

# A Research on Supportive Policy for Domestic Winter Sports on the Occasion of 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics

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## Abstract

In Durban July 2011 Pyeongchang in Gangwon-do Province was chosen to be a host of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Winter Olympic Games. Thus, Korea has become one of countries that have held the four biggest sports events including Summer Olympic Games, the World Cup and World Championships in Athletics in the world for the last thirty years. Above all, the hosting 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics has provided very important opportunities to enforce the national competitiveness internationally and revitalize domestic winter sports nationally. The third challenge succeeded thanks to the diverse endeavors so far to host the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. Meanwhile, facilities and infrastructure have been built up, human power and organization have been developed and strengthened, supportive policies of the Government and related institutions have been established, winter-related sports industries have been promoted, and other various contents have been developed. Accordingly, Korea placed the fifth overall in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, and sports stars appeared such as Kim Yuna, Mo Tae-Bum, Lee Sang-Hwa, Yi Seung-Hun and etc. The young people from snowless countries have been invited to Korea through the Dream Program. The number of young players of figure skating has been increased a lot. This way, environments related to winter sports have been transformed in various ways. Particularly, 'Drive the Dream II' was announced as a vital measure of the Government to host the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics successfully, so that the foundation on which Korea becomes a developed country of sports has been established. Thus, this study purposes to contribute to the successful hosting of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Winter Olympic Games which is going to be held three years later by considering the current situation of winter sports of Korea.

**Keywords:** Domestic Winter Sports, 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, Supportive Policy

## 1. Introduction

After two failed attempts, Korea managed to be the host of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang of Gangwon-Do, the 4th major global sport event after Summer Olympics in Seoul in 1988, Korea-Japan World Cup in 2002 and Colorful Daegu Championships Meeting in 2011. This effectively makes Korea the second country in Asia and providing the opportunity to improve the image of the country through sport.

However, the negative public opinion and concerns of Korean people from the great burden of cost, post-Olympics utilization of facilities and negative influence on natural environment are quite significant. Nonetheless, the fact that Pyeongchang Winter Olympics has successfully attracted after no fewer than three attempts can be considered as the culmination of the efforts of the central government and Gangwon-do government, as well as the Korean public. Especially the government-led<sup>1</sup> and<sup>2</sup> projects, which were initiated as an effort to attract the event, have produced the

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reports containing support from the government. There are also other projects including<sup>3</sup> Support plan of Korean Olympic Committee to vitalize winter sport (2014) and<sup>4</sup> SMART project by Korea Institute of Sport Science.

The Government including sports-related organizations have provided fostering plans in order to enforce the best-ever outcome at 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympic Games still more, to control the unbalanced medal acquisition at skating entries only, and to promote the diverse development of winter sports. Hereby, it is required to discuss on supportive policies to improve competitiveness at 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, and to vitalize domestic sports entries of Winter Olympics afterwards. This study purposes to be basic data to be used to enlarge infrastructure up to the level of developed countries, to diffuse culture of winter sports, to promote national concerns of winter sports and to expand the base by utilizing sports stars of winter sports, and above all to host successfully the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics that is going to be held three years later.

Therefore this study aims to review the overall process of attracting 2018 Pyeongchang games, with focus on the multi-faceted efforts of related organizations to develop capabilities of Korean team in preparation for the Olympic games as well as status quo of winter sport performance of Korea.

## 2. Research Method

This study was carried out through literary reviews and case studies, interviews and on-site researches, and meetings of experts. First, the literary reviews and case studies were performed to examine the existing researches related to this study and to deduct implications for it. Thus I have analyzed and summarized competitiveness-related reports and internal documents that have been published by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, the Korea Sports Science Institute, the Korea Sports Council, the Gangwon Development Institute and etc.

## 3. Current Capability of Korean Winter Sport Entries

### 3.1 Current Capability of Korean Winter Spot Entries

The first Winter Olympics that Korea participated in was the 5th Saint-Moritz Winter Olympics in February

1948, where three speed skating players of Moon Dong-Seong, Lee Jong-Guk and Lee Hyu-Chang<sup>5</sup>. But Korean athletes came home with few medals, and the country only found meaning in the participation itself until end of 1980's.

However, Kim Yoon-man won a silver medal in speed skating (100m) and Kim Gi-Hoon and Lee Joon-Ho won 2 gold medals and 1 silver medal in short track speed skating at the Albertville Winter Olympics in 1992, which were the best results in 44 years after the country started to show up at Winter Olympics. For about 20 years thereafter, Korean teams performed consistently well as the following table shows.

**Table 1.** Medals by Korean team at Winter Olympics (1992-2014)

Year	Hosting city	Number of medal				Overall standing
		Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total	
16th (1992)	Albertville	2	1	1	4	10th
17th (1994)	Lillehammer	4	1	1	6	6th
18th (1998)	Nagano	3	1	2	6	9th
19th (2002)	Salt Lake City	2	2	0	4	14th
20th (2006)	Torino	6	3	2	11	7th
21st (2010)	Vancouver	6	6	2	14	5th
22nd (2014)	Sochi	3	3	2	8	13th

So far, all medals Korea won are from ice events (speed skating, short track, figure skating), especially with short track athletes who literally dominate other international competitions than Olympics with globally renowned performances that make Korea an unbeatable powerhouse in the event. In speed skating, after Kim Yoon-min won the first silver medal at Albertville Winter Olympics in 1992, Lee Gang-Seok won a bronze in Torino, 2006 (500m), and Mo Tae-Beom (500m), Lee Seung-Hoon (10,000m), Lee Sang-Hwa (500m) won gold and silver medals at Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010. Kim Yuna also won the gold medal in Vancouver 2010 and a silver medal in Sochi 2014.

As covered so far, Korea has enjoyed great successes with ice events, but not quite so with snow events and sledding. But recent improvement of performances with curling and skeleton may prove fruitful at the Pyeongchang games in 2018.

## 3.2 Current Circumstances and Problems of Winter Sport in Korea

### 3.2.1 Lack of Infrastructure and Training Facility for Intensive Training

The only track fulfilling international standards (400m) in Korea is the Taereung International Skating Rink, which is shared by athletes of multiple events such as short track, figure skating and ice hockey without proper consideration on the ice quality. This certainly puts limitations with improving performances of these athletes. Also there are 1,546 registered winter sport athletes, and no fewer than 1,037 (67%) of them are located in the middle part of Korea<sup>6</sup> that stands for regional imbalance. Also events such as figure skating, half pipe and aerial put great emphasis on gymnastic movements, but there is no proper facility for this.

### 3.2.2 Limitation with Systematic Training of Athletes

Comparison of athlete registration statuses in 2011 and that of 2013 shows 74% of increase with the elementary student athletes (From 1,958 in 2011 to 26,261 in 2013). Such numerical increment can play a positive role in selecting and training talented athletes, but researches show that there are only 970 business teams nationwide (936 for normal business team, 33 for the disabled athletes)<sup>7</sup>.

**Table 2.** Number of winter sport athletes and teams at elementary, middle and high schools and college

Elementary School		Middle School		High School		College	
Team	Athlete	Team	Athlete	Team	Athlete	Team	Athlete
7,256	26,261	6,475	29,006	5,015	26,129	1,924	13,949

**Source:** Lee<sup>7</sup>. Press release and quotes from questions to Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

As more teams were established continuously, 65 business teams have been disbanded due to lack of budget of local governments, which is highly likely to negatively influence the 2018 Pyeongchang games, as well as to cause transfer of athletes to other sport or lack of coaches.

Most registered ice sport athletes are located in the central areas, and especially lack of awareness and popularity for bobsleigh and luge is posing the biggest threat to training athletes of the events.

**Table 3.** Number of athletes and teams of major winter sport events at elementary, middle and high schools, college and business

(Unit: Athlete)

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	College	Business Team	Total
Ice sport	560	350	174	107	61	1,252
Ice hockey	1,309	261	129	111	100	1,910
Bobsleigh / Skeleton	0	2	19	10	3	34
Curling	67	120	198	28	25	438
Biathlon	79	45	42	13	20	199
Luge	0	0	0	22	0	22
Ski	120	116	131	96	24	487
Total	2,135	894	693	387	233	4,342

Source: Korean Olympic Committee (2014). Internal data

### 3.2.3 Need to Reinforce Support with Specialized Workforce

The association of 7 winter sport events demanded recruiting more specialized workforce for each event, according to Korean Olympic Committee<sup>8</sup>. To be more specific, those 'specialized workforce' include the physical coach, team doctor, interpreter and trainer and international referee. The reference also is reporting that there are even 33 winter sport teams (18.7%) without a coach<sup>7</sup>. So, Korea Ice Hockey Association is making active efforts to improve performance of athletes such as scouting foreign athletes or sending local ones to foreign clubs. The field of speed skating that has started to hire foreign coaches is also endeavoring to train talented athletes by utilizing globally renowned coaches.

### 3.2.4 Poor Support System without Foundation on Science

Olympische Winterspiele 2014<sup>9</sup> of Germany conducts testing of equipments for winter sport and scientific application to training and analysis. Breuer C<sup>10</sup> issues reports to propose optimal training method and support with sports medicine to prevent injury and manage athletes. However, associations' poor financial situation for winter sports is causing limitations with science-based analysis and training support, leading to poor support system for winter sports overall.

## 4. Overseas cases of efforts to improve performances of winter sport athletes

Der Deutsche Olympische Sport bund<sup>11</sup> contains analysis on performance of athletes and support details of top 5 countries in the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. The report says that, Norway, winner of the top place, managed to take away many medals in the events that they are traditionally strong such as nordic ski, alpine ski and biathlon, based on fast sharing and application of training information among the head coach, athletes and researchers<sup>8</sup>. Russia invested enormous amount of budget to develop some events into their strengths, especially in attracting coaches and athletes from other countries and acquiring major skills for each event. The U.S. utilized college-oriented sport system while the Netherlands achieved excellent results in speed skating and short track. For 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, France set up the national team with the same ratio of coaches and athletes to provide the optimal condition to develop performances, and especially military skiing players in ski events got the benefits of concentrated support. Lastly Canada, a global powerhouse of winter sport, reinforced cooperation system among Sport Canada, Canada Olympic Committee and Elite Sport Control Committee, which brought them 9 medals in the freestyle event.

The implication from the abovementioned facts is that these winter sport powerhouses managed to achieve improvements of their athletes through consistent reinforcement of support system, establishing organic collaboration system among related institutions, organizations, and studies based on sport science. Therefore Korea has to come up with more specific support system, work for systematic cooperation among relevant organizations and implement scientific training programs based on researches in order to achieve better results at winter Olympic games in future.

## 5. Conclusions and Suggestion

Measures to achieve performance improvement in preparation for Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympics.

### 5.1 Reinforcing Support from Government and Related Organizations

Both 'Drive the Dream' by Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2007 for improving competitiveness of

winter sport and 'Drive the Dream 2' which was officially announced by the Korean government in 2011 in Durban of South Africa are both government-led approaches to improve performance of winter sport athletes.

Drive the Dream 2 is government's project based on the confidence from the great results at the Vancouver games in 2010. This project contains the 5 strategies of SMART which represents: Sponsorship for long-term investment and consistent support; Motivation to garner interest and active participation from the whole nation; Accompany for accompanied development of events and countries; Relay for reinforcing pool of talented athletes through training; and Technology for establishing the foundation for advanced winter sport system through science and technology. In order to effectively implement these strategies, 5 core tasks have been set up such as establishing training facilities for demand-based training by building specific infrastructures for winter sport, securing top athletes in winter sport events, pursuing diversification for shared growth among events, reinforcing scientific support for winter sport and realizing Olympism through winter sport.

**Table 4.** Business team foundation support status for strategic events

(Unit: Teams, Million KRW)

	2012~2014	2013~2015	2014~2016
Number of teams	7	9	7
Budget	500	500	500

Other than these government-led projects, Korean Olympic Committee has set up a task force team for winter sport. This organization announced 'Measures to improve performances of winter sport athletes'<sup>12</sup> and implemented them on consistent basis. The measures aim to 1. Improve athlete training system (attracting more winter sport athletes in the hierarchy of prospective children-youth-candidates-Olympic team-national team). 2. Support training of winter sport athletes with emphasis on schools of physical education (Korea National Sport University, Seoul Physical Education Middle/High School, Gyeonggi Physical Education Middle/High School, Kangwon Physical Middle/High School) and 3. Provide mentoring to prospective athletes (setting up mentoring and training support program for prospective talents and teams).

Especially the policy of Korean Olympic Committee to support unpopular sport events aims to prioritize winter sports, which makes positive contribution to vitalization of winter sport in the southern regions of Korea.

## 5.2 Expansion for Support to Setting Up and Operating Winter Sport Teams

The number of disbanded winter sport teams reaches 70 among 118 that were created from 2008 to 2013, mostly due to financial difficulties. Both training of athletes and setting up teams take great significance in achieving improved performances of winter sport, but the latter means more as they provide the stable conditions that enable the athletes to concentrate on the training. Therefore Korean Olympic Committee has launched the project of supporting operation of business teams for strategic events so that teams with financial difficulties or those under the conditions preventing normal training are provided with budgetary support.

Despite these efforts, local governments have no choice but to choose business teams first when their situation require budget reduction. Therefore these governments have to set up the conditions for self-reliance by utilizing the companies as sponsors and athletes as marketing resources.

## 5.3 Enhancement of Securing and Training for Specialized Athletes

Korean Olympic Committee is continuously adjusting the gap in the hierarchy of prospective children-youth-candidates-Olympic team-national team in order to secure more national team resources of winter sport. This means that the committee is operating the system to find as many prospective children and train them to develop into national team members through consistent support. Some of such supports include provision of budget for training and competition entry fee for the schools in the metropolitan and Gangwon-do areas and support for reinforcing winter sport training facilities and purchasing equipments. Joint sponsorship with private sector such as Hana Financial Group, Korea District Heating Corp and CJ Cheiljedang also contributes to setting up the environment that allows the athletes to concentrate on the training.

The committee is always considering how to improve performance for the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic games by utilizing resources from outside of Korea, such

as attracting non-Korean athletes. For example, Korea Ice Hockey Association is securing local prospective talents and sending them to quality leagues such as those in Canada, while trying to attract talented overseas Koreans. Such efforts resulted in the cases such as Shin So-Jeong, a female hockey player active in the tier 1 league team of St. Francis Xavier University, and Park Ye-Eun and Kim Se-rin being trained in the Hockey Academy in Ontario. Caroline Park (Park Eun-Jeong in Korean name), a Canadian of Korean descent, came to Korea for acquisition of the Korean nationality. Eric Bauman, the head coach of Korean speed skating team, is also exerting his best in recruiting good coaches to train his athletes.

## 5.4 Improving Training Conditions including Facility and Infrastructure

Importance of improving training conditions including facility and infrastructure cannot be overstated. Facilities for snow events and gymnastic fields where athletes can practice related movements would be needed with top priority. After securing the right to host 2018 Pyeongchang games in 2011, training environment for local winter sport is on the fast lane for improvement. But the inherent difference from general sport events still lies there because winter sport events are lack of popularity and directly affected by the climate. The challenge is how to overcome such weaknesses by expanding and reinforcing winter sport facilities for wider popularity of winter sports among the general Korean public while 2018 Pyeongchang games are completed with flying colors.

Final standings of Korea in the winter Olympic games varied from 10, 6, 9, 14 and 5 to 13, from Albertville Winter Olympics 1992 to Sochi 2014. Not just Kim Yuna and Lee Sang-hwa but Korea also won the attention as the global star of winter sport scene, which shows great influence of winter sport events. As the 2018 Pyeongchang games is the third winter Olympics held in Asia, and the 4th major global sport event for Korea after Summer Olympics in Seoul in 1988, Korea-Japan World Cup in 2002 and Colorful Daegu Championships Meeting in 2011, Given the negative public opinion about climate conditions and post-Olympics utilization of infrastructure, it will be highly challenging to hold another winter Olympic games after 2018. Therefore, we need to focus on improving performance and capability of athletes in order to take full advantage of home turf advantage and bring back the honor of 2010 Vancouver games, which

will serve as the foundation to develop overall winter sport scenes in Korea as well as to improve nationwide attention and awareness.

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