

# NINTH SOUTH PACIFIC GAMES IN PORT MORESBY

*Athletes' procession.*



Continuing a tradition which began in Suva, Fiji in 1963, the ninth South Pacific Games were staged from September 7th to the 21st in Papua New Guinea, the largest and most populous of the Pacific states taking part in these Games, which are reserved for developing countries in the region.

*By Brian Wightman*

## REGIONAL GAMES

The South Pacific Games are perhaps the happiest, most relaxed and colourful of all regional games. Temperatures rarely drop below 20 C anywhere in the region; and this warmth seems transmitted to the people themselves, who this year had for the games logo the bird of paradise and as the mascot the kapul, the Pidgin word for cuscus, the furry little animal found in many parts of Papua New Guinea.

Throughout the games, people could be seen performing their traditional 'sing-sings' of welcome, well in evidence at the kaleidoscopically colourful opening ceremony, attended by Prince Andrew, the Duke of York, as well as Messrs Kevan Gosper, ONOC President and Philip Coles, IOC members in Australia, Tay Wilson and Seiuli Paul Wallwork, IOC members in New Zealand and Western Samoa.

Sixteen countries took part in the games, which were given IOC patronage: American Samoa, the Cook Islands, Fiji,

Guam, the Solomon Islands, Western Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, and of course, the host country, which all have NOCs, as well as French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, the Norfolk Islands, the Northern



*The 9th South Pacific Games: a unique competitive occasion for small islands without big means.*



Marianas, Niue and Wallis and Futuna. For the first time these South Pacific Games were held in two centres, Port Moresby and Lae. Although this presented some difficulties, it meant that both places benefit from new facilities. Port Moresby, the capital, hosted competitions in athletics, basketball, cricket, lawn tennis, netball, rugby, softball, squash, swimming and yachting (boardsailing and hobie cat). The sports staged in Lae were boxing, golf, lawn bowls, soccer, table tennis, volleyball and weightlifting.

The sports competitions were very keenly contested. Competitions are all in accordance with IF regulations, although many people would not consider performances to be high in comparison with world

## *Women were well represented.*

standards. Nevertheless, standards are rapidly improving, to a large extent thanks to the input of Olympic Solidarity assistance. With the advantage of local facilities and their home crowd behind them the Papua New Guinea delegation won the most gold medals and had a total of almost a hundred. There were several outstanding individuals but a special mention should go to D. Lacombe (Tahiti) who won ten gold medals in swimming.

Drug tests were conducted for the first time at the games in co-operation with the IAAF and IWF. However, results could not be confirmed during the Games because of the distance from laboratories.



## **FINANCE AND CONSTRUCTION**

A separate Games village/housing project was specially constructed to house the athletes. Twenty-five thousand meals daily were prepared for competitors and team officials !Overseas governments also helped with some of the sports constructions. China built the main sports complex with an interest-free loan for opening and closing ceremonies for 9 million Kina. Japan built the Lae complex for K 16 million plus K 300,000 for sports equipment. Korea donated sports equipment to the tune of K 30,000. France gave a grant of K 55,500 for sailboards; Britain provided some personnel. The government of Papua New Guinea was the most important sponsor of the Games with a cash allocation of K 3.69 million. (1 Kina = approximately US 1/10 cent). It also allowed the South Pacific Games to be exempt from taxation and

duty and contributed a further more than K 3 million through the departments or ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, Police, Defence, Health and Works.

Together with sponsorship and fundraising, K 46 million was raised, a magnificent achievement. The South Pacific Games are really the foundation of sport for the island nations. They have acted as the lever to provide sports facilities in many

of the countries. This, together with development of technical expertise has increased public awareness in the region to the possibilities that sport can offer. South Pacific athletes will gather in August 1993 in Vanuatu for the next South Pacific Mini Games and then in 1995 in Tahiti (French Polynesia) for the 10th South Pacific Games.

B. W



*A numerous and enthusiastic crowd came to support the athletes.*