

Scott G. Martyn  
University of Western Ontario

## ***Will ‘this Nightmare’ Never End?*** **The IOC, ISL and USOC Negotiations** **Behind the Evolution of TOP II, 1985-1988**

In its modern form no one can help but be impressed by the accrued wealth of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), and its constituent Olympic Family members (NOCS, IFs and OCOGs). From the early steps toward commercialism, innocently taken by Pierre de Coubertin, to the enormous revenues generated by television rights and the IOC's worldwide sponsorship programme known as TOP (The Olympic Programme), the IOC has negotiated shrewdly to capitalize on all of its Olympic assets. Although the principle aims of the Olympic Movement remain unchanged, the IOC's marriage to commercialism has indelibly altered its administrative existence. Where once only leaders of sport trod, lawyers and marketing experts in substantial numbers now walk the halls and foyers of the Chateau de Vidy in Lausanne.

In 1985, Juan Antonio Samaranch, President of the IOC signed the first TOP agreement (TOPI)—a worldwide sponsorship agreement—with ISL Marketing Aktiengesellschaft, a Lucerne based sports marketing firm whose major client till then had been World Cup Soccer. Although ISL did not create the concept of sponsorship, it did develop the structure of sponsorship as an orderly tool of marketing communications. Through its team of marketing, advertising and communications experts, ISL was able to introduce, develop, negotiate and implement this programme, which, at this time, is entering its fourth quadrennium.

If the revenues generated by the sale of television rights were the chief benefactor in rescuing the IOC from virtual insolvency, the income derived from the TOP Programme has been its saviour from dependence on a single variable. The TOP I Programme (1985-1988) attracted the support of nine multinational corporations and generated approximately 97 million US dollars for the Olympic Movement. Twelve corporations comprised the TOP II Programme (1989-1992), including eight of the original TOP I sponsors. TOP II built upon the success of TOP I by generating in excess of 180 million US dollars. The TOP Programme was originally created to establish a more diversified revenue base for the Games and the Modern Olympic Movement. As TOP participants, multinational

corporations are: permitted to advertise themselves as exclusive worldwide Olympic sponsors and to associate the Olympic words and emblems with their product on a worldwide basis, receive exclusive marketing rights and opportunities with their designated product category, and receive preferential treatment in the development of marketing programmes with the IOC.

Using primary sources from the IOC archives in Lausanne, Switzerland and those of various key National Olympic Committees, this paper focuses on the realization of TOP II, which was underscored by labyrinthine “nightmares” of articulation between ISL, the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the IOC. It examines primarily the IOC, ISL and USOC negotiations out of which TOP II evolved.