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# [Andrew Jennings: An Olympic hero](#)

By [Ed Willes](#) Fri, Oct 9 2009 [Ed Willes](#)

COPENHAGEN — Andrew Jennings, who's made a career out of exposing corruption on the International Olympic Committee, admits that under Jacques Rogge, the IOC doesn't present the rich source of material it did just eight years ago.

But the indefatigable British journalist is still on the watch and still isn't completely convinced by the new face the IOC presents to the world. Before he talked with *The Province*, Jennings provided one of the highlights of Rogge's lifeless, session-ending press conference on Friday when he asked the IOC president about the presence of the infamous Jean-Marie Weber at the IOC hotel in Copenhagen. Weber is one of the central figures in the ISL bribing scandal which rocked European soccer this summer.

Rogge said he'd look into the matter.

My interview with Jennings, who's written three books on Olympic corruption, basically consisted of one question: Has the IOC changed under Rogge? We don't have space for all of his answers but here are the highlights.

"There's less corruption than there was," he began. "The vote-buying, which I'm sure still happens, is more discreet. But there can't be as many (crooked IOC members) because they did throw a lot out who were walking around with their hands out (after the site selection scandals surrounding the Salt Lake Winter Games in 2002).

"So we still have some corrupt people. But when you look at what went on this week, what an ineffectual, unimportant bunch of people (that would be the IOC). Have you ever met such a boring bunch of non-people? All they've got is a fantastic franchise to bestow so people like (U.S. president Barack) Obama and (former British Prime Minister Tony) Blair will show up here and it makes them feel important. It's not them. It's the money.

"We don't need them. In seven years, most of them won't do anything and in seven years, they'll get the

best tickets in Rio. In the meantime, they'll enjoy a well-looked-after life. We don't need them. If they evaporated tomorrow, they wouldn't be missed."

Jennings then noted that, on the current IOC board, some 70 of the 113 members are the appointments of former IOC chief Juan Antonio Samaranch of Spain who, according to Jennings, "institutionalized" corruption in the IOC.

"Prior to Samaranch there were a lot of buffoons there but it's not illegal to be a buffoon," Jennings said. "It's not illegal to be an aristocrat. OK, they were right-of-centre and they gave the Games to some wrong regimes and that can be criticized. But Samaranch changed that by bringing in all these people. It was the old Mafia thing. 'I'm the boss. You support me. You can do what you want.' "

Among those are long-time Jennings targets Joao Havelange and Sepp Blatter of FIFA. The ISL scandal centred around payments of over \$100 million made from 1989 to 2001 by the world's largest marketing firm to sports officials and others involved in TV and marketing rights. ISL held media and marketing rights for both the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics. Rogge denied vehemently that any IOC members were involved in the scandal.

"Thank god the story of Salt Lake (the bid scandal) got into the hand of news reporters who are hungry beasts. They're instructed by their editors to get the (expletive) story. And it got out of the hands of the sports-news specialists who swap access for silence. So they went through this bogus reform process and a year of meetings. They got rid of some very corrupt people but they didn't get them all. There are some in that room who are corrupt and have been named as corrupt. We've named Havelange and Blatter on BBC television and we've never heard a word from their lawyers.

"There's a man who's been at the heart of the biggest corruption in world sport (Havelange, the long-time head of FIFA, who's Brazilian) and he's pitching Rio to the IOC. They're a bit careless. You can't feel they've taken it very seriously. They just did what they had to do (as far as reforms)."

Jennings will be speaking at the University of British Columbia in early December.

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