

*Miquel de Moragas and Miquel Botella, Editors*

**The Keys to**

# **Success**

*The social, sporting, economic  
and communications impact of*

*Barcelona'92*

*Centre d'Estudis Olímpics i de l'Esport  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
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## Table of Contents

<b>Joan Antoni Samaranch</b> <i>President of the International Olympic Committee</i> . . . . .	7
<b>Presentation</b> Pasqual Maragall <i>President of the COOB '92</i> <i>Mayor of Barcelona</i> . . . . .	9
<b>Introduction</b> Josep Miquel Abad <i>Councillor Delegate of the COOB '92</i> A Summary of the Activities of the COOB '92 . . . . .	11
<b>Organization of the Games</b> Miquel Botella The Keys to Success of the Barcelona Games . . . . .	18
<b>Sports</b> Enric Truño Barcelona, City of Sport . . . . .	43
Manuel Llanos The Participation of the Spanish Olympic Committee in the Success of 1992. . . . .	57
<b>Mass Media</b> Miquel de Moragas/Nancy Rivenburgh/ Núria García Television and the Construction of Identity: Barcelona, Olympic Host. . . . .	76
Muriel Ladrón de Guevara/Xavier Còller/ Daniel Romani The Image of Barcelona '92 in the International Press . . . . .	107
<b>The Paralympic Games of Barcelona '92</b> Fernand Landry Paralympic Games and Social Integration. . . . .	124
<b>Politics</b> Joan Botella The Political Games: Agents and Strategies in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games . . . . .	139

## **Society**

Faustino Miguélez/Pilar Carrasquer  
The Repercussion of the Olympic Games on Labour . . . 149

Andreu Clapès  
The Volunteers of Barcelona '92: The Great Festival  
of Participation . . . . . 165

John MacAloon  
Barcelona '92: the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology. 181

## **Urban Planning**

Lluís Millet  
The Games of the City. . . . . 188

## **Economics**

Ferran Brunet  
An Economic Analysis of the Barcelona'92 Olympic \*  
Games: Resources, Financing, and Impact . . . . . 203

## **Technology**

Jordi López/Ferran Pastor  
Barcelona '92: Strategies of Technology . . . . . 238

Josep Bertran  
The Technological Image of the Barcelona Olympic Games 254

## **Epilogue**

Fidel Sust  
General Director of Sports of the Generalitat of Catalunya  
The Sports Legacy of the Barcelona Games . . . . . 261

## **Bibliography of Barcelona '92**

Dolors Aparicio . . . . . 266

## **Appendix**

Centre for Olympic and Sport Studies.  
International Olympic Chair.  
Barcelona Olympic Foundation . . . . . 276

## EPILOGUE

### THE SPORTS LEGACY OF THE BARCELONA GAMES

FIDEL SUST I MITJANS

In July 1993, in the context of the summer courses organized by the Universidad Internacional Menéndez y Pelayo, the Centre for Olympic and Sport Studies ran a symposium commemorating the first anniversary of the Barcelona Olympic Games.

The organizers were kind enough to invite me to participate, asking me to give a paper concerning the sports heritage of the Barcelona Games, the infrastructure and facilities they left behind them and the influence the Games had with regard to the evolution of sports activities throughout the different counties of Catalonia.

And once more I have been asked to lend a hand, to close a collection of articles concerning the impact the Barcelona Games have had. My previous paper started with a quote from the Chief Executive Office of COOB'92, Josep Miquel Abad who, referring to the Barcelona Games, said that all those who had been involved in the organization of the Games had every right in the world to feel subjective and passionate about them.

Well, being objective, and not the slightest bit passionate, I believe that the history of our country will be described in terms of the pre and post-Games periods. Why a post-Games period? Here is a subject I would like to make a few reflections on.

*Why are the Olympic Games of interest to a city,  
to a country?*

Today sport is *the* universal activity, the activity which attracts the greatest interest. It is also an activity of the greatest importance to our modern economies. There are virtually no economic areas or human activities in which sport is not found to be of greater or lesser importance.

The Olympic Games are the most important sports event in the world. They are held on such a vast scale that their impact goes far beyond that of other purely sports events, and econo-



mic, political, cultural and social sectors all become involved. All those who experienced the Barcelona Olympic Games saw this quite clearly. The Games changed both the city and the country, and have had far reaching effects, not only on sport in general, but also on all of the other areas of activity involved.

The organization of the Olympic Games does not only affect the sports world. Organization, on such a scale, is essential for a country seeking to progress, to show the world what it is really like, its aspirations and idiosyncrasies, the things which distinguish it, which establish its identity.

*Why was Barcelona able to do it?  
Where did the capital come from?*

For its people and for its history. For all those men and women who, for over one hundred years, had worked to further the cause of sport in Catalonia.

Barcelona's bid for the organization of the Games was supported by powerful arguments. It had already been a candidate four times. Between 1926 and 1972, four of the presidents of the International Olympic Committee had recognized its organizational capacity and the city's Olympic vocation.

All of this: history, organizational capacity, infrastructure and facilities, and above all, our human resources, made us confident that Barcelona was a capable candidate. And that's where the capital came from.

*Why did Barcelona get the games?  
What was done during the period of its candidacy?*

With regard to any event, however important it may be, albeit that each and every one is backed up by quite legitimate criteria, there is normally a diversity of opinion. Such was not the case with Barcelona.

From the very highest instances of the State, Generalitat, City Council, and even the Spanish Olympic Committee, everybody threw themselves heart and soul into the project. The sports bodies and civil society as a whole stood firmly besides them. The Catalan business world poured financial support into the candidature project.

We had to convince the International Olympic Committee of the worth of our project. Travelling all of the world to seek out just the right solution for the concerns of the members of the I.O.C. was one of our most important tasks. In

this respect the work of the President of the Spanish Olympic Committee, Carles Ferrer Salat, the entrepreneur Leopoldo Rodes, the journalist Andreu Mercé Varela and that of our good friend (no longer with us), Ambassador Ignasi Masferrer, cannot go unpraised.

In Catalonia the institutions held their doors open to all. With regard to the Generalitat, I myself witnessed the dedication with which President Pujol worked to achieve our common objective.

And I am also very well aware of the efforts made and dedication of the Barcelona City Council, the Spanish Olympic Committee and the State Authorities, and of the decisive role played by the Royal Family.

The figure of Joan Antoni Samaranch was at all times a leading light. What better guarantee for Barcelona could international sport want than to be led by a president who has come from the world of sport in Catalonia.

#### *How was COOB structured to ensure the successful organization of the games?*

Throughout the course of this publication, the different authors have really answered this question, and with a more authoritative pen than mine.

Suffice it to say that the structure of COOB more than amply demonstrated its effectiveness. In all fields, such as transport, communications, hotel and catering, health, infrastructure and facilities, sports or information technology, the work done was both professional and effective.

The role of the volunteers ensured, on the one hand, the operation of key services while, on the other, it filled our lungs with a breath of fresh air: to see the magnificence of civil society, a characteristic which has so marked both the people of our country and people from the world of sport in general. Without a shadow of a doubt, the volunteers represented a key factor, one of COOB's undeniable successes.

They also established the bases by which to ensure that an unquestionably Catalan presence would be felt at all of the events.

#### *Why did the Games work so well?*

At the close of the Games the opinion was unanimous—they had been the best Games ever. After a time, the con-

clusions of the spectators and press from all over the world confirmed that first impression. Barcelona had proven itself to be worthy of the trust that the rest of the world had placed in it when it was chosen as the venue for the 25th Olympic Games. Indeed, it has set such high standards that Atlanta will be hard pressed if it wishes to better them.

In short, what it all boils down to is that people did their work well, things were done properly and that, as is always the case, we were lucky enough to be able to achieve such a great success.

The excellent results our athletes achieved were also a key component in the feeling that the Games had gone well. The issue of Catalan Identity was treated in a most appropriate way. I would even go as far as to say excellent, in all aspects. And all of this combined with the great warmth of the people, rounded off with the spectacular success of the Paralympic Games and Special Olympics.

### *What have they left behind them?*

Barcelona has never been able to grow at a steady pace. It has always been forced to move forwards in fits and starts. The Universal Expositions of 1888 and 1929 both gave rise to the expansion and modernization of the city. At the beginning of the 80's Barcelona was suffering from a want of infrastructure and facilities, while the old systems were decaying and crumbling away. The Olympic Games permitted the transformation of the city, providing it with those services it so much needed, and the heavy investment that would otherwise have taken many years to have come. Barcelona once again turning its face to the sea, the Olympic Village, the airport, the roadways and communications, the hotel network, all of which were essential to its becoming a competitive city in the scenario of today's Europe.

One of the great successes of the project was the decentralization of activities, with a series of secondary venues. Barcelona was so generous, following the most deep-seated of sports traditions in Catalonia, that now there are sports which are associated with a particular town, city or county, such as basketball and Badalona or handball and Granollers. This policy meant that thanks to the Olympic Games several other parts of Catalonia were also endowed with new facilities.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the sports heritage left after the Games goes far beyond those aspects that I have mentioned up to now. When in Lausanne on October 17, 1986,

the President of the International Olympic Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, pronounced, with his native Catalan pronunciation, the word «Barcelona», there was an explosion of joy, both in its capital city and throughout the rest of Catalonia. For at last there had been a response to the repeated attempts at nomination the city had made over the preceding sixty years and for the recognition of the long-standing Olympic tradition of Catalan sport.

Such a heritage must mean far more than just the financial benefits obtained from the investment made, the new facilities, the sports played, and so on. It must also be reflected in the moral fabric, in the country itself. For such aspects we must other factors.

A. It should represent a moral strengthening, both ours and that of the rest of the world. We have shown ourselves capable of organising the best Games ever with administrative rigour, excellent management capabilities, effectiveness and optimal use of our economic, human and financial resources.

B. The Games have shown the rest of the world a specific identity, ours. An identity which the world closely associates with an occasion of such undeniable prestige.

In short, many initiatives were taken which, without the enthusiasm, the thrust the Games provided, would probably never have seen the light of day.

There is one final reflection I would like to make. The true heritage of Catalan sport is its managers, sports-people and all those who work to further the interests of sport in general. Without this great group of people, those of us who live, love, eat and breathe sport, there would be no organized sport. However, we should never lose sight of the future, that which the evolution of our society will demand of sport, what it will expect of it, what it will need. To such ends the General Secretary for Sport and the Union of Catalan Sports Federations jointly organized the Catalan Sports Congress, held over an eight month period (November 1993 - June 1994) which is also part of the heritage of the Games.

How right Pierre de Coubertin was when, after a visit to Barcelona in 1926 he said, «I had always felt sure I knew just what the Olympic vocation of a city meant until I came to Barcelona» May such a vocation live on in our country forever.

FIDEL SUST I MITJANS

General Director for Sport  
for the Generalitat de Catalunya