



YACHTING COMPETITIONS AT LOS ANGELES

BY ITALO SONCINI

PRESIDENT OF THE YACHTING COMMISSION OF THE AIPS

From the Los Angeles Olympiad, which assumed the dimensions of a kind of "Olympic Galaxy", let us turn our attention to the yachting, set against the fascinating backdrop of Long Beach.

In the course of these Games, the yachting gave rise to much favourable comment but also to some criticism. The splendour of the location is indisputable : Long Beach, most famous of beaches, in the huge and magnificent Shoreline bay. More than 2,500 vessels lie moored in neat harmony in this huge nautical structure, alongside the aging but still proud and elegant "Queen Mary", permanently moored to one of the quays, and the faithful copy of the "Bounty", that historic sailing ship.

This zone, vast though it is, only provided one site at its northernmost tip which could meet the requirements of Olympic yachting without the addition of any masonry or fixed structures. The explanation is simple : this Olympiad was managed for the first time by a private group whose main concern was evidently to make a profit. The

"monster" television made the Games into the most colossal business venture in the world.

This meant that there was no real "Olympic Village", where the athletes, accompanying personnel, the regatta judges and journalists could gather together in a unique way. No tripod was constructed to hold a flame (that of the Los Angeles Coliseum being deemed sufficient), but only a tubular structure from which thousands of spectators could watch the opening and closing ceremonies.

Everybody, athletes, attached personnel, judges and VIP's as well as journalists, had naturally to sleep and eat in the Long Beach hotels with their exorbitant prices.

The elegant Mr. Peter Ueberroth. President of the Organizing Committee of the Games, was too

busy to give his attention to the yachting, with which he was perhaps unfamiliar. And his representative at Long Beach restricted himself to bureaucratic and administrative duties.

The yachting ought to have been the object of greater attentions. I spoke to various prominent representatives of the IYRU and members of the jury who experienced the two weeks at Long Beach in this narrow and strange atmosphere. They too were operating in minute boxes, adapted from containers, without air conditioning and provided only with fans ; they met in a marquee to mingle and have drinks with ladies whose toilet facilities were worthy of the Hilton.

The atmosphere was cordial nevertheless, but yachting has its own particular style, a noble lineage and traditions of protocol so to speak, which were ill-adapted to the improvised structures of Long Beach. This was the reason for a certain bitterness towards this amateur sport, which is undoubtedly the purest of all the Olympic disciplines. For the first time, it took place within the immense context of the Olympic Games, and as a result any formal contact had to be made via the fantastical Convention Centre of Los Angeles, some forty kilometers from the sea front.

Despite the narrowness of the territorial limits, the skippers were provided at Long Beach with everything they required on land and great assistance at sea, thanks to the Coast Guard patrol boats and the helicopters of the State Police.

The Yachting at Long Beach brought a presence of 62 national flags and 305 athletes (only

two of whom were women) on board 172 vessels (38 *Windgliders*, 28 470'S, 28 Finns, 22 *Solings*, 20 *Tornados*, 19 Stars and 17 *Flying Dutchmen*).

America made her mark even in the Yachting (three gold medals and four silver), practically an American on the rostrum in every class. New Zealand gained two gold medals and Spain and the Netherlands one gold medal each.

Objectively, it must be recognised that the absence of the Soviets and the East Germans and Poles, who might have been expected to achieve remarkable results in the yachting, was a factor in favour of the US yachtsmen. It may be supposed that three medals, one gold, and two silver, might have gone to the Eastern block countries (for keelboat and dinghies) but as the saying goes, the absent are always in the wrong, and we can only hope that there will never again be a boycott.

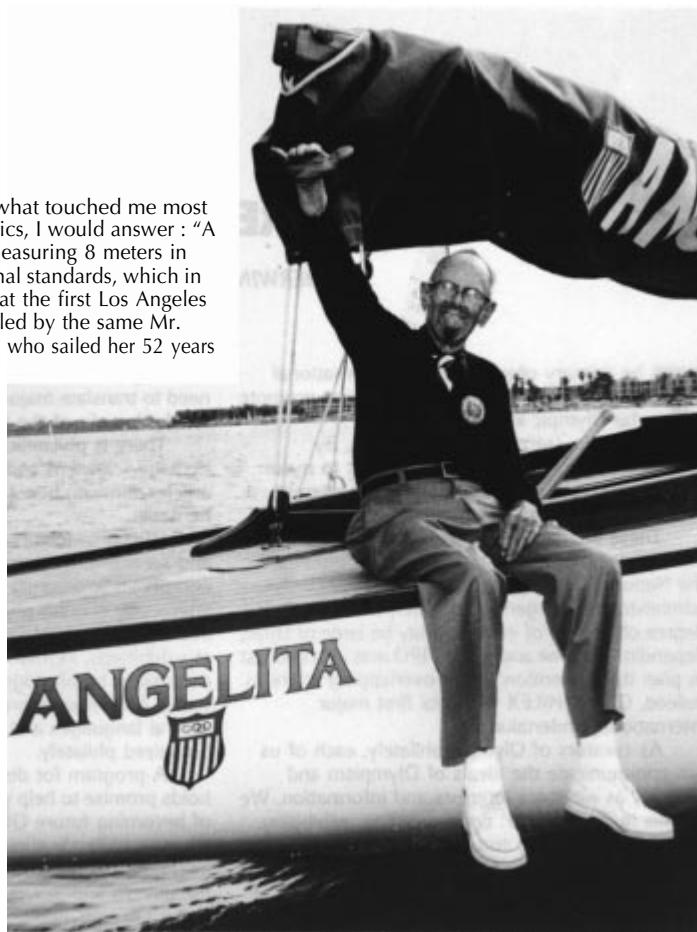
One thing is certain : at the conclusion of the Yachting Games, even though the ceremony was somewhat unpolished and unsophisticated, the real VIP's of the Olympics were there : Samaranch, President of the IOC, Lord Killanin, past President, and illustrious members of the IYRU such as Beppe Croce the President, Jonathan Jason the Vice-President, Roosevelt Junior, ex-King Constantine of Greece, Bertholdt Beitz of Krupp and Volkswagen, organiser of the Kiel Yachting Games in 1972 and gold medalist in the Naples Star, and Pinegin, the Russian who is a member of the IYRU and was the only Russian among the judges at this Olympiad.



Seated from left to right arc : Mr. Berthold Beitz, third vice-President of the IOC ; the former King of Greece, H M. King Constantine, honorary IOC member ; the Lord Killanin, Honorary Life President of the IOC ; President Samaranch ; and Messrs. Beppe Croce, President of the WRU, Julian K. Roosevelt, member of the Executive Commission of the IOC, and Jonathan Jason, Vice-President of the IYRU.

If I were to be asked what touched me most during the Yachting Olympics, I would answer : “A boat, the old “Angelita”, measuring 8 meters in accordance with international standards, which in 1932 won the gold medal at the first Los Angeles Games”. She was being sailed by the same Mr. Churchill, now 86 years old, who sailed her 52 years ago in the nearby waters of Santa Monica. And it was an honour for us all to go aboard her and to travel with her, that Marlene Dietrich of the sea, to the site of the regatta.

The old “Angelita”, whose renovation is owed to Mr Peter V. Veberoth, President of the LAOOC, preserved by the Sports Museum in Los Angeles, and its helmsman of 1932, Mr. Churchill.



The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect those of the IOC.