



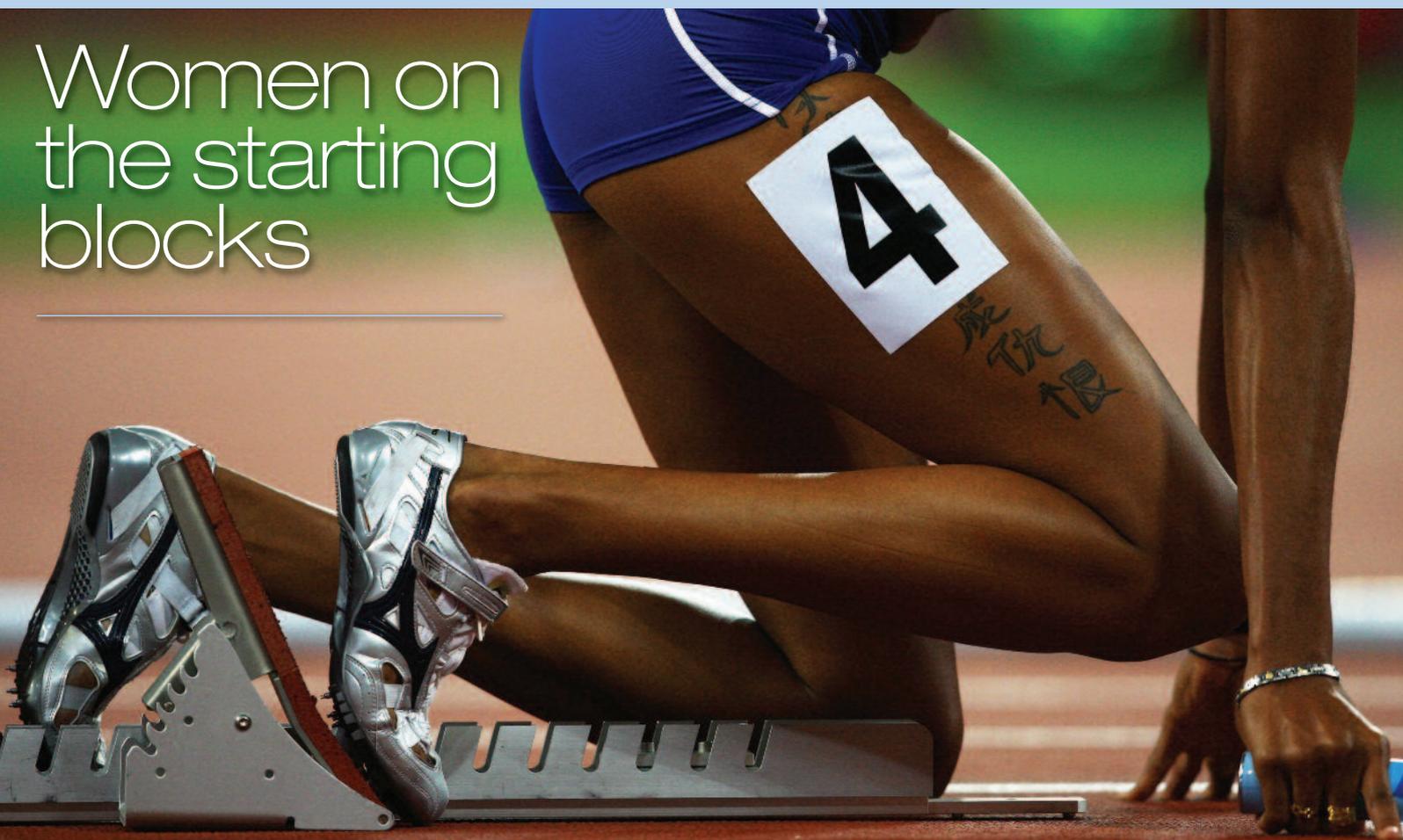
INTERNATIONAL
OLYMPIC
COMMITTEE

FOCUS

WOMEN AND SPORT

FEBRUARY 2009

Women on the starting blocks



The Games of the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing were a triumph from the magnificent Opening Ceremony to the closing speeches. On the occasion of International Women's Day (8 March) it seems appropriate to reflect on the role women played in making it one of the most successful and celebrated Olympic Games. A new record was set for women's participation. More than 42 per cent of the athletes who participated in the Games were women and surely it will not be long before parity with men on the field of play is achieved.

International Women's Day has become an occasion for celebrating the increasing number of women in high level sport. Once again, the IOC Women and Sport Awards pay tribute to five personalities who have contributed to the promotion of women and girls as well as their societies through sport. Two former Olympians are among this year's winners, two women who achieved much on the sporting field and were role models. After their sporting career they went on to serve their nations' sport with distinction and continue to inspire fellow women and girls.

Female participation in the Olympic Games has grown particularly within the last two decades. The 611 women in the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome represented just 11.5 per cent of the total. However, by 1980 the number almost doubled to about 22 per cent. At the Sydney Games in 2000 the number reached 4,069 out of the 10,651 athletes, or just over 38 per cent were women. The 40 per cent barrier was broken in Athens in 2004 when women competed in 26 of the 28 sports on the programme and in 135 events, with 4,306 female athletes out of 10,568 participants.

The slightly over 42 per cent figure that was reached in Beijing was a clear sign of the inexorable march towards parity. International Federations (IFs) in particular played an important role in boosting the numbers, tweaking their programmes by adding women's events and generally being accommodative of the IOC President's drive to encourage women to participate. Track and field, hockey, football, fencing and cycling, among others, particularly went out their way to expand their events for the purpose.

Needless to say that the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) responded positively as well, sending 4,639 female athletes to Beijing. African NOCs selected 325 female athletes, 922 were from the Americas, 908 from Asia, 2,176 from Europe and 308 from Oceania. Although merely symbolic, the number of teams who have women carrying their national flag at the Opening Ceremony has also increased, with 54 women flagbearers in Sydney, 60 in Athens and 63 in Beijing.

One of the missions of the IOC, as stipulated in its Charter, is "to encourage and support the promotion of women in sport at all levels and in all structures with a view to implementing the principle of equality of men and women". The Olympic Games are the sporting platform through which the IOC can directly provide opportunities for women to engage in top-level sport, both in competition and in leadership positions. The record of the last four years clearly shows that the trend towards an equality-balanced Olympic programme has been reinforced.

THE 2009 IOC WOMEN AND SPORT AWARDS

The IOC Women and Sport Awards were first introduced in 2000. Every year, trophies are given to a woman or man (former athlete, coach, administrator or journalist) or to an organisation that has worked to develop, encourage and strengthen the participation of women and girls in physical and sports activities, in coaching or in administrative and decision-making structures, as well as for the promotion of female journalists and women's sport in the media. Each NOC, IF or Continental Association may propose one candidate to the IOC Women and Sport Commission whose members make the final choice. This year the trophies are awarded as follows:



AFRICA Lydia Nsekera – Burundi

Sport in Burundi has been male dominated and Lydia Nsekera's achievements are nothing short of remarkable. This former high jumper and basketball player has made history, not only by helping fellow women and girls, but by taking on the male-dominated sport of football and becoming its first female national president in Africa and second woman in the world to achieve this status. She pioneered with the creation of women's sports clubs in her country. Then it was under her guidance that the national under-17 men's team came to victory in the East and Central African Football Associations Cup. Nsekera also organised the first women's football championship in Burundi and in 2004 led a successful national campaign to get women involved in refereeing, sports administration and coaching. Furthermore she has raised awareness of sexual violence against women and HIV Aids.

an Olympic gold medal when she triumphed in javelin in 1980. Since then she has played an outstanding role in promoting sports activities at the national, Pan-American and international level. She is chairperson of the NOC's Women and Sport Commission, a member of the IAAF Women's Committee as well as the PASO Women and Sport Commission. While Caridad develops youth sports clubs and trains girls and youth instructors both at home and abroad, she also contributes towards scientific texts and historical records on women, sport and family in Cuba. Moreover she gives regular lectures on the importance of sport. Caridad served as a Parliamentary deputy for five years, from 1992-1997.



ASIA Arvin Dashjants – Mongolia

As Chairperson of Mongolia's Women and Sport Commission and only female member of the Mongolian NOC's Executive Committee, Arvin Dashjants has played a crucial role in the increased participation of women and girls in all sports and physical activity in her country. A history graduate, former public relations officer and private sector CEO, Dashjants has consistently promoted Olympians as role

models for young girls and women and has worked tirelessly for women to be elected to decision-making positions of national sports organisations. Twice appointed Chef de Mission for Mongolia, she has helped establish the Women and Sport Fund which is dedicated to the development of a coaching structure in Mongolia. She has been an elected Member of Parliament for Mongolia since 2000.



EUROPE Danira Nakic Bilic – Croatia

Danira Nakic Bilic's Olympic basketball silver medal for Croatia in 1988 was the highlight of a glittering career as an athlete. As a member of the NOC's Women in Sport Commission she organises Olympic related lectures and forums in primary and secondary schools. Moreover she promotes programmes for female athletes in sports administration and other public as well as political structures. Her election as a Member of Parliament in 2004 had a significant impact on the attitude of Croatian society towards top level female athletes in public life. As vice-chairperson of the Zagreb assembly, Bilic's contribution to the development of sports facilities in the city has made it possible for more people to participate in physical activities. It did not

come as a surprise that the government recognised her talent and passion by appointing her last year as President of the Croatian Heritage Foundation which is dedicated to preserve and develop Croatian cultural identity, sport being one important element of it.



OCEANIA Auvita Rapilla – Papua New Guinea

In her 14 years with the Papua New Guinea Sports Federation and Olympic Committee where she is now deputy general secretary, keen netballer Auvita Rapilla has been instrumental in the development of the NOC's Women and Sport Committee. As a member of the Oceania Women and Sport body she has become one of the driving forces behind engaging women in and for sport throughout the region. In the framework of an Executive Masters in Sport Organisation Management (MEMOS) she developed a sports planning tool which is now being used by the various NOCs across Oceania. This outstanding performance was awarded by the Masters course's leadership. Her achievements are indeed an inspiration to many girls and women in Papua New Guinea and beyond.



THE AMERICAS María Caridad Colón Ruenes – Cuba

María Caridad became the first Cuban woman to win



"Beijing was a wonderful Games for so many reasons, not least for the women involved and those inspired by them. It remains vital to continue to use every opportunity available in the Olympic Movement to advance the cause of women in sport. In this regard I am extremely proud to announce the winners of the 2009 IOC Women and Sport Awards. These five personalities, through their commitment, enthusiasm, drive and courage, have helped increase the number of women taking part in sport at all levels, both on and off the field." **Jacques Rogge, IOC President**

"In Beijing in 2008 a record for the number of women participating was set. We are moving closer and closer to men and women competing in even numbers on the world's greatest sporting stage. Equality in participation may not be long in coming. Nevertheless the mission of the IOC Women and Sport Commission to support more women involved in decision-making bodies and in the media remains a priority. Today, through the IOC Women and Sport Awards, we honour the work of some of the Olympic Movement's great women who have fought to increase the participation and contribution of women in sport. The landscape is changing and this year's winners are helping to make sure of that." **Anita L. DeFrantz, Chairperson of the IOC Women and Sport Commission**

