The Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

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This is a transcript from a lecture given to the SEQATV group on Friday 3rd November 2000 by Richard VK4XRL.

Its now been 4 weeks since I have returned from what was billed as the biggest games ever and as you have already been told the most successful games to date. I was associated with the games for a total of seven weeks. My first reaction having walked into the main technical area on the first day was, how was I going to learn all this in five weeks. It was my second Olympics, the first being Mexico in 1968. How things have changed, we had only two tape machines and four technical staff plus three support staff including engineers. Well I believe the Sydney 2000 Games was the biggest and best games and was a tribute to all those who put it together. It was now my role (as well as my colleagues), as far as the host broadcaster was concerned, to make it work. Let's have a look at some of the statistics;

1. 10,300 athletes
2. 5100 support personal
3. From 200 countries
4. More than 21,00 international media representatives
5. More sports, a total of 28

The venues were most impressive being purpose built for the games. The Sydney Olympic Park Venue is situated at Homebush Bay and was the site for 15 of the 28 sports.

Olympic Identity and Accreditation Cards were issued to all staff either prior to arriving in Australia or validated at one of the designated accreditation Centers. Different coding on the passes allowed personnel different access to venue areas.

The host broadcaster was the responsibility of SOBO (Sydney Olympic Broadcast Organization). This was carried out with some 3500 staff with approx. 200 who were full time workers in Executive, Production, Tech Operations and Engineering, Broadcast information, Support Services, Venue Management, Business Affaires and Booking.

From the 13th September to the 1st October it was the worlds largest broadcast production organization. SOBO's mission was;

" *Our mission is to provide outstanding levels of service to Rights Holding Broadcasters, and to produce more than 3400 hours of live, visually stunning and technically superior coverage of the Games of the New Millennium, that captures the unique beauty and character of Sydney and Australia.* "

SOBO at a Glance

1123 Camera Positions
70 Character Generators
1823 Television monitors
58 OB Vans/Fly away kits
451 VTR's

IBC at a Glance

70,000 sq. meter's
Operation 24hours/day
Home for 15,000 plus broadcast personnel
Accommodated an average working population of between 7500 and 8500 a day
22 meter RF tower known as Cockatoo Tower
Microwave Dish mounting for Channel 7 to Epping studios. It happened that these link systems were made and tested by myself while employed at Mitec.
Blimp and Helicopter tracking facilities; to name only a few.

SOBO TECH was the heart of the IBC and was where I was stationed for the seven weeks of my contract. This area contained three vital areas for the host broadcaster operation.

1. TDC (Transmission Distribution Center)
2. Commentary Switching System
3. Video Library and Archives

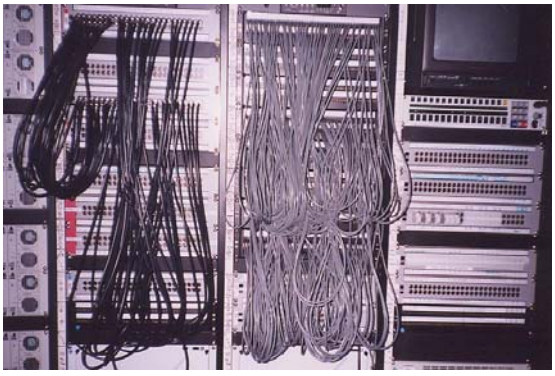
The TDC featured the world's largest video screen containing more than 400 monitors. The wall was more than 50meters long and approx. 2.5 meters high. Within TDC, SOBO staff worked very closely with Telstra staff. Telstra was responsible for bringing the signals from the venues to the IBC and provided a diversity standby line in case of problems. This was not so for the athletics stadium and superdome, where copper cables were used to carry SDI signals (270mb).

The input signals to TDC consisted of;

59 Multilaterals, (46Analog and 13 Digital)
121 Venue Unilaterals, (77Analog and 44Digital)
70 Non-Venue Unilaterals, (35Analog and 35Digital)

Multilateral signals were identified, level checked and equalized in the contribution area of the TDC. The signals were then synchronized and the format converted to either PAL or SDI, depending upon the format in which they originated at the Venue. Pal signals were distributed with analog audio, and SDI signals were distributed with embedded audio, broadcasters therefore having a choice of format for receiving the multilateral signals. The multilateral signal "bundle" consisted of the following VandA package;

40 Video and Audio, (12 Digital and 17 Analog operations)
2 Colour-black and Test-signal
1 Timecode
1200 plus co-axial cables
130 X 25 pair audio cables



Switching of the required venue circuits, to the required distribution channel, was carried out by patching both the Video and Stereo audio signals via patch panels. The required radio audio signals were also patched from within the same area.
Outbound national and international VandA signals were monitored in the transmission area of the TDC. Again signals were either PAL or SDI or some other compressed digital format. The transmission area was manned on a 24-hour-a-day basis with ongoing monitoring of transmission paths, with Telstra providing fault restoration if required. Signals from Transmission TDC, or direct from studios went to the Satellite distribution area. This area consisted of 15 up-links to various satellites around the world. Also the SNG downlinks were situated in this area.

That about wraps it up for now, as you can see it was a very big operation and I felt very privileged in being part of it.

See you all on ATV.

Richard VK4XRL