

ANNEX 4A FAI / IPC Media Liaison Report: World Games, Akita, Japan, August, 2001

“.....they were exciting pictures ... I can see extensive interest across the globe -- and I am not being simply polite. They were reeeeeeeally great and I can totally understand why it was the most popular sports in the games.” Reuters Tokyo

High energy, committed people made the IPC World Games media project the success it was.

I would like to thank BJ Worth for inviting me to assist the IPC with the World Games in Japan. It was a truly excellent event in every respect and everyone who contributed to its success should be congratulated. I consider myself very fortunate to have been a part of something that I believe will be a turning point for our sport in many ways. Not only in the way the public views our sport, but also in the way we regard ourselves.

The IPC news media project for the World Games was organised at the eleventh hour, with little time to prepare. I was travelling in Europe, away from my home, my office and my computer. However, with the help of email and the London internet cafes, the IPC news media team came together very quickly.

I would like to thank Karina Willerup for joining us with so much enthusiasm and energy from her home computer in Holland. Even though Karina was unable to attend the event, the work and preparation she did behind the scenes was fantastic. The technical expertise of Thierry Montigneaux in the FAI office ensured we could update the FAI World Games website several times a day from the competition site. He worked around the clock to meet our needs from another timezone and it was greatly appreciated.

Ronald Overdijk and Bruno Brokken, along with the team cameraflyers provided really exciting video footage and photographs, which were applauded by the media.

Other members of the IPC event and media team, including BJ Worth, Srecko Medven, Pal Bergan and Roland Hilfiker worked tirelessly to bring all the vital elements of the event together. Sachie Sakasai and her team from Japan Aeronautic Association (JAA) provided fantastic support and assistance.

And of course, the athletes were superb in their performances, their professionalism and their interaction with all the spectators and officials who came to see them.

I worked under the guidance and with the assistance of BJ Worth, who did everything in his power to ensure the success of the IPC news media project at the World Games. I thank him very much for his assistance. Together we set the following objectives before the event and I am pleased to say we achieved them all.

World Games Objectives

1. Establish appropriate media contacts
2. Deliver news material to media outlets
3. Observe and learn from Japanese World Games media center arrangements
4. Establish blue print for future FAI/IPC new media objectives

I have made a series of recommendations, as a result of my experience in Japan, which are detailed later in this report. Parachuting was hailed as the most popular sport in the Akita World Games and this was no accident. It was the result of good planning, preparation and organisation (including holding the event in a location and timing with a good weather profile), good event presentation and marketing, great facilities, a media and spectator friendly approach and of course, outstanding athletic performances.

There is no doubt in my mind that our sport has much to offer the media, the general public and potential business partners. With success in these areas, also will come greater growth in participation. The recommendations I have made are designed to help the IPC maximise the opportunities that await us.

At the end of the day, it's all about making it easier for people to enjoy our sport.

Getting the Vision Out There: Who, What, When and Where (We know Why!)

The most critical element of the IPCs media activities is to ensure the media and public see the images of our visually exciting sport, accompanied by background information and stories.

It proved to be an extremely difficult task to fulfill. But having succeeded, the results were excellent and the feedback from the media and the public was fantastic.

Karina Willerup and I pooled our database of media contacts and made initial contact with a wide range of people all over the world to test interest in the World Games Parachuting events. Of course all skydiving media wanted pictures and stories, but the response from the mainstream media was initially luke warm. With limited time and resources, we decided to focus our attention on the major international news agencies such as Reuters and SNTV, who would act as a distributor to other organisations.

SNTV is a partnership between TWI and Associated Press (and a competitor to Reuters). TWI is the company contracted to the FAI television production. Roland Hilfiker specifically requested we did not contact SNTV, so we contacted Reuters instead. Reuters were not excited about the offer of vision to begin with, but told us we were welcome to pass on the footage and they would see what they could do.

I also made direct contact with CNN in Tokyo, BBC and a number of other media organisations, inviting them to take a feed from the Reuters offering, which they did.

There were many technical and logistical problems associated with delivering one video tape of skydiving footage to the Reuters news agency. Every country's media industry has its own set of technical standards and functionality. In this case, there was no opportunity to feed footage direct to Reuters from Akita, so the tape had to be couriered overnight to the head office in Tokyo.

Reuters required all video tape in BetaCam format. We did not have the cooperation of the FAI's television production team, nor access to their facilities or video stock. Therefore, it took us four days to locate a BetaCam tape, compile a miniDV tape from the IPC's media and team cameraflyers, have it converted to BetaCam and deliver it to Tokyo. Four day old news is not generally valued in the media world, but we were fortunate that our footage was spectacular (and our commitment to delivering it unwavering). This is what our contact at Reuters told us after the footage was aired.

"... I can tell you that the parachuting footage you gave to us was a big success. While we have no concrete list of broadcasters that used the item, I can confirm that CNN used it extensively in their news because I saw them use it myself. I can imagine BBC World also followed suit (as they usually do). Furthermore, it got what is called an 'exclusive' on Eurovision which is a news footage exchange system used by nearly all European broadcasters and confirms interest in the story at least in Europe. I can only guess that our Asian clients used it a lot as they were exciting pictures in themselves and out of experience I can see extensive interest across the globe -- and I am not being simply polite. They were reeeeeeeally great and I can totally understand why it was the most popular sports in the games. Cheers" – Olivier Fabre, RVN Tokyo, Reuters Japan Limited.

A comprehensive shot list, detailing names and information about the performers and their events, accompanied this video footage. In addition to video footage, we provided a lot of information to key media outlets, including event backgrounders, athlete profiles, event information, the emerging rivalries and dramas of the competition, latest results and attendance figures. Press releases, photographs and general articles were sent out in the weeks leading up to the event, daily during the event and in the weeks after the event.

We updated the FAI World Games website daily with scores and highlights and sent regular updates to FAI and IPC email lists.

We prepared skydiving magazines and national television contacts in the countries of participating athletes for interviews, stories and pictures after the event. This ensured most national and international skydiving publications featured excellent articles and photographs after the event.

Japan's newspapers featured daily stories and photographs of our athletes and events and ongoing reviews of the fabulous opening ceremony, where our formation skydiving teams were the stars of the show.

Main Press Center

The Japanese organisers provided excellent facilities at the Main Press Center, along with accommodation in downtown Akita. However, the parachuting event was located nearly an hour's drive from Akita, which meant some missed opportunities and a great deal of lost time driving. BJ provided vital competition site support, between his other duties.

There was no central service or depository where journalists could access images and information on various sports. They had to get it themselves. Basic information such as event timetables and results were provided at the Main Press Center and journalists were left to make their own judgements about what sport was worthy of coverage for the day. There were many interesting events being conducted in the grounds and stadiums of the city. All other sports were located closer to Akita than parachuting and this was a distinct disadvantage.

I took the opportunity to introduce myself to journalists, World Games officials and others and put a notice on the Notice Board, so that people came to know I could help them. I made contact with the producers of the daily television highlights from NHK (local) and TWI (international) and helped them with their voiceovers for the parachuting event. The hard work paid off and we received excellent results both in feedback, media exposure and establishing contacts for the future.

Main Press Center – Facilities List

This media center was designed to meet the needs of mostly local press journalists, who were not far from their own offices. The larger international media organisations covering the event, such as NHK and TWI had their own facilities. There were very few media liaison officers (such as myself) using the facilities.

This list of facilities provided by the World Games Main Press Center is provided as reference information. The things I did need, which were not available to me included:

- MS Office software/email software installed on the same computer
- Scanning equipment for emailing photos and negatives.

Facilities Provided

- a) Fully staffed media center with volunteers and interpreters to provide guidance, advice and assistance.
- b) 8 x Personal working booths provided for a fee (pre-registration required).
- c) Additional workspaces provided for local news media with their own equipment (for a fee).
- d) Communal work area including:
 - 18 x Laptop computers, connected to the internet .
 - 1 of those computers was connected to a printer.
 - 8 x coin/card phone boxes, and phone card machine.
 - 4 x photocopiers.
 - 2 x fax machines.
 - 1 x television
 - Large notice board area for official information
 - Plastic draws for publishing final results of each sport
 - Camera service & repair center.
 - Photo development service – free negative development – usually 2 hours
 - 4 light boxes to view negatives.
 - Refrigerated water, Chinese tea and sports drinks, free
 - Free coffee machine
 - Microwave oven
 - Free lockers
- e) Media Conference area set up with sponsor boards, tables, chair, microphones, etc.

Media Results

Mainstream Media

The information I have regarding the results of mainstream media exposure is incomplete. The FAI, JAA and IWGA may have more comprehensive reports, which we should seek to enhance future planning. The following is an overview of the results.

Television News

- Reuters
- CNN
- BBC World
- Exclusive on Eurovision
- Channel Ten in Australia aired highlights in capital cities
- Other national television coverage

Photographs & Press

- Mainichi Newspaper
- Akita Sakigake, 17 Aug, Souvenir Poster
- Akita Sakigake, 20 Aug, Results
- Yomiuri Shimbun, 27 Aug, Spectator Results
- The Japan Times, Aug. 16, Half Page
- The Japan Times, Aug. 18, Sports Desk
- The Japan Times, Aug. 21, Front Page

Skydiving Media

Articles and photographs were provided to:

- Parachutist
- Skydive Mag
- Para Mag
- Australian Skydiving Magazine
- Skydiving Magazine
- Frittfall
- Canpara
- Air Sports International

Recommendations

I consider the following recommendations to be critical to the success of the IPC's ambitions.

1. Any strategic partnership established by the FAI/IPC, such as that with TWI television production should be highly valued and nurtured at every opportunity. Therefore...
2. The IPC should ideally work more closely with SNTV (rather than Reuters) in the future for mutual benefit.
3. The FAI and IPC media teams should work more closely, with greater cooperation, transparency and consultation about our joint objectives. There are so many synergies and overlaps between television production and television news. The processes, resources and contacts are inextricably linked. There are myriad opportunities to leverage our activities so we achieve more with less.
4. The IPC news media should have its own set of goals, plans, budget and measurements.
5. IPC events should have an independent media center on-site, with access to vital communication technologies.
6. Wherever possible, the IPC should establish independent video dubbing (MiniDV & BetaCam) facilities, along with convenient access to print and negative development facilities.
7. IPC events should be held in a location that makes it easy for the news media to access the site. If this is not possible, all efforts must be made to ensure that footage and pictures are delivered to the media on the same day.
8. A system of measuring results of IPC media activities should be established as a critical element of our work.
9. Establish a logistics database (kept by FAI/IPC secretariat) that records the most relevant details of what technology, personnel and means was used to achieve the goals of each media project. This ensures the knowledge is not lost when personnel change and the information is available to all.
10. Establish strong and fruitful relationships with representatives and decision makers in the media, and maintain contact throughout the year, regardless of competition activity.
11. A source of revenue be sought to cover the expenses of managing the IPCs media activities at all IPC events.
12. The provision and management of facilities and logistics for future IPC events must be addressed. No amount of media skill and contacts will succeed where the event is poorly run.

I understand the IPC internal rules already call for a video tape and photographic library to be established. The following is a list of items needed to run future IPC media activities.

Minimum Technology, Facility & Stock Requirements for IPC Events

Video

- Stock of blank MiniDV tapes
- Stock of blank BetaCam tapes
- Facilities to allow dubbing from MiniDV to MiniDV
- Facilities to allow dubbing from MiniDV to BetaCam

Print

- Stock of 35mm slide film
- Facilities to scan prints and negatives for email
- Access to quick development of film and slides

Computer Hardware & Software

- Internet access
- MS Word and MS Excel
- Email software for sending large attachment files
- Software to scan, manipulate, e-mail negatives & prints

Other

- Photocopier, fax machine
- Mobile phones for effective local communication
- Rental car to move between venues, purchase stock, etc.

Conclusion

I hope the IPC is satisfied with the results we achieved in Japan. Our sport is capable of achieving spectacular results in the future if we can bring all the elements of success together in future IPC events. To do this, we must first address the challenge of management and control of the event facilities and competition logistics. The contrast between the World Air Games and the World Games is a perfect illustration of this point. Only then can we expect to be able to deliver consistent and outstanding media results.

I am sorry I cannot be at the 2002 IPC Meeting to present this report, but I do look forward to continuing to serve the IPC in future event and media activities.

Leanne Knowles
IPC Media Liaison, World Games, Akita, 2001