

COMMITTEE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S GAMES



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In Remembrance – Metod Klemenc (1934 – 2023)

On 7th December, 2023, the Father of the International Children's Games Metod Klemenc passed away peacefully with his family by his bedside. He was 89 years old.

Metod Klemenc organised the first games in 1968 in Celje with the aim of "socializing of young people of different colour and race, who want to live healthily, actively, in understanding and peace." His formative years were marred by the ravages of World War 2 which saw his family undergo tremendous hardship. These tumultuous times drove him to envision a better world where sports held the potential to bridge divides among youth and build peace and friendships from diverse nations. At that time, Metod was a gym instructor for the Klladivar Track and Field Club in Celje and because of a crisis in the club, he decided to do something to help out the youngsters in the club.

Metod worked tirelessly to organise the first edition of the International Children's Games which was attended by 9 cities that bordered the then Yugoslavia. Since that historic first edition of the games, 55 Summer and 8 Winter Games have been organised in cities across the world engaging tens of thousands of youth from more than 600 cities who have taken part in the International Children's Games. From these, many of the children have gone on to represent their countries at major games like the Olympics, World Championships etc. Indeed, the International Children's Games can be seen as the springboard for success for many budding sporting careers.

One of the most memorable moments for Metod was when the International Olympic Committee gave official recognition to the International Children's Games. He felt that it was an endorsement from the International Olympic Committee that the Games were officially recognised into the "Olympic family" and embraced the "Olympic movement". Metod had passionately promoted the Olympic motto of "faster, higher and stronger" in all the games that he organised as well as a philosophy that "it is important to participate and not only win".

Over the years, I have personally come to know Metod very well as he has always made it a point to attend the different editions of the International Children's Games. At each of these games, I have always made an effort to touch base with him and listen to him tell many interesting stories of his travels. It was clear that travelling the world and watching young participants from a multitude of cultural backgrounds mix and mingle, competing one moment and then becoming friends the next, laughing in their attempts to bridge language barriers is what he enjoyed the most in his long life. While he has slowed down over the years, he still had a youthful passion burning within which is revealed by his piercing blue eyes set amid well-used laugh wrinkles and by the radiant smile that breaks out whenever he's queried on his love for sports.

The International Children's Games family mourns the loss of this inspirational man. He has touched the lives of so many of us and left an indelible mark. He will be mourned by all of us and by his own beloved family. He will always be remembered as the Father of the International Children's Games and we will endeavour to continue to promote the vision that he had set out for us many years ago.

Thank you Metod Klemenc for the legacy you have left behind.

Igor Topole



PRESIDENT