

Homosexuality and the Olympic Movement*

By Matthew Baniak and Ian Jobling

Sport remains "one of the last bastions of cultural and institutional homophobia" in Western societies, despite the advances made since the birth of the gay rights movement.¹ In a heteronormative culture such as sport, lack of knowledge and understanding has led to homophobia and discrimination against openly gay athletes. The Olympic Games are no exception to this stigma. The goal of the Olympic Movement is to

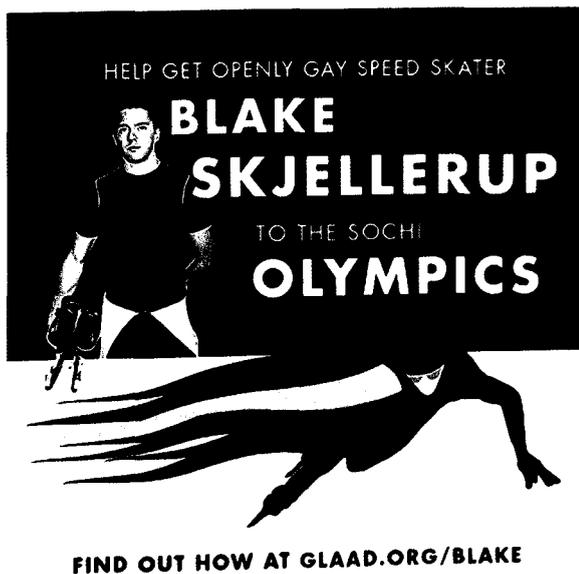
*... contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport united with art and culture practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding.*²

Today, homosexual athletes are a partially visible minority within the Olympic Movement, a minority that has felt discrimination and prejudice throughout the history of the Games, despite the Movement's stated goal. The first openly gay Olympians did not compete until the 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics.³ For an avenue such as the Olympic Movement, which praises and strives towards friendship, acceptance, participation and sportsmanship, there are still factors that inhibit the realization of these values in the case of gay athletes. Money, sponsorship and endorsements are all attributes that Olympians count on to help support their dreams of competing at the next Olympics. These attributes are the reasons why some gay Olympians choose to stay in the closet. An anonymous gay male Olympian stated in an interview,

*While it may seem from the outside that coming out would generate a lot of publicity, I feel that kind of media attention would be falsely earned, that it wouldn't be garnered for my athletic success, but for my sexuality ... I have met several other gay athletes in the years since Torino (a few of them who will be competing in Vancouver), who share this.*⁴

There are male and female Olympians who are still in the closet, afraid of what might happen if they publicly announce their sexuality. In the past, due to ignorance, discrimination and prejudice, homosexuals in all areas of life, especially professional sport, were treated unfairly. Thus, gay athletes felt they were alone and stayed in the closet to protect their dreams of competing at the Olympics. This has played out on a world stage from

the inception of the modern Games until today. An examination of key historical events that shaped the gay rights movement helps determine the effect homosexuality has had on the Olympic Movement. Through such scrutiny, one may see that the Movement has changed since the inaugural modern Olympic Games in 1896. With the momentum of news surrounding the 2014 Sochi Games and the anti-gay laws in Russia, this issue of homosexuality and the Olympic Movement has never been so significant. Sections of this article will outline the effect homosexuality has had on the Olympic Movement, and how the Olympic Games have been shaped by social movements and the context of society's perception of homosexuality and gay rights.⁵ More recent issues associated with the government of Russia's announcements of laws to be introduced and their potential impact on the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics will then be addressed as a case study.



A definition of homophobia is "prejudice, discrimination, harassment and acts of violence directed against sexual minorities".⁶ The context of homophobia needs to be considered before examining the absence of openly gay athletes within the Olympic Movement. During the 1960s, being gay was viewed socially, culturally, and legally as an abomination. Gays were denied college admission, job offers and positions on sporting teams.⁷

Matthew Baniak

was an Exchange Student from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada at the University of Queensland, Australia in 2013. Email address: mob802@mail.usask.ca

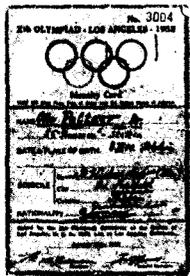
Ian Jobling

is Director, Centre of Olympic Studies and Honorary Associate Professor, School of Human Movement Studies, University of Queensland. Email address: ianj@hms.uq.edu.au

The New Zealand short track speed skater Blake Skjellerup was one of the first openly gay winter sportsmen, who had announced before Sochi that he would "show the flag" there. In his search for sponsors he received support from several gay rights organisations. In the qualification races Skjellerup managed only 33rd position on the world ranking list, and missed qualification for the Sochi 2014 Olympics by a single place.

Among the first gay athletes was the German runner Dr. Otto Peltzer. On 3 July 1926 at Stamford Bridge in London, he set a new world record of 1:51.6 over 800 m/880 y and won his duel with the British Olympic champion Douglas Lowe. His participation in the Olympic Games did not have such a happy outcome: in 1928 he was ill and in 1932 (below, his Olympic pass from Los Angeles) he reached the 800 m final, in which he came only ninth.

Photos: Walker King/Arttype



Although a fledging gay rights movement existed globally prior to 1969, the Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village in New York City, where gay people took a stance and demanded equal rights on June 28, 1969, marks the symbolic start of the movement.⁸ It was not until 1973 when the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses⁹ and 1997 before homosexual acts were legal in all jurisdictions of Australia.¹⁰

Knowledge about participation rates of gay Olympians before Stonewall is scant. The modern Olympic Games began in 1896 but it was not until 1928 the first known gay Olympic athlete competed. Otto Peltzer was not open about his sexuality when competing at the 1928 Amsterdam and 1932 Los Angeles Olympics.¹¹ In 1935, when the Nazi government enacted strict laws relating to homosexuality, Peltzer was sentenced to eighteen months in prison, and subsequently other internments, including the 'death camp' in Mauthausen-Gusen in the so-called Ostmark. In a biography entitled "Otto the Strange", Volker Kluge has stated Peltzer "never outed".¹²

Many gay individuals during the period 1950–1990 thought they were the only gay person in the world, an opinion shared by many male gay Olympians.¹³ These Olympians commented on their experiences of homosexuality during the 1970s and 1980s. Tom Waddell expressed he felt completely alone when he realized his attraction to men; he believed he was the only one with these feelings, so he kept them to himself for years.¹⁴ American Olympic diver, Greg Louganis, reflected that during his childhood in the 1960s he, too, felt alone and confused about his sexuality, and later homosexual feelings.¹⁵ Considering the timeline of gay rights, it becomes clearer why gay Olympians of the twentieth century stayed in the closet.

The Olympic Games parallel professional sport in many ways with respect to how they affect athletes. Athletes have a chance to perform on a world stage, represent their country and showcase their hard work and talent. In a recent interview, Australian Olympian Kim Cooper, a straight female, stated, "the biggest factor in athletes

coming out to themselves and their team is acceptance."¹⁶ Even without coming out to the public, some Olympians who felt accepted did advise their coach of their sexual preferences. Swimmer, Mark Tewksbury, a Canadian gold medallist, stated to his swimming coach and team ...

*I dropped 1.3 seconds off my backstroke in just ten months because I fed so much off my energies after finally telling my coach that I was gay. I had been working years to gain tenths of a second, but after I told him, I dropped 1.3!*¹⁷

Greg Louganis also fell into this category. Although feeling alone and confused, he was able to confide in his coach who helped him focus and lead him to four gold medals.¹⁸ Even though homophobia was present during the Olympiads of the last decades of the twentieth century, these gay Olympians persevered and became the best in the world.

As time went on, adversity felt by many gay Olympians decreased. By feeling accepted and free to be themselves, even just within their team and by their coach, Olympians such as Tewksbury and Louganis have revealed that gay Olympians who "come out" can focus on their task without having to carry their burden.

The Gay Games, a social-cultural and a multi-sport festival, was introduced by Tom Waddell in 1982 and founded in San Francisco.¹⁹ Waddell competed in the decathlon at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. He was a closeted homosexual at the time. Waddell chose to establish the Gay Games in order to create a sporting event free from sexism, racism, nationalism, heterosexism and elitism, all of which he said he felt during his time competing in the Olympics.²⁰ These are virtually the same ideals of the Olympic Movement. Waddell wanted to create an area that was free of prejudice and discrimination, and which focused on personal bests and participation instead of winning and crowning champions. There are many similarities between the Gay Games and the Olympic Games. Baron Pierre de Coubertin advocated the Olympic Games being staged in major cities of the world. The Gay Games were hosted in cities accepting of homosexuals such as San Francisco, Sydney and Cologne.²¹ The biggest difference was that anyone was allowed to compete in the Gay Games. Even though the majority of participants were gay, straight athletes were also encouraged to participate.

Within the Gay Games, opportunities and situations arose which allowed tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality to cross over into the Olympic Movement. This all started with the original name. Waddell wanted the Gay Games to be called the Gay Olympics.²² However, the USOC (United States Olympic Committee) denied Waddell the right to use 'Olympics' because of the 1984 Games being in Los Angeles and the potential

confusion that might arise. Despite this initial difficulty, the Gay Games have become most successful. Gay Games IV, held in 1994 in New York City, had over 10,000 participating athletes; this was more than the 1988 Seoul Games.²³ When practicing with the other athletes at the Gay Games in New York City, Greg Louganis stated: *I'd always been something of an outsider because I was gay. Now, here I was with a group of divers who were gay and I didn't have to feel at all self-conscious. I could be myself and not worry about being judged. That was incredibly liberating.*²⁴

Louganis was unable to be at the Opening Ceremony for Gay Games IV, but a video he had recorded was played. It was here where Louganis revealed publicly he was gay. When he arrived to compete at the Gay Games, Louganis stated, "I've never felt so warmly embraced in my life, and for the first time, I felt like a complete person."²⁵ This feeling of euphoria was and is received by many gay athletes who compete at the Gay Games. Australian diver Matthew Mitcham, one of the most well known openly gay contemporary Olympians, and now an ambassador for the Gay Games,²⁶ stated:

*Participating at the Gay Games is a great chance for all gays and lesbians to show that we as a community are not like the stereotypes the straight media loves to portray... I will take time off from training and travel to Cologne, since I strongly feel we have to celebrate our own values and help others to accept that it is ok to be different.*²⁷

By seeing and experience gay athletes in a highly organized event, similar to the Olympic Games, perceptions of homosexuals in sport began to change. Their athletic efforts educated parts of the world, and showed that male and female homosexuals were fierce and worthy competitors.

The past four years, 2010–2013, have had a major impact on society in changing homophobia, which has crossed over into professional sport. Many ground breaking gay movements have occurred during this time and homophobic remarks in the media and on the playing field were handled harshly. In the United States, in 2011, the controversial "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law which applied only to the military, was revoked. This law had denied gay military members to be open about their relationships.²⁸ In September 2010, after several gay teenagers committed suicide, celebrities, political leaders and professional athletes shared their stories of hope for gay people around the world via messages on YouTube. Daniel Savage started the *It Gets Better* movement.²⁹ It was also at this time in 2010, Stephanie Rice, a three time Australian gold medallist in the 2008 Beijing Games, came under heavy scrutiny after she made a homophobic remark. Rice tweeted, "suck on that

faggots", after Australia beat the South African team in a Rugby Union match.³⁰ Rice was criticized and ridiculed; the Jaguar car company, one of her major sponsors, severed all ties.

Society in the 21st century is handling homophobia more severely and is creating an environment for gay Olympians not only to be welcomed but also to be accepted as equals. Rice's comments show that no matter what your Olympic status, no one is exempt from being punished due to the ignorance produced by homophobia. This situation in sport is supported by decreasing cultural and institutional homophobia in Western countries and by legal advances won by the gay rights movement and its supporters. During April 2013, for example, three countries legalized same-sex marriage – Uruguay, New Zealand and France.³¹ In May of that year, Brazil stated that same sex couples could not be denied marriage licenses.³² In July 2013, a bill was signed to legalize same sex marriage in England and Wales, making a total of sixteen countries recognizing same sex marriage at that time. The signing in July 2013 of a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in England and Wales, brought the total number of countries recognizing same-sex marriage to sixteen.³³



The Olympic boycott of Moscow 1980 provided the final impetus for gay decathlete Thomas Waddell to work for the introduction of a separate festival for gays and lesbians. From his efforts arose the Gay Games, which first took place in 1982 in San Francisco. Waddell who'd finished sixth place in the decathlon at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, died of Aids in 1987.

On April 29, 2013 – a date that will be remembered in sports history; NBA player Jason Collins, came out as gay. Collins is the first ever professional American team sport player to do so.³⁴ He was praised and supported by fellow NBA athletes, and even by his country's President, Barack Obama, who also has voiced his approval and support of gay marriage.³⁵ Cumulatively, these breakthroughs contribute to the changes seen in young individuals today. In a recent Gallop–USA Today poll, 73% of people aged eighteen to twenty-nine were comfortable with same sex-marriage. That same poll reported that three out of four people who identified as an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered) individuals said they were out with their family and friends, and nine out of ten said they saw improvements in acceptance within their communities.³⁶ The next generation of Olympians is a part of these polls.

In the run-up to the 2014 Winter Games a great stir was caused by the official US Presidential Delegation, led by the former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano. It included two openly gay athletes former US ice hockey player Caitlin Cahow and the figure-skating Olympic champion of 1988, Brian Boitano. Tennis player Billie Jean King was also to have been part of the delegation but was prevented from attending by a family bereavement. The group was hardly in evidence in Sochi, and after a few days they went home.

Photo: photo alliance



By being born and raised in a world that increasingly is accepting and welcoming to gay individuals and their rights, the stigma of homosexuality will be reduced for future generations. The successful momentum of gay rights and the prevalent acceptance, tolerance and support seen in society is undeniable.

It is telling, however, that Barack Obama congratulated Collins for his "courage" in coming out.³⁷ Despite the many advances made, sport remains an ambiguous terrain for gay athletes, as events in Russia early in 2013 have highlighted. The 2014 Winter Olympic Games will be held in the Russian city of Sochi. Recent laws enacted by the Russian government include anti-gay laws that will especially impact on those Olympians. One such law bans:

*...spreading information aimed at forming non-traditional sexual behavior among children, suggesting this behavior is attractive and making a false statement about the socially equal nature of traditional and non-traditional relationships.*³⁸

Such bans thus deny having gay pride events, speaking in defense of gay rights or educating minors about homosexual facts or relationships.³⁹ It was stated failure to comply with these laws would result in fines from 100 to 20,000 Euros for Russian citizens, depending on the party involved, and jail time and deportation to foreigners.⁴⁰ The response to the vague wording of these laws has been a world outcry. However, it is not just the legal fines and actions that are contemptible. Surveys show that one in seven gay people in Russia have been physically attacked in the last year. Hoyle, writing in *The Times* of London has provided the following information. There have been accounts of brutal deaths and disappearances within Russia. In April 2013, a poll conducted by the Levada Centre found that thirty-five percent of Russians believe homosexuality is a disease, forty-three percent think it is a bad habit and a product of bad parenting, while ninety percent of Russians polled supported the gay propaganda law passed in June.⁴¹ Clearly, gay Russian citizens are living in fear.

The first warning sign occurred when Sochi denied the presence of a PRIDE house for the 2014 Games.⁴² A PRIDE house was introduced at the 2010 Vancouver Winter

Olympics and was present at the London 2012 Games.⁴³ Olympians, gay and straight, along with influential gay leaders in many countries west of Russia, have been vocal about the denial of a PRIDE house in Sochi. British personality and gay activist, Stephen Fry, wrote a passionate Open Letter to British Prime Minister, David Cameron, and to the IOC, advocating the banning 2014 Winter Games should be banned.⁴⁴ Fry's letter included reference to oaths and protocols of the Olympic Movement:

Rule four: Cooperate with the competent public or private organisations and authorities in the endeavour to place sport at the service of humanity and thereby to promote peace. Rule six: act against any form of discrimination affecting the Olympic Movement. Rule fifteen: encourage and support initiatives blending sport with culture and education.

Rules four and six, relating to homosexual peace, tolerance and education, can result in huge fines and imprisonment for the people involved. Fry, along with others, has just grounds to question the IOC's stance on this issue. Fry's letter continues:

The Summer Olympics of 2012 were one of the most glorious moments of my life and the life of my country. For there to be a Russian Winter Olympics would stain the movement forever and wipe away any of that glory. The Five Rings would finally be forever smeared, besmirched and ruined in the eyes of the civilized world.

Dr. Bruce Kidd, a Canadian Olympian, sports historian and human rights activist, shared his thoughts on Sochi. He agrees that the laws are deplorable and notes that the IOC needs to help keep gay athletes safe during the Games. However, Kidd's views differ from those of Stephen Fry:

*Before we resort to a boycott, our first step should be to pursue education and diplomacy. That's what the Olympics are about. They were founded as a way to bring people from different countries and different perspectives together to talk through differences.*⁴⁵

Chris Cannon, in the *Ottawa Citizen*, reported that George Takei, actor and gay activist, advocated relocating the Games from Sochi to Vancouver, and that Dan Savage, the gay activist who started the *It Gets Better* movement, launch a boycott against Russian vodka, Stolli.⁴⁶ Cannon, a resident of Vancouver, discussed the advantage of the Games remaining in Sochi. While he notes that boycotts and relocation are options, they are by no means the best answer:

*Few recall that Spain and Ireland boycotted the 1936 Berlin Games but many remembered Jesse Owens standing tall and proud on that podium in defiance of Hitler's racist policies.*⁴⁷

In the same article, Cannon recalled another iconic moment at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics with the 'Black Power Salute' by John Carlos and Tommie Smith, who later indicated they almost boycotted those Games. These events dealt with minorities who were being heavily discriminated. Through their strength and resolve, these two Olympians helped change and break barriers inhibiting their fellow African-Americans. Now, the same obstacles lie ahead for the LGBT community. Cannon's underlying tone is that by keeping the Games in Sochi, a monumental event may occur for gay Olympians; one which may go down as being the pinnacle of change, for openly gay Olympians, in the Olympic Movement.

A boycott or relocation would only dissipate the opportunities for gay and straight Olympians. Already there has been huge support from many countries, athletes and celebrities. Nick Symmonds, an American Olympian who competed at the 2013 World Championships in Moscow, was the first international athlete to denounce the laws on Russian soil.⁴⁸ Symmonds dedicated his silver medal to all his gay and lesbian friends "back home". He also criticized the words of Yelena Isinbayeva, a Russian Olympic pole-vaulter, who said, ... *we consider ourselves [Russians] like normal, standard people. We just live boys with women, girls with boys.*⁴⁹



Isinbayeva received much criticism; she later stated it was a misunderstanding due to her lack of English. In the article in *The Times*, journalist Broadbent reported that Symmonds said, "the tone of her remarks was clear – 'We have normal people having normal relations' – that appalled me."⁵⁰

Olympians Johnny Weir and Blake Skjellerup are now openly gay after both competed while in the closet during the Vancouver 2010 Games.⁵¹ Both stated they would be present and defend gay rights while competing in Sochi and be a voice for the gay community.⁵² Even with all the good intentions of the Olympians, the fans, families and citizens who are present in Russia throughout the Olympics still have to be cautious.

American Figure Skater, Brian Boitano, came out on 19 December 2013, two days after being named as one of the delegates to represent the United States at Sochi. Boitano expounded that when he won the gold medal at the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics,

*... coming out was not an option. His agent told him that he needed to keep his sexuality quiet so that he could secure endorsements ... he [Boitano] wanted to be known for his skating achievements rather than his sexuality.*⁵³

Sochi is the first time since 2000 that the United States is not sending a President, former President, First Lady, or Vice-President to an Olympic Games. Out of the five athletes who are delegates of the USA, three are openly gay: Billie Jean King, Caitlin Cahow, and Boitano. Many Americans and the media are taking this as an indirect sign of President Obama's stance and opinion on the anti-gay laws posed by Putin.⁵⁴

Sochi 2014 is the first time in history, since Stonewall in 1969, that the Olympic Games have been held in a host city with such strong and virulent anti-gay laws. Homosexual fans, siblings, friends, teammates, coaches and, in some cases, partners will be in attendance. Russia's Sports Minister, Vitaly Mutko, spoke out against such worries, stating "the freedoms of Russian and foreign athletes and guests who come to Sochi will be absolutely protected."⁵⁵ However, Mutko has previously stated that the promotion of homosexuality is equivalent to drug and alcohol promotion to minors.⁵⁶ Words offering protection are one thing but actions of the Russian government at the Games are another. The last thing an Olympian should be worried about is whether or not their loved one could be in danger, attacked, imprisoned and/or deported by expressing or defending the sexuality of others who may be considering promoting homosexuality to minors within the vicinity. The arousal of emotions from such a situation may greatly affect their athletic performance.

On September 4, 2013 Vladimir Putin reiterated that Olympians themselves would not be harmed.⁵⁷ He stated that gay rallies and marches are against the law and will thus be dealt with accordingly. However, there remains a concern that the true meaning of the Olympics and the Olympic Movement are becoming overshadowed by a domineering political and human rights issue. Olympians train for years to be a part of something bigger than themselves. While some have podium aspirations, others are in awe of just participating in an Olympic Games. Fans hold this same admiration for the Olympics; being able to cheer and encourage athletes from their country at the biggest multi-nation, multi-sports festival of our time brings immense joy and pride. It is of great concern the focus on gay rights and laws before and during the Olympics will overshadow the

Italian Vladimir Luxeria demonstrates in the Sochi Olympic Park. He was a communist party representative at the European Parliament from 2006 to 2008, where he was the first member to appear publicly as transgender.

Photo: picture-alliance

Olympics	Number of Openly Gay and Lesbian Olympians	Percentage of overall Gay and Lesbian Olympians to total participating body	Ref.
Atlanta 1996 Summer	2	2/10,318 = 0.019%	70
Nagano 1998 Winter	0	0/2,167 = 0%	71
Sydney 2000 Summer	7	7/10,651 = 0.066%	72
Salt Lake 2002 Winter	0	0/2,399 = 0%	73
Athens 2004 Summer	11	11/10,625 = 0.104%	74
Torino 2006 Winter	0	0/2,508 = 0%	75
Beijing 2008 Summer	10	10/10,942 = 0.091%	76
Vancouver 2010 Winter	6	6/2,566 = 0.234%	77
London 2012 Summer	23	23/10,568 = 0.218%	78

Table A: Open Homosexual Olympians from Westernized Countries at the London 2012 Games⁷⁹

achievements of the Olympians. The IOC has a responsibility to take anti-gay laws into consideration when determining future host cities. Now in 2013, discrimination against any minority, whether it is due to race, gender, religion or sexual orientation, is unacceptable.

The Olympic Movement has seen such discrimination in the past but has evolved and endeavored to create an almost level playing field for all. The changes to have openly gay Olympians compete and be a non-issue will not happen overnight. As has been seen with female participation in the Games, it will take time. The uproar around Sochi only proves that citizens in many societies will not allow blatant discrimination to fall on any minority. This stance has crossed over to the Olympic front. The Olympic Movement should not regress when it comes to gay rights. How the IOC will use the events leading up to the Sochi 2014 Olympics in the selection of future host cities will be worth noting. Will there be struggles?

Yes. Will they be insurmountable? No. The vague wording of the anti-gay laws and the past violence Russian homosexuals have faced is the reason Western countries and activists are up in arms. News stories are appearing daily. Education and awareness around gay rights can be found with almost every link related to Sochi. Both the Russian Sport Minister and Vladimir Putin have promised athletes and spectators safety. These Games could be one of the biggest opportunities for the LGBT community to break through Russian stigma and stereotypes and show that gays are "normal" and can compete and live

Table B: Gay Olympians who competed in the Olympics and later announced their homosexuality publicly. NB This list includes only those Olympians whom the authors could identify the year in which they revealed their homosexuality.

Name of Olympian	Olympics Competed	Date of "coming out"	Ref.
Brian Boitano	Sarajevo 1984, Calgary 1988, Lillehammer 1994	13 December 2013	79
Patrick Jeffrey	Seoul 1988, Atlanta 1996	1996	80
Johan Kenkhuis	Sydney 2000, Athens 2004	2004	81
Mark Leduc	Barcelona 1992	1994	82
Greg Louganis	Montreal 1976, Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988	1994	83
Blake Skjellerup	Vancouver 2010	May 2010	84
Mark Tewksbury	Seoul 1988, Barcelona 1992	1998	85
Tom Waddell	Mexico 1968	1976	86
Johnny Weir	Torino 2006, Vancouver 2010	January 2011	87

alongside their heterosexual equals. The events of Sochi 2014 Winter Games are upon us, and with all the hype, publicity and power behind them, it may be an iconic event not to be missed.

Facts reveal that the 21st century has taken all the work and education of the 20th century to help shape and change the Olympic Movement to favour homosexual participation on and off the field. As cultural homophobia decreases, people increasingly come out of the closet.⁵⁸ This is seen in the context of the Olympic Movement. The 1996 Atlanta Games were recorded as being the first to have openly gay Olympians.⁵⁹ When comparing Summer Olympic Games, from 1996 to 2012, the percentage of openly gay athletes has risen from 0.019% to 0.218% of total Olympic competitors (see Table A for the total number of openly Gay Olympians). That statistic may seem insignificant. However, upon closer and more reflective analysis, over sixteen years but five Olympic Games, the total percentage of openly gay participants increased tenfold. As well, it has been documented that only one to three percent of the populations of Westernized countries identify as being gay, and there are far fewer "out" gay athletes proportionally.⁶⁰ Therefore, this rise in percentage has a greater impact and significance. In addition, the majority of the activism, support and new gay rights have occurred during the last four years. Thus, having the highest number of gay Olympians (twenty-three) present at the 2012 London Olympics is a positive sign that this awareness and acceptance is working.⁶¹ This total number of gay Olympians does not include the Olympians who competed but were not open about their sexuality. For example, Johnny Weir competed in the 2006 Torino and 2010 Vancouver Games without being openly gay.⁶² It was not until 2011 that Weir came out (See Table B for a list of gay Olympians who came out after they were finished competing). When Kim Cooper was asked whether there were gay women on her Australian softball team during the 1996 Olympics, she responded enthusiastically,

Yes! There were plenty of players on my team that were gay, they were not out to the public, but they were to their parents and friends ... It was not an issue and did not affect our performance during the Olympics.⁶³

As participation of openly gay athletes increased, so did their success. As of 2012, *Outsports.com* has identified that 104 gay Olympians have competed in the Summer Games; more than half (54) have medalled.⁶⁴ In the most recent London 2012 Olympic Games, of the twenty-three gay Olympians, ten of them medalled, seven of whom won gold.⁶⁵ These statistics show that gay Olympians can make it and succeed at the Olympics. If this trend of acceptance continues throughout the twenty-first century, it is a positive sign of what lies ahead for homosexuality and the Olympic Movement.

In the second decade of this century, presidents and leaders of many countries are supporting and fighting for same sex rights. The progress in gay participation in the 2012 London Games shows hope that the Olympic Movement is catching up with society's acceptance and support of homosexuals. Even with the controversy of the Sochi Games, gay rights are gaining huge publicity. People around the world are sympathizing and rallying behind their gay allies and much is changing. With the culmination of the Gay Games continually raising support and professional athletes coming out all over the world, it seems many in the next generation of youth in the Western world are comfortable in their own skin.

As has been presented and discussed throughout this article, the visibility of homosexuality in the Olympic Movement is heavily reliant on the social and temporal context. With the 2014 Sochi Winter Games approaching it can be seen that homosexuality and the Olympics still do not resonate fully with each other. However, significant progress has been made in society since the events of Stonewall in 1969 and in professional sport.

A study by Hemphill and Symonds published in 2009 identified a way of looking at society's view of homosexuality in sport that can be used in reference to the Olympic Movement.⁶⁶ The researchers stated that views on homosexuality in sport are broken down into three climates. The first climate, representing the early views of society of homosexuals in the Olympics from inception of the Modern Games to the early 20th century, is a hostile climate full of discrimination. To be even suspected of being gay was dangerous. This was seen in the case of Otto Peltzer being sent away and tortured after being identified as gay. Many early Olympians competed in a time when this first climate was in total control. They feared losing potential sponsorships and endorsements, facing adversity from their team, and worst of all, exclusion from competition. The second climate involves conditional tolerance. This means that teammates and coaches are accepting of an Olympian's homosexuality as long as it stays out of public view. However, this causes another dilemma for athletes, as they have to continually monitor their appearance and social relationships to maintain a heterosexual team and sport image. This climate has largely prevailed since the founding of the

Athlete	Sport	Country
Natalie Cook	Beach Volleyball	AUS
Matthew Mitcham	Diving	AUS
Mayssa Pessoa	Handball	BRA
Rikke Skov	Handball	DEN
Jessica Harrison	Triathlon	FRA
Alexandra Lacrabere	Handball	FRA
Carole Peon	Triathlon	FRA
Judith Arndt	Cycling	GER
Imke Duplitzer	Fencing	GER
Ina-Yoko Teutenberg	Cycling	GER
Carl Hester	Dressage	GBR
Marilyn Agliotti	Hockey	NED
Edward Gal	Dressage	NED
Carlien D. van den Heuvel	Hockey	NED
Kim Lammers	Hockey	NED
Maartje Paumen	Hockey	NED
Karen Hultzer ⁸⁹	Archery	RSA
Lisa Dahlkvist	Football	SWE
Jessica Landström	Football	SWE
Hedvig Lindahl	Football	SWE
Seimone Augustus	Basketball	USA
Megan Rapinoe	Football	USA
Lisa Raymond	Tennis	USA

Table C: Openly Lesbian Olympians from Westernized Countries at the London 2012 Games.⁸⁸

Gay Games. Olympians such as Greg Louganis, Mark Tewksbury and Johnny Weir are all examples of athletes competing in this climate. Even with all the controversy surrounding Sochi, it is clear that Russia remains within this climate. Political leaders within Russia claim to respect all athletes, fans and everyone else who identifies as gay. They are against promoting and pushing homosexuality onto minors. Although for some the lines are blurred, the Russian government is indirectly punishing homosexuals. Russia wants their minors to be protected but as a result, they are walking a very fine line. Although they are not harming or imprisoning people on the sole basis of their sexual orientation, they are denying homosexual individuals the right to act and be themselves; which is why this issue is so controversial and seen as discriminatory to many. Hemphill and Symons' third and final climate is one of acceptance, a climate to which Matthew Mitcham was a pioneering member. In the modern era of sport, most people have moved into the second climate with only a few being in the first and third climates⁵⁸.

With Sochi 2014, the number of athletes, politicians and Olympians speaking out and voicing their support and acceptance towards gay rights increases. When looking at a global perspective now in relation to the Olympic Games, it may be surmised that the Olympic Movement too is shifting towards the coveted "third climate". There is no denying there will be struggles. However, the Western world as a whole is becoming

less homophobic and creating a more favorable and welcoming environment for all professional athletes, including Olympians, to be able to compete without having to hide their true identity.

Women did not compete in the Olympics until 1900, and for twenty years they represented less than 2.5% of all competitors during this time.⁶⁷ Now, almost 100 years later, women represented 44% of the total athletes at the London 2012 Games.⁶⁸ Change such as this takes time, hard work and support from an Olympian's teammates, coaches and countries. Gay rights groups and an increasingly accepting society have come a long way in challenging homophobia, including within the Olympic Movement. This has occurred through education and awareness from the Gay Games, through society's push to further gay rights around the world, and through the most-ever openly gay Olympians competing at the 2012 London Games. Even with the anti-gay laws surrounding Sochi 2014, there are numerous Olympians, gay and straight, rising up and fighting for the equal rights of all athletes. Although there is still much progress to be made, especially by the IOC, the tide has turned in favor of gay Olympians with no intention of changing back. Now that is something truly to be gay about. ■

- 1 David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 2004
- 2 Juan Antonio Samaranch, "The Olympic Movement", *Journal of International Communication*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1995, pp. 3-5.
- 3 Jim Buzinski, "Moment #93: David Pichler, Patrick Jeffrey competed as openly gay in Olympics" *Outsports*, 11 July 2011, www.outsports.com/2011/7/11/4051516/moment-93-david-pichler-patrick-jeffrey-compete-as-openly-gay-in, accessed 26 May 2013.
- 4 This anonymous Olympian also expressed interest in coming out, as he was also an ex-soldier. He thought this might help the fight for the Don't Ask, Don't Tell initiative. Thus, it is seen how society and world issues had shaped the perceptions of this Olympian. See, Jim Buzinski, "Olympian: Why gay jocks don't come out", *Outsports*, 14 February 2010, www.outsports.com/2010/2/14/3860794/olympian-why-gay-jocks-dont-come-out, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 5 In this article the authors will not focus on the issue of transgendered Olympians and the issues they face when competing.
- 6 James T. Sears and Walter L. Williams, *Overcoming Heterosexism and Homophobia*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997.
- 7 Caroline Symons, *The Gay Games: A History*, Routledge, London and New York, 2010, p. 20.
- 8 Carter, 2004.
- 9 Charles W. Socarides, *Homosexuality, A Freedom Too Far*, Adam Margrave Books, Phoenix, 1995.
- 10 Same-sex acts were never illegal for women in Australia, only for men. The States of Australia did not legalise same-sex acts at the same time: South Australia was the first to do so (1972); then Australian Capital Territory (1976), Victoria (1980), the Northern Territory (1983), New South Wales (1984), Western Australia (1989), Queensland (1991) and Tasmania (1997). For further information, refer to Wayne Hudson and John Kane, *Rethinking Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2000.
- 11 Tim Pears, "Otto the strange: The champion who defied the Nazis", *The Guardian*, 29 June 2008, www.guardian.co.uk/sport/2008/jun/29/olympicgames, accessed 25 May 2013
- 12 Peltzer was arrested in 1935 and sentenced to 18 months in prison after being accused of having relationships with younger male runners. Peltzer was released contingent that he stayed away from all sport; he did not, and was again arrested in 1937. In 1938 Peltzer was deported to Sweden, then sent back to Germany before

being interned in the Mauthausen-Gusen Concentration Camp, where he remained until liberated by the US Army in 1945. In personal correspondence to Ian Jobling (December 19, 2013), Volker Kluge inferred Peltzer never came out publicly. Kluge wrote: "... it definitely should be noted that he never outed. I own some of his diaries, but I cannot find any comment that he was gay. But he was without a doubt." See Volker Kluge, *Otto der Seltsame: Die Einsamkeit eines Mittelstreckenlaufers. Otto Peltzer (1900-1970)*, Parthas Verlag, Berlin, 2000.

- 13 Symons, *Gay Games*, p.14.
- 14 Ibid, pp. 14-15.
- 15 Greg Louganis and Eric Marcus, *Breaking the Surface*, Random House, New York, 1995, pp. 72-80.
- 16 Matthew Baniak, telephone interview with Kim Cooper, 2 June 2013.
- 17 Eric Anderson, *In the Game: Gay Athletes and the Cult of Masculinity*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2005.
- 18 Louganis and Marcus, *Breaking the Surface*.
- 19 Symons, *Gay Games*, pp. 38-40.
- 20 Gordon Waitt, "Gay Games: Performing 'community' out from the closet of the locker room". *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 167-183.
- 21 Locations for the Gay Games: I and II in San Francisco; III in Vancouver; IV in New York City; V in Amsterdam; VI in Sydney; VII in Chicago; VIII in Cologne; and Gay Games IX will be held in Akron and Cleveland during 2014.
- 22 Symons, *Gay Games*, pp. 55-58.
- 23 Louganis and Marcus, *Breaking the Surface*, p. 275.
- 24 Ibid, p. 273.
- 25 Ibid, pp. 276-277.
- 26 Matthew Mitcham was the first openly gay male Australian Olympian. He won gold in the 10-metre Platform Diving event at the 2008 Beijing Olympics Games.
- 27 Kilian Melloy, "Superstar Matthew Mitcham Dives Into Cologne Gay Games", *Edge News*, 15 February 2010, www.edgeboston.com/index.php?ch=news&sc=&sc3=&id=102326, accessed 25 May 2013.
- 28 Elisabeth Bumiller, "Obama Ends 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' Policy", *New York Times*, 22 July 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/07/23/us/23military.html, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 29 Brian Steler, "Campaign Offers Help to Gay Youths", *New York Times*, 18 October 2010. www.nytimes.com/2010/10/19/us/19video.html?_r=0, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 30 Josh Robertson, "Stephanie Rice loses sponsor Jaguar after anti-gay tweet", *Courier Mail*, 7 September 2010, www.couriermail.com.au/entertainment/celebrity/stephanie-rice-loses-sponsor-jaguar-after-anti-gay-tweet/story-e6freq70-1225914991559, accessed 25 May 2013.
- 31 Leigh Thomas and Mark John, "'Love has won out over hate': France becomes 14th country to allow gay marriage", *NBC News*, 18 May 2013, worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/05/18/18338084-love-has-worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/05/18/18338084-love-has-won-out-over-hate-france-becomes-14th-country-to-allow-gay-marriage?lite, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 32 Joe Mirabella, "Conservative Christian Party in Brazil Fighting Marriage Equality", *Huffington Post*, 28 May 2013, www.huffingtonpost.com/joe-mirabella/conservative-christian-party-in-brazil-fighting-marriage-equality_b_3328338.html, accessed 3 September 2013.
- 33 Stephen Fry, "An Open Letter to David Cameron and the IOC", *Huffington Post UK*, 7 August 2013, www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/stephen-fry/stephen-fry-open-letter-to-david-cameron_b_3718389.html, accessed 29 August 2013.
- 34 Howard Beck, "With the Words 'I'm Gay,' an N.B.A. Center Breaks a Barrier", *New York Times*, 29 April 2013, www.nytimes.com/2013/04/30/sports/basketball/nba-center-jason-collins-comes-out-as-gay.html?_r=0, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 35 Phil Gast, "Obama announces he supports same-sex marriage", *CNN*, 10 May 2012, edition.cnn.com/2012/05/09/politics/obama-same-sex-marriage, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 36 Peggy Drexler, "A Great Time to Be Gay? That Depends", *Huffington Post*, 6 February 2013, www.huffingtonpost.com/peggy-drexler/a-great-time-to-be-gay-th_b_2632373.html, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 37 Erica Tucker, "Jason Collins comes out as gay; Obama 'impressed by his courage'", *Global News*, April 2013, globalnews.ca/news/519203/nba-player-jason-collins-becomes-first-openly-gay-pro-athlete-in-american-sports/, accessed 21 November 2013.

- 38 Shaun Walker, "Russia set to pass strict anti-gay law that could see foreigners deported for 'sexual propaganda'", *The Independent*, 10 June 2013, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-set-to-pass-strict-antigay-law-that-could-see-foreigners-deported-for-sexual-propaganda-8652840.html, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 39 Gay rallies, parades and festivals are seen as educating minors and displaying a homosexual lifestyle in a favourable way. Thus, under Putin's laws, even waving a rainbow flag is against the law and seen as homosexual propaganda.
- 40 Ben Hoyle, "The shocking reality of gay life in Russia", *The Times*, 19 August 2013, pp. 2-3.
- 41 Hoyle, 'Shocking reality', pp. 2-3.
- 42 Glennisha Morgan, "Russia Says No To Olympic Pride House", *Huffington Post*, 8 February 2013, www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/08/russia-olympics-pride-house-nixed_n_2646703.html, accessed 30 May 2013.
- 43 Ken Williams, "Gay Olympians: Few are out and proud." *San Diego Gay and Lesbian News*, 19 February 2010, sdgln.com/news/2010/02/19/gay-olympians-few-are-out-and-proud, accessed 26 May 2013.
- 44 Stephen Fry, "An Open Letter to David Cameron and the IOC".
- 45 Valerie Iancovich, "Boycotts and the Olympic Games", *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 August 2013, p. B7.
- 46 Chris Cannon, "Queer Eye for the Sochi Guy", *The Ottawa Citizen*, 10 August 2013, p. B7. Stolli Vodka has headquarters in Luxembourg and is bottled in Latvia. Furthermore, it is owned by Yuri Scheffler, a vivid supporter of gay rights who lives in exile as an enemy of Putin. Thus, boycotting and dumping Stolli vodka in the sewers may not hurt Russia as one may think.
- 47 Cannon, 'Queer Eye for the Sochi Guy', p. B7.
- 48 Rick Broadbent, 'Symmonds the lone dissenter', *The Times*, 19 August 2013, pp. 58-59.
- 49 Broadbent, 'Symmonds the lone dissenter', p. 59.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 See Table B.
- 52 J. Litke, 'Sochi 2014: Olympics turning into a confrontation over Russia's anti-gay law', *National Post*, 16 August 2013, sports.nationalpost.com/2013/08/16/sochi-2014-turning-into-a-confrontation-over-russias-anti-gay-law/, accessed 24 August 2013.
- 53 NPR Staff, "Figure Skater Brian Boitano on Coming Out and Going to Sochi", *NPR*, 2 January 2014, www.npr.org/2014/01/02/125922698/figure-skater-brian-boitano-on-coming-out-and-going-to-sochi, accessed 6 January 2014.
- 54 Nancy Armour, "After being named to U.S. Sochi delegation, Brian Boitano announces he's gay", *The Globe and Mail*, 19 December 2013, www.theglobeandmail.com/sports/olympics/two-days-after-being-named-to-us-sochi-delegation-brian-boitano-announces-hes-gay/article16065118/, accessed 6 January 2014.
- 55 "Anti-Gay Law: Shunning Sochi Hurts Olympians, Merkel Says", *Der Spiegel*. Issue 34, 19 August 2013, www.spiegel.de/international/europe/merkel-rejects-boycott-of-sochi-olympics-over-anti-gay-law-in-russia-a-917316.html, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 56 Ilya Pitalev, "Promotion of Homosexuality Similar to Drugs, Alcohol - Russian Minister", *RIA Novosti*, 18 August 2013, en.rian.ru/sports/20130818/182833846.html, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 57 Lynn Berry, "Putin offers assurances on gay rights during Winter Games in Sochi", *Globe and Mail*, 4 September 2013, www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/putin-offers-assurances-on-gay-rights-during-winter-games-in-sochi/article14103721/, accessed 4 September 2013.
- 58 Jeni Loftus, "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 66, no. 5, 2001, pp. 762-782.
- 59 Buzinski, "Moment #93".
- 60 Gary J. Gates, "How many people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender?" *The Williams Institute*, April 2011, williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Gates-How-Many-People-LG-BT-Apr-2011.pdf, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 61 Jack Moore, "The 23 Openly Gay Athletes Of The 2012 Olympics", *Buzzfeed Sports*, 19 July 2012, www.buzzfeed.com/jpmmoore/the-14-openly-gay-athletes-of-the-2012-olympics, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 62 Adam Caparell, "Johnny Weir comes out: Flamboyant figure skater admits in new autobiography he's gay", *New York Daily News*, 6 January 2011 www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/johnny-weir-flamboyant-figure-skater-admits-new-autobiography-gay-article-1.148500, accessed 29 May 2013.
- 63 Matthew Baniak, telephone interview with Kim Cooper, 2 June 2013.
- 64 William Lee Adams, "Olympic Homophobia: Why Are There So Few Openly Gay Athletes?" *Time Olympics*, 9 August 2012, olympics.time.com/2012/08/09/olympic-homophobia-why-are-there-so-few-openly-gay-athletes/, accessed 25 May 2013.
- 65 Cyd Zeigler, "10 Gay Olympians Win Medals In London, Tie Jamaica and Iran In Gold Medal Count", *SB Nation*, 12 August 2012, www.sbnation.com/london-olympics-2012/2012/8/12/3237963/nine-gay-olympians-win-medals-in-london-tying-jamaica-and-iran-for, accessed 25 May 2013. Had gay Olympians been a country, it would have placed 31st overall in the medal standings in London 2012.
- 66 Dennis Hemphill and Caroline Symons, "Sexuality matters in Physical Education and Sport Studies". *Quest*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2009, pp. 397-417.
- 67 'Factsheet: Women in the Olympic Movement', *Olympic.org*, March 2013, www.olympic.org/results?q=factsheet%20summer%20olympic%20games, accessed 20 May 2013.
- 68 Kate Laine, 'Gender equality and the 2012 Olympic Games', *IWG*, July 2012, www.iwg-gti.org/catalyst/july-2012/gender-equality-and-the-2012-oly/, accessed 25 May 2013.
- 69 "Factsheet: The Games of the Olympiad", *Olympic.org*, April 2013, www.olympic.org/results?q=factsheet%20summer%20olympic%20games, accessed 25 May 2013; "Factsheet: The Winter Olympic Games", *Olympic.org*, July 2012, www.olympic.org/results?q=factsheet%20winter%20olympic%20games, accessed 25 May 2013.
- 70 Buzinski, "Moment 93:", 2011.
- 71 Buzinski, "Olympian", 2010.
- 72 Zeigler, "Moment #30:".
- 73 Buzinski, "Olympian", 2010.
- 74 Zeigler, "Moment #30:".
- 75 Buzinski, "Olympian", 2010.
- 76 Williams, "Gay Olympians:".
- 77 Williams, "Gay Olympians:".
- 78 Nick Harris, "Openly gay Olympians won six times as many golds as their peers. Why?" www.sportingintelligence.com/2012/08/23/openly-gay-olympians-won-six-times-as-many-golds-as-their-peers-why-210801/, accessed 23 May 2013.
- 79 Rachel Maresca, "Brian Boitano comes out as gay ahead of Sochi Olympics", *New York Daily News*, 19 December 2013, www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/gossip/brian-boitano-gay-article-1.1553107, accessed 6 January 2014.
- 80 Buzinski, Moment #93:"
- 81 John Caldwell, "Out and silver in Holland: Olympic silver medalist Johan Kenkhuis says openly gay in the Netherlands is no big deal. But neither is being a champion swimmer", *The Advocate*, 7 December 2004, www.thefreelibrary.com/Out+and+silver+in+Holland%3A+Olympic+silver+medalist+Johan+Kenhuis...-a0126164553, accessed 20 May 2013.
- 82 Danielle Wong, 'Mark Leduc, 47: Gay athlete, Olympic Medallist', *The Star*, 24 July 2009, www.thestar.com/sports/2009/07/24/mark_leduc_47_gay_athlete_olympic_medallist.html, accessed 31 May 2013.
- 83 Louganis and Marcus, *Breaking the Surface*, p. 276.
- 84 Sean Fitz-Gerald, '20 questions: Canadian Olympic hero Mark Tewksbury comes full circle', *National Post*, 10 July 2012, sports.nationalpost.com/2012/07/10/20-questions-canadian-olympic-hero-mark-tewksbury-comes-full-circle/, accessed 30 May 2013.
- 85 Symons, *Gay Games*, p.15.
- 86 Caparell, "Johnny Weir comes out".
- 87 Jim Buzinski, 'New Zealand Olympian comes out', *SB Nation*, 5 May 2010, www.outsports.com/2010/5/5/4049702/new-zealand-olympian-comes-out, accessed 25 August 2013.
- 88 J. Moore, 'The 23 Openly Gay Athletes Of The 2012 Olympics', *Buzzfeed Sports*, 19 July 2012, www.buzzfeed.com/jpmmoore/the-14-openly-gay-athletes-of-the-2012-olympics, accessed 28 August 2013.
- 89 Cyd Zeigler, 'Karen Hultzer, South African Archer, Comes out Publicly at Olympics', *SB Nation*, 30 July 2012, www.sbnation.com/london-olympics-2012/2012/7/30/3201986/karen-hultzer-south-african-archer-comes-out-publicly-at-olympics, accessed 28 August 2013. Hultzer came out during the 2012 London Olympics.