

Satisfying Two Thousand Million Spectators

RICHARD READ

Manager, International Affairs, Television Broadcasts Ltd.

The Olympic Games are the most watched broadcast in the world. The cumulative global viewing audience is 24.6 thousand million spectators, who will have watched some of the competitions. The Games are enormously popular in all countries, although naturally their sporting preferences are not always the same. Richard Read, who is in charge of the sports programmes for ABU, the broadcasting network for the Asia-Pacific region, talks here about the programming in that area of the world, explaining how it is possible to satisfy over two thousand million spectators.



Television Broadcasts Ltd. (TVB), Hong Kong had been providing sports coverage of major sporting events for fellow members of the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) since the 1978 Argentina World Football Cup. However, nobody could have forecast the size of the ABU pool for the Barcelona Olympics which was bigger than any previous ABU operation for an Olympics, Asian Games or World Football Cup. In fact the eventual operational pool included 30 television services from 21 Asian and African countries and territories. The three African nations (Kenya, Ethiopia and Nigeria) were added at the eleventh hour at the request of the regional union, URTNA, due to the problems experienced in accessing satellite feeds.

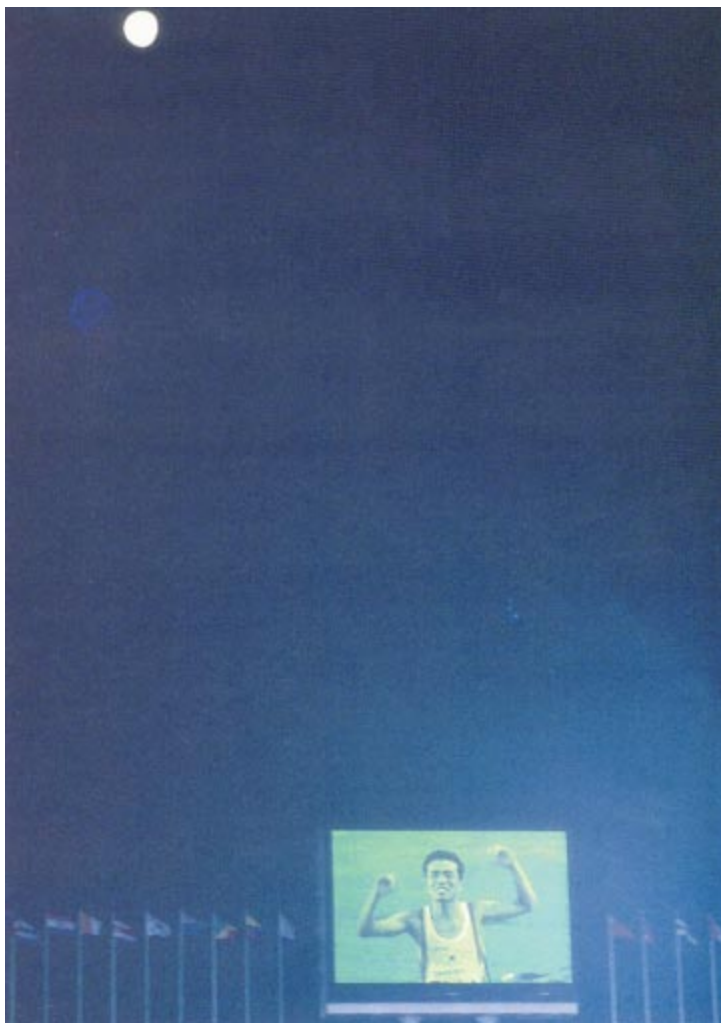
WHAT IS THE ABU?

The ABU is one of six major world broadcasting unions and, arguably,

can be described as by far the biggest since its Asia-Pacific "footprint" covers two-fifths of the world's circumference and contains nearly two-thirds of the world's population. However, considering its range and scope, the ABU's offices in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia are anything but the biggest. Compared with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) which has some 300 or more staff based in Geneva, the ABU's total staff in K.L. numbers just 19! No wonder that the ABU relies heavily on the support of its member broadcasters for the provision of services since the ABU office is mainly administrative. In that regard, the ABU's Secretary-General, Hugh Leonard, gets the ball rolling by taking on the task of negotiating major rights contracts for the members. In case of Barcelona TV rights, he achieved this entirely by phone and fax in order to cut down on administrative costs.

ABU's technical team in Barcelona, with Richards read third from the right.





All Asia wants to watch the performances of its champions. Here the Korean Young-Cho Hwang, winner of the Marathon.

BARCELONA GAMES COVERAGE

The first step was for the members to elect an operations group to take on the task of planning and execution. L.S. Ng of TVB (now a living legend among the world's best broadcast engineers) and Bill Pritchard of the ABU secretariat started the planning with myself added later to augment the team. This harmonious group attended

planning meetings in Barcelona on behalf of the ABU pool, negotiated with Telefonica to reduce the satellite charges as well as being responsible for logistical matters such as accreditation and accommodation.

THE "REACH"

We estimate that the total number of hours of multilateral and unilateral

programming accessed by pool members from the two ABU satellite paths was around 2,361. It should be noted that this figure does not allow for the amount of repeat programming that would have been scheduled in each country; several TV services run more than one channel and used the Olympic footage to service different language and ethnic groups; the pool does not include the number of hours transmitted by ABU members who were not part of the pool but had their own fully unilateral operations such as the Japan and Korea pools, Channel 7-Australia and TVNZ-New Zealand; many of the pool members took additional material from other sources to augment the feeds of the ABU pool e.g. Indonesia had an agreement with Malaysia to access preliminary Badminton and the Philippines reached an access agreement with the Armed Forces Network of the USA.

However, the most interesting statistic is the size of the audience because the guaranteed viewer "reach" from Iran to China and from Thailand to Singapore (as well as the African countries mentioned) was in excess of 2 billion persons. When one considers that many of these Asian countries have only one television service, it becomes apparent that the audience is "captive". In China and India alone, the ABU pool operation is capable of reaching a combined population of 2 billion.

COOPERATION AMONGST THE BROADCASTING FAMILY

Although TVB provided the bulk of the personnel and equipment for the Barcelona IBC operation and the pre-planning, it should be noted that this 1992 operation received great support from other broadcasters and not just regional ones. For example, several pool members request English-language commentary for key events which can be used either on-air or as a guide for translation pur-

poses. Therefore, three expert Australians were added to the team and worked "off-tube" in the IBC having been very kindly released by their respective employers, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Network Ten. As back-up and to avoid commentator burn-out, excellent agreements were reached with Channel 7, Australia, the BBC-TV and Singapore Broadcasting Corporation to access their commentaries.

THE FUTURE

At the ABU's annual meeting in Indonesia in October: the ABU/TVB operations team was given a standing ovation for putting together the biggest, the most cost-effective and easily the most successful coverage operation in the history of the ABU. By sharing the costs of the operation, broadcasters were able to afford to show many more hours of Olympics events than otherwise might be the case. In some cases, broadcasters might not be able to afford any coverage at all without this ABU support when you consider that some of the world's poor-

est nations exist under the ABU "footprint". We are very proud of our aims and achievements which closely mirror the philosophy of the Olympic movement itself.

There is 3 saying that there is "no peace for the wicked". Well, we must have been very evil indeed because no sooner had we returned from Barcelona in August than we picked up the pace on planning for two major 1994 events - the World Football Cup in the USA and the Hiroshima Asian Games. Separate planning teams have been appointed and once again there is great cooperation between the ABU and TVB.

Oh, Yes! The ABU has already begun planning for Atlanta 1996 and then there is the 1998 World Cup (France). 1998 Asian Games (Bangkok) and now we know that Sydney will host the Olympics in the year 2000 and it will then be our pleasure to welcome all of you to our part of the world and show you some real hospitality. Until then...

R. R.

The ABU/TVB pool for the 1992 Barce-

lona Olympics Television coverage was composed of thirty TV services in 21 Asian and African countries and territories: TVB (HKG); CCTV (CHI); CTS, CTV, TTV* (TPE); TVRI, SCTV, RCTI (INA); SBC (SIN); TPT (channels 3, 5, 7, 9) and NBT (channel 11) (THA); IRIB (IRI); DDI (INA); PTV (PAK); RTB (BRU); RTM (MAS); NTV (NEP); TDM (Macao); SLRC (SRI); BTV (BAN); MaBC (MRI); KBC** and KTN** (KEN); NTA (NGR); ETV** (ETH); ABS/CBN* (PHI) and SABC (RSA)*.*

**Companies which had unilateral TV rights contracts but were welcomed to the ABU coverage pool.*

***Members of URTNA, the African broadcasting union.*

N.B. In addition to being members of the pool, RTM and SABC also had their own dedicated satellite circuits.

The author of the article, Richard Read (AUS) was director of broadcasting specializing in sports and recreation of ABC, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. In 1986, he was made head of sports for ABU in Kuala Lumpur, taking an active part in the preparation of the coverage of the Games in Seoul, of the Asian Games in Beijing in 1990 and the World Cup in football in 1990 in Italy. International Manager of Television Broadcasts Limited since 1990, he deals mainly with sports matters and relations with other regional broadcasting associations.

OLYMPISM AND TELEVISION

The first televised Olympic magazine has existed since 25th June 1993. It is a 26 minute monthly programme co-produced by the IOC and Eurosport.



This magazine is the first of its kind. Its aim is to advertise the IOC's various activities; to show how sports have evolved and champions been created while respecting the traditional Olympic values.

The first editions of this programme, which has a considerable human content, were devoted to the Olympic Museum and the new measures being taken by the IOC and the IFs to fight against doping. The preparations for Lillehammer were also presented, as well as the conclusions of the Evaluation Commission's report on the bids for the 2000 Games. Sports stars also have their place in this magazine: the German skater Katarina Witt explained in detail her reasons for returning to competition. Thanks to the IOC's archives, it is possible for each edition to feature the evolution of a sports discipline through the history of the Games. So we can go back in time to show the history of the 100m, the high jump and women's gymnastics. In anticipation of the return of winter we will see the development of ski jumping, a small favour to the Norwegians, who are already waiting for us in Lillehammer: it's their national sport. Then the magazine will look seriously at the preparations for Atlanta, focusing on the new disciplines on the programme, such as beach volleyball. Later, Sydney will be in the spotlight Eurosport's Olympic magazine can't help being up-to-date.