

El Salvador fulfils its obligations

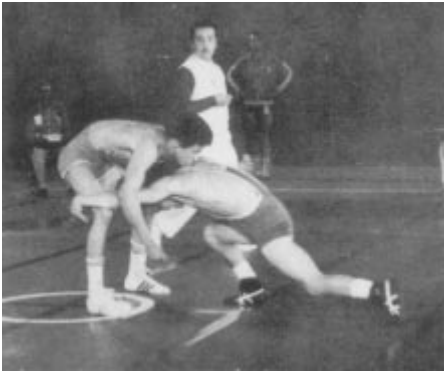
by Alfonso Salazar,

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Organising Committee of the 2nd Central
American Games*

Some one and a half thousand athletes from Panama, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador met in San Salvador from 25th November to 4th December 1977 to celebrate the 2nd Central American Games. Thus for ten days the capital of the country became the sports capital of the whole region. Honduras was the only country not represented.

According to the rules, twelve Olympic sports are included in the competition programme. But in order to try to improve the sports standard in the Central American region the Games finally comprised a total of nineteen sports : athletics, basketball, boxing, cycling, fencing, equestrian sports, football, gymnastics, judo, weightlifting, wrestling, swimming including water polo, shooting, volleyball, baseball, softball, tennis and table tennis.

El Salvador has not held games of this kind since 1935. It has nonetheless proved that it is perfectly capable of organising an event



of this size. The modern techniques used in creating the infrastructure will be of benefit to generations of sports enthusiasts, both now and in the future. Only the sports centre, where it had been intended to hold the indoor events, could not be finished in time. All the other competition venues had either been for the most part completely transformed, as was the case of the national stadium, the aquatic centre, the gymnasium, the shooting range, the football and softball pitches, or specially constructed, such as the velodrome. All proved to be entirely satisfactory and were the site of sports events marked by sweat, tears, smiles, success and love for one's country. The organisers had the joy which comes from a task well done.

The Government of El Salvador, to quote Colonel Jose Larios Guerra, President of the Organising Committee of the 2nd Central American Games, spent some 16 million dollars, the greater part of which were allocated to the competition sites.

The Flor Blanca national stadium, which was inaugurated in 1935 for the 3rd Central American and Caribbean Games, was entirely reconstructed at considerable expense. Its capacity was increased to hold 60,000 spectators, its grounds improved and drained, the athletics track and the shooting range modernised, and new stands and a roof added. The whole was completed by an electronic scoreboard and an excellent lighting system. The participating delegations repeatedly praised the host country for this and warmly congratulated those responsible for the installations.

Panama reaps the medals

Panama won the lion's share of medals—158 in all, of which 68 were gold, 47 silver and 43 bronze. Her athletes shone particularly in the individual events—athletics, weightlifting, cycling, wrestling, judo, etc., while in the team events they won the men's basketball, water polo and men's softball tournaments.

El Salvador takes second place among the medal winners

Largely through their courage and enthusiasm Salvadorian athletes unexpectedly carried off 146 medals, of which 45 were gold, 57 silver and 44 bronze. On the whole the Salvadorians won more second and third place victories than the Panamanians and were the overall winners of the sport of football. El Salvador also took first place in weightlifting, women's softball and fencing.

Costa Rica in third place

Costa Rica came third with 126 medals (43 gold, 36 silver and 47 bronze). The athletes of this country distinguished themselves particularly in athletics (overall champion), boxing, swimming, women's basketball and women's volleyball.

Guatemala fourth

In the second to last place came Guatemala, with 114 medals (35 gold, 46 silver and 33 bronze). The Guatemalan athletes finished first in gymnastics, equestrian sports, men's volleyball and table tennis.

Lastly Nicaragua

Nicaragua was placed last with 45 medals (9, 12 and 24). Her athletes took a prominent position in baseball (gold medal) and in the various individual events.





El Salvador, country of fraternity

This was the catch-phrase of a successful campaign, led by El Salvador throughout the whole region in an effort to promote the 2nd Central American Games. Very happy with the results of the games, General Carlos Humberto Romero, President of the Republic, stated in one of his speeches :

“What we have experienced on the national sports level throughout these games which closed on 4th December encourages us to take stock of the possibilities open to us and to take steps to improve further our performance in future competitions...”

My Government is firmly decided to assist and develop sport in all its forms so that our athletes may, by appropriate technical training, represent their country with honour both nationally and internationally.”

The Central American Games' village

The athletes were housed in the building constructed for the El Salvador International Fair in the immediate outskirts of the capital. A modern press centre had been installed there to service the needs of some 150 reporters from El Salvador and other Central American countries. It was equipped with telephones for local and international calls, a typing room, telexes, an information centre, a free photocopying service, a photo laboratory and radio broadcasting facilities

to El Salvador and abroad enabling the 20 million inhabitants of Central America to follow all the events in their own homes.

A congress for the region's sports journalists

Press representatives accredited for the 2nd Central American Games met for a congress, at which occasion the following major resolutions were adopted :

To lead a promotion and education campaign to make the public of the region respect the standards of good conduct at competitions

To appeal to the goodwill and understanding of journalists and radio commentators to participate actively in this campaign

To convene a meeting in mid-August 1978 in Managua, Nicaragua, to evaluate the results obtained

To call a meeting in Panama in December 1978 at which the Federation of Central American Sports Writers' Associations is to be founded.

Goodbye until Nicaragua 1981

This was the laconic, somewhat sad yet optimistic message to all the athletes at the closing ceremony on 4th December. As the lights of the Flor Blanca national stadium dimmed and the bugles commanded silence, the words “Nicaragua 81” appeared on the scoreboard to remind all those present of their next rendez-vous in the country which had requested and been granted the honour of organising the 3rd Central American Games.

A. S.

