



The media Accreditation*

by Pat Besford,

Secretary General of the European Sports Press Union (UEPS)

To *accredit* (akre-dit), according to the Oxford Dictionary, is a verb, the earliest use of which was in 1620, the adjective of which (French) "accréditer" was founded on à + *crédit*. Its meanings are :

1. To put into credit, to set forth as credible; to vouch for;
2. To furnish with credentials ; to authorise as an envoy.

Thus *accredited* means furnished with credentials, authoritatively sanctioned and *accreditation* is the action of accrediting or being accredited.

In the Olympic context, in the documentation summary, only the media (under serial categories 16, 17, 18 and 19) are considered to have been accredited. All other participants (in a list of 23 serial categories) are merely recipients of identity cards.

It is not clear whether this subtle distinction accorded the media is intended as a compliment-i.e. that they are the only authorised envoys, or the opposite-i.e. that they are the only section who need to be put into credit, who have to be vouched for!

in the context of this Olympic Solidarity course, let us assume that the media are neither special nor suspect but are just part of the whole Olympic operation. Let us also accept that, by common usage,

the question : "Have you been accredited?" applies specifically to the media. Let us also wonder whether the Oxford Dictionary, in the years to come, will add a third description to their "accredit" entry which (paraphrased) might say "To approve as an OK press person" !!

*
* *

Formal accreditation of the media at an Olympic Games is necessary, in my view, for the following reasons :

1. Because there are national quotas of "accreditations" similar to the limitations of the size of teams, numbers of officials and so on.
2. In order to separate the categories who have their different working places and/or requirements.
3. To control the professional bona fides of those wishing to work.

It should *not* be necessary for an all too often believed fourth reason, i.e. that the media need to be investigated in a special or different way to any other Olympic Identity Card holder.

In principle, the media is divided into three working categories :

- a) Journalists (i.e. the written press-a much disliked distinction).
- b) Television and radio (i.e. the electronic press).
- c) Photographers.

Certain facility and information needs are common to all three categories but there are also special requirements according to the type of media work and also particular priorities according to the importance of a section within any one category.

With the evergrowing, world-wide interest in the Olympic Games which has resulted in increased demands for media accredi-

* Conference given at the Olympic Solidarity course for sports administrators, London (GBR), September 1978.

** The philosophy and principles of accreditation can be found in pages 46-48 of the IOC book "The Administration of an Olympic Games".



tation, the need to control the numbers is self-evident for two main reasons :

- a) To protect Organising Committees from excessive demands-beyond the capacity of the agreed viewing and working areas set aside for the media.
- b) To protect the accredited media and avoid overcrowded viewing and working areas.

The categories of accreditations are :

1. *Full* - Allowing admission to all press centres, press stands at sports venues and the right to reserved accommodation in the press house(s).
2. *Partial* - Allowing admission to the main press centre, the press stand and sub-press centre at ONE sports venue and accommodation in the press house(s) at the discretion of the Organising Committee.
3. *Technicians* - Allowing limited access to facilities according to the type of work to be undertaken.

Within the categories of accreditation, the first priority under sections a) and c) above (journalists and photographers) are the approved international agencies viz :

- Agence France Presse,
- Associated Press,

- Reuters,
- Tass,
- United Press International.

These international agencies who have special privileges and procedures for both accreditation and seat allocations may :

- Negotiate their requirements directly with Organising Committees ;
- Distribute their own accreditation forms and identity cards ;
- Ask for (and receive) an allocation of prime position, reserved places in press stands... have their own working' rooms... their own technicians (telex operators, etc.) ;
- Be members of the photographic "pool" which has special working areas at all venues.

These international agency "rights" are jealously guarded and protected by the above mentioned organisations—and quite correctly—for through their respective wire services they are providing a world-wide coverage of the Games and also a results service.

There are also the major national agencies, of which that of the host nation has a first priority, who are not given a special

mention in the IOC administration book but do, in fact, claim the next most privileged position under the journalists category. Some are larger than others, but all serve their respective national interests. They include, for example :

- Australian Associated Press (AUS),
- Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau (HOL),
- Deutsche Press Agentur (GER),
- Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichten (GDR),
- Suomen Tretotoimisto (FIN),
- Kyodo (JPN),
- Tanjug (YUG),
- Polska Agencja Prasowa (POL),
- Austria Presse Agentur (AUT),
etc.

For the pending 1980 Summer and Winter Games, the Soviet Union (with Tass) and the United States (with AP and UPI) should not have major national agency claims for priority.

The largest group to be accredited are the journalists, the representatives of great or small newspapers, specialist papers, magazines and so on ; and it is this group which becomes most involved with and affected by the national allocations of accreditation.

These allocations are handled through National Olympic Committees who also deal with the distribution of accreditation forms and identity cards within their countries. And the ways in which the NOCs handle this difficult problem vary from country to country.

The only system on which I can speak, perhaps, with authority is how the matter is dealt with by the British Olympic Association which sets up a committee representing all writing press interests (national newspapers, provincial newspapers; magazines, National Sports Writers' Association, etc.). This committee considers all applications, decides quotas within the different priority categories of publications and investigates the professional bona fides of individuals.

The recent introduction of "partial-single sport" accreditations has been of particular importance to this media group and, indeed, to the less popular (in the press context) sports which might otherwise re-

ceive very little national publicity for the following reasons :

- The small number of people able to be accredited from any one publication ;
- The large number of sports on the Olympic programme.

(i.e. one journalist cannot be in six or seven places at the same time, and therefore will attend the most popular events, such as athletics, swimming, gymnastics, boxing finals and so on.)

The smallest group, yet the most difficult to provide for, are the photographers, whose accreditations are also handled by NOCs. These media members fall into two categories. The hard-news black and white photographers and the specialists (very often freelancers) who do colour work and, eventually, provide the permanent pictorial history of the Olympic competitions.

The groups are small because their working position requirements are very specific. They must have places from which they can take the significant pictures with due regard to light, distance from the action (and even modern, sophisticated equipment has limitations) and unobstructed view.

All sections of the media, ideally, wish to sit in line with the finish or centre of the competitions. But all, except the photographers, could still work in a slightly less good position. A photographer has only a fraction of a second of unrepeatable opportunity to capture the crucial action on film.

The electronic media (television and radio) accreditations are dealt with by the national broadcasting organisation of the host country and are, of course, linked up with facility contracts which, in the case of television, involve huge sums of money. This section will need and receive a very large number of accreditations for technicians in addition to those for commentators, producers, statisticians, etc.

The importance of controlling the bona fides of accredited media members varies from country to country. However, it is the strong view of the Association Internatio-

(Continued on page 203)

(Continued from page 184)

nale de la Presse Sportive (AIPS), the world organisation which represents all national sports writers' associations, that accreditations should go only to professionals. This is a principle to which working journalists subscribe for a variety of reasons, including :

- The protection of their status, profession and jobs ;
- The problems, when working under pressure, of the "social-amateur" in press areas.

There is, in fact, a distressing conflict in areas of media accreditation (and therefore media access and exclusion). Frequently, the principle behind an Olympic press operation is to 'box up' the media within tight, controlled areas which almost preclude contact with all other Olympic participant categories. At the same time, the solution for the admission of non-category individuals-friends, relations, guests and so on, who do not meet any of the other

Olympic identity card requirements-is to give them a press accreditation.

According to the rules, it is the responsibility of the NOCs (and, finally, the Organising Committee) to ensure that only bona fide media members get this type of accreditation. Unfortunately, friends, relations etc. are still being admitted into press areas, while the media are hardly allowed out of their areas.

These remarks also apply to what might be described as 'the traders', i.e. the companies which enter into contracts with Organising Committees and wish to have press and venue access to obtain publicity and further their businesses. Very often, this group has access far beyond that offered to the media and at the same time can come into the media areas. This situation is particularly prevalent at major, world and continental meetings and is to be deplored.

P. B.

