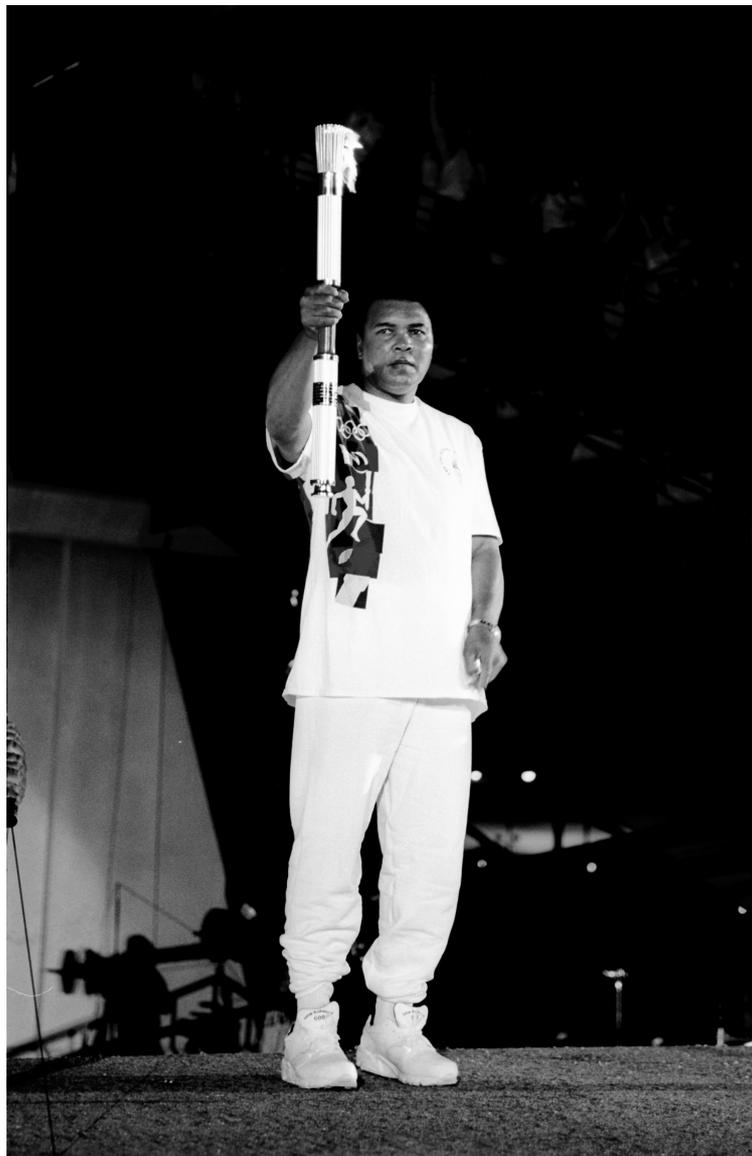


Chapter 5

BEYOND A BRAND



© Getty Images

Lillehammer, Norway, February 9th, 1994

Preparing for the Lillehammer Winter Games in 1994, the news was dominated by coverage of the destruction of Sarajevo. Some of the venues which had played host to the Winter Games ten years before were now cemeteries.

Approaching the opening ceremony, Samaranch had a formal prepared speech. As usual, it had been worked on repeatedly to strike the right chord, acknowledge the right people and send the right message. There was nothing radical in it; nothing that could be construed as political.

Truth be told, the set piece was awful. I was supposed to rehearse Samaranch for the English part. I went to his office and read through the prepared text, but had to tell him that there was no way he could read it in front of a worldwide TV audience. He was not amused by this piece of advice and responded that it was simply too late to change. I persisted, so he told me to go and find someone to write a new speech and be back within a couple of hours. There was not enough time to find and brief speechwriters. So, I found the IOC director general, Francois Carrard, and the two of us set about preparing a new speech. When it was finished, I went back to Samaranch, told him the new draft was a bit stronger and far more direct than he was used to. I fully expected him to throw it out. I handed it over, watched and waited. Samaranch frowned as he read through it – and then said: 'It is different, it is very good.'

The news from Sarajevo struck a chord with Samaranch – as it did with all of us who'd enjoyed and participated in the Sarajevo Games. For this reason Samaranch was happy to make a bold statement during his Opening Ceremony address – happier than the arch diplomat normally would have been. Francois Carrard and I were sworn to secrecy about the change from the official text, but I agreed with Samaranch that we would brief CBS, the network which had the US broadcast rights to the Games.

When the time came, Samaranch invited all 40,000 spectators in the stadium to stand up in a moment of silence and respect. He then invited everyone around the world, even those in their own homes watching the Games on television, to stand up in memory of Sarajevo. 'Please stop the fighting. Stop the killing. Drop your guns,' he implored.

The CBS executives immediately saw the potential symbolism of the moment. When Samaranch delivered his speech, CBS cut to a living room

in Sarajevo where a Bosnian family was watching the Games. As the camera panned around the living room, you could see the bullet holes that had broken the windows and the confusion on the faces of the children who had never known peace. The imagery was compounded by the family looking at the TV set as Samaranch invited everyone watching to stand up. The parents looked at their children, wondering what to do.¹

Samaranch's speech at Lillehammer was an attempt to reintroduce the tradition of the Olympic truce. The literal meaning of the Greek word for truce is *ékécheiria* – the laying down of arms – based on an ancient Greek tradition dating back to the ninth century BC.² The truce began seven days before the opening ceremony of the Games and ended seven days after the closing, so that the athletes, relatives and spectators could travel to and from Olympia safely. This became a tradition and, in over 1,000 years of ancient Olympic competition, the sacred truce was never violated – making it perhaps the longest peace treaty in history. Olympia was the only Greek city never to build walls to defend itself.

The ring ritual

Sport is often said to be a metaphor for war. But, really, it's a catalyst for peace. The Olympic brand is where the world of sport and the yearning for peace meet. No other brand has such power.³

Harnessing and better understanding the power of the Olympic brand became an increasing focus for the IOC in the mid-1990s. The revenue foundations from broadcasting and sponsorship were basically sound. It was time to look ahead and see what structure the IOC wanted for its future marketing programmes. Concern was already mounting that the desperate search for revenues by the Atlanta Organising Committee risked compromising the Olympic brand. The IOC needed to exercise greater oversight and control, taking a far more active and direct role in building value in the Olympic brand.

Over the previous 100 years the Olympic brand had evolved organically, with little if any direct structured or formal management. This had to change. For years, Dick Pound and I had advocated that, to protect its brand, the IOC could not afford to delegate the management of marketing-related issues to an organising committee. More often than not, the

organising committee had a very short term focus – namely how to get through to the closing ceremony without facing bankruptcy. We needed continuity. We needed to give our marketing and broadcast partners far greater insight into what the Olympic brand really represented. They had to understand what made the Games so unique and special. They needed stability and, more than anything, a clear long-term vision.

What we now call 'branding' was actually at the heart of the Olympic Movement from the very start. Think of the defining brand vision *Citius, Altius, Fortius* – 'Swifter, Higher, Stronger' – adopted by de Coubertin as the IOC's motto after he heard the Principal of Arcueil College, Father Dideon of the Dominican Order, address his students.

The Olympic Games was always based on symbolism, powerful images and rituals. These have been key in building Olympic brand equity over the past century. In 1910, de Coubertin observed that 'without rituals, the Games would become merely large multi-sport world championships'. He later presented the Olympic flag and emblem to represent the 1914 World Congress. In so doing, de Coubertin created one of the most recognisable emblems of our time.

De Coubertin wrote in the *Olympic Review*, in 1913, how 'the five rings represent the five parts of the world, now won over to Olympism, ready to accept its fruitful rivalries. In addition the six colours, combined in this way, reproduce the colours of every country [flag] without exception'.

Alternatively, it has been suggested that de Coubertin got the inspiration for the Olympic symbol from an advertisement for Dunlop tyres. The ad showed angels holding interlaced bicycle tyres, with the inscription 'Africa, America, Asia and Europe', representing the four continents, and no reference to the fifth continent, Australasia.

To some, the Olympics were much more than a brand. After all, they had a 3,000 year history and encompassed a global movement long before globalisation was even talked about. Yet, it was also clear that there was much for the IOC to learn from the corporate world in how to manage and cultivate its image.

Yin and yang

By the 1990s, with growing pressures from an array of stakeholders – host cities, broadcasters, sponsors and numerous other bodies – the time had come to develop a much stronger vision for the future presentation of the Olympic brand. ‘So where is the plan, we need a plan,’ Samaranch declared at the end of the traditional marketing report to the IOC Executive Board in 1995.

Numerous market research studies have identified the Olympic symbol as the most recognised trademark in the world. No other symbol is identified across so many cultures and continents.⁴ A much broader question remained: what did the Olympic symbol really stand for? It was all very well, sitting at the IOC headquarters in Lausanne, with our own views of what the rings meant, but what did they really stand for in China, in the sub-Sahara and in Peru?

So after the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, the IOC embarked on the broadest market research programme ever undertaken by a sports organisation. The aim was to better understand the consumer’s true perception of the Olympic brand.

The brand analysts, Edgar Dunn, along with Terence Burns from the IOC’s marketing agency, Meridian, undertook a comprehensive study across 11 countries with interviews and focus groups with over 5,500 consumers, and a further series of 250 in-depth interviews among key media, broadcaster, Olympic family and sponsor opinion leaders.

The results were remarkably consistent. Not surprisingly, the Greeks were often the most passionate about the Olympic brand. To the Greeks, every time the Games travels away from Greek shores, its values are placed in jeopardy. One of the focus groups in Greece wondered whether ‘the competition had gotten out of hand, and the Olympics were no longer pure. The Olympics were like a Greek virgin, who is raped every time she leaves Greece’.

Greek patriotism aside, the research confirmed that the Olympic brand differs from other brands because it straddles two distinctive universes. It

is not strictly humanitarian, like the Red Cross, nor is it strictly commercial like Disney or other entertainment or sporting brands. The Olympic brand's sports association gives it more dynamism and modernity than other non-commercial organisations, yet its spirit and heritage give it more morality and depth than often found in commercial brands.

After Samaranch's Lillehammer plea, Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General, called for the Olympic Truce for the 1998 Nagano Games. 'At a time when crises are multiplying, when conflicts are emerging within the very heart of nations, truce provides a gleam of light in a world beset by hate and destruction. Olympism is a school for democracy. There is a natural link between the ethics of the Olympic Games and the fundamental principles of the UN,' he said. The Olympic Truce was adopted unanimously by the 48th Session of the United Nations.

The research identified four key propositions for the Olympic brand:

- *Hope.* The Olympic Games offer hope for a better world, using sport competition for all and without discrimination as an example and a lesson.
- *Dreams and inspiration.* The Olympic Games provide inspiration to achieve personal dreams through the lessons of the athlete's striving, sacrifice and determination. This intrinsic brand message conveys the enduring power of the Olympic Games to inspire humanity to achieve.
- *Friendship and fair play.* The Olympic Games provide tangible examples of how humanity can overcome political, economic, religious and racial prejudices through the values inherent in sport.
- *Joy in effort.* The Olympic Games celebrate the universal joy in doing one's best, regardless of the outcome. Through their honour and dignity in competition, Olympic athletes teach lessons to us all.

There was a paradox here. It became clear that non-commercial values provided the Olympic brand with its true commercial value to the marketing partners.

Sceptical sponsors

Initially, broadcasters and sponsors were very sceptical about the IOC's plans for a global brand audit. They were convinced that the IOC would try to use the results to dictate the terms of their programming and advertising, and use it as a check on the approval process for their Olympic marketing campaigns. In some ways the sponsors were absolutely correct. We did want to provide a clearer road map. We wanted to illustrate what the Olympics really stood for. It was a way to develop more integrated marketing programmes – while still protecting the Olympic values.

The sheer weight of sponsor advertising and promotions in the market place was starting to define the public's view of the Olympics. The sponsors were the heaviest users of the Olympic brand equity and for that reason the IOC had to engage all the partners. It was essential that they became true champions and promoters of the Olympic brand values through their marketing programmes.

Sponsor advertising was often a hit-and-miss exercise. More often than not, the commercials were in line with the Olympic values. But every now and then, a campaign would come along that risked trivialising the Olympic brand. The IOC needed to find a way to manage the process. It had to ensure there was an effective review process that did more than just check that the colours of the Olympic rings were accurately reproduced.

Initially, the IOC proceeded discreetly, slowly winning over the hearts and minds of the marketing executives of each partner. When a campaign was proposed that was not in line with the Olympic brand, we gently debated the issue, asking the executive to put him or herself in our shoes. Usually we won the day, although occasionally a promotion slipped through that made us cringe and provided fuel to the critics who lamented the negative consequences of Olympic marketing.⁵

An important part of the IOC's strategy was selecting the right companies to be Olympic sponsors, in the right categories. Historically, the Olympic marketing rules were far from rigid. Those who criticised the

commercialisation of the Olympics in the 1980s might not have been so vocal if they had considered what went before. The tension between the Olympic values and commercial interests is long standing. One of the most successful licensed Olympic products ever produced, for example, was 'Olympias', a brand of cigarette. Produced from a mixture of Turkish and Greek tobacco, it was designed to generate funds to support the organisation of the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo. Olympias generated over \$1 million in revenues for the Organising Committee.

The marriage between cigarettes and the Olympics was a promotional theme at the 1964 Games. A popular Japanese cigarette brand, 'Peace', ran a promotion where each packet was sold with a numbered premium ticket. This entitled anyone drawing a winning ticket to claim a prize of a further 365 packs. Even back in the 1960s, marketers realised that the Olympic rings could draw consumers' attention to a product. Every packet of 'Peace' cigarettes, carried the Olympic emblem.

Four years later, at the 1968 Winter Games in Grenoble, the organisers again licensed two brands of cigarettes to use the Olympic marks. This prompted the then IOC president, Avery Brundage, to write to IOC members complaining about rampant commercialism. The media also remarked on what was seen as the rapid growth of commercialism. *Skiing Magazine* mourned: 'The Olympic ideal died somewhere in Grenoble.'

Even long after the IOC had banned any association with cigarettes, organisers or government authorities still launched special tobacco packaging commemorating the Games. The Korean tobacco body, for instance, launched a series to commemorate the 1988 Seoul Games. This was later withdrawn after formal IOC protests. There are reports that the Chinese tobacco body has signed up an Athens gold medal winner to endorse cigarettes; even today, the problem hasn't yet fully gone away.

The challenge has always been to manage two issues. On the one hand, there is the organising committee's focus on generating enough revenue to avoid bankruptcy and balance the books. On the other, there is the IOC's need to ensure that the Games are successfully staged, and that the scramble for revenue does not undermine the overall Olympic ideal.

As the IOC succeeded in building the revenue base from broadcast rights and the TOP programme provided an ever greater share of the

organising committee's budget, the IOC introduced tougher guidelines. These included protocols on which product categories and which official supplier designations were truly suitable for an Olympic association, and would not undermine the Olympic image.

The majority of the official sponsor relationships for the Centennial Games in Atlanta were excellent examples of the partnership between the business community and the Olympics. But as the organisers became ever more desperate in their final search for revenue, they were forced into last-minute supplier arrangements that clearly undermined the Olympic image and their own efforts. The media jumped on these inappropriate categories and used them as examples of crass commercialisation. They pointed to 'Jeopardy – the official Olympic Game Show', the official Vidalia onion sauce or the official toilet seat cover, as illustrations of how the Olympic commercial agenda was out of control. And when Billy Payne announced that ACOG planned to grant a license to the 'official feminine hygiene products' of the Olympics, and started to present the proposed advertising treatment, the IOC felt that enough was enough.

It did not matter if 39 out of 40 partners proved a perfect match with the Olympic brand. If just one partner was counter to the Olympic brand, or stretched the public's credibility about the supplier designation granted, it could undermine the value for all official partners and diminish the long term value of the Olympic brand. Rob Prazmark, who had now moved on from ISL to become president of IMG's Olympic marketing division, accused the ACOG of 'damaging the Olympics, almost beyond repair, by undermining the value of sponsorship, and inking too many deals and slicing product categories and letting in lower tier sponsors at bargain rates'.

Celebrate humanity

One of the first concrete steps that the IOC took as part of its broader brand-building strategy was to create a series of public service TV announcements, promoting the Olympic values. The timing of the IOC's decisions could not have come at a more difficult moment – the middle of the Salt Lake City crisis (see Chapter 9).

Six leading advertising agencies were invited to pitch for the IOC's account. The account, in itself, would not be worth much financially to the winning agency as all of the media would be bartered through existing IOC broadcast and media agreements. But winning the account offered considerable prestige.

The agency review narrowed the field down to two players – Young & Rubicam and TBWA, Chiat Day. Lee Clow, chairman and worldwide creative director for Chiat, led their pitch. Clow is one of the most creative minds in the industry, responsible for many great advertising campaigns over the years, including the famous Big Brother commercial that launched the Apple Macintosh in 1984, and Apple's 'Think Different' slogan.

Clow and his visionary creative director, Rob Siltanen, presented a series of creative spots that immediately captured the essence of what the Olympics stood for. Their tag line was 'Go Humans'. All of my colleagues from the IOC and our marketing agency Meridian loved the tag line. I hated it and knew that it would be impossible to sell to the IOC board. It seemed to me to be overly American and that it wouldn't be easy to sell – or translate – internationally. It sounded gimmicky, and the slogan in itself did nothing for the brand. I had my hands full convincing the IOC about the principle of the campaign to begin with and I did not need to add to the risk. Everyone across all 200 countries had to immediately say when they saw the campaign that it was what the Olympics are about.

Chiat Day clearly had nailed the right creative direction for the IOC's first campaign. All that was left to do was find the right tag line. It was amazing how many months and meetings it took for the team to come up with the eventual tag line 'Celebrate Humanity'. The words *celebrate* and *humanity*, along with 50 other words, were up there on the white board, but it took forever for the simple idea of putting the two words together to materialise. This is no doubt true for many great ad campaigns.

The next challenge was to find the voice for the campaign. Numerous names were proposed, but we all agreed that the actor Robin Williams would be the best. We also all knew that Robin Williams had never done a single voice-over for an advertisement in his career. But Chiat knew someone, who knew someone, who might be able to approach Williams's agent – his wife. We did not have particularly high hopes that he would accept,

and continued to explore alternative solutions, but kept coming back to the power and diversity of Williams's voice.

Out of the blue, a call came through from Marsha Garces Williams, saying that, if the agency team could get themselves to the recording studios, Robin was on board. Williams captured the true magic of each Olympic moment. 'Many of my favourite Olympic memories were not gold medal situations,' Williams recalled, 'they were inspiring moments of humanity that transcended borders, obstacles and languages – and unified people around the world.'

The first Celebrate Humanity campaign was launched in New York in January 2000 to a highly sceptical audience. Twelve months previously, the IOC had been in front of the same audience defending the organisation's very existence as a result of the Salt Lake City bribery scandal. The press were convinced that the campaign was part of a broader strategy to advertise our way out of our Salt Lake difficulties and rehabilitate the IOC's image. The media only began to accept that the campaign had little to do with the crisis when they realised that none of the spots even mentioned the IOC.⁶

Six broadcast spots, eight radio spots and a series of print ads were produced. The visual imagery, recalling some of the most magical and special Olympic moments, combined with the tight scriptwriting of an advertising agency, who had to get their message across in under 30 seconds, proved a powerful combination.

One spot showed the British athlete Derek Redmond struggling around the track at the 1992 Barcelona Games after he pulled his hamstring in the back straight of the 400 metres, only to collapse in the arms of his father, who had jumped the barriers to evade the security guards and help his son over the line. The voice-over pronounced: 'Strength is measured in pounds, speed is measured in seconds. Courage? You can't measure courage.'

Another captured the sheer delight of the Nigerian 400 metre relay team, thinking that they had finished in fourth place and then seeing on the scoreboard that they had won a bronze Olympic medal.

Radio spots told other inspiring stories, like that of Karoly Takacs. Takacs, who was a member of Hungary's Olympic Team, and one of the finest rapid-fire pistol shooters in the world, was expected to win a medal at the 1940 Games until they were cancelled due to the Second World War.

During the war, a grenade exploded in Takacs' right hand, blowing it off. Undaunted, Takacs vowed to learn to shoot with his left hand. For the next few years he practised in solitude. Most of his friends thought he had died during the war, and were surprised to see him turn up at the 1948 Olympic Games in London, where, left-handed, he won the gold medal beating the world record in the process.

Or the story of Bill Havens, who was favourite to win gold medals in the rowing events at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris. Shortly before the American team were due to leave for Paris, however, a trip that would take several months, Havens learned that his wife was expected to give birth to their first child at approximately the same time as the Games.

After much contemplation, Bill Havens decided he would give up his Olympic dream to remain with his wife. Four days after the Games were over, on 1 August 1924, his son Frank was born. For 28 years, Bill Havens secretly wondered whether he had made the right decision. Then, in 1952, he received a telegram from Helsinki, the site of the 1952 Olympic Games. The telegram read, 'Dear Dad, thanks for waiting around for me to get born in 1924. I'm coming home with the gold medal you should have won'. Frank Havens had just won the gold medal in the 10,000 metre canoeing.

Many of the spots were inspired by one of the greatest Olympic storytellers of all time, the legendary and award winning film maker Bud Greenspan, who has chronicled the Olympics since 1948.⁷ Greenspan had the uncanny eye to catch the magical moment that best captured the Olympic spirit – not only telling stories about the winners, but often of the athlete who came last. One of his most moving films told the story of John Stephen Akhwari, the Tanzanian marathon runner who competed in the 1968 Mexico Olympic Games. The race had been won. The medals awarded. Night had fallen and most of the spectators had left. Into the stadium, came the lonely, limping figure of Akhwari, an hour after the rest of the field, his leg bandaged after a bad fall and obviously in considerable pain. Despite this, he struggled around the track to finish. When a journalist asked Akhwari why he kept on to the very end, Akhwari replied: 'My country did not send me 7,000 miles away to start the race. They sent me 7,000 miles to finish.'

Even the most cynical commentators were moved.⁸ Media companies around the world embraced the campaign, all running the advertise-

ments for free as public service announcements. CNN ran the campaign 30 times a day for the eight months leading up to the Games; 30 airlines showed it as part of their in-flight programming; over 200 radio stations in the US aired the campaign; and Val Morgan Cinema advertising took it to the big screen across three continents. Print publications ranging from *Time* to *USA Today*, from *National Geographic* through to *Rolling Stone* ran spreads. By the time the Sydney Games were over, it was estimated that the Celebrate Humanity campaign had received over \$120 million in free advertising.

It was not a difficult decision to continue the Celebrate Humanity campaign through to Salt Lake City. The brief to Chiat was simple – don't touch anything, just winterise the message! Chiat came back with the spots adapted to the Winter Games, plus an additional series of youth spots set to the music of Daft Punk and Radiohead.

The decision to engage the MTV generation was critical in ensuring that the IOC and the broadcasters broke through all the clutter and noise in the market place, to keep the world's youth engaged with the Olympic values. Research showed that the Olympic message still resonated as strongly as it ever had with youth groups. But there was so much going on in their world that they needed to be reminded of why the Olympics were special and different, and to take the time out to stop and watch.

One of the most dramatic spots was the image of the Austrian, Hermann Maier, in slow motion crashing in the men's downhill at over 130 km an hour, with the sound of his bones cracking against the ice as he flew through the safety netting. It was one of the most frightening crashes ever seen on the ski circuit. The voice-over talked of how 'Falling is easy, Getting back up, that's the hard part', noting that a few days later Maier went on to win two gold medals.

The Winter Celebrate Humanity campaign was scheduled to be launched in mid-September 2001, providing for a six-month count down to the Salt Lake City Games. All the broadcasters had received the spots and were preparing their schedules when September 11 happened. As we thought of postponing the launch of the Celebrate Humanity campaign, CNN decided that it would be appropriate to start running the IOC spots straight away. All other advertising was on hold and the message was timely:

*You are my adversary, but you are not my enemy
For your resistance gives me strength
Your will gives me courage
Your spirit enobles me
And though I aim to defeat you, should I succeed, I will not humiliate you.
Instead I will honour you,
For without you, I am a lesser man.*

Within days other broadcasters were calling the IOC, asking for copies of the spot, and how much they had to pay the IOC, to air the campaign.

What did we learn from all this? In the old days, a brand signified ownership. Later, a brand came to mean a promise of quality. But some represent much more than that. The Olympic brand is about athletic prowess and fair play, but it is also about trust in the Olympic ideals – fraternity, friendship, peace and universal understanding.

Bringing the heritage home

A key element of the Olympic brand is its heritage, the powerful visual images that helped define the twentieth century. There was just one small problem. The IOC did not have the rights to use many of these images.

Over the years, the IOC, like all sports organisations, had paid little attention to the question of copyright ownership to the official films and broadcast coverage of the Games. Right up until the early 1980s, IOC lawyers still allowed US networks to acquire broadcast rights exclusively, and in perpetuity. That meant that not even the IOC could use footage of Carl Lewis winning his four gold medals in Los Angeles, or Franz Klammer's bone-breaking downhill descent on the Patscherkofel to win gold at the 1976 Innsbruck Games, without paying substantial fees to ABC.

The IOC could talk about Olympic history, show still pictures of the great moments, but was effectively blocked from creating any documentary or film that would tell the story of the past 100 years. Broadcasters found it too difficult to gain access to historical footage and sponsors were prevented from developing strong visual programmes that captured one of the most important elements of the Olympic brand – its great heritage.

By the mid-1980s, media barons around world were beginning to realise the potential value of film and sports libraries, to support their new television channels. They weren't alone. The boxing promoter Bill Cayton amassed an Olympic and boxing archive which he eventually sold to ABC for over \$70 million.⁹

It was increasingly apparent that if the IOC did not make its own move to acquire back the rights to past Olympic films and news archives soon, others would do it ahead of us and access to the Olympic heritage might be lost forever.

Samaranch and Pound recognised the importance of the IOC getting back control and ownership of its visual heritage, and a secret budget of \$5 million was established to quietly start acquiring back the rights. It was critically important that the process be conducted discreetly for fear of waking up the commercial market as to exactly what the IOC was up to and thereby driving the price through the roof. It was clear that the IOC could never compete against the major media groups should the rights end up in a bidding war.

It was also apparent that the IOC did not have the internal expertise or resources to start trawling through the world's film libraries and searching out long-lost Olympic footage. I turned to Eric Drossart president of Trans World Sport, the broadcast arm of Mark McCormack's IMG group, to see if they would be interested in helping out. At the time, no sports organisation had, with the possible exception of the National Football League in the US, built any form of historical sports archive.

Drossart liked the idea and together we came up with a plan and created the Olympic Television Archive Bureau (OTAB), which set about acquiring whatever past Olympic film and television footage that could be found, restoring it, and then making it available to the Olympic broadcast and sponsor partners, and other television producers.¹⁰ A small team was established at OTAB led by Stewart Binns, an award winning Olympic and historical documentary film maker, along with a specialist film archivist and historian Adrian Wood.

Ten years later, the acquisition programme was close to completion, with the IOC having brought back the rights to virtually every known piece of Olympic film and broadcast material, creating what is now viewed as one of the world's largest sports libraries – a library that exceeds over

50,000 hours of Olympic footage, dating right back to the 1900 Olympic Games in Paris.¹¹

The story of how the IOC acquired back all the rights is, at times, a story of intrigue and secret undercover missions that would do justice to any spy novel: dedicated painstaking research from the depths of the former Soviet state archives through to lock-up garages in Mexico; last minute court injunctions and quiet long drawn out diplomacy; of negotiations that would lead to the highest office of the land, with the direct intervention of the head of state.

In many cases the IOC found films rotting away in archives and at grave risk unless immediately restored or being lost forever. On other occasions the IOC was in a race against time with lawyers to reassert the IOC's ownership over a particular film.

The acquisition programme was finally completed in December 2003 when, after five years of negotiation with the German government and Leni Riefenstahl, the IOC was able to acquire the copyright to the classic 1936 official Olympic film, *Olympia*. In 1936, Riefenstahl was commissioned by Goebbels to produce the film of the Berlin Games. Riefenstahl invented or enhanced many of the sports photography techniques that we now take for granted: slow motion; underwater diving shots; to magnify the height of the pole vault, she would dig camera pits next to the jump, so that the cameras could film from ground level; and the installation of tracking systems for following fast action.¹²

The acquisition of all the films of the Olympic Games right up until 1984 was of particular importance. The film record was of dramatically better quality than any broadcast coverage. And some of the greatest film producers of the twentieth century had made Olympic films. Kon Ichikawa's film of the 1964 Tokyo Games, for example, became as much a document of the event as of a time, a place and a culture, as Japan reconnected with the global community.¹³ David Wolper's *Vision of Eight in Munich* brought together a cross-section of legendary producers from around the world including the British John Schlesinger and Milos Forman from Czechoslovakia. It was only in the late 1980s that broadcast equipment and technology began to compete with the quality and intimacy that celluloid film could offer.

The IOC was now able to finally totally control who could use Olympic imagery, ensuring that all actions were in support of the Olympic brand.

The fire of the gods

At the heart of Olympic symbolism is the Olympic torch. Throughout history, fire has been a powerful and sacred symbol. Greek mythology tells of how fire was stolen from the gods and given to man by Prometheus, its power revered by all. Ever since Prometheus brought the spark of heavenly fire to earth for man, it has been a purifying symbol in most cultures. In some cultures, a torch was held beside a new-born child. At marriages the mothers of the bridal pair carried torches. At funerals, as they took place before sun-rise, torches lit the way of the procession, as well as purifying the air and, where appropriate, lighting the funeral pyre. And fire has long been a symbol of sacrifice.

The lighting of the torch in the olive groves of Olympia provided a direct symbolic link between the modern and ancient Games, adding to the power and legitimacy of the Olympic ideal. It was an ancient myth brought back to life. The former president of the Hellenic Committee, Antonios Tzikas, noted that each time the world gathered 'on the same spot in Olympia, among the ruins of the Temple of Hera, we again rekindle the Olympic spirit as the flame bursts to life'.

From the start, Baron de Coubertin wanted the modern Games to reflect the rituals of the ancient Games. The Olympic flame was introduced at the Amsterdam Olympics in 1928. Without formal ceremony, it burned for the duration of the Games above the entrance to the Olympic stadium. But it wasn't until the 1936 Berlin Games that the president of the organising committee, Carl Diem, reintroduced the tradition of the Olympic torch relay. In honour of various Greek gods, runners at the ancient games ran from one altar to another, with the winner lighting the sacrificial flame with the fire from his own torch and then carrying out the sacrifice.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Diem's concept of a peaceful relay was hi-jacked by the Nazi propaganda machine, which immediately understood its power and symbolism.

Over the years, the lighting of the flame has provided some of the most symbolic moments in Olympic history. At the 1964 Tokyo Games, the final torch-bearer was Yoshinori Sakai, who had been born in Hiroshima, Japan, on 6 August 1945, at the exact hour the atom bomb was dropped.

Four years later, the torch was lit by the first woman, Enriqueta Basilio de Sotelo, after the relay followed the route Christopher Columbus took to dis-

cover the New World. In Seoul, Sohn Kee Chung, the 1936 Berlin Olympic marathon gold medallist, carried the final torch into the Olympic stadium as a Korean; unlike fifty-two years earlier, when Sohn had to register under a different name Kitei Son, and compete under the flag of occupation, Japan.

The Olympic torch has become a magic wand for the Games. The torch carrier is transformed into the bearer of the Olympic message as the flame makes its great journey from Olympia, Greece, to the site of the Games.

Something unusual and unplanned

It was Peter Ueberroth who took the torch relay to a whole new level. Ueberroth understood the potential of the torch to spark national interest and pride, uniting people behind the Olympic Games. The rest of his management team at the Los Angeles Organising Committee did not have the same vision. They outvoted him seven to one. Ueberroth nevertheless stuck to his instincts and overruled his executives, unleashing the torch's true potential by creating a community approach to the relay, where each runner's life story fuelled the spirit of the Olympic flame.

Ueberroth turned to US telecommunications giant AT&T to sponsor the flame's epic journey. AT&T needed to reconstruct its national image after a federal judge had ruled that it should be broken up. The relay was an ideal platform to reconnect with communities across the country. It was decided to use it to raise money for a cross-section of American charities. Each relay slot was sold for \$3,000, eventually generating close to \$11 million for the charities.

The Greek Olympic Committee was not amused and saw the selling of relay slots as a sacrilege against the Olympic ideal. The fact that in ancient times the relay was sponsored – to provide the runners with food and lodgings, pay for the torches and decorate the route – was conveniently forgotten. That you could also walk into any souvenir shop in the village of Olympia and buy a cheap plastic Olympic torch – far tackier than anything offered up by the Los Angeles licensing programme – was also overlooked. The Greeks made it known that they would not allow Peter Ueberroth and the Los Angeles organisers to come and light the flame at Olympia.

Ueberroth was at a loss. The failure to light the flame in Olympia called into question the very legitimacy of the Games and was certain to be exploited by

the boycotting nations. After weeks of negotiations with the Greek committee had failed, Samaranch concocted a simple plan. Two Swiss students were sent to Olympia to light the flame, photographing and filming the whole exercise to verify the authenticity of the process. The students brought the flame back to Lausanne in a miner's lamp. Samaranch then presented the Greek Committee with a simple choice. The Greeks were told to either allow Ueberroth to come to Olympia and light the flame in the traditional manner, or the IOC would dispatch the flame from the IOC headquarters in Lausanne. The Greek Committee accepted Samaranch's proposal.

Samaranch advised Ueberroth that his 'little problem' had been solved. The Olympic torch relay began its 84-day journey through America. It quickly turned into a feel-good patriotic celebration. The relay helped lift the country out of the lingering malaise of the hostage crisis in Iran and the deadly terrorist bombing on the marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon.¹⁵ At the Republican party convention a few months after the Los Angeles Olympic Games, US President Ronald Reagan talked in his main address of the impact of the Olympic torch relay on America.

Four years later, the Calgary organisers again saw the potential for the torch relay to create a community spirit across the country and embarked on a programme to invite the whole population to nominate people to run in the relay. More than 17 million nomination forms were issued to every household across Canada – one of the largest Canadian mailings ever.

A total of 6,624,582 nominations were sent back for the 6,525 slots to run the relay. The relay was sponsored by Petro Canada and went on to become one of the most successful sponsorship marketing programmes ever. As a result of the National Energy Programme – a Federal Government policy that Albertans believed had caused economic devastation throughout the region – Petro Canada was regarded by many as public enemy number one. The company's involvement with the torch relay was a turning point. It banked immeasurable goodwill as it made its way across Canada and sold 55 million commemorative Olympic torch relay glasses, using the profits to establish a scholarship fund that is still in existence.

The Atlanta Organising Committee decided to build upon the community spirit programme developed by Calgary. With the support of Coca-Cola, it saw a relay embark on a 15,000 mile journey, with more than 12,467 runners carrying the flame across 42 states over 84 days.

The community hero programme developed by the Atlanta organisers and Coca-Cola added a new dimension to the relay. The stories it produced were some of the most powerful and emotional symbols of the Olympic ideal. In Milwaukee, a torch-bearer, Barbara LeClair, who had received a bone marrow transplant took the flame from a stranger, Suzy Wells, the anonymous marrow donor who had saved her life. In Yuma, Arizona, Mark Haugo, a wheelchair-bound torch carrier, secretly underwent exhaustive physical therapy so he could climb out of his chair, strap the torch to his walking frame and thrill his community with his bravery, bringing the relay team to tears.

When the relay passed through small communities, it placed them in the spotlight like no other previous event. *Business Week* profiled the impact of the Atlanta relay visiting Scottsburg, Indiana, a dot on the map of less than 5,000 people. 'Nothing had come close to the impact [of the torch] – except if you go back to 1812, the year of the Pigeon Roost massacre, when Indians slaughtered 22 townsfolk. The Olympic relay gave the town a sense of importance that finally eclipsed the Pigeon Roost tragedy.' The whole town turned out, from schools with their home-made flags, to nursing home residents wheeled into the street. 'For Scottsburg, the torch symbolises a renaissance; like many small rural towns, it took the 1980s on the chin – with unemployment climbing to 20 per cent. In places like Scottsburg, optimism and idealism are more than just words. They are a way of life that does honour to the Olympic torch as it passes through the town.'

There are a host of moving stories about torch carriers. Travis Roy from Kittery, Maine, and a quadriplegic, ran with the torch during the Centennial Games. Travis won a hockey scholarship to Boston University but, during his first 10 seconds on the ice, was slammed into the boards and broke his neck. Nine months later, Travis was selected as a torch-bearer, carrying the flame in his wheelchair with the torch mounted on the side. He controlled his wheelchair by blowing through a straw. On arriving at the torch collection point, he asked the relay team 'Before I start, do you mind putting the torch on top of my head, so that I can feel how heavy it is?' The torch relay manager placed the torch on top of his head. As Travis felt the weight of the torch, he broke out in a big smile, and said, 'OK, now I am ready'.

Another torch-bearer, Jeff Kalail, was dying from soft tissue sarcoma at the age of 42. After a sixteen year battle against the illness, he had discontinued all forms of treatment. Jeff and his father Ed were chosen as an inspirational pair of runners. But on the day that Jeff was due to run, he was not sure he would make it through the day. Ed prayed with Jeff that his son would be able to make his last walk with his father. Ed was at peace with his son's dying, but he wanted to spend the last day with him. Jeff was able to make his last walk, with his proud father at his side.

The *International Herald Tribune* reported that the relay had become an advertisers' dream, 'a continuous 84-day commercial affecting people on an emotional level that companies hope will cement a lifetime bond.'

The greatest

The identity of the final torch-bearer has become one of the most eagerly awaited moments of the Opening Ceremony, and one of the Games' most closely guarded secrets. A few months before the Atlanta Ceremony, I questioned Billy Payne, the Organising Committee President as to who he had in mind. Billy had not decided and asked what did I think?

'Well,' I said, 'with this being the Centennial Games, to my mind it should be the greatest living US Olympian, but in the eyes of the rest of the world.'

'Well, who do you think that is?', Billy enquired.

'I have no idea – let me think. ... It has to be Muhammad Ali.'¹⁶

Four months later, Evander Holyfield one of Atlanta's favourite sons, ran around the track sharing the torch with Greek hurdler Voula Patoulidou, a gold medallist from Barcelona. The torch then passed to swimming legend Janet Evans. She in turn handed it onto Ali who emerged from beneath the tower of the cauldron and grasped the torch with both hands. The stadium erupted in a roar at the sight of one of the greatest athletes in the world, as he struggled to light the taper to ignite the cauldron, both hands shaking, uncontrollably – a sad reminder of the effects of Parkinson's Disease.

Two years later there was a similarly emotional moment when Chris Moon, the anti-personnel mine campaigner, who lost part of his right leg and right arm while attempting to defuse mines in a remote village in

Mozambique, ran into the stadium holding the torch high above a crowd of children. Moon handed over to Midori Ito, the silver medal figure skater from Albertville, who was wearing a traditional kimono dress.

When the Olympic flame travelled down under to Australia, it became a symbol of hope and national reconciliation, and healing for the Aborigines. A barefoot Nova Peris-Kneebone, one of 11 Aborigine members of the Australian Olympic team and a hockey gold medallist from Atlanta, became one of 11,000 Australians to carry the torch over the next 100 days. The relay had a dramatic finale when fellow Aboriginal athlete Cathy Freeman stood in a circular pond of water that then turned into a circle of fire, as the blazing cauldron arose around her.¹⁷ More than 500,000 people turned out on the streets of Sydney for the final day of the relay.

Around 100,000 people have had the honour of carrying the Olympic flame over the years. Their memories of their special moment carrying the flame from Olympia to the host city of the Games have provided some of the most poignant and inspirational commentaries of the Olympic ideal. Occasionally, when you become ever so slightly jaundiced reading through the barrage of cynical media commentaries suggesting the Olympic Movement has lost its direction, it is good to read through the runner's log from the torch relay bus. You are reminded of the true meaning of the Olympic spirit and its potential to inspire.

The Sydney organisers added an extra piece of symbolism. At the closing ceremony, a Royal Australian Air-Force F111 jet streamed over the Olympic stadium at the moment that the Olympic flame was extinguished. As the jet passed just 160 metres above the dying cauldron, a plume of flame spurted out from its afterburners lighting up the night sky. It was as if the sacred Olympic flame was being taken back to the heavens – returning to the Greek gods from whom it came, for safe keeping.¹⁸

The Olympic DNA

The power of the Olympic torch's symbolism was brought home to me in October 2001, when I was with Jacques Rogge as he completed his first tour of the US as IOC president. Francois Carrard, the IOC director general and I accompanied him as he met the CEOs of the TOP partners, along with the editors of America's leading media.

We arrived in New York late Thursday evening October 10, after three days of non-stop travel, six cities and interminable meetings. New York was the last port of call. We were scheduled to be up early the next morning at the NBC studios, where Rogge was to be a guest on the *Today* show to talk about preparations for the Salt Lake City Games.

Sitting in NBC's hospitality suite waiting for Rogge's interview to begin, firefighter Kevin Hannison walked into the room. He was in his uniform with his fire-station dog. A month on from September 11, Hannison poignantly explained that he had found his younger brother, also a fireman, in the rubble of the twin towers and had been able to give him a proper burial. I made a note of Hannison's address and later contacted him to ask if he would like to run in the Salt Lake City Olympic Torch Relay in memory of his brother. The theme of the relay was an inspiration, to light the fire within. Local communities were challenged to nominate their heroes to run in the relay.

The Salt Lake City torch relay became a symbol of hope after the trauma of September 11.

And so, we had finally come to understand what the Olympic brand really meant – its special place in the world. We had identified the Olympic DNA. We had taken those findings and cultivated, reinforced and enshrined them in Celebrate Humanity campaigns. We had reached out and touched people by distilling the essence of what the Olympic Games are.

The decision to embark on a brand management programme in the mid-1990s – the first by an international sports organisation – dramatically increased the value of the Olympic franchise and, we hoped, put the Olympic Movement on a firm financial footing. But understanding what is unique about the Olympic brand was not enough. We had to be prepared to go to the barricades to protect it. Over the years, the IOC has been sorely tested. Some of those who have pushed their luck the hardest are household names.

NOTES

- 1 The contrast with the conflict between different religious and ethnic groups back in Sarajevo was further highlighted with the participation of the Bosnian bobsleigh team in Lillehammer, manned by Muslims,

Serbs and Croats. Nizar Zaciragic, a 25-year old bobsleighter, offered a moving testimony of his time at the Games: 'We escaped briefly from hell on earth – a place where the starvation, the rape and the bloodshed are turning human beings into halfway animals. We came to a land of comforts yet we felt guilty when we ate.' Seeing the reaction to his speech, Samaranch made a special visit to Sarajevo in the middle of the Lillehammer Games and the IOC later created a fund to aid the rebuilding of Sarajevo's Olympic Ice Stadium.

- 2 According to Greek mythology, at the beginning of the 8th century BC, Iphitus King of Elis, asked the God Apollo at Delphi his advice on what he should do to save Greece, which was devastated by civil wars and plagues. Apollo, via the Pythia, recommended holding the Olympic Games as a celebration of peace.
- 3 'There's a fine and manipulative line that snakes through the five rings of the Summer Olympics,' observed *Business Week*. 'It's the line that tugs at people's nationalistic heartstrings or internationalist values while selling a product. In essence the IOC's sophisticated marketing programme charges its most exclusive multinational sponsors \$55 million for the right to help promote world peace. "We'll make it all seem good and pure by convincing people that we are diplomats in running shorts – the physically fit UN." And boy does giving peace a chance sell.'
- 4 SRI research of 10,000 people across nine countries and five continents found that the Olympic rings enjoyed recognition levels of over 90% (99% in Japan) – compared with Shell 88%; McDonald's 88%; Mercedes 74%; Christian Cross 54%; United Nations 36%; World Wildlife Fund 28%.
- 5 A USOC promotion repositioned the breakfast cereal Cheerios as official edible Olympic rings. A 1988 commemorative spoon programme in Korea included a souvenir china spoon celebrating Olympic history, and each Olympiad. For 1944, when the Games were cancelled, the Koreans developed an artistic rendition of the atomic bomb rising out of the Olympic rings.

- 6 Lee Clow explained: 'This is not about advertising in the traditional sense, it is about reminding the world of the values and dreams the Olympics represent. The Olympics are the ultimate celebration of humanity; we want the whole world to be able to participate in that celebration.'
- 7 Bud Greenspan produced the official films and TV specials for the 1984 Los Angeles, 1988 Calgary, 1988 Seoul, 1992 Barcelona, 1994 Lillehammer, 1996 Atlanta and 2000 Sydney Games.
- 8 Referring to the silver medal spot, where Yoto Yotov from Bulgaria expressed his delight at winning the silver medal for weightlifting, Bob Garfied, the advertising critic for *Advertising Age*, wrote: 'Mr Yotov was clearly no Carl Lewis prima donna. He was a little guy who reached his maximum potential before the whole world and gloried in the experience. It is a very charming, very poignant spot that can't help but move and inspire you. Because – oh yeah – for all the scandals and ugly compromises, the Olympics are moving and inspiring. Also exciting, beautiful, vivid, often dramatic and sometimes breathtaking. It's no wonder that, quadrennially, the world suspends its disbelief and swoons under the spell of the Olympic euphoria, we buy into the silly methodology that politics are set aside, that competition trumps commerce, that sportsmanship reigns, not because we believe it, because we wish to believe it. It is a spectacle so grand and so rich with majestic moments, we are prepared to forgive it nearly everything ... thus does TBWA succeed so well, because this wonderful footage corroborates the myth. It validates our optimism. It permits us, against a large body of evidence, to feel good'.
- 9 Prior to the sale of Cayton's library to ABC, the IOC advised the network that the ownership of any Olympic material in the collection was a matter of some dispute. ABC nevertheless proceeded with the acquisition, and the IOC was forced to commence legal proceedings to claim back all Olympic material, including material from the Melbourne 1956 Olympic Games which, as broadcasters had boycotted the Games, was the only known film of the event. After a long drawn out legal battle, the Australian courts eventually ruled in the IOC's favour.

- 10 The Olympic Television Archive Bureau was finally established in 1995, as a 100% IOC owned and controlled organisation, based in London with TWI having a management contract to run and administer the operation.
- 11 Some moving images exist of Athens, and although it has been claimed that these date from 1896, subsequent research has shown that they came from the 1906 Olympic Games in Athens – a ‘non official Olympic Games’ staged by the Greeks, who felt that they should be given the right to stage the Olympic Games on a permanent basis and set about organising their own festival.
- 12 Leni Riefenstahl was born in 1902 and made her mark with her 1934 film, *Triumph Of The Will*, a hypnotic account of the Nuremberg Nazi party rally, where she glorified Nazi pageantry and Hitler’s oratory. Goebbels saw the propaganda potential of an Olympic film and provided Riefenstahl with unprecedented resources. She travelled to Berlin with 30 cameras and hundreds of staff, shot over 400,000 metres of film (over 248 miles), around 250 hours – probably the largest amount of film shot at the time. The subsequent editing took more than 18 months. *Olympia* was a lavish hymn to sporting prowess and physical beauty and strength, and premiered in 1938 on Hitler’s 49th birthday, with the Nazi leader attending as guest of honour.

Samaranch had long understood the importance of gaining back the ownership of this classic Olympic film. Early on in his presidency, he invited Riefenstahl to Lausanne to present her films as part of the Olympic Week celebrations, an annual festival for the local community. Riefenstahl came but the film presentation was cancelled at the last minute due to anti-Nazi protestors in the audience. Throughout her life, Riefenstahl was never able to shed the historical contamination of her connections with Hitler. Although her films have had enormous impact on world cinema, Riefenstahl found it difficult to gain public respect, remaining a controversial figure right up until her death in 2003, aged 101.

- 13 The Tokyo 1964 official film used 164 cameramen and 1,031 cameras – 59 just for the marathon.

- 14 Even the first torch relay of the modern Games had its official suppliers. Zeiss, the leading firm in the Greek market for optical products, was invited by the Greek Olympic Committee to provide the reflective mirror to light the flame. Daimler Benz provided the transport and Krupp Steel designed the torch.
- 15 The *New York Times* captured the true impact of the relay: ‘Something unusual and unplanned is also happening as the Olympic torch makes its way slowly across the nation these days. For unseen by most of the country, as the flame moves through places like rural Missouri, communities like Useful, Linn and Knob Noster, Union, Sedalia and Festus, it seems to be igniting some special feeling tied less to the Olympics and more to patriotism. Some people, freshly roused by the flashing lights of the police escort, emerge from where they have been sleeping, on blankets in the grass or in the back of a pick-up truck. Others bring lawn chairs or stand for hours in the sun. This afternoon one farmer could be seen atop his distant tractor applauding silently in the middle of a giant soybean field ... it is in the countryside, out beyond the range and interests of the big city television stations, that the runners find themselves the most touched by efforts to become involved somehow: the crowds of 1,000 people in a town of 300. The little communities that line their sidewalks with scores of candles, their own glowing echoes of the travelling torch ... As a runner enters town, church bells sound, fire sirens blare, trucks blast air horns. Some people throw roses, offer beers or run alongside to touch someone, anyone involved with the torch. “Look at that runner, Honey,” one mother urged her daughter, “Look at that runner and always remember him!” ’
- 16 Several other Olympic commentators were advising Billy Payne around the same time as to who the final torch-bearer should be, including Dick Ebersol, chairman of NBC Olympics. Everyone came to the same conclusion, albeit maybe with a different logic.
- 17 The lighting of the Sydney Olympic cauldron did not go exactly as planned. A freak telecommunications signal caused a glitch in the computer that controlled the raising of the cauldron through the crowd. For 220 seconds, what would seem to the organisers like an

eternity, the cauldron was stuck above Cathy Freeman's head, with the band playing the same musical chord of Berlioz's *Te Deum* over and over again, until the engineers working in the bowels of the stadium were able to track the problem and override the safety mechanisms. Although the organisers had developed contingency plans of an extra 30 minutes of gas supply in the cauldron, last-minute weight restrictions had prevented the addition of the gas canisters and the Olympic cauldron had less than a minute of spare fuel when it did finally start moving again and the main gas burners kicked in. Ric Birch, the ceremony producer, later wrote: 'Imagine the symbolism of watching the cauldron ignite and start moving, only to see it stop and then a few minutes later to witness the Olympic flame die out.'

18 Unfortunately, not every torch relay ended so smoothly. In Seoul the legacy of the torch relay was seen by many international commentators to have more to do with roast pigeons than any community spirit. To the doves – read pigeons – that were released at the opening ceremony, the cauldron looked like a perfect bird perch from which to watch the rest of the ceremonies. While most of the pigeons immediately escaped from the stadium, about twenty decided to stay behind and enjoy the festivities. No sooner had they settled down to watch, than the final torch-bearers arrived, bringing the pigeon's relaxing afternoon siesta to an abrupt, and rather warm, end in front of three billion television viewers. For the following months, Samaranch's office was inundated by letters of protest from animal protection groups, distraught at what they had seen on live television. There was another problem – the pigeons, having been caged for the 24 hours prior to the opening ceremonies, are inclined upon release, to fly over athletes and spectators with an immediate urge to relieve themselves. The athletes, in their new parade uniforms, can quickly find themselves covered in pigeon droppings. As a result, the IOC Board decided to change to paper pigeons. This was deemed wise after it was established that if the Albertville organisers released their pigeons into the mountain air at night, they would get lost and freeze. Samaranch did not want another barrage of animal rights letters from around the world.