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Workers promised share of Olympic ideal

By Rhys Blakely, Times Online

Conditions for labourers in the developing world could improve after the British Olympic Association (BOA) agreed that workers producing goods bearing the Olympic logo should benefit from the event's "ideal of fairness".

Winning gold in Athens this month will lead to multi-million-pound endorsement deals for a handful of top athletes, some of whom, such as Roger Federer, the Wimbledon tennis champion, or Ian Thorpe, the Australian swimmer, have already been made millionaires through their sporting careers. Others, such as sprinter Maurice Greene, are able to command fees of more than \$10,000 *per second* for their competitive race appearances outside the Olympic arena.

In contrast, many workers in developing countries live in poverty, working 12-hour shifts for less than \$2 a day. Many work in factories producing goods for some of the highest profile sports brands.

Following a meeting with the pressure group Play Fair at the Olympics campaign (PFOC), the BOA today said it would seek to ensure "wherever possible" that contracts to supply kit to the British team were covered by "International Labour Organisation standards and decent employment conditions".

The sportswear market in Europe is estimated to be worth around £30 billion. It is supplied by manufacturers in Asia, eastern Europe, Africa and Central America.

According to the PFAO, cut-throat competition forces manufacturers to cut costs by squeezing wages and to employ workers on short-term contracts so that they can be hired and fired at will.

A spokeswoman for the BOA said: "The BOA takes its corporate and social responsibilities very seriously and as such we are always looking to ensure we have the best policies in place."

The BOA added that it had confidence in its present partners, Adidas and Roots.

The PFAO said: "We welcome the chance to begin to discuss the campaign aims in detail with the BOA and the acknowledgement that the Olympic movement must take responsibility for the goods licensed to carry its logos."

The group added that it hoped that it would be able to take forward the discussions to achieve "real progress for the workers in the sportswear industry".

"This places the UK among the group of front runner countries where the national Olympic associations have committed to collaborate with the PFAO. We also hope

that the BOA will support PFAO proposals with the International Olympic Committee."

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