: Only 4 Golds. Still a Record.

Contributed by Newsroom
Monday, 30 August 2004

Brazil went back home with 10 medals from the Athens Olympic Games, which ended Sunday, August 29, in a ceremony at the Olympic Stadium in the Greek capital. From now on, international athletic attention will be focused on Beijing (China), host of the next Olympics, in 2008.

For 17 days events were held in various sports categories. Brazil achieved one of its best results ever in Olympic competitions, obtaining 10 medals, including 4 gold (a record), 3 silver, and 3 bronze.

In the last day Brazilians took the winners' stand twice. First, the men's volleyball team, which won the gold medal by defeating Italy in the finals.

Then, the Brazilian long-distance runner, Vanderlei Lima, who won the bronze medal in the men's marathon, even after being attacked by a man in costume, who ran into the street and dragged him into the crowd.

Brazil took a strong sailing team to Athens, no doubt about that. The team of Torben Grael and Marcelo Ferreira won a gold medal for the country in the Star Race. The feat makes Grael the country's greatest ever Olympic athlete with five medals—two of them gold.

The other Brazilian gold medals in the Athens games were in men's beach volleyball (Ricardo e Emanuel), who defeated Spain 21 to 16 and 21 to 15, and Robert Scheidt who won the Laser Class sailing competition.

One silver medal was won in women's beach volleyball by Adriana Behar and Shelda. Two bronze medals were won in judo by Flavio Canto and Leandro Guilheiro.

Getting Better

In June, Brazil held the first National Conference on Sports. The focus of the meeting was on sports as a factor of social inclusion, education, and development.

According to the Minister of Sports, Agnelo Queiroz, the conference marked the beginning of sports as a State policy, serving as a tool to help human development in Brazil.

In Queiroz's view, it is necessary "to create a culture of sports being practiced by all, to live longer, with quality of life and far removed from diseases."

For the Minister, sports can be the instrument for social inclusion, "because it is a cheap and pleasurable activity, which children and adolescents want to practice, occupying their spare time."

The Minister also argued that funds need to be provided for sports. According to him, the government is studying the creation of a fiscal incentive law for firms to sponsor sports.

The Ministry of Sports reports that it will install five centers for gymnasts around the country. Queiroz declared that the idea is to use existing facilities and adapt them for Olympic gymnastics, which will reduce costs. He revealed that the necessary equipment will cost US\$ 100,000 (300,000 reais). The first of the new centers will be in Manaus, state of Amazon.

The minister also announced that the Ukrainian, Oleg Ostapenko, who trained the Brazilian Olympic team will be an assistant at the new centers.

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