

Opinion: Olympics inspire a need for Team Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

I wanted to be an Olympian.

I could swim pretty well by age 4, was competing by age 6. I still love the backstroke most, and can do a lap of fly when I test myself.

A few problems arose, though, on my way to gold.

(OK, I really never was on the road to gold ... only in my heart.)



Wimbledon will be home of the Olympics for the first time. Photo/Kathryn Reed

I don't have what it takes to put in the hours of practice to be the best at any sport. I'm not that focused, not that disciplined. And, honestly, I was never that good even if I had the tenacity.

But something about the Summer Olympics grabs me every four years. I remember as a kid my friend Darla and I would have contests in our back yards. We made up a few sports – but we also “competed” in gymnastics and swimming.

I was in college in San Diego when the 1984 Games came to Los Angeles. My parents came down and took me to see volleyball and soccer. Just being at the Olympics, no matter the sport, was an incredible experience.

Through my travels I have had the opportunity to visit a few Olympic cities pre- and post-the events. Most recently it was the Olympic park in London.

The grandeur of the buildings even from the outside is worth touring.

More impressive for me was walking around the grounds of Wimbledon. Oh, to just be able to go hit a few balls. Would I even see Serena's serve? This incredible tennis venue that each year mandates players dress in all whites will allow contestants to wear whatever colors they like during the Olympics.

Having been to London, Beijing and Vancouver in the past 2½ years, I can't help but think what it would be like for Lake Tahoe to host the Games. With 2022 out of the question, the soonest would be 2026.

I like how London built some of the facilities so the seating will be dismantled because those large venues would not be needed for "normal" competitions.

Train tracks go right behind the swimming pool, with a train station nearby. The Lee River will have water taxis.

Tahoe, with a little help from those who've done it, could figure out the transportation issue. Heck, the residents of Los Angeles figured out how to make it work – couldn't we?

We need better lodging. We need restaurants that understand the world is not full of meat eaters. We need shopping.

We need government and regulatory agencies to get out of the way of entrepreneurs and companies who want to invest in the

Lake Tahoe Basin.

The one area we are so lacking in is guest services. Managers need to leave Tahoe to see how friendly-responsive-accommodating other places are and then train their employees to be nice, to smile, to know what is going on in town.

We don't need a prosperity center or chambers plotting our future, we need common sense. We need to be a "we" and to stop asking, "How will *I* benefit? How will *my* business benefit?" It's time we got on the same team and asked, "What can *I* do to help *my* community so in turn *my* business benefits and *I* have money in my bank account?" It will definitely mean compromising for the greater good.

Team Tahoe can prosper. But first we need to be a team and stop acting like we are in an individual sport – even if Tahoe never hosts the Olympics.

As for the Olympics, well, the Prosecco is chilled in anticipation of tonight's Opening Ceremony. I will toast all those Olympians who have given their all for this one moment. I will have special interest in watching diving as Kristian Ipsen competes because I went to high school with his parents.

For the next two weeks I will live my Olympic dream through those men and women who are gathered in England. To me they are all winners, not matter if they medal.