

# Douglas C. Harris

Class of 1998



Olympic competitor, field hockey, 1988 Summer Olympic Games, Seoul, Korea



## How You Play the Game

Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson set a new world record in the 100 metres only to have it stripped away after testing positive for steroid use. Canadian sailor Lawrence Lemieux was poised to win the silver medal in the Finn class when he abandoned the race to save an injured competitor, finishing 22<sup>nd</sup>. He was awarded the Pierre de Coubertin Medal for Sportsmanship. For Canada, 1988 represented the worst and the very best the Olympics has to offer. Here, Doug Harris shares his own best and worst memories of the 24<sup>th</sup> Olympiad.

*I was 22. Seems like a whole other life. The Olympics are understood as the pinnacle of sport and there's a long journey to get to them. For me, it started as a kid playing field hockey in the community league at 10. In the Olympics, there are only 12 teams that qualify in men's or women's field hockey, so a big hurdle for Canada has always been to qualify. Our route was through the Pan-American games in 1987 in Indianapolis. We beat Chile in the semi-finals on penalty strokes. We met Argentina in the final. Argentina has been one of the top six or eight teams in the world for a long time. We beat them three to one, and it was an amazing experience, just a phenomenally positive experience. So we knew in August 1987 that a year later Canada would be at the Olympics.*

*But it's the country that qualifies, not the players. So there was a hard year of training and it was a very mixed year for me. We had a number of tours ... and in Belgium I got a ball square in the face and broke my nose and was out for 10 days. Then I got sick at the end of the tour and it turned out it was mono. After that tour, I was cut from the team. This was June 1988 and the Olympics were in September. I assumed that my Olympic dream was on hold, at least this time around.*

*The national team went on another tour and things didn't go well. About a month before the Olympics I was picked up again, not feeling much like an Olympic athlete because I'd been on the sidelines, but nonetheless absolutely delighted, and excited to be going.*

*We got there two weeks before our first game to acclimatize. Early in the tournament I tore my hamstring muscle as a function of not being able to train fully in the preceding months. I remember trying to hold it together with my leg and just not being able to. So the team that had been so strong the year before in qualifying unraveled a little at the Olympics. In the end, we finished 11<sup>th</sup>. We beat Kenya in the final, but we'd gone in ranked 8<sup>th</sup>, so we were a pretty disappointed crew.*

Harris continued to train, and came close to qualifying for the Olympics in 1996, but by then academics had become his primary focus. He earned his B.A. in history in 1990, his LL.B. at University of Toronto, his LL.M. at UBC in 1998 and his Ph.D. at Osgoode Hall in 2005. He teaches First Nations, property and fisheries law at UBC, and is just finishing a book about the relationship between Indian Reserves, access to fish and the prevailing legal regime.

He still plays the game with the Vancouver league: "I love being on the hockey pitch. I love the high of a play well made," he says. Married to former Olympic field hockey player Candy Thomson and coach of their eight-year-old's team, he carries the lessons of the field into his classroom. "One coach in particular," he says thinking back, "it was just so clear he didn't want to be anywhere else, that this was his passion, and that enthusiasm was so infectious. It's lessons like that that I try to bring into my work as a teacher."