



The Olympic Attaché

by Roger de Groot

At the moment when National Olympic Committees should be considering the appointment of their Olympic attaché for the Games of the XXIst Olympiad and the XIIIth Winter Games, we asked one of them, Mr. Roger de Groot, to describe this difficult and essential job for us.

Roger de Groot can indeed claim to be the specialist he is since he has fulfilled this office for ten years and has been the efficient architect of the French delegation's preparation for the Tokyo, Mexico, Munich and Montreal Games.

We thank him for this contribution.

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There are few Olympic officials who, the day of the Opening Ceremony, can accurately estimate the extent of the problems the organisers have had to overcome throughout a complete Olympiad in order to achieve the presentation of that wonderful world event which the Olympic Games of today have become.

Of course one has to have taken part directly in the setting up and functioning of the innumerable wheels of the enormous machinery to be aware of its complexity.

Tributaries of all kinds of demands, national or international, the Organising Committees are often limited in their freedom of action which adds to the

difficulties. It is therefore clear that they cannot reject any form of aid and that on the contrary they expect the maximum support from those principally concerned—the National Olympic Committees.

Right from the initial months of each Olympiad this collaboration should manifest itself through participation in the enquiries carried out by the Organising Committees to which unfortunately *only 30%* of the NOCs reply, and by the appointment of the indispensable liaison agent—the Olympic attaché.

Article 46 of the Olympic Charter states that the attaché should act as a liaison between the Organising Committee and the National Olympic Committee to which he is attached, and collaborate with both of them in order to assist with the travelling and housing arrangements and to help solve any problems which may arise.

Solve any problems, this is what leaves great freedom of interpretation and explains why, for four Olympiads, the French sports authorities have a very broad conception of the role of their delegate to the Organising Committee.

It is clear that the attaché's responsibilities depend on the one hand on the size of his country's Olympic participation and on the other on the limits of the duties which the NOC he represents intends to give him. It is therefore impossible to define a general rule in this sphere. However, in reply to the

many questions I am regularly asked, I would like, without any pretension, to explain a few of my essential activities on behalf of sport in my country. For this I only need to outline the working plans established in relation to previous experience, in agreement with the French sports authorities concerned and with the approval of the President of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee.

In reality this programme of activities clearly defines my role with the Organising Committees as well as with the various official local sports organisations; it includes a certain number of varied responsibilities such as:

- maintaining permanent liaison between the Organising Committee and the CNOSF;
- general information on Olympic preparation;
- technical information for the sports federations;
- preparation of official missions;
- reception of various personalities;
- assistance to representatives of the press, radio and television;
- finding solutions to the different travel and accommodation problems of a delegation;
- aid to organised groups,

and various other activities too numerous to go into here.

These are essentially Olympic functions which naturally become more and more important as the Games approach. But, since Olympism and sport are a whole, it would be irrational not to take advantage of the presence of an *attache* in the country particularly

motivated by the progress of its physical education to study its organisation and development plans, in agreement with the local authorities, since there is always something to be learnt in such a complex field. Some of the Canadian Olympic Association's achievements can serve as an example.

In addition, still with the aim of assistance, I am of course at the disposal of all my country's sports federations and on this account I help in the preparation of the participation of French teams in certain tournaments, both at the club or association level and the international level such as, for example, the next world cycling championships.

Also entering my duties are the drawing up of a cultural programme and the writing of an information book for the participants and accompanists in order to allow them to leave the host country with much more than just the impression of the track or gym.

I think this amply expresses the many facets of the role with which the French National Olympic and Sports Committee entrusts its Olympic *attache*.

There are cultural *attaches*, financial *attaches*, trade *attaches* and military *attaches*—so why should there not be, at least in the city preparing to receive the whole world, Olympic *attaches* working for a cause just as noble as any other?

R. de G.

