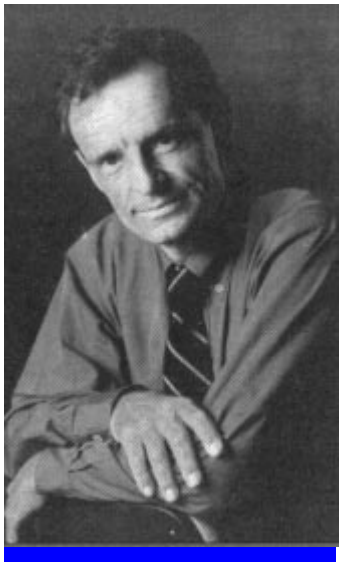
THE MAGIC OF OLYMPISM



By Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy

Why not host the Olympic Games one day in the largest ski region in the world? The idea was bound to occur to the people of Savoy. In these Alpine massifs, winter sports, for pleasure and competition, have been a tradition, almost a way of life and state of mind, for one hundred years. We felt that these mountains would thus be an authentic setting for Olympism served by a population of snow and ice professionals. Everything, or nearly everything, was already in place the only vital need being a complete overhaul of the road network, which had beome one of the major concerns of the region.

We shall never forget tht moment on 17th October 1986 in Lausanne when the International Olympic Commitee chose Albertville and Savoy to host the XVI Olympic Winter Games. What tremendous joy we felt, a joy shared by all those who had supported our candidature during the "campaign years"! But we already knew that we would have to prove ourselves worthy of this honour. Far more than merely putting an idea into practice, we would have to construct an ideal, aim for the excellence which Olympism demands.

These Games would be different. We would put into them so much of ourselves, our creativity, our knowledge of the terrain, our faith... We wanted to dedicate them to youth, technology, the environment, emotion and the noble beauty of sport. In a word, we wanted to astound. It was a daring wager. But isn't organizing the Games always a wager?

The French State, the Region, the Department, our Club Coubertin partners and official suppliers, 8000 volunteers and 6000 members of the security services have joined forces with COJO. They too have laid their bets. Every day for the last four years, we have all had to take up the challenge.

For some weeks now, the peaks have been covered in snow, the mountains are beautiful, a new road is open to traffic, the final details are being settled... We are ready, and eager to receive at last our guests : 42,000 members of the Olympic family including 2300 athletes, 7000 journalists and media technicians and several thousand visitors. For us it is a real pleasure ! For it is we who have been given the chance to restore once more the magic of Olympism.

M.B.
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