

*IT'S HOW YOU PLAY THE GAME: THE INSIDE STORY OF THE CALGARY OLYMPICS* by Frank W. King (Calgary: Script/The Writer's Group, 1991). Reviewed by Donald Macintosh, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada.

This book is an upbeat, personal account of Frank King's role in hosting the Calgary Winter Olympics. King was involved right from the start, when the Calgary Booster Club decided in 1978 to make a bid for the 1988 Winter Games. Shortly thereafter, he became chairman of the Calgary Olympic Development Association, the body created to make this Olympic dream a reality. After successfully winning (over Vancouver) the Canadian Olympic Association's endorsement, King and his cohorts were thrown into what he calls "The Big League," that is, the political world of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This, of course, involved travelling around the world, attending IOC meetings, World Championships and Olympic Games, and wooing every IOC member possible—in King's words, "Moving in the Right Circles." These efforts included making IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch an honorary chief of the Blackfoot Nation during ceremonies held in Montreal in the spring of 1981 (Samaranch is well-known for his penchant for honorary awards and the accompanying pomp and circumstances).

King gives a fascinating account of the IOC meetings in Baden-Baden in September 1981 where Calgary won the right to host the 1988 Winter Games over Cortina, Italy and Falun, Sweden. This was accomplished, according to King, with a sophisticated, high-tech, video presentation ("Come Together in Calgary") and good old, down to earth, Calgary hospitality. The "hospitality" contest carried out in Baden-Baden by the competing cities, an action preceding the vote, is "must" reading for anyone not familiar with some of the things that must be done to win the right to host the Olympic Games.

After the euphoria of victory, the Calgary contingent had to face up to what King calls "Rough Roads." The first step was to put in place the organization that would be responsible for staging the Games — Olympiques Calgary Olympics '88 (OCO '88). This was a 12-man volunteer board, with King as the chairman. David Leighton was the board's appointment as the full-time president, but he soon lost their confidence and was fired because, according to King, he would not conform to some of the board's decrees. Bill Pratt was appointed to replace Leighton. Despite much criticism of his management style, he remained as president until the end.

The most serious challenge to Pratt's tenure rose when Brian Murphy, the last survivor of a "rebel group of middle managers in the sport and operations area," released a letter critical of Pratt's management style. Murphy's letter was "picked up" by the press. It also came to the attention of Calgary Mayor Ralph Klein, a constant thorn in King's side. Klein demanded a public inquiry into OCO '88's administration and management. King sidestepped Klein by getting him to agree (miraculously, it seems) to establish a review committee composed of three members of King's own OCO '88 board! This committee, not surprisingly, gave OCO '88 a clean bill of health, but did recommend that King assume the

chairmanship of OCO '88 on a *fulltime* basis. This, King reluctantly did, because he felt that "it was the only way to save Pratt's skin." One bit of fallout from the whole affair was Murphy's resignation in the fall of 1986.

King also recounts the controversy surrounding the cost overruns and the manner in which contracts were awarded in the construction of the Olympic Saddledome, asserting that "it was not a bungled construction job; it was a bungled communication job." Many would disagree with this assessment. King makes no mention of the under-handed manner in which officials were able to avert public hearings over the dislocation of hundreds of working class residents in Victoria Park in order to provide a site for the Saddledome.

King glosses over the Olympic ticket distribution scandals, blaming it on one dishonest official, Jim McGregor, or, as he was known in Calgary circles, "Jiminy Tickets." In his most blatant indiscretion, McGregor devised a complex scam designed to rake off the dollar exchange rate (Canadian vs. U.S.) by establishing a private post office box in the name of World Tickets Inc. (his own company), and then instructing American ticket buyers to pay the Canadian ticket price in U.S. dollars!

It is not at all surprising to learn from King, a patriotic Calgarian and one of the city's leading businessmen and civic boosters, that one of the few villains in the organizing scenario is the Federal Government, and in particular, its Calgary representative, Anita Slazak. The Federal Government had made an early promise to Calgary to contribute \$200 million to the city's Olympic initiative. An ongoing struggle with the Government to make good on its promise is recounted by King. Here, there is some good reading, embellished as it is with changes in both government officialdom and policies relating to federal sport lotteries. King is certainly to be admired for his persistence. In the early 1980s King was particularly at odds with a series of Liberal government francophone sport ministers, but when a newly elected Conservative government appointed Otto Jelinek to the nation's senior sportspost, the funding issue, according to King, proceeded according to plan.

Another of King's villains was the local press, which he claimed consistently sought the "negative" story. On the other hand, the provincial government led by Peter Lougheed could do no wrong. Not surprisingly, the virtues of private enterprise are extolled by King throughout the book: "In a free enterprise economy like Canada's, the government isn't needed to act as a laundry service for revenues that are used for sport." Thus, concludes King, amateur sport in Canada should be privatized. Unfortunately, none of the shortcomings of this course of action are identified, although the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is portrayed as one example of the evils of public ownership. On the other hand, King espouses the virtues of CTV as an organization that knew how to accomplish the task successfully. The story of how Calgary (with the help of master negotiator Dick Pound) was able *to* raise the ante among the big three U.S. television networks to garner an unprecedented amount of \$309 million (U.S.) from ABC for the U.S. television rights, makes for some fascinating reading. King aptly captures the euphoria in Calgary after this coup by entitling the chapter: "Poor No More."

Throughout the book, King accords the IOC a full measure of reverence and respect. This consistency in the book is not surprising because the volume is prefaced by a flattering foreword by President Samaranch himself. Only once did

King challenge IOC "protocol." He tried in vain to get Samaranch to agree to a radio call pick-up service for IOC members, instead of following the traditional policy of having a limousine available at all times for each IOC member and guest who attended the Games. Samaranch, according to King, was livid at the suggestion. King was forced to back down. King was also careful to refrain from criticizing the IOC's lavish lifestyle at its meetings and events, a lifestyle cultivated to such tastes as the most luxurious accommodation available and the epitome in sumptuous banquets. Surely, one day the IOC will come to realize that this is the kind of behaviour that tarnishes the Olympic Movement in the eyes of many around the world.

The patriarchal nature of the IOC is another quality carefully avoided by King. And, with good reason. Even though he was indignant when the press labeled his organization "an old boy's club," King's account confirms that the OCO was just that—an old boy's club—women filled only a few of the secondary management roles. A photo of the first 12-member board of directors (1983) shows no women. A later photo of the enlarged board shows four women represented among the 27 members present. Then, too, King also does little to endear himself to women by referring to former IOC Director Monique Berlioux as the "IOC Dragon Lady."

King concludes the book's penultimate chapter by agreeing with IOC President Samaranch: "The Olympic movement will become one of the leading social forces in the world at the end of the century." There is little in this book that will lead one to believe that this dubious prediction will come true.

The most unique and heartening aspect of the Calgary Olympics is the story of the volunteer effort. Though cynics might see King's effort to rouse the volunteer population as exploitation, there is little doubt that the entire volunteer scenario translated into a widely spread excitement and pride across the whole community. Indeed, King dedicated his book to the 12,310 volunteer members of Team '88; the names of each appear in a long list at the bottom of each page of the text. In fact, the volunteer effort may turn out to be Calgary's most important legacy of the Games—a legacy of human resources and community spirit. Paradoxically, however, while King extolled the virtues of this participatory style of running the Games, at the same time, he stubbornly held fast to OCO '88's "autonomy" and resisted all attempts to broaden or democratize his board of directors.

In reading this book, one can't help wondering what makes up King's motivational psychology. Here is a man who bet \$1 million that he could beat a business associate, Joe Womersly, in a marathon, even though King himself had not been training for such an undertaking. Later, King found out that his opponent was a regular marathon runner. Undaunted by this knowledge, a year later King beat Womersly in the 1979 Boston Marathon (incidentally, both men fabricated times in order to qualify for the race). On another occasion, King participated in a "walking on hot coals" ceremony in Mexico. After surviving the ordeal, he mused that "perhaps most of our challenges are mental, not physical."

Though it is touching to witness the extent that King involved his wife and children in the scores of events and ceremonies of the 1988 Winter Games, as well as to perceive his eagerness to have his sons inhale the flavor of the Olympic Movement, it is evident throughout the book that King enjoyed most the exercise of "rubbing shoulders with the big boys." He revels in describing (and having

photographed) his meetings with the rich and famous. His flamboyant style is best epitomized in a never-realized scheme devised for the opening of the Olympic Eve Gala event. The plan called for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and King, each astride handsome horseflesh, to ride down separate aisles of the Jubilee Auditorium, meeting in front of the assembled audience in typical “western style.” And, all this on national television. The entire scheme fell apart because Mulroney refused to get on a horse. Stories abound in *It's How You Play the Game*. And King is a good storyteller. One knows, however, that there are two sides to every story. Perhaps in time, we will come to know the other side of those tales told to us by King from his point of view. In the meantime, this is an interesting and enjoyable read, written in an easily digestible, if not scholarly style.