

THE XVth EUROPEAN ATHLETICS CHAMPIONSHIPS IN STUTTGART

by *Professor AUGUST KIRSCH*

PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

A MODEL OF ORGANIZATION FOR EXCELLENT RESULTS



The European Athletics Championships — which have been held since 1934 — took place on German soil for the first time from 26th to 31st August 1986. It was the largest sports event in the Federal Republic of Germany after the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and the Football World Championships in 1974. The significance of this occasion can be seen from the following key figures :

- approx. 1400 participants from 32 European countries
- approx. 1800 representatives of press, radio and television from 41 countries
- approx. 300 000 enthusiastic spectators at ten competition periods over 6 days
- an IAAF congress with some 350 participants from about 110 countries
- over 40 hours of live coverage in the Federal Republic of Germany alone
- live and recorded television broadcasting in all European countries (no concrete figures as yet)

— radio broadcasting (unfortunately no figures available regarding number of hours).

The significance of this event was also underlined by the visits from numerous figures from public life and industry. Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker was the guest of honour on the final day. Chancellor Helmut Kohl opened the 35th IAAF Congress and gave a widely-appreciated speech regarding the social function of leisure and competition sport in our time. IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch also spoke at the IAAF Congress and opened the meeting of the IOC Eligibility Commission. He was also present at three sports events in Stuttgart.

THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

The German Athletic Federation established an organising committee together with the Württemberg Athletic Federation and Stuttgart, the capital of Baden-Württemberg. This also included representatives of Baden-Württemberg itself and of Stuttgart University.



The Presidents of the IAAF and the IOC on either side of Federal Chance/for Mr. Helmut Kohl.

For over four years, this organising committee had enlarged and modified on the basic concepts established by the Federation through thirteen commissions, one coordination group and a central office. According to the German Athletic Federation, the athlete was the central point of the event. Ideal sports facilities should be available, together with the best accommodation — the “Athletes’ Village”. Building work on extensions was carried out — partly with support from the Federal Government and the government of Baden-Württemberg — and included work on Stuttgart’s Neckar Stadium, renovation of the university’s sports facilities at Vaihingen, the extension of the PSV sports facilities as well as a good deal more minor repairs and extensions.

Everything was undertaken in order to provide lasting benefit for the sports infrastructure of Stuttgart, and a particular example of this was the first colour, full-matrix video scoreboard at the Neckar Stadium.

Relations with the European Athletic Federation, through its President, Sir Arthur Gold, his organisational delegates Frauenlob of Switzerland and Dariaux of Paris, and the technical delegates Wieczisk of the GDR and Rose of Denmark, were always excellent.

THE ATHLETES VILLAGE

The accommodation for the athletes was a major preoccupation within the concept of these European Championships. The concept was established with the cooperation of the University of Stuttgart and the Students’ Union and the finer details realised thanks to the involvement of the majority of the students themselves. For the first time, all participants were lodged in single rooms. The facilities of the village were greatly appreciated by all participants and in particular the athletes. This, together with a superbly efficient transport system based on the use of public transport, led to a positive basis for all partici-

pants to be on perfect form, and the success was evoked by the impressions voiced by participants and their trainers both during and after the competitions. The four world records and six European records provided visible proof that the athletes were on top form even in the sometimes wet and cool weather.

THE PUBLICITY CONCEPT

The publicity for the 1986 European Championships as well as its success on the sports, organisational and commercial level was based on establishing the concept of advertising — which was later to be modified — at an early date.

First of all, public attention was drawn to the event through information and public relations work, posters, and various other means of advertising. A second phase was focused on the event in Stuttgart and the surrounding area by the use of flags, posters and road signs.

The artistic European Championships emblem, logo, and the “little horse” as a symbolic figure, as well as the striking colour scheme used at the championships contributed a great deal to the general atmosphere. To have all these in evidence required cooperation with the traffic authorities of Stuttgart, the press of Stuttgart and of Baden-Württemberg, many clubs and organisations as well as shops and department stores in Stuttgart.

COMMUNICATIONS

The significance of communications and the central coordination of all the necessary systems was recognised at an early date. The new full-matrix video scoreboard represented the central point of a completely new information system for athletes, teams, trainers, organisers and spectators, and was visible from outside, the stadium. It was complemented by equally, new scoreboards within the stadium with considerably extended information as compared with traditional systems. The use and management of this scoreboard required a new type of cooperation between the host broadcaster and the organisers, as well as the establishment of agreements regarding new legal requirements. The favourable reception by the participants and above all by the public indicated that this was a successful investment and innovation.

The centre of the information system within the working area was the new accreditation and

sports information system established by IBM and Omega which processed all information on competitions and results within seconds whilst also making a 12-channel closed-circuit television network with over 750 monitors permanently available.

The coordination of this essentially new information system with the traditional means of communication such as telephone, radio, broadcasting of images and loudspeakers and the necessary facilities to make this possible were further proof of the high technical standards achieved during this event.

The introduction of the full-matrix scoreboard led to a completely new type of sports festival : the spectator was confronted with both sport as he witnessed it and also a second version of what he was watching — that provided by the technology of the media — thus allowing him access to the same information as television viewers, but whilst in the stadium. Not only does he have the reality of the stadium, but the over angles available are also shown — the athletes were seen both in wide-angle and in close-up. External competitions such as the marathon and the walking events were brought into the stadium in this way. The award ceremonies also took on a new dimension and a new sentimentality : the moment of victory is patched in and the deciding moment can be seen and checked again.

HOSTESS AND GUIDE SERVICE AND SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMME

The hostess and guide service for both visiting teams and other guests was basically established by the Organising Committee and carried out by their personnel. This was run on a basically unpaid basis in all areas, and contributed to the positive overall impression of the championships. Apart from personalised services, the possibilities offered by a supplementary programme were considerable. Here, the City of Stuttgart, with the guidance of the departments of culture and sport, made an outstanding contribution. The successful mixture of sightseeing, culture, public events and entertainment left an excellent impression on all those who took part.

From this programme, two exhibitions had a particular impact which stressed Coubertin's synthesis of sport and art in a most impressive way. Under the leadership of Dr. Reinhard of Stuttgart's Department of Culture, a review of sport in

Baden-Württemberg's art throughout the 20th century was held in the City Gallery in Stuttgart from 9th August to 14th September 1986. Some eighty paintings, graphics and sculptures by twenty-five artists were presented.

This gallery also housed forty space-time studies — technical sports photography — from 31 st July to 21 st September 1986.

IOC President Samaranch and NOC President Daume were impressed by both exhibitions. The catalogues for both events will be lasting souvenirs of memorable days in the world of athletics.

THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP

Within the framework of the European Athletic Championships, an international youth camp was held for the first time, in which twenty-one delegates from European countries took part. Accommodation and meals were provided in the Youth Hostel, which the city had renovated for the occasion and which proved to be an excellent setting. Besides sports activities, the camp provided a wide-ranging cultural programme in Stuttgart and the surrounding area. The concept and the actual running of the camp were highly successful and it is felt that this may have been the forerunner of similar projects at international athletic meetings.

FINANCIAL ORGANISATION AND COMMERCIAL RESULTS

To assume the full economic risk without any support from the public authorities was a great challenge for the German Athletic Federation and the Organising Committee. For an athletic federation without sufficient and suitable capital of its own, this is always a considerable risk. The financing as a whole and above all the necessary prior financing required close and trusting co-operation with the general agents for all the competition rights, the London firm West Nally Ltd. About half of the financial support came through them ; international sponsors were BASF, Canon, Coca-Cola, Daimler-Benz, IBM, Kodak, Bosch, NEC, Adidas and others.

If one adds up the relevant income and expenditure and includes the sponsors' estimated contribution of about DM 3,5 million, we reach an income of about DM 15 million, with expenditure of the same amount. According to estimates to date we can assume that the goal of the Ger-

man Athletic Federation — to finance the expenses relating to the competitions through income from the competitions themselves, without the use of public funds — was achieved.

Whether a profit was made, and how much, cannot be established at this point.

STUGGART AS HOST

The city and the population of Swabia proved themselves excellent hosts on numerous occasions throughout the last two decades. On this occasion, too, all communal authorities, all city

officials, all clubs, firms, schools, the university, the Stuttgart press and not least the entire population were admirable. The hospitality for many thousands of foreign and local visitors was exemplary, and on this basis a sensation of brotherhood grew to an unprecedented extent. Irrespective of their nationality or their success, athletes were encouraged by rhythmic hand-clapping — even from their own teams — and rewarded by tumultuous applause. The climax of this was the “Swabian chant” celebrated on a number of occasions — identical to that experienced in Mexico — and which went on for 15 minutes for the women’s 10 000 metres event alone. Rain and cold weather hardly affected this enthusiasm, and athletes reacted in the same spirit. In interviews both at the stadium and in the press, they stressed how much they had been encouraged by this public. The team from the Federal Republic thanked them on the final day, at the closing ceremony, with a message on the board “The team from the German Athletic Federation thanks our wonderful public”.

Dr. Primo Nebiolo, President of the IAAF and Dr. Willi Daume, President of the NOC, spontaneously stated at the end of this event that they would propose that the City of Stuttgart and its inhabitants receive the Olympic Cup.

A. K.

