

THE MAN WHO

\$OLD

THE OLYMPIC\$



SCHEMING GENIUS: André Guelfi

SAY WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT GUELFİ, HE BRINGS US TERRIFIC SCANDALS – POLITICAL, FINANCIAL AND OLYMPIC.

The man who created the modern Olympics sits on his sunny terrace celebrating his ninetieth year and gazes North towards the coast of Sicily. André Guelfi's out of jail and living in Malta but hasn't been invited to Beijing.

The Olympic officials he fashioned and enriched have curtained him off in their minds. The wizened little fellow with the over-muscled right arm and a reserved seat marked 'Honorary IOC President' wouldn't be there if it wasn't for Guelfi's money-laundering skills and political pull. But he doesn't write and he doesn't call.

Guelfi is owed much by every hand that signed the Maastricht Treaty that bound Europe together in 1992. Francois Mitterand and Helmut Kohl owe him too but they'll be absent – one dead, the other disgraced. The chaps said to process the sticky stuff coming out of the Afghan mountains remember Guelfi fondly – but they won't get visas.

Guelfi the entrepreneur captivated the fishermen who sailed his sardine boats, acquired a lot of money, somehow, in turbulent, newly-independent Morocco, impressed his rivals at Le Mans in 1953 and on the race circuit, was a playboy at his St Trop mansion, married a niece of French President Georges Pompidou

In this exclusive article for All Sports Magazine, the ace British investigative reporter pieces together the jigsaw of corruption in the International Olympic Committee through the life and times of André Guelfi, the man who could fix anything. **BY ANDREW JENNINGS**

and built a staggering property portfolio in Paris.

Few have been so versatile in amassing money and powerful friends. Guelfi didn't have any ideological drive to privatise the Olympics but they were a stagnating, under-valued asset and when he got into synch with his German partner Horst Dassler (son of Adidas founder Adi Dassler) they would be burnished, certified drug-free and brought to market.

Dassler was expanding from his iconic family sportswear firm into sports marketing and helping bankroll the Russians organising their 1980 Games. Then Jimmy Carter pulled the US plug, sponsors headed south and west, but not east.

Guelfi owned the Le Coq Sportive business with French rights to the Adidas logos and saw his chance. He put up the money Dassler needed and rescued the Muscovites who promptly swung their political bloc behind Dassler's nominee for IOC president. And there were no positive drug tests. The Olympic bosses found this

bolstered business and buried several more positives at their next event in Los Angeles.

One of the IOC's best-kept secrets was that their ambitious vice-president Juan Antonio Samaranch was a fervent fascist who'd bowed and scraped for 37 years to General Franco, rising to become the murderous dictator's sports minister. That didn't trouble the IOC members who declared Samaranch their Maximum Leader in 1980 in return for pledges of moolah like they'd never known it.

With Samaranch in place and poised to grant the partners exclusive marketing rights to the Games, Dassler and Guelfi went on a promotional spree. Next to be promoted was sticky-fingered Primo Nebiolo to the captaincy of international track and field in 1981 and a few months later FIFA got itself a new general secretary.

Dassler picked Sepp Blatter for the job, describing him as 'one of us,' and Guelfi, breathing darkly, persuaded the incumbent to walk. Dassler had previously been generous with brown envelopes on

the eve of the Brazilian adventurer Joao Havelange becoming president of FIFA in 1974. He's still an IOC member. So is Blatter.

Guelfi ponied up another bundle of cash and Dassler launched his International Sports and Leisure company, effortlessly acquiring the incredibly lucrative marketing rights to the Olympics, the football World Cup and the world athletics championships. The IOC and the sports federations dripped millions and blazers everywhere awarded themselves imperial lifestyles. Athletes mostly travelled coach.

Hoping to hold these contracts forever, Dassler set up a network of offshore accounts to channel kickbacks to the blazers. Their existence was eventually revealed in a courtroom in Zug, Switzerland, in March this year. Between 1991 and 2001 alone, ISL paid £70 million in bribes.

Studying the Franco dictatorship at close quarters, Samaranch learned the advantages of institutional corruption. In order to privatise sport it had to be corrupted so Samaranch diluted his royal, honest and Gulf billionaire members with a brigade of Olympic kleptomaniacs. They toured the planet shaking down cities bidding to host the Games and feeling up the local frauleins – few can forget the legendary 'Mr Wandering Hands' – and refused to dine without consulting the Guide

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Michelin. The affluent Guelfi occupied a lakeside villa in 'Cité Olympique' Lausanne with sublime views across Lac Lemman to Evian and snow-tipped mountains. Guelfi enjoyed it but Samaranch coveted it and for a mere \$4.4 million of IOC money it became the site for Samaranch's monument to himself, the Olympic Museum.

The plunderers stole too much too often and the inevitable cash 'n' sex for votes scandal in Salt Lake was deemed so abusive to American sponsors that Senate

SALUTING THE DIKTAT: The classic shot of Juan Antonio Samaranch (fourth from right) giving the Nazi salute at a fascist ceremony in Barcelona in 1974, months before General Franco died.

event? And was it dope-tested? As Samaranch expanded his Olympic empire, recruiting the new post-Soviet nations of Central Asia, he flew in Guelfi's private jet. They became familiar faces among shady people in Uzbekistan and flew to Beijing for Samaranch to tutor his hosts in Olympic bidding and Guelfi to do business. "We were the masters of the universe," Guelfi told a reporter.

Guelfi made friends with Uzbek President Islam Karimov, launching a bid to stage the 2000 Olympics in Tashkent – and nobody at the IOC

dared giggle. Then he collaborated with senior Russian IOC member Vitaly Smirnov, who shrugged off a serious reprimand for his conduct in the Salt Lake scandal, to back an Olympic bid by St Petersburg. Guelfi and Smirnov, who emerged as a wealthy man once the Soviet empire evaporated, acquired adjoining luxury homes in a gated compound in the village of Versoix, between Lausanne and Geneva.

Over two decades Samaranch awarded the once-coveted Gold Olympic Order to the likes of the Pope (big battalions), Boris Yeltsin (to win support for Smirnov), former East German leader Erich Honecker (fellow despot), Romanian tyrant Nicolae Ceaucescu (despot), Bulgarian dictator Tudor Zhikov (despot) and Japanese property-and-everything else billionaire Yoshiaki Tsutsumi who tipped \$10 million to the committee but was erased from the IOC memory following a visit from the Tokyo fraud squad. Robert Mugabe came too late.

Athletes who enhanced our lives were awarded lesser honours.

Currently, there are 110 members of the IOC. Samaranch appointed 83 of them, 15 are women and three are princesses. One is Samaranch's son. As Lord Coe reminds us, Olympic legacy is so important. Samaranch's successor, Jacques Rogge, appointed two Gulf princelings, aged 21 and 23, in his first list of new members in 2002.

Guelfi will feel the pain of Korean IOC vice-president Kim Un Yong who, after narrowly failing to defeat Rogge in 2001, was diverted for 30 months to the Seoul lockup – prosecutors had demanded seven years – for embezzlement and bribery. He's out now and so is former Indonesian member Bob Hasan who warehoused around \$40 billion of loot for Indonesian dictator Suharto while single-handedly chopping down more of the planet's rainforests than any other logger. Bob overcame the handicap of being a billionaire to encounter great warmth from his IOC colleagues but had to be let go when he copped six years for just one of his timber scams.

Say what you like about Guelfi,

he brings us terrific scandals – political, financial and Olympic. He used Russian Olympic contacts to open doors in the East for France's nationalised Elf oil company. Elf was looted by senior managers and Guelfi found himself making headlines alongside Foreign Minister Roland Dumas whose mistress, also on the Elf payroll, penned a memoir, *Whore of the Republic*.

The cops came calling, triggering serious memory loss in Guelfi. Locked up in La Santé to help him recover, Guelfi was a few cell doors from disgraced government minister and match-fixer Bernard Tapie

who had bought Adidas from the Dassler family. Sometimes, the world of sports, money, politics and criminality seems very small.

IOC member Smirnov wrote to the Paris court on Olympic notepaper pleading for his old friend. After five weeks, Guelfi, near his 80th birthday, was reportedly talking about money laundering through Olympic bank accounts.

From his Swiss base, Guelfi also laundered around \$40 million, at Mitterrand's command, from Elf to German fixers, allegedly linked to Kohl, to keep the German Chancellor in power, stabilise the EU and make

the Maastricht Treaty succeed. Guelfi ended up with a suspended sentence and big fine. He still battles Elf, suing them for nearly £700 million in commissions. He doesn't talk about his Olympic years or of Dassler who died 21 years ago. The Olympics too commercialised? Money has stimulated the grotesque doping? He's moved on and is investing in the Russian railways.

Guelfi now resides in Madliena, probably the most beautiful, and priciest, residential area on Malta. It's about 15 minutes drive from the airport. Just in case. [esm](http://www.esm)

(Read the first chapter of Andrew Jennings's latest sports corruption book *FOUL!* at www.transparencyinsport.org for free!)

SHARING THE SAME SPACE: IOC president Jacques Rogge (L) with Joao Havelange and Sepp Blatter (R) at the 2006 World Cup final.



CAUGHT AND BOWLED: Then IOC vice president Kim Un Yong at the Seoul Prosecutors' Office in 2003. Prosecutors had summoned Kim for questioning following allegations of corruption.

commerce committee chairman John McCain summoned two American IOC members for a monsterring by Democrats and Republicans. I was called to interpret Samaranch's over-sized right bicep.

In the merriment we never had time to ask the IOC grandees why a squad of visiting Olympic looters commanded their prim Utah hosts purchase for them a violin, a vibrator and a large sack of Viagra. And what was the subsequent

