

by Liang Lijuan


He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

何振梁与中国奥林匹克梦：英文 / 梁丽娟 著；
(美) 布劳内尔 (Brownell, S.) 译. —北京：外文出版社，2007

ISBN 978-7-119-04843-7

I. 何… II. ①梁… ②布… III. 何振梁—回忆录—英文 IV. K825.47

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2007) 第 084545 号

何振梁与中国奥林匹克梦

作 者：梁丽娟

翻 译：Susan Brownell

责任编辑：杨春燕 刘芳念

封面设计：蔡 荣

印刷监制：张国祥

© 2007 外文出版社

出版发行：

外文出版社 (中国北京百万庄大街 24 号)

邮政编码 100037 <http://www.flp.com.cn>

电 话：008610-68320579 (总编室)

008610-68995852 (发行部)

008610-68327750 (版权部)

制 版：

外文出版社照排中心

印 制：

汇鑫印务有限公司

开本：1/16 印张：35.5

2007 年第 1 版第 1 次印刷

(英)

ISBN 978-7-119-04843-7

13800

7-E-3781S

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and
China's Olympic Dream**

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First Edition 2007

Author: Liang Lijuan
Translator: Susan Brownell

ISBN 978-7-119-04843-7

© Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, China, 2007

Published by Foreign Languages Press

24 Baiwanzhuang Road, Beijing 100037, China

Website: <http://www.flp.com.cn>

Email Address: Info@flp.com.cn

Sales@flp.com.cn

Distributed by China International Book Trading Corporation

35 Chegongzhuang Xilu, Beijing 100044, China

P. O. Box 399, Beijing, China

Printed in the People's Republic of China

**Preface from the President
of the International Olympic Committee,
Jacques Rogge**

For Publication in *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*

I am particularly pleased to write the preface for a book dedicated to a great defender of the Olympic cause and a wise man of many qualities. The Olympic Movement would not be in the position it enjoys today in our society without the work of men like He Zhenliang.

It is to the lady who knows him best, his wife, Liang Lijuan, a former well-known journalist, whom we owe *He Zhenliang and China's Olympic Dream*. The book recounts how her husband, who originally trained as an electrical engineer, became involved in sports administration in the late 1950s, something he himself describes as “a happy accident,” saying that “it was not me who chose sport, but sport that chose me.”

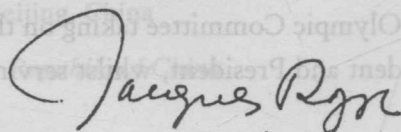
Throughout the pages of this book, you will discover the story of a man who, for the last fifty years, has always used his firm convictions to serve his country and the Olympic Movement, a man who has been attentive to others, always listening and serving people with discretion and modesty, making his own the fundamental values of sport — mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity between peoples — which are the values of life.

He Zhenliang is today the longest-serving and senior member of the Olympic Movement in China and one of China's foremost and most recognized sports administrators. He has played a key role within the Chinese Olympic Committee taking on the roles of Secretary General, Vice-President and President, whilst serving in various capacities and positions of

responsibility on national and continental organisations, such as Advisor to the National Sports Federation of China and Vice-President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).

Since 1981, he has brought all his valuable experience and knowledge of sports organisation to the IOC, serving on several commissions, and in particular the Executive Board several times — holding once the IOC Vice-Presidency. For two years, I have had the privilege to work closely with him on the Executive Board, benefiting from all his know-how. For more than 10 years, he has worked tirelessly for the defence and promotion of the Olympic ideal from sporting and cultural points of view, assuming the chairmanship of the Cultural Commission then the Commission for Culture and Olympic Education, and inviting his IOC colleagues to understand the importance of the combination of sports, culture and education. He Zhenliang has devoted virtually his whole life to the Olympic Movement and the principles it stands for. But one of his greatest achievements is the successful candidature of Beijing for the Games — his life-long dream — contributing to a milestone in the history of the Olympic Movement. As we all look forward to 8 August 2008 when the Olympic flame is lit for the first time in China, inviting us to celebrate “One World, One Dream,” this biography is, in some ways, a key to better understanding Chinese sporting diplomacy from the middle of the 20th century to the present day.

The IOC is proud to have He Zhenliang, a deserving and extraordinary man, as one of its members. Thank you, He Zhenliang, for all you have done and for everything that you will do and give to the Olympic Movement and sport in the years to come.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Jacques Rogge". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial 'J'.



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIQUE

Lausanne, le 29 novembre 1999

Peu après le retour de la République Populaire de Chine dans la famille olympique en 1979, He Zhenliang a été coopté, en 1981, membre du Comité International Olympique. Depuis, il est de tous les membres du C.I.O. un de ceux que je considère le plus proche de moi. Son implication dans le Mouvement olympique est à la mesure de sa loyauté envers la Charte Olympique et envers son pays, c'est-à-dire totale.

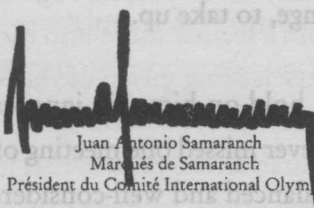
Sa grande culture, sa parfaite connaissance de plusieurs langues, son expérience scientifique d'ingénieur et son expérience politique sont un atout précieux dans les différentes missions que le C.I.O. lui a confiées, et continue de lui confier. Elu membre de la Commission exécutive en 1985, il a été réélu régulièrement en accord avec nos règles.

Il a aussi su donner à la commission culturelle, dont il est le président depuis 1995, un essor en accord avec la définition de l'Olympisme qui est le sport plus la culture. Rien ne lui paraît impossible pour éveiller, même chez les plus indifférents, de l'intérêt pour l'art. Ce que certains considéreraient comme une impasse, est chez lui une invitation à la créativité quand ce n'est pas un défi à relever.

Le temps n'a pas de prise sur lui. Il ignore la fatigue ou, feint très bien de l'ignorer. Il n'a jamais manqué ni une réunion de la commission exécutive, ni une session, y apportant toujours son sens de la mesure et la pondération de ses remarques.

Il a travaillé ces derniers mois, avec nous tous dans la Commission C.I.O. 2000 sur les réformes à apporter au Comité International Olympique pour que cet organisme soit non seulement mieux adapté à la transformation de la société contemporaine, mais pour qu'il serve toujours au mieux les idéaux olympiques qui sont de contribuer à offrir un monde pacifique et meilleur à la jeunesse qui bâtira le monde de demain.

Ecrire une biographie n'est certes pas une tâche aisée. Comment condenser toute une vie en quelques pages de lecture ? Je voudrais remercier l'auteur. Il est bon pour les jeunes générations d'avoir des points de repère pour mieux comprendre l'héritage que nous leur transmettons, et pour modestement leur servir de modèle.



Juan Antonio Samaranch
Marqués de Samaranch
Président du Comité International Olympique

Lausanne, 29 November 1999

Not long after the return of the People's Republic of China to the Olympic family in 1979, He Zhenliang was co-opted, in 1981, as a member of the International Olympic Committee. Since then he has been among the members of the IOC one of those whom I consider the closest friend. His involvement in the Olympic movement is in proportion with his loyalty to the Olympic Charter and to his country. That is to say, his involvement is total.

His great culture, his perfect knowledge of several languages, his scientific experience as an engineer, and his political experience are precious resources in the different missions the IOC has entrusted him with and continues to entrust to him. Being elected as a member of the Executive Board of the IOC in 1985, he has been regularly reelected in accordance with our rules.

He has given to the Cultural Commission, of which he has been Chairman since 1995, a great momentum in accord with the definition of Olympism spirit, which is sport plus culture. For him nothing seems impossible to arouse even among the most indifferent, an interest in art. What some consider as an impasse, is for him an invitation to his creativity, if not an outright challenge, to take up.

Time has no hold on him. He ignores fatigue, or pretends well to ignore it. He has never missed one meeting of the Executive Board, nor one Session, and his balanced and well-considered speeches have been a great contribution to our work overall.

Recently, he labored together with us on the "IOC 2000 Commis-

sion" to reform the IOC in order to enable our organization not only to be better adapted to the transformations of contemporary society, but also to enable it to better serve the Olympic ideal. This ideal is to contribute to present a peaceful and better world to the young people on whose shoulders the world's future will rest.

Writing a biography is certainly no easy task. How is it possible to condense an entire life into a few pages of text? I would like to thank the author. It is good for the younger generation to have some points of reference in order to better comprehend the heritage that we pass on to them, and in all modesty to serve as a model for them.

Juan Antonio Samaranch

Marques de Samaranch

President* of the International Olympic Committee

*Juan Antonio Samaranch has been president of the International Olympic Committee from 1980 to 2001.

Foreword

Years ago He Zhenliang asked me to compose some calligraphy to commemorate our friendship, which stretches back several decades. I asked him what he wanted me to write. Without hesitation he answered, "Knowledge is boundless." The man, standing before me, has been a leader of the State Sports Commission for many years, but he still looks to work like the young man who was transferred to the Central Committee of the Youth League where I was in 1950, full of youthful spirit, never tiring of learning. I said, "I can't write down these words for you as if I am a senior teaching you a lesson." He said, "You will always be my senior. Besides, I truly feel there were so many things to learn, I can never stop learning." Having written these words, I felt I had not expressed myself sufficiently, so I wrote on another scroll: "Sport diplomacy owes everything to you." I felt this was not an exaggeration because, as a colleague in the same ministry working together during a good portion of our lives, I am aware of his growth of maturity and strength of personality. Together we have been tempered by the "cultural revolution" which had caused huge damages to sports in China, and together we have experienced the countless brilliant moments in Chinese sports that have made people proud and jubilant, both in China and around the world.

For several decades while working within the State Sports Commission, He Zhenliang gradually developed, through the Party's cultivation and his own hard work, from a regular cadre into the deputy minister and deputy secretary of the Party leading group of the State Sports Commission. In sport diplomacy, he is an eyewitness to the marching of Chinese sport onto the world arena. In all the great events in the annals of China's external relations regarding sports, including the opposition to the "Two Chinas" in international sports organizations in the 1950s, the founding of the Games of the New Emerging Forces in the 1960s, the fight to regain our rightful place in the IOC in the 1970s, the hosting of the 1990 Eleventh

Asian Games in Beijing, and the bid for the games of the XXVII Olympiad in 2000 and the games of the XXIX Olympiad in 2008, his dedication has been nothing less than total. He also made a tremendous effort for starting up and promoting Cross-Straits sports exchanges.

In 1979, China returned to the Olympic community as a member of the IOC. He's outstanding work earned the respect of his colleagues. Having been a member of the IOC Executive Board (including one term of vice president) for sixteen years, he became the first person from China to occupy such an important post in an international sport organization. It is worth mentioning that in several of these elections his name was put forth without opposition. He Zhenliang is now an influential leading figure in world sport. He has made important contributions toward upholding and promoting the role and status of China and other developing countries in international sport. As a sport leader of a socialist country, he also has played an active role in reforming the IOC, an institution with over a hundred years of tradition.

In my 50-year career as a leader in Chinese sports, I personally observed the maturity of a large number of people in sports with outstanding talent. He Zhenliang was one of them. True, this has something to do with the fact that he had opportunities to be forged in important diplomatic events of the Party and state, but another important reason is that he himself loves to learn, is a diligent thinker, self-disciplined, and upright. I am confident that readers will find much important historical information about China's sports diplomacy in this book, also could find useful inspirations in the course of He Zhenliang's growth to maturity and in his deeds.

Rong Gaotang

荣高棠

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Previously, He Zhenliang had only known that he was born on December 29, 1929, in a village called Tiantuli in the vicinity of the Wu Bridge in the suburbs of Wuxi city, Jiangsu Province. With a little luck, this time he found a few warmhearted old people from the surrounding neighborhood, and, relying on their pieced-together recollections, finally found the two-story building where the He family had resided. In the past, the house in the village had no address numbers, but today the building is known as Tiantuli No. 7, Yellow Lane, Wu Bridge. In those days it had been completely surrounded by a village of one-story houses, and the former home of the He family was one of the most grand residences in the village. Now it was dilapidated and seemingly on the verge of collapse. As with many old structures, it had been divided into several shops and residences.