



CHAMPION

Opinion

Put a lid on the Olympics

Give 'em snowballs. As each Winter Olympics competitor moved away from the scrutiny of competition, organizers made certain they were given a bunch of flowers. Most athletes were too tired, too dazed, and too concerned about their performances to do anything other than accept them. Athletes could have been handed anvils and never known it. Surely it has occurred to the French that flowers and winter don't go together. I figure that at least once, somebody flung the buds as far away as possible, swore a blue streak and skied another 50 kms cross country just to remove any taint. Of course this was edited for television.

Now, what if, organizers made sure everybody, only moments after they finished their event, was well supplied with snowballs? I suspect you'd be faced with the instant creation of the first decent sport to hit demonstration status in a long time: snowball fighting. It's a natural. Women's, men's, mixed, with two, four and full international Olympic teams. There could even be a category for free-for-all where every athlete from every country starts in the stadium and the last standing takes home the snowball fighting gold.

Look at some of the ridiculous 'sports' that were featured at the Games. Freestyle skiing, in all its many forms, is patently not a sport. Nice to watch? Yeah, for a while. And I can marvel at what the practitioners can do, but it is not a sport. Style points, or artistic impression points precludes any such endeavor from the realm of sport.

Anything where judges determine the winner isn't legit. It's one thing to have judges on hand to make sure rules are followed, but quite another when it's not the athletes who decide the outcome.

They'll put some bounce into your step

February blahs, anyone? We even get an extra day of February this year. Oh, boy. At least it's getting lighter in the morning and staying light a little longer at night. It's been so long since I've seen my pets in natural light, I'll have to check closely now for positive identification.

Shorter days affect animals as well as people. Both tend to sleep more and to crave carbohydrates, often in the form of junk food. Potato chips and television seem to go hand in hand during the gloomy winter months.

One of my cats is passionately devoted to sour cream and onion chips and will go to any lengths to obtain them.

Half-napping TV watchers tend to respond with howls of indignation when a cat suddenly appears and hooks a chip out of their bowl at lightning speed before beating a hasty retreat. You have to laugh at his determination.

The dog relies on deep sighs and the occasional pathetic lifted paw to convince people of his sincere hunger. I abhor begging animals, and ignore them across the board, whether my own or other peoples' pets. My family, however, has never responded well to my training methods.

Begging, I tell them sternly and for the thousandth time, is just a passive, staring-down, a dominance contest, and the dog wins when you feed him. Not only does he redouble his efforts after a success, he continues to

REAUME WITH A VIEW

with BRAD REAUME



Speed skiing is another classic. Of course the Summer Olympic equivalent is speed falling, where the competitor leaps from a plane, is measured for speed moments later, and then parachutes toward a bull's eye for additional points (with a bonus for a telemark landing) while a drunken crowd watches to the beat of loud, pulsating rock music.

We're almost at the point where every form of human activity is becoming an Olympic sport. Of course toboggan racing isn't in the Olympics despite having much more claim to legitimacy than most.

I think that driveway shovelling (both 10 centimetre and 1 metre depth events), sub-zero house-to-locked-car racing, and appointment-keeping-in-a-snowstorm have more legitimacy as Winter Olympic events than ice dancing, freestyle ski ballet or speed skiing, which is akin to remaining on your feet as you fall off the side of a mountain.

Why don't they have speed skating events on frozen canals? Hey if they can't do that at least they can race, as a group, down the luge run. If nothing else it would make for some great TV. And isn't that what it's all about?

It's nice everyone wants to be included in the Games. I hear that a new sport looms for the next Olympics — TV channel-changing. The only problem is the International Olympic Committee can't decide between the Summer or Winter Games for this extravaganza.



Control is a child's motivator

What's the point of a child working hard at school if he feels that nothing he does makes any difference? There is no point. That is why "locus of control" is so important.

Some children think they are responsible for their successes and failures. If they succeed, it's because they tried hard and have the ability. These children are said to have an internal locus of control (internalizers).

Other children feel they don't have much control over what happens to them; if good things happen, it's due to luck, circumstances or other people. They are said to have an external locus of control (externalizers). Many children fall between these extremes.

Locus of control tells us a lot about children. Internalizers do much better at school, and in life, than externalizers. An externalizer will think mistakes at school are because the work

PSYCHOLOGY

with DR. ARNOLD RINCOVER



is too hard, and he can't do much about it, so he won't try very hard or for very long. He'll develop lower expectations for himself, choose easier challenges, and give up easily. His feelings of helplessness will extend to other situations. He doesn't think he can control or influence what other people think of him, so he doesn't initiate contact with new people or try to "repair" friendships when problems arise.

The internalizer, on the other hand, expects to do well. He feels he can master anything if he tries hard enough. He initiates conversations and plays with other children, rather than hoping they will initiate contact. He takes the lead in solving problems, and learns how to compromise, share, reciprocate, and get along. He will excel at school, outperforming other children of equal intelligence.

How does a child become an internalizer? It has been linked in part to parents' attitudes during child-rearing. Encouraging independence seems to be a key. Children who are allowed to sleep over at a friend's house at an early age, are allowed to explore things, go places, have choices, given time to solve everyday problems before parents jump in to help, tend to become internalizers.

Children who are granted such privileges relatively late tend to become externalizers. Children who have a dominating mother (or father) who makes virtually all the decisions, and children who feel neglected or rejected, tend to become externalizers.

Some researchers feel a child's locus of control begins to develop in infancy. Infants are clearly happier if they feel they have control over the world around them, as they smile and coo more when they discover their head movements can make a mobile turn, that makings sounds causes the same sound to come out of the grown up leaning over them, that crying will get the diaper changed or a bottle. The more a child's crying is ignored during the first year, the more likely a child is to feel powerless to have any effect on what happens to him.

PETS AND YOU

with ANNE NORMAN



"train" you by using as many variations on the soulful stare as he can muster. This is not cute or sad, I tell them, it is a single-minded dedication to bending you to his will.

Even as I speak, my daughter reaches for the chip bag and the dog is at her side — a stalwart companion.

My son informs me that "We hardly ever give him anything", and I throw up my hands and admit defeat. Embarrassing, the whole situation.

Getting back to the winter blahs; just at the moment we feel that adding 10 pounds to our bulk is inevitable this time of year, the old winter sun begins pushing its way through the gloom.

We feel energized. Our pets feel the same way.

Cats, noted for the incredible capacity for sleep, stretch and look for sunny windows in which to nap further.

Once in a while, they may even (now that

spring is approaching) watch the birds flying and hopping about outside, and sit muttering to themselves, tails twitching with interest.

The odd burst of kittenish behaviour may manifest itself as well. My favourite is the blank stare, followed by a small jump with ears flattened and tail erect.

This is followed immediately by a mad rush across the room or down a hallway, perhaps smacking briefly at any objects along the flight path.

Dogs revert to puppy antics. You know, first the happy expression, ears forward. Then the front paws thrown down hard, bum up, tail wagging. At the least sign from you, the dog charges off, ears back, head down, racing past you like an idiot. Then he stops, abruptly, waiting for you, and a madcap game of tag begins.

Only the stoniest of hearts could fail to respond to this hilarious invitation to play. Granted, I sometimes feel that these interludes could be better timed, and I'm often in the middle of doing something that I feel is important.

Experience has taught me, however, that pets, like children, need you when they need you, and there are more important things than finishing the dishes this second.

Life is filled with spontaneous and wonderful moments — enjoy them. And be glad that February is a short month.

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Publisher — Ian Oliver
General Manager — Neil Oliver

Jane Muller — Editor
EDITORIAL: News: Rob Kelly,
Karen Smith. Sports: Brad Reaume.
Photography: Graham Paine.

Neil Oliver — Advertising Mgr.
ADVERTISING: Sales: Debbie Pells,
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BUSINESS: Shirley Dyc, Belinda
Beasley, Linda Norton.
CLASSIFIED: Sheena Cameron.

Karen Hulsmen — Circulation Mgr.
CIRCULATION: Bonnie Walsh.

Phone 878-2341

Toronto Line 821-3837; Fax — 878-4943

Second class mail Registration No. 0913

Tim Coles — Composing Mgr.
COMPOSING: Mark Dills, June Col-
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Julie Green.

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