

THE ATHLETES

Thousands of athletes all over the world are preparing to take part in the Games of the XXVI Olympiad, the Centennial Games, to be held from 19 July to 4 August 1996 in Atlanta, United States of America.

Our first duty is to be at the service of the athlete, to place all of the world's athletes on the same level, whatever the political or economic system to which they belong, to make them independent, foster their development, and to combat all forms of discrimination which could hinder the growth of their personality and their integration into society.

The athletes, who form the core of the Olympic Movement, deserve our assistance so that once their active sports careers are over they can integrate into society and continue to make a contribution to the Olympic family. Hence our decision in 1981 to create an Athletes' Commission responsible for dealing with the specific problems that concern them. The athletes competing in the Games of the XXVI Olympiad in Atlanta this year will be electing their representatives to this Commission. In addition, an International Federation of National Associations of Olympic Athletes has been established.

by Juan Antonio Samaranch

Since Olympic Solidarity began its activities in 1983, we have insisted that training for athletes remain a priority, for the Olympic Games would not exist without them. The new "Atlanta'96 Olympic scholarships" initiative was conceived in the same spirit, and is granted to athletes from developing countries who fulfil the required conditions and who are selected by their NOC.



The universality of the Olympic Games must be respected and preserved; but it must also be an affirmation of Olympism's cultural vocation, while improving the level of competition between the best athletes from the entire world. The Olympic Movement is extremely fortunate to draw upon an internal source of strength for the development of sport thanks to its top level athletes. Many former athletes have made a successful

transition in their career, becoming coaches, technicians, educators or officials, and thus continuing to serve sport, which has now become a branch of the economy that requires specialization in all related professions. In all sectors of national or international activity, there are former athletes who hold positions of authority.

The International Olympic Committee is therefore proud to have among its members the Olympic champions, medallists and participants who are featured in this issue of the *Olympic Review*. Almost all of the IOC's members since 1894 have practised a competition sport or been involved in running a sports club, federation or a National Olympic Committee. Like all the other volunteers in the Olympic Movement, the IOC members contribute, with their wealth of experience, to developing sport and promoting the Olympic ideal. Many athletes are also serving the International Federations and National Olympic Committees.

It is thanks to the performances of the athletes and the volunteer services of the officials that the Olympic Movement has become the social force that it is today, and that it celebrates in 1996 the Centenary of the Games of the Olympiad.