

HELPING ATHLETES GET IN THE FAST LANE



Brigitte and Mireille, Olympic scholars from the Central African Republic, training in the Boulouris regional sports centre on the Côte d'Azur (FRA).

Participation. That's what competitive sport is all about. But that is just the end of the story. The moments, minutes, hours maybe, of the big day count for so much precisely because they represent all the days and weeks that have added up in preparation, dedication. More a matter of years at the highest competitive level, when an Olympic medal is at stake. The start of 1992, Olympic Year, is a good moment to review Olympic Solidarity's Scholarship Scheme, which began after the last Games in Seoul in 1988.



OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY

Bengt Halvarsson (l.) and Daniel Jakobsson with their head coach Pecka Eriksson (r.).



Solidarity coaching courses, and the roving sports leaders school were already well established. Yet some NOCs still knew they needed something more. What to do when talented individuals appear ahead of their time, of national and local means and possibilities? Such cases are not just individual losses, but can mean throwing away a vital impetus for the general development of sport. (We all know what Steffi Graf and Boris Becker have done for tennis clubs in Germany.) : the double pyramid of Olympism - sport for all helps create the elite and vice versa. After the last Games Solidarity moved to support the tip, by adding a third plank to its worldwide sports development strategy: helping directly athletes with few opportunities to train at the same elite level as those in developed countries.



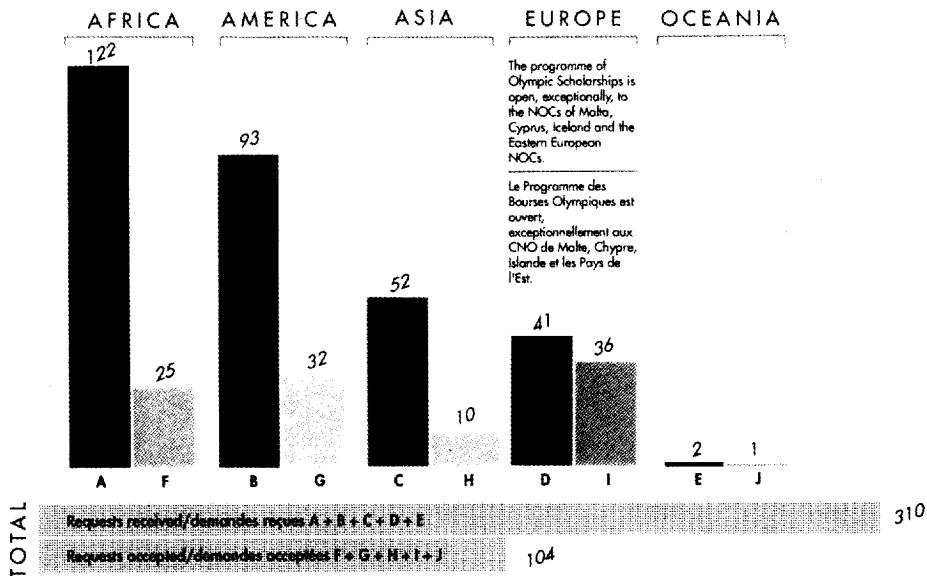
Valentin Ngbogo (CAF), who was welcomed by the Racing Club de France.



Andrea Cristina Chiuchic (ARG) at a fencing school in Milan.

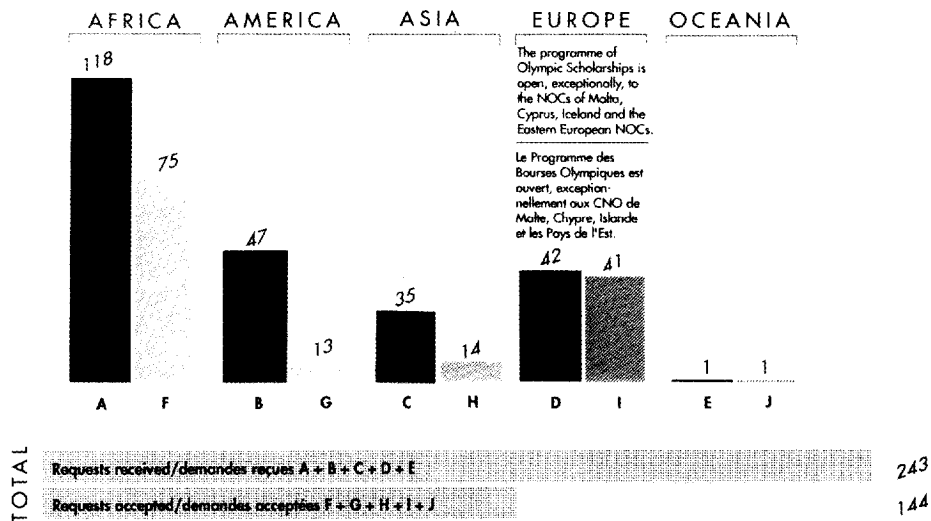
OLYMPIC SCHOLARSHIPS FOR ATHLETES BOURSES OLYMPIQUES POUR ATHLÈTES

AS AT 15TH NOVEMBER 1991 - AU 15 NOVEMBRE 1991

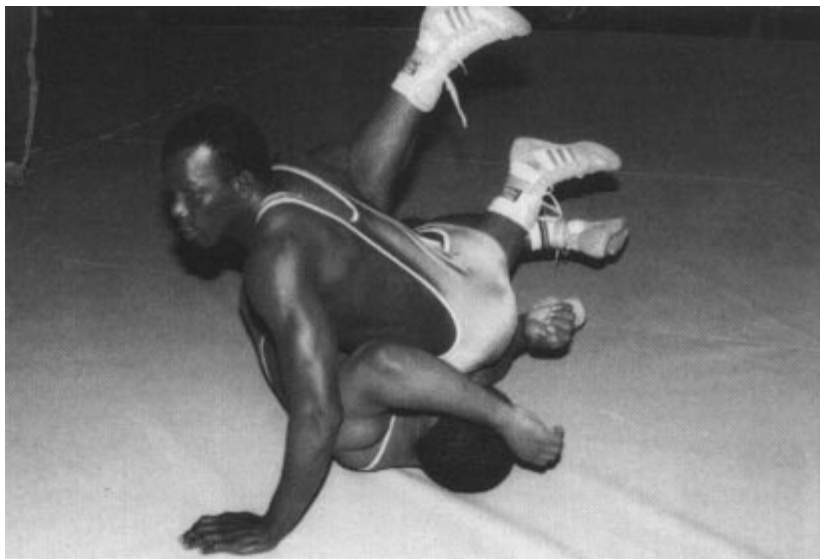


OLYMPIC SCHOLARSHIPS FOR COACHES BOURSES OLYMPIQUES POUR ENTRAÎNEURS

AS AT 15TH NOVEMBER 1991 - AU 15 NOVEMBRE 1991



OLYMPIC SOLIDARITY



African wrestlers training at the French Institute of Physical Education.

The graphs say it all. Two hundred and forty three applications accepted in 1989, three hundred and thirty one planned for next year. The programme has proved adaptable to need, open, on an exceptional basis in Europe to the NOCs of Malta, Cyprus, Iceland, and the former socialist countries.

Or perhaps not all. Take Bernardo Lopez Menendez, 18, the Salvadoran national equestrian champion, who received a scholarship last year to train with Paul de Leon at the Norwich International Equestrian Center in New York, who counts Olympic gold medallist Tad Coffin amongst his pupils. Mr de Leon helped Bernardo with his preparations for the 1991 Panamerican Games and with his aim of competing in the 1996 Games in Atlanta. (A long-term



Study session at the Hungarian University of Physical Education. Back left, Mr Tamas Ajan, NOC Secretary General.



Edward Wismayer playing a forehand topspin wide angle.

aim, that international scoreboard, what medallist would say otherwise?)“A way of advancing the cause of equestrian sports in the world so that more than a few countries are technically advanced,” comments the young hopeful’s experienced coach. As for the Olympic student, his scholarship fulfilled two goals. “I want to become a better rider and compete successfully in the big international competitions.” Second, “I want to learn as much as I can in order to translate this knowledge to my students”. He

has opened an equestrian school in San Salvador, where he wants to pass on what he has learnt. He has even started his own scholarship programme for children who want to ride but lack funds. The pyramid swings round.

Applications for scholarships to Solidarity require a recommendation from the athlete’s trainer and the national sports federation, and are submitted through the NOC.