

Chapter 7

OPERATION PERFECT HOSTS



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Office of the Mayor of Salt Lake City, Rocky Anderson, City Hall, 7 August, 2001.

The 19th Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City are only months away. Salt Lake is a hive of activity, as the final plans and preparations to host the world are pulled together. IOC executives are visiting Salt Lake on an ever more frequent basis to work through last-minute issues. The final count-down has begun.

I am concerned. There are rumours that the city authorities plan to create their own separate identity and celebration plan, rather than collaborate with the organising committee to ensure a single unified programme. The IOC can ill afford a repeat of Atlanta, where the city's commercial agenda was allowed to run amok, damaging the image of the host city and undermining the Olympic values in the process.

Organising committee president, Mitt Romney, and chief operating officer, Fraser Bullock, are far from comfortable that they have things fully under control with the mayor and city hall.¹ The city council is starting to dream up various celebration and fund-raising programmes – many of which compete directly with the efforts of the organising committee.

Romney asked if I would come along to a meeting with the mayor, Rocky Anderson. The mayor opens the proceedings with a comprehensive overview of the broad marketing programme he's planning. These include a special celebration park which would compete directly with the organising committee's efforts for Olympics medals plaza. Romney and the Salt Lake Olympic Committee (SLOC) delegation look pale. Fraser Bullock starts to argue about the problems that this parallel programme could create for traffic circulation and other key logistics. But the mayor is not budging. The longer the debate continues, the more we seem to be heading for a repeat of Atlanta, where the organising committee's agenda and that of the city collided head on, leaving the Olympic Movement caught in the middle and badly bruised.

Watching the drama unfold around me, I know something has to give. With no end to the deadlock in sight, I turn to Mayor Anderson and politely but firmly point out that if the city insists on proceeding with the programme they will be in breach of the host city contract they signed with the IOC when Salt Lake was elected. The IOC will be left with no alter-



native, I say, but to sue the city for breach of contract. It would be the only way to protect the image of the Games.

Until this point, the IOC had never threatened to sue any host city, and the mayor may have assumed mine was just an idle bluff. He nevertheless turned to his legal counsel and asked whether the IOC could sue. The answer was clear: if Salt Lake proceeds with its city marketing programme, it risks being in breach of the IOC's contract.

Angelic hosts

No one needed reminding about the headlines of the world's media after Atlanta. They were damning. The city failed to live up to its responsibilities to host the Centennial Games, because it elected to put short-term profit over any enhancement of its image.

Whether the IOC would have ever sued Salt Lake is open to debate. But the mayor decided not to take the risk and quietly allowed the city's marketing programme to fade away. From that moment on, SLOC and the city started working closely together. At the closing ceremony, Rocky Anderson came up and thanked me for threatening to sue them, bringing the city to its senses. Salt Lake went on to develop one of the strongest visual identity programmes ever, and in the process lay to rest many of the ghosts of Atlanta. The organisers proved that America did understand the true ideals of the Olympic Movement and could stage a magical Games.

Hosting the Olympic Games can provide one of the most powerful platforms for any nation. Governments spend billions of dollars every year managing their national image around the world. They seek to influence how they are perceived by other nations. National images, they know, affect political and economic relationships. Whether it is to increase tourism, change foreign and domestic policy, attract investment or aid, or boost international trade, the goal of national image management is to cast the nation in a more favourable global light.

Tokyo in 1964, for example, signalled a change in both the world's and Japan's own view of itself, and its place in the world. Seoul was a monumental step forward in modern Korean history – showcasing the fact that the country was no longer a poverty-ridden nation but ready to evolve from years of military dictatorship into a true democracy. In Barcelona in



1992, the city succeeded in catapulting itself into the top tier of Europe's tourist and business destinations. Similarly, the Games in Beijing in 2008 provides the perfect stage for China to redefine its place in the modern world.

It is no coincidence that the Games have become an international showcase for the host cities, or that the Games themselves continue to grow in stature as a result. When Samaranch became president, he immediately identified that the IOC was missing a great opportunity to brand the Olympic venues and competition sites with Olympic imagery. He had a clear vision and became very committed to the development of a consistent brand experience. Over the next two decades, he led a concerted campaign to develop a programme, called 'Look of Games', to reinforce the unique nature and presentation of the event.

By Sydney, the Look of Games project had become one of the key success factors of the Games. Samaranch often said that a \$300 million stadium is not complete, until the Look of Games has been applied to it. Why throw the world's greatest party, and not bother to get dressed?

In 1980, the Olympic branding at any of the venues was very limited. The competition field of play was clean but sterile. By 2000, the field of play had become a vibrant dynamic stage, reinforcing the message that this event is different from all others. In Salt Lake City, an athlete was overheard to say that he was going to treat this as just another competition, until he stepped onto the ice and saw the giant Olympic rings at the end of the arena. At that moment it hit him: this was not just any other event; this was the Olympic Games.

Although working with a limited budget, in 1984 Peter Ueberroth and his team in Los Angeles had already identified the potential of venue presentation to raise the Olympic bar. They developed a visual presentation for their venues that differentiated them from all previous Games. They used an unusual combination of colours, including magenta, vermillion chrome, vivid green and aqua. This colour palate became known as 'festive federalism'. The eclectic mix of colours had Ueberroth claiming to be colour blind, but it worked.

The world's longest commercial

Despite such isolated moments of brilliance, it wasn't until Barcelona that the IOC succeeded in significantly raising the bar on the presentation of the overall visual Games identity. Barcelona understood from the outset what the potential of hosting the Games meant – and how the Olympic celebration could be used to present a new identity for the city and country as a whole.

The fact that Samaranch was a native of Barcelona, and was on the organisers' and the mayor's case every day, helped. Samaranch challenged the organisers to establish a new standard in the visual presentation of the Olympics and in the process to add a totally new dimension to the Olympic brand. But it did not happen overnight.

The initial indications of Barcelona's design vision were not promising. From a city associated with brilliant artists like Antonio Gaudi, Salvador Dali and Pablo Picasso there were high expectations. The organising committee for each Games is always responsible for creating a series of emblems and designs to identify the specific nature and character of their Games. The IOC does not interfere in the creative process other than rubber-stamping the final design. At least that was the case until Barcelona came to present its mascot to the IOC for approval.

Samaranch looked on in utter disbelief as the proposed mascot for the Barcelona Games was presented to him for approval. Barcelona designer Javier Mariscal had designed a dog, called Cobi, to represent the Games. Cobi was a very avant-garde dog. It needed a lot of imagination to be even recognised as a dog. Even Mariscal was unsure about his design, later noting that, 'It is hard to fall in love at first sight with a dog that looks as if he has been run over by a heavy goods vehicle.'

Few people jumped to Cobi's defense. One who did was Spanish novelist Manuel Vazquez Montalban, who unhelpfully announced, 'I am pro-Cobi. He is a tribute to all dogs that have been run over at the tolls on the Barcelona motorway.' Eventually Cobi fired the collective imagination and, with his endearing nature and offbeat sense of humour, became an important contributor to the success of the Games, and perhaps the most successful Olympic mascot ever created.

In their presentation of the Games and their city, the Barcelona organisers showed that they grasped the basic ground rules of theatrical and stage management. A top advertising executive, Luis Bassat, was hired to produce the opening and closing ceremonies. Bassat, a Barcelona native and European creative director of global advertising agency Ogilvy and Mather, described the ceremonies as 'the longest commercial spot' in his career.

The mayor of Barcelona, and president of the Barcelona Organising Committee, Pasqual Maragall, set Bassat a simple challenge: 'Put Barcelona on the map. Put Catalonia on the map. Make the Games, Catalonia's coming out party! The image of Barcelona, Catalonia and Spain depends on the opening ceremony. The 100 metre sprint is the same in Seoul and in Barcelona ... The big difference we can offer in comparison to other past and future Games, is our opening ceremony and perhaps our closing too.'

Luis Bassat came up with a number of simple iconic ideas that stamped their mark on the Games and the city. From the dramatic lighting of the Olympic cauldron by a flaming arrow, through to the symbolic unfolding of the Olympic flag over 10,000 athletes, he produced dramatic and highly effective visual images.²

The world, and in particular the media, was quick to praise. The Games took place against the backdrop of a new world order. The Soviet Union was unravelling, the Cold War was over and the Berlin Wall had fallen. The Germans were reunited and apartheid in South Africa was crumbling. Reuters observed that for those moments 'it was possible to imagine that the world was a perfect place and that Barcelona was at its fulcrum. Barcelona became the only place one could imagine ever wanting to be'.³

Barcelona won gold for its staging of the opening and closing ceremonies. Mayor Maragall noted that in the space of five short years the Olympics allowed the city of Barcelona to undergo a transformation that would otherwise have taken it 30 years.

How would Atlanta shape up? Billy Payne, the chairman and CEO of the Atlanta Organising Committee (ACOG) came to Barcelona with his team. They were not expecting to learn much from the Spanish organising committee. He left town, with four years to organise his own Games, with headlines saying that the Barcelona Olympics would be a tough act to follow. And they were.



Arctic circles

Before Atlanta took centre stage, the Olympic circus moved to a small Norwegian town of just 22,000 people, closer to the Arctic Circle than the Games had ever been staged before. Lillehammer won the Games at the 1988 IOC Session in Seoul, as the rank outsider. It went on to stage one of the greatest Winter Games in living memory.⁴

Norway was anxious to avoid the same mistakes it had made hosting the World Nordic Ski Championships in 1982. Then, the prevailing image among the foreign media, was the staggering price of the cost of living and how no one could ever afford to holiday in the country. The Lillehammer Olympics showed a different side of the country.

The leadership of the Lillehammer Organising Committee (LOOC), and its COO Petter Ronningen, soon realised the importance of image. Under the direction of their design director, Petter Moshus, they built the first truly integrated design programme of any Olympic Games. Moshus created a concept that focused on Norway's distinctive features and national character. It combined the motifs of wood and stone, closeness between people and nature. The designers deliberately chose 'materials with an emphasis on solidity, honesty, authenticity and environmental awareness'. The pictograms were inspired by Norwegian petroglyphs – rock carvings thousands of years old. They reinforced the idea of the Games returning to the birthplace of winter sports.

The organisers also recognised the critical role of the spectator in creating atmosphere. In Albertville two years earlier, most of the spectators had been placed behind the television cameras, and therefore were not visible to the television viewers. But the Lillehammer producers decided to place the spectators as a backdrop to the athletic performance. The effect was dramatic.

The importance of the spectators had long been recognised by Samaranch. He repeatedly fought to ensure that the Olympic stadiums were full, arguing that if they looked empty on television the viewer would not fully appreciate the importance of the event. It was an honour to be able to attend the Games in person, he insisted, and if no one turned up then the event appeared second rate.



During the 1988 Seoul Games in Korea, where athletics is not a popular local sport, Samaranch berated the local organisers for the empty athletic stadiums. He argued that no one outside of the country would understand why the stadiums were empty. Samaranch instructed the organisers to fill the stadium with soldiers, school children – anything just to fill up the venues.

Lillehammer turned the spectators into part of the spectacle. This and the overall look of the Games exceeded everyone's expectations. The media heaped praise on their Norwegian hosts. The Games, they acknowledged, provided an unrivalled platform to promote the culture and image of the host country around the world. Norway and the Norwegian people had taken full advantage of the opportunity to host the Olympic Games; to change certain perceptions of the country and dramatically enhance the country's global standing.⁵

'The truth about the Olympics is that they are almost impossible to ruin ... Any damage Atlanta might do will only harm Atlanta,' was how the *International Herald Tribune*, with uncanny foresight, closed its commentary on the Winter Games.

Atlanta shoots itself in the foot

Two years later the headlines around the world told a very different story. The world's media were united in their condemnation of the Atlanta Games.⁶

Atlanta won the privilege to host the Centennial Olympic Games, in a contentious election at the 1990 IOC Session in Tokyo by 16 votes.⁷ Atlanta, the frontier town of modern capitalism, beat the sentimental favourite Athens, the cradle of civilisation and birthplace of the modern Games.

The seeds of failure were soon apparent. The city of Atlanta embarked on a contentious relationship with the Atlanta Organising Committee and its president Billy Payne. When Bill Campbell took over as mayor of Atlanta from Maynard Jackson in 1993, things went from bad to worse. Campbell never understood his responsibilities as mayor of an Olympic host city. He set Atlanta on a collision course with the organising committee.

The organising committee also caused raised eyebrows with some of its early design decisions. Atlanta's mascot, Whatizit, with its bulging eyes and dangling feet, received a similar welcome from the world's media as Barcelona's mascot, Cobi. The IOC again briefly pondered whether to veto the design. But, recognising how Cobi had eventually become such a hit, the IOC elected not to intervene. Looking back, this was a mistake.

Unfortunately, Whatizit, or Izzy as the mascot became officially known, never rose to the challenge. In the lead up to Atlanta, the media had a field day. The *Los Angeles Times* kicked off the debate shortly after the mascot's launch describing Billy Payne's pride and joy, as: 'A little mutant monstrosity that was born in the toxic dump of somebody's imagination.' The reviews only got worse with the world's media referring variously to the 'blob', 'the sperm with legs' and suggesting alternatives including, in the spirit of Lillehammer's human mascots, Haakon and Kristin, that Atlanta should adopt Ted and Jane – after media mogul Ted Turner and his wife Jane Fonda.

Atlanta City Council seemed intent on squeezing the Olympic opportunity for every cent and be damned with the consequences of what it would do to Atlanta's image. The city's marketing director, Joel Babbit, a well known *enfant terrible*, soon began to show what might be in store when the world arrived in Atlanta. He talked of his plans to sell sponsorship to the city's parks and buildings, streets and street signs. He even proposed to bounce laser beams off the moon and round up all the stray dogs in town, using them to display advertising messages. Not all of his ideas were practical, but they were bound to spark a reaction.

The IOC reacted strongly to the proposals. A letter to the mayor stated that the proposed activities would be inconsistent with the terms of the Host City Contract and could compromise the successful financing of the Centennial Olympic Games. The mayor was invited to attend the next IOC board meeting. Mayor Jackson backed down over the proposals, responding that 'Atlanta will take no action which will jeopardise the success of the Games.' Sadly, his successor, Bill Campbell, was less far-sighted and pressed ahead with a damaging commercial agenda.

The city soon approved a new revenue-generating plan, through the Atlanta Economic Development Commission, chaired by Campbell himself. An associate of Campbell, Munson Steed, developed a programme to lease and manage street property during the Games. Steed's plan was to

raise up to \$50 million for the city and himself, selling to whoever would pay, be it Olympic sponsors – or their competitors. The sponsors were apoplectic with rage. George Fisher, chairman and CEO of Kodak, threatened to pull his company's operations out of Atlanta. Even this did not bring the city's officials to their senses.

The original plan was to sell an initial batch of around 350 stalls for \$10,000–20,000 each. But after pressure from local lobby groups, the programme was opened up, with the price dropping to as low as \$150 per stall. Some 6,000 'entrepreneurs' jumped at the opportunity. The operation was a total commercial flop, with Munson Steed sued by angry stall-holders for \$25 million. Some unfortunate stallholders lost their life savings.

The result was chaos. ACOG's own managing director of communications, Dick Yarborough described downtown Atlanta as looking 'like a small town carnival on steroids. Tacky is too nice a word to describe the city during the Games. The city looked like a third-rate flop house when the world came to see us ... Atlanta paid dearly for its reputation.' Olympic historian Robert Barney described a scene of 'roving street hawkers and frenzied vendors preying on residents and Olympic tourists like a horde of locusts.'

My own memories are equally vivid. The street market initiated by Atlanta City Council created traffic grid-lock around the centre of Atlanta, preventing everyone from travelling around town. The media couldn't get to the main press centre. Media buses would finally make it through the traffic, only to have drivers speed right past the entrance, refusing to stop and pulling up some 800 metres further on. This was because the city council refused to issue a special temporary permit, to allow the buses to stop in front of the press centre.⁸

Journalists who actually made it to the press centre considered themselves lucky. The bus drivers, who were brought in from all over the country to drive the press around, often had no clue where they were supposed to go. One group of journalists found itself visiting one of Atlanta's scrapyards, instead of attending the opening ceremony.

By the time the press did make it to the press centre, they were ready to tear the city and the organisers apart. The Atlanta organisers had forgotten Samaranch's dictum that the media are the last to judge the Games. Despite repeated pleas by the IOC, ACOG never understood that the media could make or break the Games.

Media management became ACOG's Achilles heel and the leadership became paranoid in their dealing with the media. 'They never got the idea that we were a necessary evil. We were just evil,' was how long-time Olympic journalist, Associated Press sports chief Larry Siddons saw things. One commentator later noted, when analysing 'Why Atlanta missed out on Olympic Glory', that 'the organisers must be regretting not taking better care of the people writing their epitaph.'

After years of grating encounters with ACOG's leadership, knives were sharpened. 'We'd been lulled into this myth of this wonderful American organisation,' noted veteran Olympic journalist Morley Myers, UPI's international sport editor. Myers was an experienced Olympic hand, having attended every Games since Mexico 1968. 'When we got there, it plainly wasn't the case. We were expecting high-tech, and we got Third World. Basically nothing was working.'

Mayor Campbell had absolutely no appreciation of the damage that his actions were doing to the image of the city that he had been elected to promote and safeguard. His reaction to the media onslaught was to suggest that 'they should take the critics out to the shooting venue and get rid of them.' The *International Herald Tribune* noted that the 'statement revealed more about the parochial weakness of the Atlanta leadership than any of the transportation or computer problems.'

Billy Payne lost the plot. His response to media criticism about how tacky the city was looking as the hawkers descended on downtown Atlanta, was that this was just a case 'of Atlanta getting ready to party'.

By the third day of the Games, Samaranch was well aware of the damage that ACOG's lack of media management and the city's self-absorbed revenue-generating programmes, were doing to the image of the Games. Dropping his usual diplomatic guard at the daily Co-ordination Commission meeting between the IOC and ACOG, Samaranch laid into Billy Payne. 'You have to provide the media with a full mechanism to successfully do their work', he said. 'You are killing the Games.' Samaranch went on to tell both Billy Payne and Mayor Campbell that if things did not improve within 48 hours, Atlanta's image would be tarnished forever.

During the years planning the Atlanta Games, it had become apparent that there was a totally dysfunctional relationship between the city and the organisers. But nothing truly prepared the IOC for the fact that the host city

would go out of its way to ambush the Games and to do untold damage to its own image. As *The Wall Street Journal* noted, 'the IOC was prepared to repel the usual corporate ambushers but not a host city ambush.'

At the very least, we had perhaps naively expected the city authorities to be co-operative and supportive of the Olympic effort, not to effectively sabotage the Games. After all, not only were the city authorities not being asked to contribute to the cost of the Games, ACOG was going to spend nearly \$500 million in construction projects for the Games.⁹ This included a new \$207 million baseball stadium that after the closing ceremony would be given to the Atlanta Braves, guaranteeing that the team would not move out of the city. All of this was in addition to being relieved of \$11 million of debt on the old baseball stadium.

This though, was not enough for Campbell. He wanted more. Campbell set about trying to shake down the organising committee for every conceivable cost. Atlanta became the first ever host city to charge for extra policing and sanitation costs – some \$9.5 million. This was a cost that ACOG could ill afford, forcing it to cut corners elsewhere in the operations and push its marketing efforts beyond the limits of what the Olympic image could sustain.

The original financial model for the staging of the Games in Atlanta was, with hindsight, fundamentally flawed. Billy Payne promised the local authorities that not a single cent of taxpayer or city funds would be spent on the Olympics. All costs, including the construction of all the venues, would be covered by the Games marketing programme. Ultimately this proved too steep a mountain to climb. As funds started to dry up, ACOG became increasingly desperate.

The marketing programmes had no problem in funding the costs related to the actual staging of the Games. But it was too much to ask them to cover the \$500 million of capital costs for building all the venues. The idea that they could recoup all these costs over 17 days was madness. Unfortunately the number one priority for the ACOG leadership was how to balance the books, rather than finding the time, and the budget, to set about enhancing and perpetuating the Olympic image.

The initial reactions after Atlanta was awarded the Games were positive. The Governor of Georgia, Zell Miller, noted shortly after Atlanta's election in early 1991, that the 'failure to fund [these Games] would send the

wrong signal from the state honoured to host the Centennial Games.’ But within a few months, ACOG was scrambling to raise the necessary funds. Soon it was slicing the cake very thin. ‘To say that we had a short-term view was an understatement’, Yarborough, ACOG’s communications chief joked. He described ACOG and the city’s revenue-generating philosophy as ‘Show me the money’, a catchphrase taken at the time from the hit movie *Jerry Maguire*, based on a struggling sports agent.

A play in three acts

The Atlanta Games were three quite distinct events. The Games that were seen on television generated global TV audiences that established new records.¹⁰ The television cameras, for the most part, avoided the tacky downtown street images and focused on the sports venues and athletic competition. As a result, the world saw some of the best sports competition ever, and was shielded from the trashing of the Olympic ideals in the city streets. Broadcasters simply averted their eyes, and the eyes of the world, from the shameful spectacle. For this, the Olympic Movement owes it a great debt of gratitude. But something else was also lost: the soul of the Games.

It was interesting to note that in research conducted in the US after the Games, people commented on how wonderful the Games were but that there was, nevertheless, something missing. When pressed, they would ask where were the waterfalls of Montjuic in Barcelona? Where were the festival street scenes of the host city celebrating? The Games needed the magic to extend beyond the sports venues, to make them the Olympics.

And then there was the media view. Even Atlanta’s own press had to admit that it had blown it: ‘The “greed Games”’. That’s the knock we heard often during the Atlanta Olympics, as critics complained that commercialism ruined what should be a celebration of the nobility and dignity of sport for its own sake.’

And finally, there were the Games you attended as a spectator. Atlanta attracted record crowds – selling 8.6 million tickets, more than Los Angeles and Barcelona combined. On the whole, these spectators had a wonderful time, their enjoyment fuelled by the success of the US team, who won a record set of medals. It was no small achievement for ACOG to pull together an operation that could cope with such large crowds. But

in the end all this was lost in the comments of the vocal, but critical and highly influential, 4,000 print journalists attending the Games.

ACOG's Dick Yarborough reflected after the Games: 'The city couldn't live up to its hype and showed it to the world.' He continued, 'the city of Atlanta government blew the Games – pure and simple. What could have been an opportunity to show the world we were the major league city we claim to be, was instead an embarrassing display of tacky shacks blocking sidewalks and impeding traffic flow.'

The *Financial Times* wrote: 'This was the chance for Atlanta to show itself to the world, but for the sake of a few thousand dollars (raised from letting land to small business) it has allowed people to go away with a poor image of the city. It's a crying shame when the sport competition and the enjoyment of the crowds have been such a phenomenal success.'

And therein lay the tragedy for both ACOG and the IOC. Billy Payne, and his senior operations team at ACOG led by A.D. Frazier, had done an excellent job, staging some of the best sports competitions ever seen. They had pulled together a very committed team but, in the end, were let down by the local authorities and a weak mayor. They had taken their eye off the ball in dealing with the media, and failed to engage the mayor and the city in a collaborative effort.

My own emotions after Atlanta were mixed. Initially, I felt a sense of failure that the IOC had not been able to prevent such a disaster. My colleagues and I had allowed the Olympic image to be undermined. But it also led to a hardening of our resolve to protect the Olympic brand. The IOC resolved to never let it happen again. Never again would we let a politician take control of the Games for some personal short-sighted agenda.

The wake-up call

Atlanta became a major wake-up call for the IOC and a watershed for the Olympic Movement. It was abundantly clear that the world did not like what it had seen in Atlanta and felt that the Olympic ideals had been tarnished while in Atlanta's possession.

The *Wall St Journal*, in its closing report on the Games, noted that 'the IOC feels its sacred rings have taken some significant dings, and Atlanta's legacy may be more pronounced in the realm of how not to do things ...

To remain effective, [the IOC] must retain an aura of international amity, patriotic intensity and dewy-eyed Olympic hopefuls. Much of it is hooey, but it is what every enterprise needs: a point of differentiation.' Atlanta was a warning for future host cities.

The journalists were right. The Olympic image took a major hit in Atlanta. It did not matter that for the most part the sponsor programmes were a success, and developed in a manner totally complimentary to the Olympic ideals. The actions of the city with its street vending programming, along with a mismanaged souvenir licensing programme, had done significant damage to the Olympic brand.

Atlanta had totally missed the opportunity to use the Games as a platform to enhance its image and promote itself around the world. Mayor Campbell and the city council's short-sightedness and greed not only scored a major own goal for his city, but, in the process, distorted the Olympic values.¹¹

Even before the Atlanta Games were over, the IOC sat down with officials from Nagano and Sydney to make sure that they fully understood why Atlanta had slipped up and what steps could be taken to prevent a repeat exercise at subsequent Games. Atlanta provided both Nagano and Sydney with a cautionary lesson in the issues of image management.

Lessons learned

Michael Knight, the New South Wales Minister for the Olympics, and the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Frank Sartor, left Atlanta with some important lessons. There was no sense in putting on a perfect sports presentation, they realised, if you did not manage how the city presented itself on the world stage. For Sydney to succeed, and the Olympic Movement to rediscover the Olympic values that many believed were lost in the cluttered streets of Atlanta, the IOC and Sydney must find ways to rein in the rampant commercialism. Knight and Sartor knew that the venue for the Games is not just the sports venues, but the whole city. This is what the world would see. As with Barcelona, this would be the true payback for hosting the Games.

Immediately after the Atlanta Games, Samaranch tasked the IOC management with reviewing the structures and relationship with host cities.

A 30-page list of new marketing conditions was drawn up, designed to ensure that the local organising committees, and in particular the host cities, would not work at cross purposes with the IOC, or with each other. The IOC could not afford a repeat public relations disaster by a host city. The IOC set about reviewing how it could manage and control the whole visual presentation more tightly. The Olympic Games were to be seen as a franchise, with the IOC as the franchisor doing a much better job at controlling its franchisees – the host cities and local organising committees.

One of the first actions was to develop a standards manual for the overall presentation of the Olympic imagery at the Games, both within the venues and throughout the city. The Olympic symbol had to be made 'the hero' of the overall presentation of the Games. In every picture and every television shot, the Olympics and the host city must be clearly branded. The design team of Copeland Hirthler was hired to start working with Nagano to review the whole look of the Games' presentation.

Meetings were held with all the partners to review the Atlanta experience and decide what lessons could be learned from the overall presentation. Although most partners had developed successful programmes leading up to the Games, many were insulted by the naked commercialism on the streets of Atlanta. They recognised the damage that this would cause to the Olympic brand, if left unchecked. 'The United States brand has suffered badly', was John Hancock's CEO, David D'Alessandro's judgement of the Atlanta Games. *Advertising Age* in a lead editorial shortly after the Games, pointed out that 'Sponsors stand to gain the most from close association with a well-run event and lose the most from over-commercialisation.'

The headlines confirmed what I already knew: the Corinthian spirit and the commercial value of the Games were not in conflict – they were symbiotically intertwined. By protecting the former, we enhanced the latter.

Although Nagano was only 16 months away, the IOC and the Organising Committee, NAOC, set about reviewing all aspects of the visual presentation, sponsor presence at the Games and, most importantly of all, the co-ordination between the city, the local prefecture government and the organising committee. This time, there was to be no parallel city marketing programme – the Japanese understood the importance of presenting a single, unified image and tightly controlling the overall commercial presentation.

Samaranch took an even more hands-on approach to the Look of Games programme, poring over architectural plans and making suggestions as to where the Olympic rings and other branding elements should be added. Even once the Nagano Games had begun, Samaranch stayed focused to the multi-screen TV feed in his office at the IOC headquarters hotel. In one incident he called up in the middle of a race to inquire how quickly we could add the rings to the ice of the luge run. The Japanese organisers, who had planned for every contingency other than the IOC president becoming chief 'look designer' during the Games, were left scrambling to find out how to sink the rings into the ice, whilst not interfering with the running of the sleds. The technicians screamed that it was impossible, but by day two of the competition the rings were there. Samaranch turned his attention to the next venue and more small details and adjustments that improved the overall visual presentation.¹²

Even if Nagano, an industrial city of over a million people, could not always present the most beautiful visual backdrop, it won over the world with the charm of its people. A long-standing Olympic commentator wrote in the *New York Times*, how 'the Japanese hosts were open and capable, and visitors like me felt honoured to live three weeks in a very different culture, walking down narrow lanes and peeking into tiny houses.' The press left Nagano in decidedly better spirits than they had Atlanta.¹³

Raising the bar in Sydney

From an early stage, the Australian Tourist Commission recognised the potential of hosting the Games. Initial research by the Commission suggested that the Games would attract an additional 1.74 million visitors between 1997 and 2004, generating Aus\$ 3.5 billion in foreign exchange earnings. John Morse, managing director of the Commission was clear on the potential benefits: 'The media coverage will add depth and dimension to Australia's image, by looking at every aspect of our lifestyle and culture, including travel, the arts, business entertainment and cuisine. The unrivalled exposure we receive on television, radio, print and on the internet will change forever the way the rest of the world sees us.'

The Australian media were less sure. Following the euphoria of Sydney's election, the local press embarked on a campaign fretting about

everything that might go wrong with the Games.¹⁴ There was concern that the organising committee might embarrass the nation in front of the world. Bill Bryson, the award-winning author, compared the Australian attitude to hosting the Games, with that of the Americans: 'Australians are ace fretters, which in a context such as this, is no bad thing. The American approach to a big event like the Olympics, is to expect everything to go right, to be dumbfounded when it does not, and then to move swiftly into denial.'

Bryson went on to talk about the huge amounts of newspaper space devoted to all things that might go wrong: 'It is literally not possible to name a catastrophic contingency, short of asteroid impact or nuclear attack, that hasn't been mooted and exhaustively analysed in the nation's press in the long run-up to the Games.' The Australian population enjoyed seven years of cynicism and backbiting before they were able to sit back and enjoy their Games.

Michael Knight, Sydney's Olympics Minister, understood that if the city was to be treated as an Olympic venue, the Games would need special legislation to manage the downtown precinct. New laws were needed to deal with everything from the control of streets, to limitations on billboards and city advertising, through to special police powers to prohibit unauthorised street vending and hawking. Knight drove the Sydney Olympic Arrangements Act through the New South Wales Parliament.

Although Knight moved to ensure tight control of Sydney's image while staging the Games, he was still struggling to balance the books and was reluctant to allocate the necessary financial resources to completely dress the city. It was to be an ongoing budget battle between the IOC and SOCOG.

Shortly after Sydney had been awarded the Games, Ric Birch, who had been appointed to produce the ceremonies, came up with the idea of placing a giant icon of the Olympic rings on Sydney Harbour Bridge. Knight decided that this would be an unnecessary extravagance, and repeatedly refused. Others though, believed that the idea had the potential to become the overriding image of the Games and kept quietly working away on the plans. By February 2000, it was clear that if Sydney did not take a decision on the rings on the bridge, it would be too late to undertake the manufacture. Knight was still refusing to allocate the budget and it looked like the

idea was not going to happen. Either the IOC was going to have to 'volunteer to pay', or Knight would have to be 'tricked' into agreeing.

The IOC Executive Board held its final meeting in Sydney prior to the Games in February 2000, and Knight reported to Samaranch and the Board. I scribbled a note to Samaranch, telling him to read out the message, as part of his concluding remarks, at the end of Knight's presentation and after all the questions. Samaranch looked at me, asking what on earth this was all about. I just said, trust me, please do it, it will be worth it.

'Mr. Knight, I understand that you are considering applying the Olympic rings to Sydney Harbour Bridge for the Games', said Samaranch, squinting at my handwriting, 'but are not sure if you need the IOC's approval. I think it is an excellent idea and I am pleased to approve it. Thank you, meeting closed.'

Knight looked on not quite sure what had happened. His right-hand man, David Richmond, head of the Olympic Co-ordination Authority, knew exactly what had happened – he had just had \$1 million knocked out of his dwindling contingency budget. Richmond cornered me the moment the meeting broke up, asking what I was up to. I just smiled and told him that the IOC was pleased to approve the project. After the Games, everyone – even Knight – agreed that the rings on the bridge had been one of the best investments they had made in the presentation of the Games.

Construction immediately began on the largest Olympic rings ever produced. Made out of 35 tons of steel, the rings were 75 metres wide and 35 metres high. Erecting them on the bridge presented its own set of engineering challenges. The job was completed just a few days before the Opening Ceremony, only to cause mild panic within NBC's Olympic studios.

Dick Ebersol, NBC's Olympic head, had designed his main studio at the international Olympic broadcast centre to appear as if it overlooked Sydney bay and the bridge, and had gone to great expense to create a photographic backdrop to achieve the effect. Ebersol arrived in Sydney the day the rings were being added to the bridge, only to realise that his expensive set was now out of date. NBC scrambled to hire helicopters and arrange for the rings to be secretly switched on at night, so that the whole studio scene could be re-shot, this time with the rings on the bridge.

The rings dominated the skyline throughout the Games and identified Sydney as a remarkable Olympic host city. The Sydney organisers knew

that they really were hosting the world. 'Our objective has been about making sure that not only are the venues looking absolutely fantastic,' Bridget Smythe, Sydney's director of Games Look and Design observed, 'but to make sure that Sydney as a city and the public spaces surrounding the venues are really brought to life for the Games, they are really dressed up to make sure that everybody gains the Olympic experience. It's all about making the precinct sing. We have branded this city Olympic.'

Party time

Sydney introduced a number of other projects that had a major impact on how the world experienced the Games. These included creating six 'Olympics Live' sites around city, to entertain the public who might not be able to afford or have the time to go to the venues. The effect of the six sites around town was to create a dynamic festive party atmosphere. The spirit carried through to the athletes and the media who could be found watching large video screens of the competition, and listening to local bands late into the night. The Olympic spirit transcended the whole city.

When the Olympic flame was extinguished on 2 October, as an Australian airforce F-111 jet swept over the cauldron, no one wanted to leave Sydney, least of all the media. Sydney insiders referred to the last day of the Games as 'Sad Sunday', not wanting their party to end.

The headlines around the world were effusive in their praise for the organisers, Sydney and the Australians. 'No city on Earth will outshine what we have experienced here,' was how the UK's *Daily Mirror* summarised their experience, 'they were the best Olympic Games of everybody's lifetime. For two weeks a nation that truly loves athleticism elevated sport to a plane none of us thought attainable in this cynical world.' 'Sydney restored something to the Olympics you can't measure on a balance sheet: Humanity', reported the *Observer*.¹⁵

Bill Bryson, writing in *The Times*, summed up the general mood. 'Congratulations Australia. You did it. From start to finish, it's been wonderful ... I invite you to suggest a more successful event anywhere in the peacetime history of mankind.'

'Australians can now allow themselves the quiet satisfaction of knowing that they have thrown the best party of the planet,' was the accolade from *Time Magazine*.

Inevitably Sydney's accolades led to direct comparisons with Atlanta. More than once Sydney was described as the antithesis of Atlanta, thanks in part to keeping the commercial agenda on a tight leash.¹⁶

The media also gave the sponsors credit for their programmes. 'If the Olympics are remembered for one thing – besides the splendid setting and spectacular athletic feats – this could be the Olympics that forever changes the nature of how sponsors speak to visitors', was how *USA Today* reported on the marketing efforts of the Games, recognising how the sponsors had worked hard to develop programmes that enhanced the visitors Olympic experience.

Lighting the fire in Salt Lake

With the close of Sydney, it was only a few months before the Olympic Movement was scheduled to return to America, this time for the Winter Games in Salt Lake City. Among the world's media, the jury was very much out about whether the Sydney presentation was a mere anomaly, a one-off, courtesy of the Australians. Would the Olympic organisers in Salt Lake return to the commercial problems found in Atlanta, or had the IOC and the organisers learnt their lesson to build on the brand strengths found in Sydney?

And, on top of these challenges, Salt Lake would have to work hard to overcome stereotypes about polygamy and to demythologize the Mormon religion, as well as dispel the lingering odour of the bribery scandal linked to Salt Lake's bid to host the Games. There were many misconceptions about the region, prompting journalists to joke in the lead up to the Games, 'that most of the visitors pouring into Salt Lake for the 2002 Winter Games will have heard just two things about Utah; that it can be tough to get a drink, but no problem looking for three wives.'

Although Mitt Romney, president of the Salt Lake Organising Committee, understood the importance of avoiding a commercial free-for-all on the streets of Salt Lake he, like Billy Payne, a few years earlier, faced many of the same challenges in balancing the books and bringing the Games

in on budget. Romney was unsure that he would have the necessary resources to develop a strong image programme for the Games. And as SLOC was effectively once again a private organising committee, Romney also did not have the legislative authority that Knight had in Sydney to ensure control over the city.

Romney, nevertheless, left Sydney with a much better appreciation of the importance of Look and Image as one of the key success factors in defining the Games. Slowly, over the coming months, the Look budgets would be increased and the SLOC creative team, led by Scott Givens, was given an ever freer hand to push the envelope and develop a series of dramatic visual presentations.

Givens, and his director of design, Bob Finley, came forward with the idea of wrapping all the skyscrapers around the centre of Salt Lake in twenty-storey high images of athletes to provide a unified backdrop against the Wasatch Mountains. The team also decided to challenge Sydney in producing various interpretations of the Olympic symbol. To the northeast of the city, they constructed the largest Olympic rings yet built. At an elevation of 1800 metres the rings, measuring approximately 150 by 90 metres (imagine a 14-storey building on its side), and composed of over 1500 florescent lights, lit up the mountainside at night and shone down on the Games below.

If there was one single moment that best captured the difference between Salt Lake and Atlanta it was during the opening ceremony, when the Olympic flag was marched into the stadium. Traditionally, the flag has been paraded in either by athletes from the host nation, or a military guard of honour. In Atlanta, Billy Payne had broken with tradition by inviting seven friends, the original members of the bidding team to march the flag in with him. Many Olympic traditionalists were appalled. All the more as these had been the Centennial Games.

Romney, though, showed that he understood the true power of the Olympic brand and the symbolism of the rings, and their ability to inspire. Romney came up with the powerful idea of inviting eight living legends to march in with the Olympic flag, representing the five continents, and the three pillars of the Olympic Movement: Sport, Culture, Environment.

Triple Olympic gold medallist and skiing legend Jean Claude Killy was chosen for sport, filmmaker Steven Spielberg for culture and activist Jean-

Michel Cousteau for environment. They were joined by astronaut John Glenn, representing the Americas; Nobel Laureate and former President of Poland, Lech Walesa, Europe; Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Africa; Nagano 1988 ski jumper and gold medallist Kazuyoshi Funaki, Asia; and the last person to light the Olympic cauldron, gold medallist, Cathy Freeman, Oceania.

After some soul-searching at city hall, Mayor Anderson finally realised that it would be suicidal to embark on the same strategy as Atlanta, going head-to-head with the organisers over the visual presentation of the city during the Games. Anderson backed down from embarking on a broad programme of street vending and, by the time the athletes and media arrived in Salt Lake, the world found what it wanted: a city and an organising committee that fully understood its responsibilities in staging the Games; that they were mere custodians of the Olympic brand, and were tasked with nurturing it, polishing it and eventually returning it back to the IOC – stronger, and in better shape, than when they had received it. Given some of the issues that Salt Lake faced along its journey to stage the Games, with the scandal surrounding its election, the final positive result was all the more impressive.

When the torch was extinguished, the press were once again generous with their accolades and the image of Salt Lake City and the Mormon religion would be changed forever.¹⁷

Polls run by the *Salt Lake Tribune* after the Games underlined just how far public local opinion towards the Games had changed, with nearly 60 per cent of the population feeling exceptionally well about the Games, and another 29 per cent better than expected. Only one per cent saw the Games as worse than expected. The big winners were: the Mormon Church, with 51 per cent believing that Games had improved its image; the Utah people no longer perceiving themselves as boring (80 per cent); the state's natural beauty (91 per cent); and Utah in general (92 per cent). As with Barcelona and Sydney, the setting would linger in the collective memory long after everyone had forgotten who had won the ice dancing.

Eighty-seven per cent of the population saw it as a good thing to have bid and won the Games, and over 74 per cent had not had enough and wanted to bid for a future Olympics. Fraser Bullock, the chief operating officer of SLOC talked about the theme of the Games, 'Light the Fire Within', and

how it proved 'that the power to inspire is the power to change. More than anything else, these Games showed that this vision is perhaps humanity's greatest untapped resource. Well after the medals were awarded and the champions crowned, it was this spirit that Salt Lake City left to the world.'

The tourism dividend

'The Olympic Games are the best thing that has ever happened to Australia's tourism industry,' John Morse, managing director of the Australia Tourist Commission said a few months after the Sydney Closing Ceremony. 'The Olympic Games have changed forever the world's view of Australia.'¹⁸

Although tourist boards in previous host countries had set about benefiting from the glow of staging the Olympic Games, strategies were more often than not developed after the Games had actually taken place. Australia was perhaps the first country to truly realise the potential benefit of being an Olympic host nation, from the moment of Sydney's election they developed a strategy to maximise the return. The mere fact that Sydney won the right to host the Olympic Games helped Australian destinations capture the ear of convention organisers. The Australian Tourist Commission's goal was to make the Olympics a two-week documentary on Australia for the global TV audience of 4 billion, creating a lasting legacy for their industry.

Australian tourism marketers wanted to divest Australia of the Crocodile Dundee image by which it was perceived in many international markets, and project an image of a diverse and modern country with a unique look and feel. Back in the early 1990s, Australia was rarely on the world stage. The Games became the hook the media had been waiting for. 'The media were saying – the Games are on in Australia, let's find out more about this country ... The Olympics added to the depth and dimension of the world's knowledge of Australia and will make us a contemporary destination.' The Games took Australian tourism to places it could never otherwise have afforded to go.

Morse grasped the potential benefits of promoting Brand Australia with the Olympic brand. And the IOC saw the value of a host country taking the benefits of hosting the Games to a new level of excellence, which in turn

could lead to an even greater roster of cities applying to host the Games in the future.

The Australian Tourist Commission had only limited budgets to fully realise the opportunity and although the government provided an additional \$6.5 million grant for specific Olympic-related promotions, Morse understood that the real potential was to gain access to the marketing budgets of the Olympic partners and connect with the producers of the Olympic broadcast rights holders. The IOC also believed that a partnership between the Olympic sponsors and 'Brand Australia' could add a new dimension to partner marketing programmes.

John Morse and his team were invited to attend sponsor and broadcast workshops, and explain to the partners how the ATC could help with film, images, story ideas, contact for talent, logistics and shoot location guides. Over time, the sponsors started to listen, and began to integrate Brand Australia into their Olympic programmes, eventually leading to an additional \$170 million in additional publicity and promotional programmes for Australia. Visa alone generated over \$20 million in destination spend advertising, from television commercials in the US through to bus shelters in Shanghai.

The torch relay was also turned into a series of video postcards for the host country broadcast around the world, from Uluru (Ayers Rock), the world's largest monolith and an Australian icon, through to an underwater dive along the Great Barrier Reef.

Tourism has always been an important objective for cities bidding for the Winter Olympic Games. The promotional campaign for the first Winter Olympic Games in Chamonix in 1924, was undertaken by the PLM Railway Company, which wanted to increase the number of visitors to this resort now that it was connected by train.

Lillehammer and Norway, benefiting from the stunning broadcast images and glowing media reports, saw the number of guest nights in hotels grow from 1.6 million in 1988 to over 2.22 million a decade later, with similar increases in overall number of visitors to Norway up from 11.85 million to 16.42 million.

Barcelona has seen some of the most dramatic benefits of any recent Olympic host city. In economic terms, Barcelona in the early 1990s, was ranked 11th according to a survey carried out among 500 businessmen.

Today, it has risen to sixth place after London, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt and Amsterdam.

The growth in tourism between 1990 and 2002 truly illustrated how Barcelona benefited from being in the world's spotlight in 1992. Total overnight stays more than doubled from 3.8 million to over 8 million and the number of conventions nearly tripled to over 270,000.

The global stage

The Olympic Games are unique in their ability to present a host nation and a city to the world. No other sports event, or any other type of event for that matter, offers such a global stage. Recent host cities have begun to appreciate the true potential of hosting the Games. How a host government takes advantage of its brand identity internationally is critical in terms of future trade and investment. The nation and the city need to define the image, what it wants to tell people about itself, in the brief time it is under the spotlight. It must also develop a post-Games strategy to help build a long-term business legacy.

The IOC's vision of developing a strong Look of Games identity has significantly expanded the potential benefits for any nation in hosting the Games, and is one clear reason today why more cities than ever before want to host the Olympic Games. The decision to brand the whole city 'Olympic', has taken the branding potential beyond anything previously achieved. The football World Cup is a great event, but look closely and all you will see is a football match, like any other match, with no point of differentiation that makes it *the* World Cup, or image payback to the host.

For any nation, the economics of staging the Olympic Games are best understood as a Herculean re-branding campaign. The aim of any re-branding exercise is to take a product with a certain image and turn this perception around. The Olympics have the effect of focusing the world's attention, for a very brief moment, on a single city and the culture and character of the host nation.

Hosting the Olympics can be an expensive path to self-esteem – but one that, correctly managed, is one of the most cost-effective, powerful and rewarding undertakings that a government and a nation can embark on. Only once in the last twenty years, has a city got it wrong. The mistake at

Atlanta was one of short-termism over long-term investment. Even then, within the local community, Atlanta was seen as a great success, leaving a tremendous legacy of new facilities.

What the IOC has learned from its experience of working with host cities is the importance of maintaining strict brand discipline. This means negotiating and finalising many of the arrangements in advance of the host city being chosen. The danger, otherwise, is that the local politics get in the way. A city that is one of several on a short list is altogether easier to deal with than the same city once it is confirmed as the next Olympic host. The IOC learned this in Atlanta. But it also learned other lessons.

Chief among these is the importance of getting the technology right. Technology and the Olympics have grown up together over the years. As technology has advanced, it has enhanced the Olympic experience. But, in Atlanta we discovered that technology is a double-edged sword. Ironically, it was in the US, which has hosted so much of the technological revolution, that the lesson was graphically brought home. No matter how good the physical infrastructure of a host city, if the technological infrastructure fails, the Games can fail too – and that is what happened when IBM's systems crashed in 1996 in Georgia.

NOTES

- 1 Mitt Romney, a Harvard MBA and law graduate, became Governor of Massachusetts in 2002, and founder and chairman of private equity and venture capital firm Bain Capital. Scion of a prominent family, his father was president of American Motors Company and governor of Michigan. Romney is touted as a possible Presidential Republican nomination in 2008.
- 2 The idea for lighting the cauldron came about practically by accident. The judging panel for the design of the cauldron, selected the winning design and then realised that they had not worked out how to light it. They called the designer back and asked how he planned to light the Olympic flame. He told them that he had no idea but, after a moment's reflection, jokingly suggested that they might consider firing an arrow. The idea was nearly dismissed but over the coming weeks Bassat kept coming back to it. After the Games, people asked what would happen

- if the archer had missed. It has been suggested that there was so much gas being pumped into the air around the cauldron that, even if the arrow had gone in the opposite direction, it would still have ignited.
- 3 The *Financial Times* wrote that the Games 'were brilliantly organised, executed and hosted by Barcelona, (and that) Spain will bask in the afterglow of the Olympics for some time.' *The Times* noted how 'the Spaniards confounded all the sceptics, by staging the Olympic Games with a spirit that was a model of its kind ... These were the relaxed Games, the friendly Games and, above all the fair Games; where for all the commercialism and drugs, the world saw that top-class sport could be fun and exciting ... The Olympic torch that is now handed onto Atlanta in the US burns as brightly as it has ever done. The success of the Games should have a lasting effect on Spain itself, as the Seoul Olympics left their beneficial legacy in Korea.' *The Japan Times* made its own homage to the host city: 'Brilliantly staged. The Games won high praise with many commentators calling them the best ever ... Few cities have been able to display the architectural monuments in the way Barcelona repeatedly did ... Never was this truer than during the diving events. The world was entranced by the vision of graceful divers catapulting into the rays of the dazzling Mediterranean sun over the Barcelona skyline, only to plunge past Antoni Gaudi's unfinished masterpiece, the Church of the Holy Family, into a blue splash of competitive excellence'; the *International Herald Tribune* ran the banner headline, detailing how 'The Real Winner was Barcelona, Not the Athletes. The athletes never had a chance. No matter how well they jumped and ran and rowed, they could never dominate these Games. The City won the Games. The people of Catalonia won the Games ... At their best, the Games are a celebration of the people who stage them – every trilingual official, every volunteer'; *Sports Illustrated* reported how the 'Games were pure Gold', 'There was more pleasure to be found at the Barcelona Games than any other Olympics in living memory. This was due to the elegance of the city.'
- 4 Even the Lillehammer bid committee did not really expect to win the right to host the 1994 Olympic Winter Games, sending all of their promotional material home the night before the election. The favourite to win was Ostersund, Sweden, but it lost momentum in the final

48 hours when certain voting blocks, especially the South Americans, were rumoured to have switched their allegiance, as a result of losing the election to the IOC Executive Board of their candidate to the Swedish IOC member. When Samaranch announced that Lillehammer had won, the Norwegian delegation looked on in utter disbelief. The King of Sweden, who was sitting in the first row of invited guests, looked up in disbelief as well, but for very different reasons. Samaranch was totally surprised, subsequently joking as to whether he had in fact opened the right envelope.

- 5 'These were the Games that touched the heights and hearts. The bidders who were 1000–1 outsiders. The Norwegians whose cheers steamed into the air – loudest for home skiers but still loud enough for foreign competitors. They presented a positive image of the host country that is beyond price.' (*The Independent*); 'Norwegian warmth knows no boundaries. As we head home, Norway and its people are in our hearts ... we give you one more gold medal for a winter Games as perfect as your Christmas-card snow' (*USA Today*); 'These Games have enabled Norway to present their face to the world and to enjoy a collective identity that brings a national sense of confidence and well being' (*The Times*); 'Lillehammer showed the Norwegians in the best possible light: polite, organised, adaptable, mature in their snow culture and with consciences alert to the world's trouble spots such as Sarajevo and the preservation of environmental balances' (*The Guardian*). The accolades continued for years to come, leaving a lasting legacy. *The New York Times*, in an article previewing the Salt Lake Games, fondly reflected back on Lillehammer, 'with [its] bright sun, frigid air, quaint buildings, rolling farmland under a clean coat of snow, idealistic Norwegians burning candles on the sidewalk for sister Olympic city of Sarajevo. It all worked.'

The Norwegian press, which had spent six years lambasting the organising committee, undertook a 180 degree U-turn following the opening ceremony, talking about how 'the world had never seen anything more beautiful ... and that ... heaven [Lillehammer during the Games] was a place where one can still be, while still alive.' Humourists like Dave Barry became enchanted with the Norwegian people, explaining to his readers back in the US, that Norwegians 'LOVE cross-

country skiing. This is a huge event for them, very much like our Super Bowl, except that, at the Super Bowl, you can actually see the Game' (*Seattle Times*). It was, perhaps, *Sports Illustrated* that paid Lillehammer and Norway the greatest compliment: 'The XVII Winter Olympics did not exist. Norway did not exist. These were the fairy tale Games, drawn from the imagination, staged in the pages of a children's book. They could not exist. Reality cannot be this good.'

- 6 'Gold medal for chaos' (*Sports Business Journal*); 'Atlanta has blown it big time' (*France Soir*); 'The Greed Games' (*Los Angeles Times*); 'Greed eclipses Olympic creed at Olympic flea market. Atlanta promised the greatest Games of all time, but never mentioned that they would be the tackiest too' (*Atlanta Constitution*); 'Scorned Atlanta [has been] brought down to earth' (*The Times*); 'The ideals [were] left behind in the Atlanta gold rush ... Atlanta will go down in the history of the Summer Games as the city that failed to produce an enlightened strategy' (the *Independent*).
- 7 Six cities applied to host the Centennial Olympic Games: Athens, Atlanta, Belgrade, Manchester, Melbourne and Toronto. The final round of voting saw Atlanta gain 51 votes to Athens' 35.
- 8 Journalists eventually found out how to make the buses stop. They all lit up cigarettes in front of the press centre, forcing the driver to eject them from his non-smoking bus.
- 9 In addition to the new 49,714 seat baseball stadium, ACOG also funded a new tennis centre at Stone Mountain Park, a new shooting complex at Wolf Creek and contributed towards many other construction projects including new housing, used as the Olympic Village, at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Construction costs accounted for nearly 29 per cent of ACOG's overall budget – revenue that should have been allocated to other critical areas like technology testing and transportation.
- 10 The Opening Ceremony was the most watched Olympic Ceremony in US broadcast history.
- 11 The rest of Campbell's time as mayor of Atlanta was fraught with controversy, with the FBI investigating him and his administration in 2000 for alleged corruption.

- 12 Samaranch's eye for detail also prompted the adoption of blue tables and yellow balls in table tennis. Other bodies changed their scoring protocols to make them easier to follow.
- 13 'Thanks a Million and Sayonara,' was the lead headline in *Time*: 'Nagano's warm hospitality will be a tough act to follow. Host cities put their marks on the Olympics ... The Japanese organisers have rescued the Olympic spirit that was so deeply shaken after the disaster of the 1996 Atlanta Games ... The question we were all asking, when we fled Atlanta in disgust back in 1996 was whether the Olympic Games had become so big and so complex that they were unmanageable ... In Atlanta there was no way to escape the relentless commercialism of the street hawking vendors ... In Nagano, the problem was the stores had run out of stuffed replicas of the snowlets, the overtly cute mascots ... In the end, Sydney must remember that it is hosting the Games for the world.'
- 14 The *Sydney Morning Herald* alone published more than 8,000 articles on Olympic preparations between January 1995 and the Opening Ceremony. After the success of the Games, some of the most critical elements of the Australian media claimed that the success was because of their repeated criticism, having kept the organisers on their toes.
- 15 In Germany, *Hamburger Adenblatt* noted 'the Olympic Movement could not have found a better place for its rebirth'. The *International Herald Tribune* talked of 'how the unmitigated success of the Sydney Games came at a most opportune moment. It has restored faith in the relevance of the Olympics'. In Spain, *El Pais* quoted Jacques Rogge saying, 'A friend of mine said that Sydney had raised the bar (for future cities) from a high jump to a pole vault.'
- 16 'It was noted time and again that while Atlanta which has become a byword for the antithesis of the Olympic spirit ... Sydney gave it back to the world,' was how *The Times* closed its report on the Games.

'After the commercial excesses and failures of technology and transportation in Atlanta,' wrote Jerry Longman in the *New York Times*, 'the Sydney Games revived the idea that the Olympics can be organised smoothly, and that they remain in reach of ordinary people. Sydney has little of the flea market ambience that made the Atlanta Games a byword for crass commercialism.' 'What the Aus-

tralians have done so magnificently is to just once again make the Olympics seem worth all the trouble. They redeemed the shame of the Atlanta Olympics,' concluded *The Independent*, while *USA Today* noted how, 'Atlanta's Games were a monument to corporate crassness. Sydney never made that mistake.'

- 17 *The Guardian* in the UK, wrote that 'Salt Lake has emerged as the biggest winner ... The Wasatch Mountains provided a gorgeous backdrop and the city extended a friendly hand, belying its reputation as a Mormon-dominated enclave where it is tough to get a drink. The Mormon Church kept its promise to curb its missionaries' zeal while the Games were on. "We have taken a giant step forward in correcting some of the misconceptions people have about the church," said M Russell Ballard, a church elder, "I think that we have made a lot of friends." 'Yes, Salt Lake City definitely did it,' said the *Washington Times*, '2002 Winter Olympics were as good as gold.' All this was a far cry from the headlines that closed the Atlanta Games.

- 18 Morse claimed the Olympic Games advanced Australia's international tourism brand by ten years, attracting an additional 1.74 million visitors to the country between 1997 and 2004 – visitors who generated over \$3.5 billion in foreign exchange earnings. In 2000, visitor arrivals to Australia increased by 11 per cent and the International Congress and Convention Association predicted that Australia would be ranked as the number one country for meetings in 2001 – overtaking both the United States and the United Kingdom. In the 12 months following the Games, Sydney saw its convention business increase by 71 per cent.