

The real Olympics

By David Glovsky
The Dartmouth
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(U-WIRE) HANOVER, N.H. - This Olympic op-ed is not going to be about Bode Miller, Daron Rahlves, Johnny Weir (who's hilarious, by the way) or anyone else who supposedly "underachieved." None of those people will be mentioned after this sentence. Since most of us are Americans, we assume we're the best in the world at everything we do. For the record, we're awful at cross-country skiing. And the biathlon. And ski jumping.

I can think of one American athlete, though, who deserves even more attention than he has received, for his success and not his failure. His name is Joey Cheek. This week, Joey Cheek reminded everyone who watched or read about him of the impact of sports and the potential for athletes to be role models. After winning the 500-meter speedskating competition, his first career gold medal, Cheek immediately announced he would donate his \$25,000 bonus to charity. At his press conference, Cheek said, "I always felt if I ever did something like this, I wanted to be prepared to give something back."

Cheek's money is going to

the humanitarian organization Right to Play, an organization founded by former Olympic gold medalist and speedskater Johann Olav Koss. Cheek's contribution will go directly to programs in Chad for children who are refugees from Darfur. Right to Play's mission is "to improve the lives of children in the most disadvantaged areas of the world by using the power of sport and play for development, health and peace." Cheek's reasoning was, "We're so fortunate to be where we're from, and you know, it's just a twist of fate. If you're born in Zambia, if you're born in Darfur, you could have the same skills, the same genetic make-up, same skills, and you're just struggling to survive."

Had Joey Cheek stopped there, he already would have qualified as a Mensch in my book. However, he challenged his personal sponsors and the Olympic sponsors to match his donation. Since Cheek's speech, the organization has received over \$300,000 in pledges in response.

To put things in perspective, even the best world-class speedskaters make little money compared to other professional athletes (Cheek made under \$100,000 in his best year, the year he won a bronze medal in Salt Lake City). Cheek had talked to

Koss ahead of time about doing "something big," but Koss wasn't sure what to make of that. When a reporter called to inform Koss of the donation, he "sounded so stunned he had to repeat the figure to believe it."

"Was it \$25,000? That's amazing," Koss said. "That's totally fantastic. He's an Olympic speedskater. He doesn't make money. This is absolutely incredible." After this initial gift, Cheek won the silver medal in the 1,000-meter speedskate. I'm sure you can guess where the \$15,000 from that event went.

Having never met him before the Olympics, Koss had no way of knowing that he was the reason Joey Cheek became a speedskater. After learning about Koss' organization, Cheek began thinking about what he could do. A few days before the Olympics, Cheek was able to meet with Koss, and he let him know he wanted to help as best he could. After the 500, Cheek said, "The things that he has done for other people has [sic] been an absolute inspiration for me. Now I have an opportunity to do something similar. It's my hope that I can assist some people and maybe walk in his large shoes."

Joey Cheek is only 26 years old. He won a bronze medal four years ago, but coming into the

Olympics, there was not a great deal of hype around him (even though he won the world championship just one month ago). Cheek is retiring from speedskating after the 2006 Olympics to attend college. His first choice, Harvard, was not intelligent enough to realize their luck when they had the chance. While his early admission application didn't go over so well in Cambridge, I'd like to let him know that we'd be more than happy to have him up here in Hanover (I hope the admissions office wouldn't object too much).

Strangely enough, Cheek said at his press conference that prior to his race, he had never been more relaxed in his life. He knows he's been fortunate in life. "What I do is great fun," he said. "I've seen the entire world and I've met amazing friends. But it's honestly a pretty ridiculous thing. I mean I skate around on ice in tights, right?"

Maybe he's right, and maybe the hype and praise we heap on our athletes is slightly over the top. But it's difficult to overstate charity, and for that reason, Joey Cheek deserves all the praise in the world. For that matter, so does Johann Olav Koss, the four-time gold medalist and the son of two doctors, who made the events of the last two weeks possible.

Ohio state senator fights fire with fire

Staff Editorial
The Post (Ohio U.)

Ohio State Sen. Robert F. Hagan, D-Youngstown, has requested support from the Ohio Senate to enact legislation that would ban Republicans from adopting children in Ohio.

Clearly, Hagan's request is ludicrous, unthinkable, unconstitutional and morally wrong. And that was the point.

Hagan's request is in response to the proposed legislation that sought to ban homosexual, bisexual or transgender Ohioans from adopting children.

With his outrageous proposal, Hagan has created possibly the best, most articulate pro-

test to this bill. By employing such a satirical response, Hagan illustrates that denying any group equal rights because of one characteristic should be unthinkable and violates an individual's rights. Denying Republicans the right to adopt follows the same irrationality as denying homosexuals the right to adopt - both ideas lack credible reason and merely reflect cultural animosity.

With the thousands of children in foster care and needing to be placed in nurturing homes, it is irresponsible for state legislators to prohibit a large sector of qualified applicants simply because of their sexual orienta-

tion. In doing so, legislators would inevitably disqualify many potential loving parents from adopting children who have no one else. The stigma against same-sex couples is influenced by pseudoscientific claims that homosexual individuals are unfit parents and are somehow biologically inferior to heterosexuals. But such studies offer no verifiable evidence to prove their claims and instead merely attempt to advance a biased agenda.

Luckily, not all Ohio legislators back the legislation. Prior to Hagan's proposal, Ohio House Speaker Jon Husted, R-Kettering, said "...we have a lot

of children in need who need homes, and until all of them are adopted, I'm not going to restrict any loving family's opportunity to adopt and to care for those children."

Hagan's satirical proposal might elicit criticism from his opponents based on the nature of the idea, but Hagan has done all Ohioans a good service. His proposal is just the proactive measure needed to force legislators pushing religiously motivated beliefs to recognize the fault in their ideals, and that they themselves could be subject to the same unwarranted revocation of civil rights given different circumstances.