

AN ANGEL BLOWS OUT THE FLAME



An unforgettable farandole finale.

An angel came to blow out the flame, and everyone danced to say good-bye and see you again two years from now in Lillehammer. The athletes now begin the shortest "Olympiad" in history. In the meantime, what memories will they have of the Games in Albertville and Savoy ?

On that Sunday evening, in the theatre which still contained some of the exuberance of the opening, the crowd, their heads full of vivid images, seemed to be hunched up in their seats. They had understood that the gold and costume jewels would be going with all those who were departing the next day, leaving nothing but bare snow. Sensibly wrapped up, with a

few adventurous leaps to show that they could still pack a punch, and Dutch clogs to add some local colour, the heroes from wonderland paraded in, already far fewer than before, in no order save that of chance and friendship, without the Swiss delegation who were mourning the tragic loss the previous day of their teammate, the speed skier Nicholas Bochatay.

Then it was time to take leave of these Games. "They will go down in history", said the IOC President, presenting the Olympic Order to the co-presidents of the

CLOSING SPEECH OF THE IOC PRESIDENT, H.E. JUAN ANTONIO SAMARANCH

As President of the International Olympic Committee, I wish to express our heartfelt congratulations to all of you, athletes, officials, leaders of the International Federations and National Olympic Committees.

For sixteen days, you have shown us that the Olympic Games are still the great universal celebration of friendship. You have put your whole heart into it.

To all of you, organizers and volunteers in your thousands, I extend my warmest thanks. Winter Games, spread over thirteen sites in the mountains; it was an immense challenge. You took up this challenge like the mountain-dwellers that you are. It was not easy, but you succeeded.

Yes, you succeeded, and Olympism will remember these Games which will be a milestone in its history. We are all winners, but above all Savoy, for its present and its future.

I should therefore like to congratulate particularly your presidents, Michel Barnier and Jean-Claude Killy. I have the great honour to award them our highest decoration: the Olympic Order in gold... you have certainly earned it.

Permit me, finally, this evening to say thank you to France, France which now as always holds high the torch of modern Olympism, thanks to the efforts of all of you.

I now declare closed the XVI Olympic Winter Games of Albertville/Savoy. In accordance with our tradition, I call upon the youth of the world to assemble two years from now in Lillehammer, Norway, to celebrate with us, in 1994, the XVII Olympic Winter Games.



XVIth OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES



*The shortest-ever Olympiad:
Lillehammer is two years from
now.*

organizing committee who, for their part, congratulated the region for having the audacity to accept such a challenge. They also thanked France, the whole of France but in particular the 8,000 volunteers, brimming over with excitement as they sat in the stands. There were some tears, some boos as well, but emotion shone through and, as one ovation succeeded another, in a brotherly ad lib Michel Barnier called for special applause for Jean-Claude Killy, the exemplary hero.

In the presence of Queen Sonja, Mr Audrun Tron, the mayor of Lillehammer, received from his Albertville counterpart, Mr Henri Dujol, the flag of the Winter Games, the one given in 1952 by the city of Oslo. Then an angel flew up to blow out the flame. The Games were ending, and already eyes were turning towards Norway, its polar bears, drakkars and Vikings, chromes à la Decouflé with built in snow, birdmen and successions of skaters, real ones, to make the ending less sad. But the final serenade went to Savoy, the folklore of a whole region to the sound of the hurdy gurdies of local children, to greet the whole world and hope to see everyone again soon on its slopes. Then with a series of thunderclaps, the whole arena burst into flame, with a deluge of fire at the heart of the stadium, a first in the history of Olympic fireworks. Finally, in a madly whirling farandole, everyone could say good-bye by dancing with everyone else.

A positive result overall, declared the relieved COJO co-presidents at their final press conference. Michel Barnier underlined the popular success of the Games, with 941,650 tickets sold : "20 % more than our most optimistic estimates", and excellent television viewing figures in the United States particularly, but also in Europe. Such

results should limit COJO's budget deficit to around 4%. "Two items cost us more than expected, accommodation and the building of some sports facilities."

Jean-Claude Killy called for a moment's silence in memory of Nicholas Bochatay. Then, speaking of the Olympic Movement, "this winning product", he stressed that the keynote of the Games had been technology, with a record participation of 64 NOCs and 2174 athletes. The major difficulty of these XVI Winter Games, the distance between venues, had not been disastrous. One regret, however, was that this had limited the atmosphere of conviviality which is precisely what is expected from the Games. The relatively mild weather had not disrupted the competitions, and only one event had to be postponed. On the sporting level, the praiseworthy performances of the German and Norwegian athletes meant that some exciting competitions were in store in two years' time. The rout of the Swiss had been a surprise, but in general the favourites had done what was expected of them. The Russian Ralssa Smetanina, nearly 40 years old and with ten Olympic medals, four of them gold to her name, became the most decorated Winter Games athlete, and Alberto Tomba became the first athlete in the history of the Games to hold on to his title in the giant slalom. For his part, the Finnish ski jumper Toni Nieminen is now the youngest ever Winter Games gold medallist, exactly one day younger than the American bobsledder Bill Fiske in 1948. And Annelise Coberger from New Zealand won the first winter medal for Oceania. For the rest, the primary objective is now Lillehammer in two years' time. Killy's advice to the organizers : "Opt for simple solutions !"