

Bryant goes to Winter Olympics, and will be acting as a liaison

By Jim Faddis

Although he is not one of the athletes competing in the Winter Olympics, Don Bryant's involvement in the Games is something that is important to him.

Bryant, UNL's sports information director, will be on the press services committee at the Winter Olympics next month in Lake Placid, N.Y.

Bryant will not be paid for his work in the Olympics, but he said just being involved will be pay enough.

"It's an opportunity to serve the country," he said. "It's a privilege to be around all the great athletes. When an opportunity like this comes, you don't care about money."

Lake Placid is using a new concept in handling the press coverage of the games, Bryant said.

"They are bringing in sports information directors from different universities," he said. "Each is assigned to a couple of sports and will arrange press coverage of those sports."

Bryant is assigned to figure skating and the biathlon, which is an event that combines cross country skiing and target shooting, two events which he admits he's not too familiar with.

No biathlon expert

"They didn't pick me because I'm a figure skating and biathlon expert," Bryant said. "They chose me because I'm experienced at working with the press."

Bryant said he will act as a liaison between the press and the athletes.

"If a reporter wants to interview an athlete, I will arrange a time and a place for the interview," he said. "I will be helping the press, and protecting the athletes from constantly being bothered by the press."

Last year Bryant gained valuable experience in working with the international press corps when he worked as the chief U.S. press officer at the World Cup track and field meet in Montreal.

"The foreign reporters who cover the World Cup and Olympics are professionals. They know what they're doing," he said.

Language isn't a barrier to most foreign reporters, Bryant said.

Most speak English

"Most of them speak English. If they don't, they have an interpreter with them at all times," he said.

Although there will be 2,000 reporters covering the Winter Olympics, Bryant said he doesn't anticipate any problems with the press.

"Everything at the Olympics is organized," he said. "They schedule press conferences and everything else well in advance. Everyone knows what's going on."

Security is very organized, Bryant, who has been UNL's sports information director for 17 years, said.

"Only 200 reporters at a time will be allowed in the Olympic village, where the athletes stay," Bryant said. "Before you're allowed in, you must pass through several layers of security and be searched."

Although heavy security is necessary at international athletic events, there is a special atmosphere that exists there, he said.

Same goals

"There is a special feeling among athletes, even though they come from different countries and believe in different ideologies," Bryant said. "They are all striving towards the same goal, to win their event. That brings them together."

Bryant said he would support a boycott of the Summer Olympics if it is in "the best interests of the country," but he said he hates to see athletes used for "political motives."

"The Olympics are a great tool for letting people from different parts of the world get to know each other," he said. "I just don't want to see that Olympic movement destroyed."

Politics have been injected into the Olympics before, Bryant said, but that is usually done by governments, not the athletes.

"Most athletes don't have political hatred towards one another," he said. "To them the Olympics is a game, a sport where they can compete against the best in the world."

While Bryant is honored to be part of the Olympics, he said there are other events that have meant more to him.

"The Olympics are a great event," Bryant said. "But it will still rank below some Nebraska football games I've been at."

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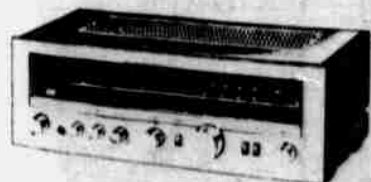
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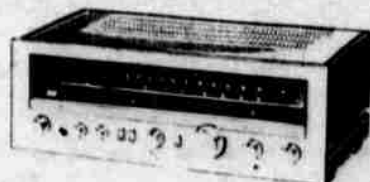
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