

INTO THE FINAL STRAIGHT



By Lluís Mascaro

On 13th March last, we were just 500 days from the opening ceremony of Barcelona '92. The goal of 25th June 1992 is growing nearer by the minute, but Barcelona's response to the Olympic project has exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Now, we are beginning to experience the realities of a dream which was born ten years ago with the first proposals to host the Games. Since then, much enthusiastic work has been done by everyone, organizers and citizens alike, on the way towards a goal which now lies less than 500 days ahead.

On 17th October 1986, at 13.31 hours precisely, the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, announced in the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, Switzerland, the name of Barcelona as the host city for the summer Olympic Games of the XXV Olympiad to be held in 1992. The 91st IOC Ses-

sion had elected the capital of Catalonia with a total of forty-seven votes in favour. This was the culmination of Barcelona's long history as a candidate city, and the three previous occasions on which it had applied, unsuccessfully, to host the Games - 1924, 1936 and 1972 - were forgotten. But it also marked the beginning of a hard task

to ensure that the Games in Barcelona are the best ever. A task which, today, 500 days from the opening ceremony in the Montjuic Olympic Stadium, has not yet been fully completed.

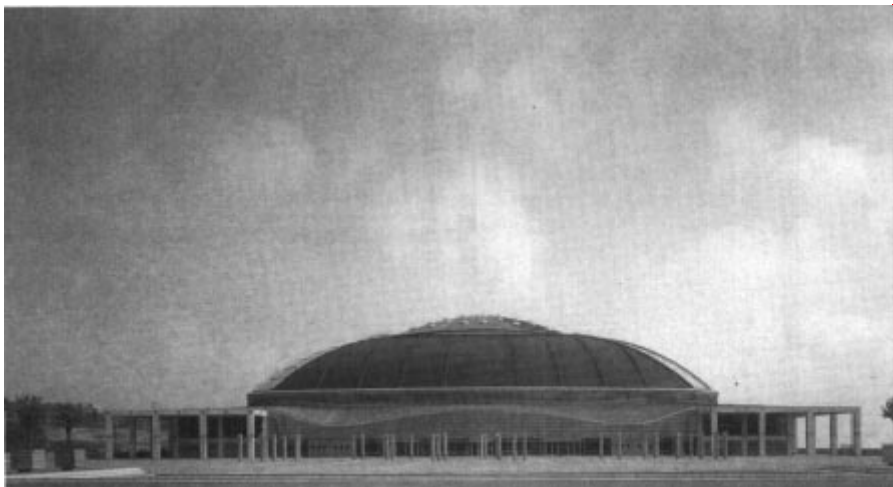
COOB

Almost five months after the nomination of Barcelona as host city for the 1992 Games, COOB' 92 (Comité Organizador Olímpico de Barcelona' 92) was set up in accordance with the Olympic Charter and with the aim of organizing the Games. The Municipality of Barcelona, the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE), the Spanish Government and the Generalitat of Catalunya signed an agreement to set up this consortium, taking responsibility for financing and organizing the Games. The work which has been done since 17th October 1986 can be divided into two clearly distinct projects: firstly, to organize model Games on the basis of a public initiative with the help of a number of private companies, and secondly, to make Barcelona into an international city, not just during the 1992 Games, but especially from 1993 onwards. COOB' 92 has taken charge of the first project, that is to organize great Games, designing a scheme based on four main Olympic areas situated at strategic points in the city - apart from sixteen sub-venues situated at different points in Catalonia, plus Valencia and Saragossa.

TRANSFORMATION

These four main Olympic areas are: Montjuich, Diagonal, Vall d' Hebron and Parc de Mar, which contain most of the competition and training facilities as well as accommodation and services for the Olympic family during the Games. With the exception of Diagonal, these four areas have been undergoing major transformations over the past four years, which are now on the point of completion. Montjuich, which will be the nerve-centre of the Games, has seen the Olympic Stadium rise from the ruins, the jewel of the Anillo Olímpico, the Palau Sant Jordi, come into being, the swimming pools of Picornell transformed and construction begin on the Sports University, the INEFC, to be finished towards the end of 1991. At the Vall d' Hebron, where the Municipal Velodrome had already existed since 1984, when the World Cycling Championships were held in Barcelona, the La Teixonera tennis complex and a new sports pavilion are under construction, together with the Vall d' Hebron Olympic Village, which is to house the journalists covering the Olympic Games.

All these works will be finished at the end of 1991 or early in 1992. Finally, the Parc de Mar will be the site not only of the yachting events in the new Olympic Port, which is now complete, but also of one of the most important non-sports facilities of



The Palau de Sant Jordi, crowning glory of the Olympic venues.

the Games, namely the Olympic village, which will accommodate over 15,000 athletes, judges and referees and some of the press. The Olympic Village will be finished early in 1992. But the most important thing about this sports area is the fact that a new district of Barcelona is being created which will open up the city to the sea through the Poble Nou.

The city of Barcelona is taking advantage of the Games to give itself a major facelift, to be finished in 1993. Now nearing completion are: a major extension of the Prat de Llobregat airport, with a budget of almost 12,000 million pesetas, to be fully completed by the end of 1991 (the new Puente Aéreo terminal is already a reality, as it came into service this past February), the opening of the city on the north side (la Serra de Collserola) by means of the Vallvidrera tunnel, which has now been bored for its full length of 2.5 kilometres and is also to be finished this year, and the creation of new sections of the Segundo Cinturón and Cinturón del Litoral ringroads, two communication routes vital to rational traffic flow through the city.

L.M.

