

The Olympics

by BRIAN LOCKHART

I used to love watching the Olympics.

Other than Wide World of Sports, which used to air sometime around 4 p.m. on Saturday afternoons, it was the only time you could watch events like ski jumping, bobsledding, the luge, and downhill skiing.

As a kid, I was fascinated by the ski jumpers who rode down a perilous track to the end of the jump before flying through the air, and finishing like they were taking a walk in the park.

I'm sure the reality of it was that the jumpers are probably pretty nervous before every jump, because after all, there is an inherent risk of injury in that sport.

However, for a spectator, it was a great sport to watch ? even if I've never seen it live.

The winter sports are different. It's not like there are minor bobsled leagues or a local luge track, and there aren't many places you can visit the local ski jump hill and sign up for lessons.

For the Summer Olympics, I pretty much liked watching all the sports.

I have always thought that the running events are the purest form of sport. You don't have a puck or ball to handle, you're not throwing anything, and you don't have teammates.

During a running race, it's all on the competitor. All that training, all that coaching, and all those diets they follow to keep them healthy comes down to one person, on their own.

Either you run faster than the other person, or you don't.

The Olympics are all about finishing first. No one ever remembers who won the bronze medal.

Guys like Mark Spitz, the American swimmer who won an incredible seven gold medals at the Summer Olympics in Munich in 1972, returned home as a national hero.

Canada has hosted the Olympic Games three times - the 1976 Summer Games in Montreal, the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary, and the 2010 Winter Games in Vancouver.

Hosting the Olympic Games is a huge challenge for the host city. You either have the venues, or you have to build them.

You need appropriate stadiums for track and field and team sports. You need Olympic-style pools, an equestrian park, and other outdoor venues for various sports.

For the winter games, obviously, you have to be in a region that has both mountains and snow. If you don't have a bobsled run, you will have to build one.

You have to have a place for the Olympians to stay, so now you have to build a small city to accommodate several thousand people from a lot of different countries, and that's just for the competitors.

On top of that, you will have to accommodate thousands of officials and everyone involved in running the Olympic Games. And of course, visitors to the games will also need a place to stay.

It's a logistical nightmare, but they manage to pull it off.

It seems to be a prestigious thing to host the Olympic Games, but what does it all really mean?

A check of many former Olympic sites shows that many of them have simply been left to fall into ruin.

The Montreal Olympic Games were a notorious financial disaster. No cities ever seem to come out ahead after hosting the Olympic Games.

Maybe it's time to build permanent venues rather than allow the notoriously corrupt International Olympic Committee to play its political games and select a new city every four years.

Just build an Olympic venue with all the needed athletic stadiums, pools, and equestrian parks, and an Olympic village to host the athletes. If every country participating in the Olympic Games contributes to the venue's maintenance, it wouldn't cost very much to keep it alive.

The athletes go to the Olympics to compete. Why would they care which city the games are held in?

For the Winter Olympics, find a suitable mountainous area with abundant snow. Having a permanent Olympic site would greatly benefit the town or city where it is built through jobs and tourism.

Between Olympic Games, the venues could host other world-class sporting events.

A permanent venue would also eliminate all the political crap that goes into selecting a city and the cost of putting a bid together in the first place.

Every other sport on the planet has a permanent home. You don't see the Toronto Maple Leafs announcing they will be playing home games in Kingston this year.

If you build a permanent Olympic Games venue, they will come.