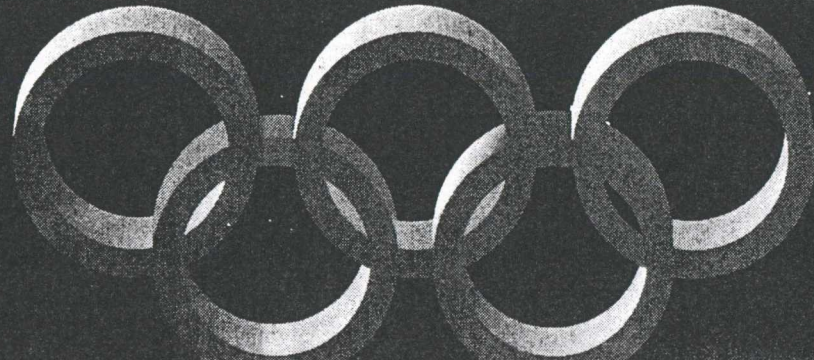


A SHADOW OVER THE OLYMPICS



Olympic Village site located near a known earthquake faultline

Campaign to halt development near ancient battlefield of Marathon

Wrestling hall in the suburb of Ano Liosia 40% over budget

Table tennis and gymnastics hall at Galatsi 40% over budget

Planned rail line to Spata airport scrapped

New Attica highway

Marathon route

Spata airport

Acropolis

Piraeus

Varkiza

Keratea

Laurion

Sounion

ATHENS

The Olympic Games began in ancient Greece at least 3,500 years ago. They were abolished in AD 393 by the Roman emperor Theodosius I but were revived in 1896 when the first modern Games were held in Athens

Sydney could do it again

By John Goodbody
Sports News Correspondent

SYDNEY would be most people's favourite to stage the 2004 Games, should the IOC take them away from Athens.

The 2000 Games were not just the best ever — as Juan Antonio Samaranch, the IOC president, said — they were the best by a long way. The facilities, weather, organisation and, above all, enthusiasm of Australians meant that for many the Games provided one of the most memorable fortnights of their lives.

Most of the facilities would still be available for 2004, while the infrastructure is already in place and the success of the volunteer programme, with 50,000 people helping to run the Games, could be repeated. With relatively little capital spending, the Games would provide a financial bonanza for the city.

Seoul would also be a possibility because the facilities used for the 1988 Games remain, but it is doubtful whether South Korea could commit itself to the organisation only two years after co-hosting the 2002 football World Cup.

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Athens battles to save 2004 Games

From John Carr
in Athens

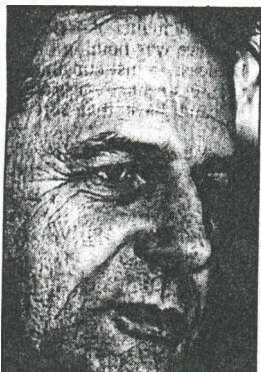
GREECE was struggling to convince the International Olympic Committee yesterday that Athens would be ready to host the Olympic Games in 2004.

After delays in building key infrastructure, rising costs and a general lack of urgency, the Greeks looked decidedly nervous with the arrival in Athens of Jacques Rogge, the IOC's vice-president, on his latest inspection tour.

On his last visit, in February, Mr Rogge was unimpressed by a series of slipping deadlines and told Costas Simitis, the Prime Minister, that any more delays in the preparations for the 2004 Games would be inexcusable.

Now, despite the completion of infrastructure works such as a new £2 billion airport and progress on a northern Athens ring road, Mr Rogge is expected to issue a further warning. Last week, when the media interpreted a letter of his to Costas Kartalis, the Culture Ministry's special secretary for the Olympics, as praise for progress in preparations, Mr Rogge was quick to reply: "It was not a letter of praise. It was a technical document on the progress of the activities. We will render judgment at the end of the visit."

On arrival in Athens, Mr Rogge made no statements, but plunged into a flurry of meetings with officials. A still unanswered question is whether Athens might yet manage to lose the Olympiad. The possibility seemed real last year, when the IOC threatened to withdraw the Games. It took the appointment of Yanna Daskalaki-Angelopoulos, one



'We will render judgment at the end of the visit'

— Jacques Rogge

of Europe's wealthiest women, with little time for meddling politicians, to knock preparations into shape.

Contracts for building the Olympic Village are expected to be awarded next week after months of delay, the result of dithering between government ministers and contractors over who should get the best jobs.

Two days ago, rather than face further criticism from the IOC, the four contracting consortia slashed their combined budget by 9 per cent. However, the original budget of some £2.2 billion has crept up to £2.4 billion as the Government is only just realising that it is not only the bricks and mortar that have to be taken care of, but that the police, ambulance service, coastguard and fire brigade are also all in dire need of modernisation.

"Extra costs have come up," Evangelos Venizelos, the Culture Minister, admitted recently. Mrs Daskalaki-Angelopoulos, however, claims that her organising committee has managed to save up to £60 million by cutting "unnecessary constructions".

Fani Palli-Petralia, an opposition conservative former Athletics Minister, said that spending on key venues such as the wrestling hall in the disadvantaged suburb of Ano Liosia, the table tennis and gymnastics hall at Galatsi and a big football stadium in Crete was already up by about 40 per cent. Other opposition deputies pointed out that, 35 years after Montreal hosted the Games, that city was still paying the debts it had incurred.

Daunting problems remain. Three years before the opening, Athens still lacks a modern public transport system, especially in suburban railways. Plans to include a rail line to Spata airport were hit by a major road contractor with extensive media interests who feared a loss of revenue from the road tolls. Northern Athens, except for the genteel suburb of Kifissia, lacks the hotels that will be needed to house the thousands of visitors. Last month Nikos Christodoulakis, the Development Minister, announced plans to build a few dozen new suburban hotels. Yet even the planned Olympic Village will be sitting dangerously near a known earthquake fault line.

The Athens 2004 committee is under fire from other quarters. Archaeologists and environmentalists have joined forces to fight plans for an Olympic sailing and rowing centre abutting the ancient battlefield of Marathon. The committee claims that the environs of Marathon were ruined by illegal building years ago.

Failure to stamp out terror group threatens athletes

By Richard Beeston
Diplomatic Editor

GREECE'S failure to tackle terrorism could threaten the safety of thousands of athletes and millions of tourists when they descend on Athens for the 2004 Olympic Games.

Nearly a year after gunmen belonging to the November 17 group murdered Brigadier Stephen Saunders, the British military attaché in Athens, the killers are still at large and hopes are fading that they will ever be caught.

The left-wing terror group has killed 22 people since 1975, but there are suspicions that it is being shielded by individuals in the ruling Pasok party.

Officially the Foreign Office insists that Scotland Yard anti-terrorist detectives working on the case are receiving full co-operation from the Greek police. Privately, a source in London close to the investigation said yesterday: "The Greeks look like they are serious about catching the murderers, but there is growing frustration that no real progress is being made."

For the authorities in Athens the Saunders murder inquiry is seen as an important test of their resolve. The outcome is being watched carefully by the Americans, the largest contributing nation at the Olympics.

George Tenet, the CIA director, recently warned Athens that it had a long way to go

before Washington would be satisfied. Any threat of more terrorist attacks would not only affect attendance at the Games, but also jeopardise vital sponsorship from American-based multinationals.

"The Olympics are a major vulnerability," the American intelligence chief told US Senators in February. "They need to be seen not just as cleaning up old cases, but creating the kind of capability that is needed to assure the protection of all Olympic athletes."

In the past November 17 has targeted vulnerable individuals, such as foreign diplomats or Greek businessmen, and there are doubts that they would attack athletes or tourists indiscriminately.

However, Wayne Merry, a former Pentagon and State Department official who served in Athens, said the real danger was that other international terrorist groups would see Athens as a soft target.

The Greek authorities argue that they are serious about tackling terrorism. This week a new anti-terrorist law was presented to parliament that would strengthen police powers, offer witnesses protection and establish special courts for trying terrorist offences.

The Greeks point out that even the most secure events are open to attack, and recall the bombing incident at the Atlanta games, which killed one spectator. The suspect has still not been arrested.