

members, six IF presidents or secretaries-general, and holds key positions on international commissions and panels. What's wrong here, you might ask? What is wrong is that we (the USA) are so worried about a few upper positions that we continually lose opportunities for important major positions in IFs and other organizations.

On the subject of Olympic IFs, it is important that they have a larger role in any restructuring or change in the IOC. They should play a major role in selecting the candidate cities for the Olympic Games. Who knows better than the IFs about technical requirements, venue and facility needs, and the actual operations of their sport in the Olympic Games?

Regardless of the past wrongs the IOC may have committed, it is making a positive and direct effort to right them. The US should be helping rather than trying intimidation tactics (Senate hearings, sponsors rattling sabres, etc.) to gain the respect, positions and money it feels it deserves.

It is not the intent here to defend those who have made grave errors

that have harmed the Olympic Movement. However, let's face it, perception sometimes is stronger than reality. Many of the allegations of wrongdoing are based on facts and circumstances that are insignificant in comparison to the numerous overt acts by governments and businesses that rarely draw the attention of the media. If they do, they are forgotten until the next war or police action comes along.

IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, whether he rides in limousines or receives a shotgun, has done less in this vein than business CEOs and politicians do on a regular basis. I am defending the man (Samaranch) not the system that has provoked and compounded the problems. It is the system that is broken and obviously needs fixing.

Somehow, we never hear about the good things the IOC and Samaranch have done over the years. The humanitarian aid and financial support the IOC has provided many countries is something you do not read or hear about because it is a

positive force, and some people do not like the IOC to receive credit for positive actions.

The IOC's support of sports development, especially in developing countries, and as an advocate for youth and women, somehow misses the spotlight. The IOC has been a fore-runner in these important areas of world society. With the Games in Sydney close to 500 days away, it is time we focus on making changes where they are needed. Most importantly, it is time to stop the back stabbing and character assassination, and to work toward a better and more positive relationship among all who are part and wish to be part of the Olympic Movement.

*President of the International Softball Federation (ISF), secretary-general of General Assembly of International Sports Federations (GAISF), member of the Executive Council of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations (ASOIF), vice-chair of the USOC International Relations Committee.

News flash

El Salvador

The fifth session of the Salvadorian Olympic Academy took place on 21 and 22 November 1998, with help from the IOC's Olympic Solidarity assistance programme. The many partici-

pating athletes were able to attend lectures by Felipe Muñoz Kapamas of Mexico, known as "El Tibio", who won a swimming gold medal at the Games of the XIX Olympiad in Mexico in 1968, and Francisco Aguilar Chang, a Guatemalan Olympic historian.

Thanks to another Olympic Solidarity programme three athletes, Patricia Damaris Sosa (weightlifting), Veronica Quijano (athletics) and Maureen Kaila Vergara (cycling), and two coaches, William Vaquerano (table tennis) and Diego Muyschondt

(equestrian), were given grants to train abroad.

The Central American and Caribbean Sports Organization (CACSO) has chosen the city of San Salvador to host the 19th CACSO Games in 2002.