

The President saw the future

Beijing stunned the world

In the finish of the Olympic preparations, Dr. Tamás Aján, President of the International Weightlifting Federation tried to see the future in World Weightlifting. We wanted to learn what the expectations of the IWF's top official were concerning the imminent world rendezvous. We are now briefly recalling his remarks, along with his reflections now, with the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games behind us.

"With the Olympic Games, China will astound the world..."

"There is no doubt that China indeed stunned the world," Dr. Aján asserted. "In all the countries of the globe the Olympic Games are recognised as having been exceptional. The top-ranking sports officials of the world, who had seen much and set the highest of demands, outbade each other in pronouncing eulogies. It is a general feeling that with the 2008 Games China opened a new chapter in the history of the Olympics. In the future we shall have to speak of 'pre-Beijing' and 'post-Beijing' eras and Olympic Games. This giant country surpassed all expectations giving it all is potential. They spent forty billion dollars

on the Games: nothing was too expensive when it came to being successful. Millions of people were involved: seven hundred thousand volunteers helped the event. Alone in and around the weightlifting venue thousand people were active. For several years before the Games services of the most recognised experts were benefited from. They estab-



Dr. Jacques Rogge, the President of the IOC was a recurrent visitor to the weightlifting competitions

lished an exemplary relationship with the International Olympic Committee and the International Federations. However, Beijing's charm did not only move China forward by decades: albeit indirectly, the whole world can profit from the success achieved."

"We are facing the biggest Olympic Games of all times..."

"In the spring I could say only that we were *expecting* the biggest Games of all times. Now, with Beijing 2008 already behind us, I can confirm that what we saw was indeed *the* biggest Olympic Games of all times. We had been used to tremendous competitions, amazing records and won-

derful championships at any Games but this time it was truly impossible to find even the smallest blemish in the organisation. The weightlifting hall was full from the first moment to the last, and spectators were very enthusiastic. Beijing has indeed set the benchmark extremely high, giving a headache to any future organiser. In fact, the Bei-

jing standards now seem to be unmatchable."

"The Chinese weightlifters are going to be practically invincible..."

"The level of weightlifting in China is well known to the world. For a great

number of years, Chinese lifters have excelled in all major competitions. It was not hard to predict that they would do something extraordinary in the Games if held on the home turf. As far as I was concerned, I expected their 6 male and 4 female lifters to deliver 5 or 6 gold medals. In contrast, each of their four women won, and the men also collected four gold medals. *Li Hongli* lost the gold and became the silver medallist only on account of a difference in body-weight. Only the Olympic champion, *Shi Zhiyong* failed to capture a good placing. All in all, China achieved an outstanding success, this proven by the number of medals won and the points in the unofficial nations' classification.

I was stupefied by the ease they surmounted even the heaviest of weights. And the results speak for themselves. Actually, the Olympic Games made weightlifting in China even more popular than before: millions have grabbed the barbell and further masses are expected to join the sport. Besides,

the conditions provided in that country are ideal and uniquely superb. If we want to look into the future again, it is not too difficult to see China's potential for accomplishments perhaps even bigger than so far."



HRH Prince Albert of Monaco and his accompanying guest enthusiastically rooted for the competitors, including Monaco's Olympian



Mrs. Wang Yan, Competition Manager must be congratulated on a superb job done

“The Olympic weightlifting competitions will bring an unusually profound change of guards...”
“This change of guards, that is the change of generations, did indeed happen. To tell the truth, it was painful and regrettable to watch, since the Athens Olympic Games, many of the superstars of the sport leaving the stage. Mutlu, Zhan Xugang, Dimas, Kakhi-asvilis, Weller, Rezazadeh all finished their careers. At the same time, the gate opened wide to the new talent. Present and future candidates to superstardom came, saw and won. Among the men three of the Olympic champions are still juniors. Of the fifteen champions, only two Chinese girls were able to make an encore of their Olympic success. The competitors who shared the 45 medals awarded in Beijing represent 18 countries. Several nations won their first ever medals. This, as well as the 18 medal-winning countries are the proof of weightlifting being an ever growing and ever more popular sport worldwide. Long Qingquang, Lu Yong, Ilya Ilin, Andrei Aramnau are still very young, yet they have left their mark on the Games as worthy successors of Dimas and his friends. It gives me the pleasant feeling that weightlifting is in for more good and progress in the future.”



Of course, the Beijing Games have raised new questions as well. The IWF President answered them as well.

“You were in close contact with the other leading sports officials during the Games. What did they think of weightlifting?”

“It seems that the Beihang University Weightlifting Hall developed into a favoured meeting point for the officials representing other sports. We had more than once the pleasure of Dr. Jacques Rogge’s company, the President of the International Olympic Committee. We had a lot of VIP guests, celebrities, top governmental and sport leaders, IOC Members, members of Royal families. They declared unanimously that they had come to see weightlifting, a sport they liked.”

“What is your own judgement about the contests at these Games?”

“I think the same attribute that we applied to the organisation goes for the challenges, too. We enjoyed the suspense, the fantastic battles, the competitions that remained open until the last moment. In the absence of ‘old’ stars, the

high standard was assured by the younger lifters and the events will be remembered for long.”

“What else did you like?”

“To tell the truth: everything was extra. I liked the atmosphere in the sports hall, the great crowds and the way they supported the athletes. I am also very proud of the

The wonderful Chinese Olympic champions rooting for their team-mates



Mr. Bernie Ecclestone, the Formula One Boss, admitted that he was a keen fan of weightlifting. Going backstage, he was accompanied by Attila Adámfi, Technical Delegate

number of countries represented – 84 – and the 255 lifters who eventually lined up in the 15 categories. I am very happy that so many nations, eighteen, could boast Olympic medals, and that new countries were registered on this prestigious list. Let me congratulate the nations who celebrated Olympic champions for the first time: Kazakhstan, Belarus and DPR Korea. I also want to mention those whose lifters won medals for the first time: Indonesia and Vietnam. We have spoken of China, but I would also like

to praise the accomplishment of Korea – host of the 2009 World Championships – as they won gold medals for both the men and the women. Jang Mi-Ran was one of the best of all lifters: her world records are truly staggering. Another unforgettable champion is Matthias Steiner, who could thank his victory to an exceptional stamina and perseverance. Winning the +105kg category, he captured glory not only to himself and to Germany but to the whole weightlifting world. I can’t wait to see again Lu Yong, Liao Hui, Sa Jae-Hyuk, Lu yong, Ilya Ilin and Andrei Aramnau, and the women: Chen Yanqing, Pak Hyon Suk and Cao Lei as protagonists of the following years. My special congratulations to

Chen Yanqing and Liu Chunhong who managed to rise to the rank of double Olympic champions already at the third Games with women participation. Also very importantly: I am happy that our mighty efforts in the last four years in the

fight against doping have not been in vain. Out of the 255 competitors one produced a positive result.”
“What’s next?”
“All that happened in Beijing at the Olympic Games left wonderful memories in all people involved in the sport of weightlifting. The path is set and we must walk on. The Beijing Gala showed that consistent and hard work brings the fruit. Nothing more is left for me than to say ‘Thank You’ to everybody. Beijing passed with distinction.”

Jenő Boskovics