

Olympic Games

Philip Seale

“A funny thing happened on Bondi beach yesterday. There we all were having a party, dancing the macarena, grooving to Zorba the Greek, weaving a slow motion Mexican wave to the music from Swan Lake, when all of a sudden someone started a game of volleyball.” (SMH 26/9/00)

That was my experience of the Olympic games. Sure long days. In fact 30 long days without a break, however the atmosphere was electric for the whole time. No sign of the protesters who had threatened the event. Just 10,000 people there to have a good time and cheer on the Aussies.

My name is Philip Seale and I worked for SOBO, the Sydney Olympic Broadcasting Organisation, during the Sydney Olympics. SOBO was the host broadcaster for the entire games. They employed 58 outside broadcast facilities and over 3,500 staff. I lived in Riverstone for the first 24 years of my life and my mother is still there. My full time job is working for Network Ten as a Technical Director in the Sydney Studios. Ten kindly agreed to release me for the duration of the Olympics.

I worked at the Beach Volleyball at Bondi Beach as a technical operations centre supervisor. This involved ensuring all the television pictures and sound were of a high quality and overseeing the transmission of pictures to the Homebush International Broadcast Centre. All pictures were sent there via fibre optic cable for distribution to the international rights holders. I was also responsible to the other rights' holders on site. These included NBC (USA), Televisa (Spain) and Globo (Mexico). Each of these companies had their own cameras to supplement their coverage and I provided them with the circuits required for their broadcast.

The crew at Bondi was truly international in make up. The majority were Canadian. Some were from the USA having had experience in Atlanta. The rest were English. Australians were definitely in the minority. For an event of this scale there are nowhere near enough experienced crew in Australia.

During the term of the games I was also called to assist at the Entertainment Centre. The crew there was made up almost entirely of Russian TV crew. It was found that they had a slightly different way of working than the rest of the world. We were called on to assist them to produce television pictures to the standards required by international broadcasters. This was quite difficult as my understanding of Russian was only slightly worse than their grasp of English.

On completion of the games I returned to work at Channel Ten. With a bit of luck I will be able to head to Salt Lake City to work on the winter Olympics in two years time. I only hope you can dance the macarena in the snow as well as you could on the sands of Bondi Beach.