

Juan Antonio Samaranch and Olympism

Preface by Ben Weider, CM, CQ, SBStJ, PhD

Over the years, I have undertaken studies comparing the legacies of the various individuals who have led the International Olympic Committee since it was re-established by Baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1896. Those studies have led to the incontrovertible conclusion that His Excellency Juan Antonio Samaranch is, without question, the most efficient and effective president that the International Olympic Committee has ever had. Moreover, he has cemented his place in Olympic history by taking steps necessary to ensure that the IOC, the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement move forward through this century and beyond.

When Mr. Samaranch assumed leadership in 1980, the IOC was a much smaller body than it is now, and it was struggling to raise the funds necessary to ensure its very survival. Today, in stark contrast, the Olympics continue to grow both in scope and popularity. Several distinguishing attributes have enabled Mr. Samaranch to achieve the myriad successes that have characterized the organization's growth during his tenure as president.

For one, he has had the sensitivity required to bring together Olympic athletes and officials alike to continue building and strengthening the IOC. In addition, his relentless work ethic, which has seen him visit more than 190 countries around the world, has underpinned virtually all of his achievements. He has had the wisdom to realize that nothing could substitute for his firsthand interactions with the far-flung members of the extended Olympic family.

In addition to his general success at building the IOC, Mr. Samaranch has also spearheaded numerous other more specific accomplishments. He assured the participation of women in the Olympic Games and was the first president to name a woman to the IOC Executive Board. He created the Paralympic Games, which represented a major step forward in encouraging participation in sports among paraplegics. His struggle against the divisive role played by apartheid in international sport is also well known and documented, and helped contribute to the downfall of that unjust system in South Africa.

Under his leadership, international corporations have decided to take part in the solidarity of the Olympic movement. The resulting influx of funds and support enabled Mr. Samaranch to fulfill one of his greatest dreams, the building of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. This magnificent facility will enable future generations to learn more about the Olympics, including how the Games started and how successive IOC presidents have endeavored to make the Olympic movement what it has become today. Another lasting legacy of Mr. Samaranch's tenure was the building of the Château de Vidy, the IOC's headquarters in Lausanne.





Rafael Santonja, Juan Antonio Samaranch, and Ben Weider at the European Men's Amateur Bodybuilding Championships, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2000

In summary, Mr. Samaranch is recognized as the man who plucked the ailing IOC from the brink of bankruptcy and turned the Games into a profitable enterprise as well as a truly planet-embracing event. He has left the International Olympic Committee in great condition to prosper into the new millennium and beyond. And while his tenure as IOC President may have come to an end, his passion for the Olympic movement remains as alive as the Olympic flame. As Honorary IOC President for Life, I know that he will spend the rest of his life furthering the efforts of the International Olympic Committee and supporting athletes who carry on the Olympic spirit in perpetuity.

**Note: On behalf of the IFBB and our sport, I have dedicated my life to achieving the goal of Olympic recognition. I have had the distinct honour of knowing Avery Brundage (IOC President 1952-1972), Lord Killanin (IOC President 1972-1980), and Juan Antonio Samaranch (IOC President 1980-2001). I have met with President Samaranch on many occasions; oftentimes accompanied by my close friend and colleague Dr. Rafael Santonja. Mr. Samaranch always greeted us with genuine warmth, kindness, and friendliness. Sympathetic and understanding of our cause, he was the only IOC President to ever attend a bodybuilding competition*

(World Games, Lahti, Finland, 1997 and European Championships, Lausanne, Switzerland, 2000). It was during his presidency that the IFBB was granted provisional recognition (1998-2001).

Quotations by Juan Antonio Samaranch



We shall serve sport, not use it.
 Money generated by sport shall benefit sport.
 Sport shall remain in control of its own destiny.
 Olympism is a guide, not a constraint.

1990

Coubertin's Olympism adapted to the conditions of our times can, through the practice of sport such as he conceived it, be a place of culture and humanism, a center which leads to peace.



Alone, we can reform neither man nor society... The Olympic Movement has possibly a unique opportunity, amidst the present disarray, to show through deeds that it is one of the great and beneficent social forces of our time; that in all places, and at all times, it places sport, such as we conceive it, at the service of the human community.

1991

We think that Olympism should be idealistic but not ingenuous... We must not let young athletes lose their freedom and become dependent on agents who determine where, and against whom, they should compete.

1992

Olympism, since the beginning of its history, is related to culture. Both ancient Olympism, which is a reflection of Greek civilization and modern Olympism, expanded to the dimensions of the world.



Olympism demands a daily reassessment in the light of changes in society and the vicissitudes of politics. It is the links forged in the stadiums and in the Olympic Village which remain, for many, the very best of youthful memories. And they are

germane to the trends which are making themselves felt throughout the world, the breath of freedom which is stirring the nations... We must, and indeed do, take a respectful view of the wide variety of opinions which are expressed concerning us. But we do not accept and we shall always defend ourselves against the envy and hypocrisy which prompt some people to try to destroy what they themselves were unable to create.

1993

The IOC President, as you know, is like the conductor of a Philharmonic Orchestra, whose responsibility lies in harmonizing the tune and rhythm each member is playing with his own instrument.

1994

The International Olympic Committee has signed

cooperation agreements with the specialized agencies of the United Nations in order to involve the Olympic Movement, which is an integral part of society, more closely with the well-being of humanity... We therefore have the moral obligation, the humanitarian duty and the will to serve the international community.



Our ambition is not to seek to settle the problems confronting our society. But we have the responsibility, in conformity with our fundamental principles, to make a gesture, take initiatives and act according to our means and preoccupations, and in the domain which is naturally ours.



For countries facing socio-economic and political difficulties, physical and sports education are very low on the list of priorities. We must reflect upon this hard reality, defining a rational cooperation policy to reduce the inequalities between industrialized and developing countries.

1995

We must constantly expand sport's capacity to open the minds and hearts of young people to relations based on warm friendship and mutual respect, introducing them to forms of fair contest and arming them against any temptation to succumb to unjustified or violent actions.



United by and for sport, the Olympic Movement can and must mobilize itself to make its contribution to the protection of planet Earth and the well-being of mankind.



Modern sport is like a vessel on which we are all sailing, and where we find ourselves alongside the International Federations and National Olympic Committees. Our solidarity will be successful only

on one condition; that it is perfectly coordinated by the IOC. I say coordinated and not led.



Like all philosophies which strive toward a model of personal achievement and fulfillment, sport contains an inner virtue, a spiritual challenge which brings the individual face to face with himself, his limits and his abilities... This total approach to development, which treats both the body and the mind, is the framework that will allow mankind to move ahead towards a greater, better existence.

1996

We cannot change the world without first changing human beings, and perhaps it is there that the philosophical aspect of sport can play a role, in the endeavour to achieve an ideal of holistic human development, an ideal of which Olympism could be the driving force.



Our aim is always to place the Olympic Games, with the considerable resources they generate and the media attention they command, at the service of the Olympic Movement.



Our development aid policy is not a policy of promises, but a reality, and a true reflection of the fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter. We must respect and maintain the universality of the Olympic Games, while affirming the cultural vocation of Olympism and continually improving the standard of competition by attracting the best athletes from the entire world.

1997

Cooperation and unity through sport is one of the cornerstones of modern politics and constitutes a challenge that has to be met in the future.



The Olympic Movement has always managed to mix the richness of tradition with the bold imagination of modernity, and the energy and dynamism of youth.



Our duty is to be at the service of the athletes, to place them on an equal footing, whatever the political or economic system to which they belong, to make them independent, foster their development and combat all forms of discrimination which could hinder their personal growth or integration into society.



The history of the IOC shows that men and women are capable of serving society sincerely and unselfishly, and of their own free will. There are millions of volunteer soldiers of the Olympic Movement all over the world, even in the most far-flung corners, working each day for the good of their communities through physical, cultural, artistic and sports education.

1998

The Olympic Games are unique and must remain so. For this reason, we must study the ways and means to protect the Games and, if possible, increase their prestige still further so that they remain the biggest event in the world and the greatest celebration of contemporary society.



We are more than ever convinced that sport and physical activity in general merit a key place within education. They help individuals in their personal development, and constitute a school for understanding, solidarity, friendship and ethics.



This year, which celebrates the 50th anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights, it is important to remember that each individual has the right to recreational activities, and that

each individual should have the opportunity to practice the sport of his or her choice according to his needs.

1999

We are not a court, and we do not wish to become one, even if we are the ones who enforce the rules. All we ask is for the rules we have set to be observed by all those concerned.



We had to accommodate many interests and perspectives in the aims of developing the consensus needed to progress and expand.



History teaches us that games have been part of human activity since the dawn of time. The cultural heritage of different peoples bears witness to their richness and diversity... Sport should be used to help educate enlightened men and women capable of undertaking generous initiatives to the benefit of society. Fair play, by winners and losers alike, is an invitation to exercise the virtue of justice.



Yes to the reforms necessary to consolidate the Olympic Movement, without renouncing our convictions... Yes to reforms which protect the universality, importance and prestige of the Olympic Games, as well as the independence of our organization.



No organization can find a single universal answer to all the contradictions and oppositions that affect our planet... Faced with the development of society and the vicissitudes of politics, the International Olympic Committee cannot remain unmoved and has a duty to react – and does react – in the right way, committing itself to culture, peace and the well-being of society.



The fundamental values which enrich our cultures must be taught by parents who are the first educators, and these continue to be followed at school and in sport clubs... Our desire to do more and do better for human development must not hide the fact that our role and our means are limited. But our goodwill shall never be found wanting.



We are not doing this for ourselves. We are not doing this for our own sake. We are not doing this for our own offices, positions or functions. The International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Games and the Olympic Movement belong to all, and first and foremost to the youth of the world, to all youngsters who dream of taking part in the Olympic Games, to the athletes – they are the heart and the soul of the Games – to all coaches, trainers and other officials surrounding the athletes, to all volunteers, to all our partners and – through all media who ensure a universal coverage of the most important multisports event – to all the people of the world.

2000

The Olympic Movement is the biggest volunteer organization in the world. Serving freely the international, national and local communities, in one way or the other is the best contribution that an individual can make and is rewarded with moral satisfaction.



Sport is a school of justice, democracy and human rights. The first rules that we learn are those linked to the Games and to sports. Moreover, sport, a universal language, creates, in all circumstances, national unity, political consensus, solidarity and mutual understanding.



Our initiatives on peace and humanitarian activities are of a symbolic nature, but the most important is the gesture which is valuable in every culture.



All volunteers who serve the Olympic Movement are also “champions” in their own right at the community, neighbourhood and family level.

2001

The Olympic Movement is the largest volunteer movement, whose foundation and existence depends on volunteerism.



The most effective army that Africa should use in education, which will enable its nations to develop their own vital resources, social justice, democracy, human rights and ensure their well-being.



“One of the greatest accomplishments of my life was taking part in the Olympian torch relay of the games of the XXV Olympiad, Barcelona, 1992.”

*QUOTATIONS reprinted from OLYMPIC REVIEW, XXVII - 39, June-July 2001
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