

§ 1. The moment for Olympic glory and gold occurs once every four years - a moment which becomes the focus for the lives of athletes from all over the world. This one event is their main goal and in order to achieve their dream they are prepared to make any sacrifice. All athletes are selected by their national Olympic Committee to represent their country, and once selected they face two major demands. The first is the mountain of form filling, paperwork and administration. The second is to finalise their preparation for the Games. Most athletes have highly-developed training schedules which enable them to reach the height of their performance for a particular event. However, the Olympics, creates its own timetable and pressures.

§ 2. When I was selected to represent Great Britain, I had approximately a hundred days to prepare. This included finalising training plans, raising nearly £16,000 towards the costs, seeing to travel arrangements and entry forms, and having discussions with my employer about extra time off work to allow me to prepare fully. Throughout my sailing career I had never had the opportunity to become a full-time athlete, so I needed **to pursue** my business career at the same time as my sporting objectives. However, any top-class athlete in any sport needs a level of business skills when competing at Olympic standard. They need the ability to plan and arrange for all the expenses effectively as well as work towards definite aims.

§ 3. Once you arrive, you stay in the Olympic 'Village', which is really a small town housing 15,000 people from every imaginable culture and background. It is fascinating to watch athletes from tiny gymnasts to huge weightlifters and basketball players, and best of all is the excitement at being part of such a select gathering. There are training facilities, souvenir shops, launderettes, a bank and post office, as well as the Village restaurant which seats over 3,000 at one time.

§ 4. So what does it feel like to go to an Olympics? It can be summed up in many ways by the opening ceremony, where thousands of athletes and officials parade wearing their team kit. To most it is an event they will never forget and the honour of just being there is almost magical. And perhaps winning a medal is one of life's major experiences. For me it was the thoughts of family and friends who had all played a part on my road to success, and it felt wonderful. I feel that it is important to try and repay everyone's faith in me by putting something back into the community. I want the younger generation of athletes **to benefit** in the ways that I did.

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Anyone who reaches the Olympics will benefit from having

- 1) their expenses professionally handled.
- 2) a background in the business world.
- 3) a full-time job in the sporting world.