

Who is ...? Gianni Merlo

Gianni Merlo is President of AIPS, the World Association of Sports Journalists which is a partner to WLA and ELS.

Biography

Gianni Merlo was born in 1947 in Vigevano, Italy.

He began his journalistic career in 1967 when he started writing for the magazine "Atletica Leggera", founded by his father Dante. He soon became contributor to various quality Italian newspapers such as "Il Giorno", "La Gazzetta del Popolo" and the "Corriere dello Sport-Stadio". In 1972 he held the office of television commentator assistant; first for the Italian Swiss television and then for the RAI, the national Italian network.

In 1974 he was employed by the "Gazzetta dello Sport" – one of the world's leading sports newspaper – where he became one of the most high-profiled journalists specialising in athletics, skiing and sports policy.

From 1990 to 1994 he was a member of the European Sport Press Union Board (UEPS) before becoming the Association's President for four years. From 1986 to 2006 he was president of the AIPS Specialist Commission for Athletics and at the AIPS Congress in Marrakesh, Morocco in May 2005 he was elected President of AIPS, a function which he still fulfils with great enthusiasm and pleasure.

He has published two encyclopaedias "Conoscere l'Atletica" and "Conoscere lo sci". Two years ago he wrote a book with Oscar Pistorius: Blade Runner.

In his career he has covered 19 Olympic Games – 9 Summer (Munich 1972, Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988, Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996, Sydney 2000, Athens 2004, Beijing 2008) and 10 Winter (Innsbruck 1976, Lake Placid 1980, Sarajevo 1984, Calgary 1988, Albertville 1992, Lillehammer 1994, Nagano 1998, Salt Lake City 2002, Torino 2006, Vancouver 2010). He has covered more than 30 world Championships in different sports and various European Championships.

Gianni Merlo is married with a daughter, Manuela, and a son, Ivan.



Interview

As a journalist you have covered 19 Olympic Games. Which one was the best experience for you and why?

The number 20, the one I witnessed in Rome in 1960 when I was 13. At that time it was possible to enter the Olympic Village, to meet champions of every nation. It was a great party of the world's people. That Olympics impressed me a lot.

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As AIPS President you established a close relationship between AIPS and state regulated lotteries represented through WLA and ELS. What do you think it is that lotteries can give to your association and to sports?

First of all we have the same goal: to fight against corruption in sport. We want the game clean and educational. Sport is also culture, so it is very important that we work together to give new possibilities to the youth of the world. I think the WLA and ELS can help journalists a lot to understand how to fight against this “cancer” in sport and we can help these organizations by providing information to the public.

What is the global media’s role in the fight against corruption in sport? Can it do more than create constant awareness?

We can be a kind of “sentinel”, because we know the world of sport and we can understand when something is going wrong, and if we are aware of the facts we can help to keep sport clean.

As a journalist you are an expert on athletics and skiing, among others. In your opinion, how threatened are those disciplines by corruption in general and match- or spot-fixing specifically?

Every sport can be threatened by corruption. Maybe it is not so easy in individual sports where there are only two contenders, but the possibility of fixing a result is there and we have to stop the bad attitude from the start.

What is your personal recommendation on how to fight against and solve the problem of corruption in sports?

It is necessary to gain and spread more knowledge because many people underestimate the danger. Sometimes they think the misbehaviour of a player is a small “sin” and this is a big mistake, because it opens the door to a bigger fraud.

Your tip: Who will be the shining star at the IAAF World Championship in Daegu, Korea?

I still think it will be Usain Bolt, but he must pay attention to Asafa Powell in 100 meters. In Daegu we will also see some new stars.

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