

Shan Ip Ting Wah is considering hosting a future conference on sports and medicine in his home nation, Mauritius.



SWINDLE IN MAURITIUS

Shan Ip Ting Wah, Sports Editor of the largest newspaper in Mauritius, found himself in trouble after printing a series of articles critical of his country's Olympic Committee (MNOC). The articles claimed that a grant from the IOC support programme "Olympic Solidarity" destined for MNOC projects disappeared without trace. Whatever became of it, he told *Play the Game*, the money did not make it to the sportsmen and women whom it was intended to benefit.

»After I had documented the problem, our Sports and Youth Minister put a block on all further contributions to the MNOC,« said Shan Ip Ting Wah. »The chairman of the organisation then threatened to sue me, but nothing happened in the following six months. I'm not sure if they have a good case.«

Together with English journalist Andrew Jennings, he now plans to contact the IOC's Ethical Committee detailing the allegations.

»I am continuing to work with the case, and am very happy about the new contacts I have made at this conference,« he added. »They are worth just as much as the speeches.«

Shan Ip Ting Wah also participated in the 1997 conference, and is looking into the possibilities of hosting a future event.

Continued need for IOC reform

The International Olympic Committee has recently introduced fifty wide-reaching reforms. IOC member Gerhard Heiberg thinks that this is not enough

By Jonna Toft

Despite the introduction of fifty new reforms after 1999's Salt Lake City bribery scandal, Norwegian IOC member Gerhard Heiberg is far from satisfied. In his contribution to *Play the Game*, he questioned whether the reforms went far enough: »We are getting to the stage where we will be forced to look at the structure of the IOC and ask if it is modern and representative enough,« he said. »We must ask ourselves whether we are working in the correct manner. We should be highly aware of the ethical arguments, and the IOC's Ethical Commission will come to play a highly important role in the future. We must ensure that Europe, North America and Japan do not continue to dominate - we must endeavour to include all continents in our work.«

Gerhard Heiberg was Chairman of the Lillehammer Winter Olympics in 1994, and despite his well-documented scepticism of the IOC he became a member of the organisation soon afterwards. Now he wholeheartedly supports the ideals behind the Olympic movement, and has been known to comment: »Actually, I don't see myself as a member of a mafia-like organisation. It feels quite funny to be in such a position.«

Closed Circle

But how did things get so bad that the IOC was forced to introduce so many reforms in a single year?

»The IOC did not keep up with the times,« he continued. »Some would also say that we did not act responsibly enough. The media was interested in what was happening at the IOC, but we thought that since it was not public money we were dealing with, our accounts could be kept private. We did not act openly. In the past, very few people knew where the IOC's money came from - and where it went to.«

When Juan Antonio Samaranch became IOC Chairman in 1980, one of the main challenges facing the committee was to scrape enough money together to fund the work of the Olympic movement, he said. "The inhabitants of Montreal are still paying for the 1976 Games. Since then, however, the flow of money has grown at a tremendous rate. At the Sydney Olympics, eleven top sponsors paid 550 million dollars to the IOC."

The price of TV rights has rocketed. Before the games began the IOC's income totalled 2.6 billion dollars. While most of this money was shared out between the national and international Olympic committees, a total of 7 percent headed directly to the IOC coffers.

»But something has gone wrong,« continued Heiberg. »With so much money in the system, some have seen the job of hosting the games simply as a chance to improve their country's infrastructure. Money has been misdirected. This has been taking place for years, leading up to the so-called Salt





»We have come a long way, but we must continue to ask whether the IOC's structure is representative enough,« says Gerhard Heiberg

Lake City scandal at the end of 1998.«

In contrast to many of the IOC's critics, Heiberg believes that the reforms carried out in 1999 were entirely relevant and effective. »The Salt Lake City scandal changed the IOC's mindset,« he said. »We undertook an aggressive reform process in which ten members left the organisation more or less voluntarily.«

How does he respond to the fact that although allegedly tainted by corruption, other IOC members such as FIFA's Joseph Blatter and Joao Havelange remain.

»Some people in the IOC simply should not be members of the organisation,« he continued. »But the situation was different when they were nominated. The method in which today's members are chosen makes me confident we are now more protected against the few who put self-interest before that of the movement.«

Open for scrutiny

But are the reforms worth anything - or is the IOC just playing to the gallery?

»I think we have come a long way. The IOC is much more open now,« said Heiberg. »Everyone is aware of the money flowing through the organisation. The IOC's meetings are open to the press and an ethics commission monitors our work. We have rules that state that IOC members may not receive gifts from candidate cities, and we may not visit these cities. The fight against doping was maybe not taken up wholeheartedly in the past. But now we have set aside 25 million dollars to get WADA up and running as an independent doping agency. All in all, I don't think we are doing so bad.«

In Heiberg's opinion, the wide-reaching reforms of last year give the IOC a sound basis to work further on the improvement of its entire structure - a task that the committee's new chairman will undoubtedly have a large influence upon.

»It is very important that we choose the right person to succeed Juan Antonio Samaranch in July,« added Heiberg, without hinting who he feels is favourite for the job. Strong candidates include WADA's Canadian chairman Dick Pound (see pages 6-7) and Belgium's Jaques Rogge. ♦

Boxing threatened with expulsion

So many inexplicable results occurred in the boxing tournament at last year's Sydney Olympics that Gerhard Heiberg is now investigating whether fraud took place. »What occurred in Sydney was entirely unacceptable,« he said. »The IOC is the only body that can do something about it. We will investigate the flow of cash within international amateur boxing and investigate how they choose their judges.«

»We are working towards a new scoring system in which everyone can see how the points have been awarded. There is plenty of work to do, but I hope we can come up with a solution that allows boxing to remain in the Olympic programme,« added Heiberg, who was one of the most vocal objectors to the results in Sydney.

