Yes, it’s an Olympic year. The media are chock full of stories of athletes overcoming myriad adversities, exhibiting Herculean effort, and immersing themselves in near-Buddhist devotion and discipline in their struggle for GOLD. For these 2 weeks, we viewers are treated to pure excellence. I have been fortunate to attend four Olympics: Lillehammer, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, and Athens—in Atlanta as a volunteer physician and in Athens as crew in a pre-Olympic regatta, so I can attest personally to the extraordinary palpable energy felt at the Games and to the continuous display of feats of excellence, seen so frequent that they become numbingly commonplace.

Ok, ok, publishing a paper in the *Journal of Refractive Surgery* is not the same as competing in the Olympics—but JRS authors exhibit many Olympian traits.

**SERENDIPITY**

Many an Olympian athlete discovered his or her sport by chance—viewing a hero’s stellar performance on television, being involved in a school or sports program with an inspiring coach, or encouragement of a parent. And so it often is with authors, finding an area of interest through the experience of managing a patient, under the influence of an inspiring teacher, or by a serendipitous observation of their own.

**DEALING WITH THE PAST**

Most Olympic athletes compete in the shadow of their predecessor record-setters, in their own search for a new world record. Authors must know the past as well—and endure the burdensome literature review, discovering the insights of their historical colleagues, sometimes realizing that their new idea is not new and in any case establishing the standards of the past against which to compare their own work.

**NEW TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY**

How is it that Olympians continue to set new world records every 4 years? Is humankind simply getting stronger and faster? Probably not. Rather, there are discoveries both in technology and personal skills that propel athletes forward: advanced swimming pool design, more complex archery bows, improved training techniques. And so it is with clinical and experimental ophthalmology: new surgical instruments, new medications, improved education and training; all can lead to new discoveries, improved patient outcomes, and solutions to clinical problems, as reported in peer-reviewed published papers.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATION**

The Olympic athlete must implement all of this background and these advances in consistent personal performance—repeated locally, regionally, nationally, internationally, in Olympic preliminaries, and finally in the medal round. Similarly, the aspiring author must demonstrate the utility and effectiveness of his or her new ideas, initial observations, ongoing refinements, and modification of techniques by structuring clinical trials with colleagues and analyzing outcomes and data, often repeating the process over and over again. These laborious undertakings, which few readers see or appreciate, lead to the manuscript that inevitably undergoes multiple revisions.

**PEER REVIEW**

Peer review at the Olympics? You bet! The athlete makes the team, arrives in Beijing, and acclimates to jetlag, only to face world-class preliminary competition before any chance at a medal. The author finishes the paper, certain of its importance and superiority, and submits it to the Journal, only to face the onerous peer reviewers. The paper comes back full of challenges, questions, and calls for revision. But just as preliminary heats often bring forth improved performance for athletes, peer review improves most manuscripts.
QUALIFICATION
Finishing near the top in the preliminary heats, Olympic athletes enter the medal round, along with a gaggle of other aspirants, the best in the world. The author revels in having his or her paper published in the Journal of Refractive Surgery, among many others—an achievement in itself. But at that point, no medal.

THE MEDALS
Of course, bronze, silver, and gold are awarded in each discipline at the Olympics, the gold accompanied by the winner’s country’s national anthem and an extraordinary sense of pride in victory, a pride that almost eclipses the pain of preceding years—nay, decades—of labor. The Journal of Refractive Surgery offers two awards for editorial excellence: the Troutman Award presented through the International Society of Refractive Surgery of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (more about that in a later editorial) and the Waring Medal sponsored by SLACK Incorporated, the owner and publisher of the Journal, presented at the Ocular Surgery News Symposium in New York.

This year’s Waring Medal, with the accompanying $5000 award, as selected by a committee of the Journal’s Associate Editors, goes to Gholam Peyman, MD, for his paper entitled, “Cyclosporine 0.05% Ophthalmic Preparation to Aid Recovery From Loss of Corneal Sensitivity after LASIK,” along with Drs Sanders, Batlle, Félix, and Cabrera.

The paper was judged excellent and found superior based on the following:
1. Originality. Peyman, Sanders, Batlle, Félix, and Cabrera demonstrated for the first time an effect of topical cyclosporine (Restasis, Allergan Pharmaceuticals, Irvine, Calif) on the rate of recovery of corneal sensation after LASIK.
2. Importance to Refractive Surgery. LASIK is the most commonly performed refractive surgical procedure today. Dry eye symptomatology is the most common side effect of LASIK. It is highly likely that what is routinely called “dry eyes” does not reflect tear deficiency, but rather a surgically induced corneal neuropathy resulting from the cutting of the corneal nerves when making the LASIK flap. Thus, an effective therapy to reduce LASIK-induced corneal neuropathy would have a major impact on refractive surgery. Peyman and the team have demonstrated that possibility.
3. Study Design. The study was a prospective, randomized, contralateral eye design that compared the return of corneal sensation after LASIK in one eye treated with topical cyclosporine to the other eye treated without cyclosporine in the same patient. This is a powerful study design because of the natural internal control of having the same patient with two eyes that are presumed to have similar biological properties.
4. Internationalism. The study was carried out under Peyman’s direction from Arizona State University in Phoenix, Arizona (after leaving New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina). The clinical trial was carried out in Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic under the direction of Juan F. Batlle, MD, with Rafael Félix, MD, and Ginny Cabrera, MD, at Centro Láser, which serves a large patient population (including a large indigent population cared for with minimal charge) and which also serves as an offshore training site for American surgeons in new surgical techniques. Study design and statistical analysis were done by Don Sanders, MD, and his staff at the Center for Clinical Research in Chicago. Such collaboration demonstrates the modern truth that “the world is flat” and reinforces the historical fact that refractive surgery has been—from its inception—a multinational undertaking.
5. Clarity and Concision. The paper is written in a clear understandable way with appropriate illustrations and acceptable statistical rigor, all within the context of a concise document.
6. The Immeasurable. Some Olympic athletes just win through an inner spirit and skill that defies measurement. For authors, some combination of epiphany, genius, prepared minds, and obsessive work produces medal-worthy editorial excellence.

THE OTHER COMPETITORS
And what of the thousands of athletes at the Olympics who did not win a medal? Being an Olympic athlete—an elite distinction in itself—is deeply satisfying and a cause for great personal pride and humility. Similarly, those dogged authors who have had their work published in the Journal of Refractive Surgery in the past year deserve recognition and honor for their achievement. Not only does their work appear online and in the print journal, it is also archived by the National Library of Medicine where it can contribute to the world’s knowledge base for decades to come. Many of those Olympic athletes still striving after the elusive medals commonly vow to continue their hard work for another 4 years and return for the next Olympics—as do those authors who continue to publish in the Journal of Refractive Surgery and to compete for the Troutman Award and Waring Medal.

REFERENCE