

Something has changed in Great Britain. The gold nosed jet which repatriated our Rio heroes symbolised more than a successful sporting campaign. In 2012 our team delivered a fantastic result which cynics were quick to credit to home advantage! Yet four years later the result speaks for itself; Great Britain finishing second and only beaten to first place by the United States. To say the least this is remarkable particularly if considered in the context of 2015 IMF data which revealed the US population to be five times our own and with a GDP of 18.5 million million compared to our 3 million million. If population and wealth alone dictated sporting success then the US, and a number of others, should have wiped the floor with us. So what has changed?

While the 23 June result still shocks some, most have got used to the idea that we will soon go it alone. It will be years before we know if the outcome is beneficial but, in any event, the decision sent shockwaves right around the world. As the result unfolded foreign commentators questioned the sanity of the British voter but now, at least in some parts, the UK is heralded a trail blazer! Is it possible to link our renewed ability to keep winning with the vote for national independence?

A few years ago while watching England having a hard time at Twickenham a foreigner asked me "So why do you call yourselves Great

# Track or field?



Britain?" After a colourful exchange making full use of the Anglo Saxon dictionary I listened to what was not such an unreasonable argument. My friend explained he had based his question upon events such as the demise of the coal industry leading to a reliance on others for energy, our habit of under achieving at most sporting events, the massive reduction in armed forces, and perhaps most poignant of all, our inability to move on from the 1966 World Cup!

But something is restoring Great Britain to a standing not seen for decades. Anyone watching the Rio games could not have escaped the references to the 1996 Atlanta games where team GB brought home just fifteen medals compared

to 67 in Rio, of which 27 were the best colour. Perhaps in 1996 we didn't have the pool of athletes to choose from? Maybe, but there are more plausible factors.

Two simple reasons; intense focus and significant investment. The latter has been made possible because of Lottery grants but large injections of cash do not always guarantee success and substantial organisations often make poor decisions. But that is not the case here. The GB Olympic Committee successfully supported the potential winners and ruthlessly discarded those with no prospect of delivering success.

Perhaps it is too farfetched to compare cosseted, single minded athletes with farmers and the farming industry but

in the unlikely event the GB Olympic committee found itself in charge of GB Agri it would start by interrogating each manager and enterprise quickly identifying the profitable winners and loss making losers. They would also look carefully at the next generation hoping to identify those already demonstrating the determination and will to succeed, no matter what. These would be nurtured and encouraged, a practise we do not always do very well.

So does farming in the post Brexit era and winning the Olympic 100 metres gold have anything in common? Whether on the track or in the field, the successful require constant investment, must work harder than their rivals and have obsessive attention to detail. As for the also rans most never make a final let alone get close to winning a medal!



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