

THE WORLD MASTERS GAMES 2005:IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADIAN SPORT TOURISM RESEARCH

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Introduction

Contemporary sport is an international phenomenon of gigantic dimensions, which attracts a large amount of media attention. A similar status can also be claimed by tourism, supported by impressive and increasing evidence, which indicates it is the fastest growing industry in the world today (Donnelly, 2000; Statistics Canada, 1999; Redmond, 1991). Perhaps it is not surprising then, that a symbiotic relationship exists between sport and tourism. Indeed their points of contact have increased significantly in recent years, a trend which present indicators suggest will continue.

Multi-sport festivals include both international and national events such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Masters Games, Pan American Games, Canada Games, Canadian Special Olympics and within the nation, the Provincial and Territorial Games such as the British Columbia Winter and Summer Games. Partially through a combination of historical, geographical and political factors, Canadians have participated in a greater number and variety of such multi-sport festivals than people of any other nation (Redmond, 1991).

The 2005 World Masters Games

The first World Masters Games were hosted by Toronto, Canada in 1985. Canada is the second country aside from Australia to have hosted this international multi-sport festival. Canada has been a leader in the Multi-Sport Event hosting (Pealo & Redmond, 2002) and in particular, the western provinces have dominated the role of host. The City of Edmonton will host the 2005 World Masters Games.

Figure 1. World Masters Games History

| Year | Location | Number of Sports | Number of Participants | Number of Countries |
|------|----------------------|------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 1985 | Toronto, Canada | 22 | 8,305 | 61 |
| 1989 | Herning, Denmark | 37 | 8,500 | 76 |
| 1994 | Brisbane, Australia | 30 | 24,500 | 74 |
| 1998 | Portland, U.S.A. | 28 | 11,400 | 102 |
| 2002 | Melbourne, Australia | 26 | 24,866 | 98 |
| 2005 | Edmonton, Alberta | 27 | TBA | TBA |

Figure 2.: Canada's Role As Host To International Multi-Sport Festivals In Recent Years

1954 - 5th British Empire (Commonwealth) Games

Vancouver, British Columbia

1967 - 5th Pan American Games, Winnipeg, Manitoba

1976 - 18th Summer Olympics, Montreal, Quebec

1978 - 11th Commonwealth Games, Edmonton, Alberta

1983 - 9th World University Games, Edmonton, Alberta

1985 - 1st World Masters Games, Toronto, Ontario

1988 - 15th Winter Olympics, Calgary, Alberta

1990 - 3rd Gay Games, Vancouver, British Columbia

1994 - 15th Commonwealth Games, Victoria, British Columbia

1999 - 13th Pan American Games, Winnipeg, Manitoba

2001 - 8th IAAF World Athletics Championship, Edmonton, Alberta

2005 - 6th World Masters Games, Edmonton, Alberta

2010 - 22nd Winter Olympics, Vancouver, British Columbia

Discussion

In spite of the fact that Canada's involvement in many different types of multi-sport festivals provides unlimited, rewarding scholarly research opportunities, many questions about this phenomenon remain unanswered. A few of the more important questions that need to be addressed include:

- How did a comparatively young country like Canada, with its' small population, come to the forefront as the supreme international host of multi-sport festivals in recent years, and why?
- What factors, if any, explain the dominance of Western Canada, and in particular the province of Alberta, in this respect?
- What economic impact, if any, has the World Masters Games had upon the host city and country?

In closing, sport tourism development through multi-sport festivals is a significant topic that needs to be researched from many different perspectives. Canada, through multi-sport festivals epitomized by the Olympic Games, has its' national and provincial agencies catering to many different groups and interests within society. The 2005 World Masters Games may play an important role in the development of Canadian Sport Tourism internationally, and future sport tourism research.

References

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