

Review panel named for ABU Project Awards

The ABU has announced an international panel who will review submitted applications for the recently launched ABU-MAE Project Awards Programme.

The panel – representing a strong mix of public health experts, media professionals, and local HIV/AIDS representatives – will review the submitted proposals in June.

The ABU-MAE Project Awards Programme offers funding of US\$1,000 to help motivate and underwrite the development and production of local television and radio programming on HIV/AIDS and related issues in the region.

It places emphasis on the creation of news feature items, public service announcements and longer format programming on HIV/AIDS protection, education, prevention, and stigma and discrimination issues faced by people living with HIV/AIDS.

Elaborating on the role of media in raising awareness on HIV/AIDS, one of the reviewers, Marcus Cheek, Programme Editor at Aljazeera English, said broadcast media plays an important role in responding to the HIV/AIDS challenge.

“By giving a voice to the voiceless, broadcast journalism can help raise

awareness of the toll HIV/AIDS is exacting in developing countries. I look forward to being a part of the Project Awards Programme.”

Echoing Mr Cheek, fellow reviewer, Andrew Tan of the Malaysian AIDS Council, said the award provided “a great platform to create awareness on the gravity of HIV/AIDS, consequently encouraging people’s change of attitude and perception towards AIDS”.

Transparent review

The reviewing panel was established to ensure transparency throughout the process of reviewing and awarding the ABU-MAE Project Awards.

The panel is expected to make recommendations on the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal according to a standard set of criteria which includes the appropriateness of messaging, integration and participation of local institutions working on HIV/AIDS issues and the strength and innovation of the proposed programming concept.

Commenting on the criteria of good programming, James Jeon, Senior Producer of KBS-Korea, said that the key to producing a good programme is to find new ways to illustrate the issue of focus.


“Good production has to be innovative. It has to portray the truth, change people’s minds and affect behaviour. I’m excited to be part of this programme and I look forward to seeing new HIV/AIDS programming ideas from Asian broadcasters.”

Other panel members include Lisa Studdert, Health Specialist, Asian Development Bank; Pramod Kumar, Programme Advisor, Regional HIV and Development Programme for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Nuntawun Yuntadilok, Assistant Director, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand.

The Project Awards programme was made possible through funding from the Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI).

Recipients of the ABU-MAE Project Awards Programme will be announced this summer. Award recipients have until September to produce their programmes and the completed productions are expected to air on the recipients’ broadcast channels by December 2008.


The programmes will be available cost-free and rights-free to ABU member broadcasters across the region under the ABU-Media Awareness Exchange satellite distribution of HIV/AIDS programming, which is also funded by GMAI. □




ABU-MAE


ABU-MAE PROJECT AWARDS


for the Development of HIV/AIDS Programming








REVIEWERS:














42nd ABU Sports Group Conference

Mongolian hospitality a class act

All Sports Group stories by John Barton, ABU Head of Sport

It has long been known that pictures speak volumes about places, people and events. The ones featured in this spread tell a thousand stories of a splendid week as we were hosted by our members in Mongolia, especially TV5 – a long time supporter of ABU Sport.

TV5 took a leading role in sponsoring the 42nd ABU Sports Group Conference which was held in the capital, Ulaanbaatar, in the first week of May. They were well supported by other members, MNB, UBS and NTV, who hosted dinners or provided logistical support.

Delegates to the conference travelled from Europe, the United Kingdom, Mauritius, Fiji, Uzbekistan and throughout Asia.

The Sports Group Conference has now become an important fixture on the international events calendar and attracts speakers of great note.

We were indebted to the Prime Minister of Mongolia, Bayar Sangaa, who opened the conference and spoke of how grateful broadcasters in his country were of the support given by the ABU in supplying sports events of national interest.

There are now five ABU members in the Mongolian pool and they will be receiving extensive coverage of the forthcoming Beijing Olympic Games.

But it was not all meetings, speeches, and side-bar charts. There was time to fully absorb the local culture, especially the performing arts.



A delegate trying his hand at archery



Phil Lines (left) and Les Murray savouring an authentic Mongolian lunch

42nd ABU Sports Group Conference

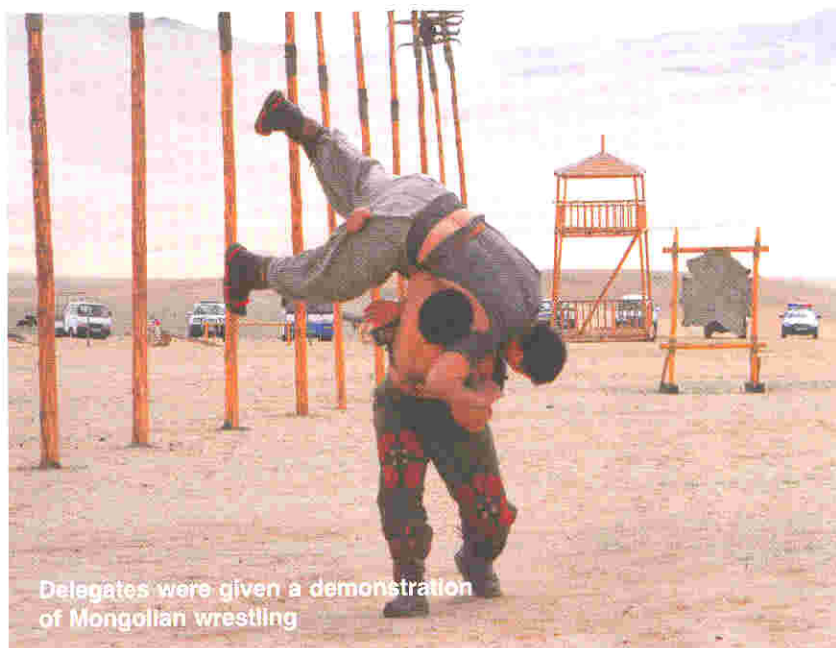


A Tsam dance is performed to drive away evil spirits

The delegates were overwhelmed with the evening dinners and entertainment. The fare was of the highest standard and the performers who sang, danced and played ancient instruments were quite brilliant.

Speaking to the delegates at a dinner hosted by TV5, the ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, congratulated all members for making the 42nd Sports Group Conference such a memorable event.

He said: "The Sports Group meeting has developed into a major conference which is drawing not only more members, but also leading figures in sports administration and marketing."



Delegates were given a demonstration of Mongolian wrestling

"It would not have been possible for it to have grown without the sort of support that we are seeing tonight from members like TV5 who have offered to host the meetings, so I am sure I speak on behalf of all delegates when we say we are very grateful," he added.

The three-day event culminated in an excursion to historical sites around the

city of Ulaanbaatar and a bus trip to the steppe where they were given a demonstration of local Mongolian wrestling.

Delegates learned of the history of the Mongol Empire, and many were surprised to know that in the 13th century it was the biggest contiguous empire in the history of man. □



Delegates getting a feel of camel riding

42nd ABU Sports Group Conference

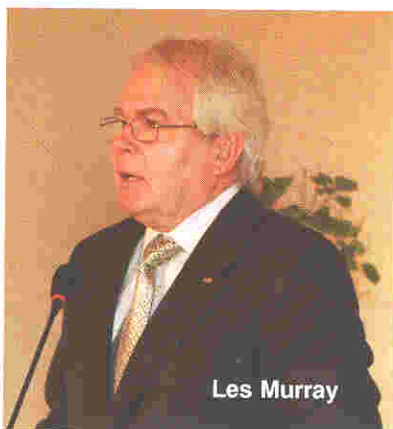
Football and the social responsibility of sports federations

“Sport has an enormous capacity to act for the common good, to unite people to break down barriers and to act as a catalyst for peace and harmony,” said the Chairman of the ABU Sports Group, Les Murray, (SBS-Australia) at a conference of members in Mongolia.

Addressing the 42nd Sports Group Conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mr Murray said sporting federations had to recognise more fully their social responsibilities.

He said that most governing bodies of football embraced the concept and professed to act on it.

“FIFA’s mission statement is: Develop the game, touch the world, build the future,” he told the 90-odd delegates who attended the conference and associated meetings.



Les Murray

He went on to say the UEFA, the association that runs football in Europe, was well aware of its social responsibilities and actively supported campaigns to promote social harmony and cohesion around the world.

But, he said, it was the role of broadcast organisations, such as the ABU, to make sure that bodies like FIFA and

UEFA better understood the problems faced by poor nations, or those ravaged by war.

“Four years ago, the people of Timor, one of the poorest countries in the world, where war had raged for years, and where football is king, were on the brink of not being able to see the European Championships because they did not have the money for the rights fee.

“UEFA was receptive and sympathetic to their plight and through the efforts of the ABU we were able to provide them with full coverage of the event,” he said.

Mr Murray pointed out that the ABU and the marketing company SportFive were working closely to ensure that small nations, without budgets for big sports, were not marginalised by the need to make money.

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It was noted that outstanding Sports Group subscription fees were often the cause of members being listed for suspension, suggesting that the extra subscription was difficult for some members to justify to their organisations.

The Sports Group’s Finance Committee discussed the option of abolishing the Sports Group subscription completely, but felt that a nominal fee should still be charged to help defray meeting costs and provide some additional income which would be used to provide travel fellowships for

members from developing countries to attend the Sports Group meetings.

The reduction in the subscription is most significant for the larger members, reducing from US\$5,000 to US\$900. For many members this will more than offset the five percent increases in the ABU membership subscription that were approved for 2008/09 and 2009/10 by the General Assembly in Tehran last year.

Head of Sport, John Barton, told the meeting: “It has been our goal to make membership of the Sports Group more affordable to attract new members, so we have now achieved that objective.”

He added that the healthy financial situation of the Sports Group would enable the Sports Department to expand its activities to include more training for producers and commentators, so there would be benefits for members to join the Sports Group even if they were not participating in the pools that are formed for the acquisition of rights for sports events.

The 42nd meeting of the Sports Group was hosted by TV5-Mongolia with support from three other ABU members in Mongolia – MNB, UBS and NTV.

42nd ABU Sports Group Conference



More traditional dances entertain the delegates

"I want to thank SportFive for their efforts in trying to get Euro 2008 into some desperate markets, such as Afghanistan, and Timor. The right to see the beautiful should game not be limited by poverty," he said.

Why sport in Asia is booming

"Success breeds success," the ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, told the 42nd Sports Group Conference.

"So, it is not surprising that the methodology behind the global popularity of football's Premier League, would be copied by another sport," he said in his keynote address.

Mr Astley was referring to the recent launch of the Indian Premier League Twenty20 cricket competition which took the region by storm.

Rights fees had exceeded US\$1 billion, television demographics had been turned upside down, and India's Bollywood stars were woven into the promotional bandwagon making it a sporting phenomenon.

Mr Astley said it spoke of a new dynamic in sport, especially in Asia.

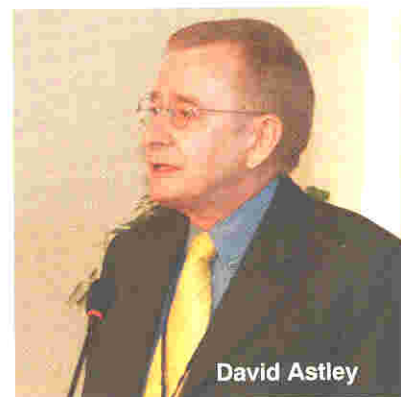
"In India there is nothing more potent than the mix of cricket and Bollywood superstars. The warm embrace of the game that you love, local celebrities who are worshipped by millions, and entertainment.

"We have witnessed the birth of a game which is compelling as a sporting spectacle, doted on by its parents, some of India's most famous movie stars and entertainers," Mr Astley said.

He said that the 'sporting gold rush' which was happening in Asia was not limited to cricket and the sub-continent.

In Asia there was a seismic shift in the balance of sports which attract big television audiences, and therefore sponsors and power.

He cited the Beijing Olympics, the Guangzhou Asian Games, the World Athletics Champions in Osaka and Daegu (2011), the night time Grand Prix in Singapore this year, and the Youth Olympics in Singapore (2010) as evidence of the commitment of Asian cities to back major sporting events, in spite of the huge cost.



David Astley

"Asia is now saying to the world that we can host major international sporting events with the management standards and television/media production values, as good as anywhere in the world," he told the meeting. □



Delegates paying attention to the proceedings of the meeting

42nd ABU Sports Group Conference

The English Premier League: Will the 39th round conquer distant shores?

At the turn of the last century Britain was rather proud of its empire.

In the Colonial office in Westminster the mandarins would gaze with an inner glow at the world map, and with some glee note that the "sun never sets on the British Empire".

Canada in the deep north, parts of the Middle East and Africa, the vast sub-continent of India, Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific in the south. When the sun went down its shadows would be cast on some distant land under British rule, no matter where, nor how remote.

Whilst that is an historical truth, the lands that they once dominated broke free of those 'surlly bonds' and the Empire as it was, is no more.

Or is it?

Have the Brits come up with an ingenious way to once again colonise us unsuspecting cyber-citizens? I believe so.

Every weekend, for most of the year, we are entranced by what they do and there seems to be no escape, especially for those of us in its former colonies.

OK, so what do I mean? How could this be?

British imperialism

The Brits have long left our shores and, apart from a few expatriates here and there, old English laws, wider roads and the ubiquitous 'civil service', few traces remain. But then what were you doing on the Saturday night of 10 May if you lived in Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, Tokyo or Ulaanbaatar?

Watching football, right? Yes, and what was it? The Premier League! Correct.

The Premier League is now the dark angel of the old colonial office rising out of those smoke-filled wood panelled rooms in W1 [London's West End] every Saturday and Sunday to make sure



Phil Lines making a point

we haven't totally abandoned all things British.

We are drawn to it like moths to a flame, or a gambler to the last race, a drinker to a bottle.

"Well, yes, we have created an empire. No doubt," said the Premier League's Head of Broadcasting and Media, Phil Lines at the ABU Sports Conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

"And it's expanding," he said with a wry smile.

Watch out, he might have added, the old empire is striking back.

In measured tones that some could have interpreted as the final act in a cunning game plan, he laid out before us a possible scenario that would lead to world domination: the Global Premier League, courtesy of the English Football Association.

With Field Marshall Ferguson snapping the baton at the Theatre of Dreams (Manchester), his Gallic Commander Arsene Wenger barking out



Dressed up for the cool and crisp Mongolian weather

42nd ABU Sports Group Conference

Napoleonic orders at the Emirates (Arsenal), or Generalissimo Benitez defending the Maginot Line at Liverpool, we may have seen the coalescing of such force that not even the Americans could resist.

"The Premier League is the strongest brand in football in the world, and each year it gets stronger," opined Lines. True. Worldwide broadcast rights sales have reached US\$5.6 billion, with Asia contributing US\$1.25 billion mainly from the pay/cable industry.



Delegates deep in discussion during the break

Asia has fallen to the blend of British footballing muscle, the silky skills of its European imports, and the raw passion of the fans in the stands. It is compelling and irresistible. In its wake are arguably better leagues such as Serie A and La Liga, but the global fans don't feel the same compulsion to tune into Barcelona, Real Madrid, or AC Milan.

Now the corporate eyes of the Football Association are looking west, across the Atlantic, to the richest prize in world sport: the giant American market worth a trillion dollars.

Football there is in its infancy. It's a marginal sport.

But the greatest commercial name football has even known, David Beckham, has been seeded in Los Angeles and he is growing and widening the brand's appeal. Some might say he's the first out of the Trojan horse that

is the FA, in the states where the riches would make Croesus buckle at his gold-capped knees.

How soon before we see English Premier League teams planted in the big capitals around the world in pursuit of the global dream, I asked.

"No, that won't ever happen," said Lines. The English fans would scream blue murder.

Hmm?

But, as we know there is little sentiment in business when it comes to the bottom line and if, as Lines says, it's all about the money, then why not put Manchester United in LA for a month? Or, Liverpool in KL?

The battle has already begun. And there is a certain inevitability about the eventual outcome. □

More EPL games for Asian free-to-air TV

The English Premier League (EPL) is examining ways to bring more games to Asian free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters.

The EPL's Head of International Broadcasting, Phil Lines, said they were trying to find a solution between the competing interests of pay television, and the need to broaden the audience base (FTAs).

He was addressing the 42nd Sports Group Conference in Ulaanbaatar attended by over 90 delegates from throughout Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia.

Mr Lines said the EPL was under pressure from the FTA broadcasters and sponsors to put out more games to the masses. "We are acutely aware of the need and we are seriously addressing the question," he said.

The EPL had found a solution in sub-Saharan Africa where a balance had been struck between the needs of the pay industry and those of the FTAs. He said in the current contract there, one game each week had to be made available to the mass market.

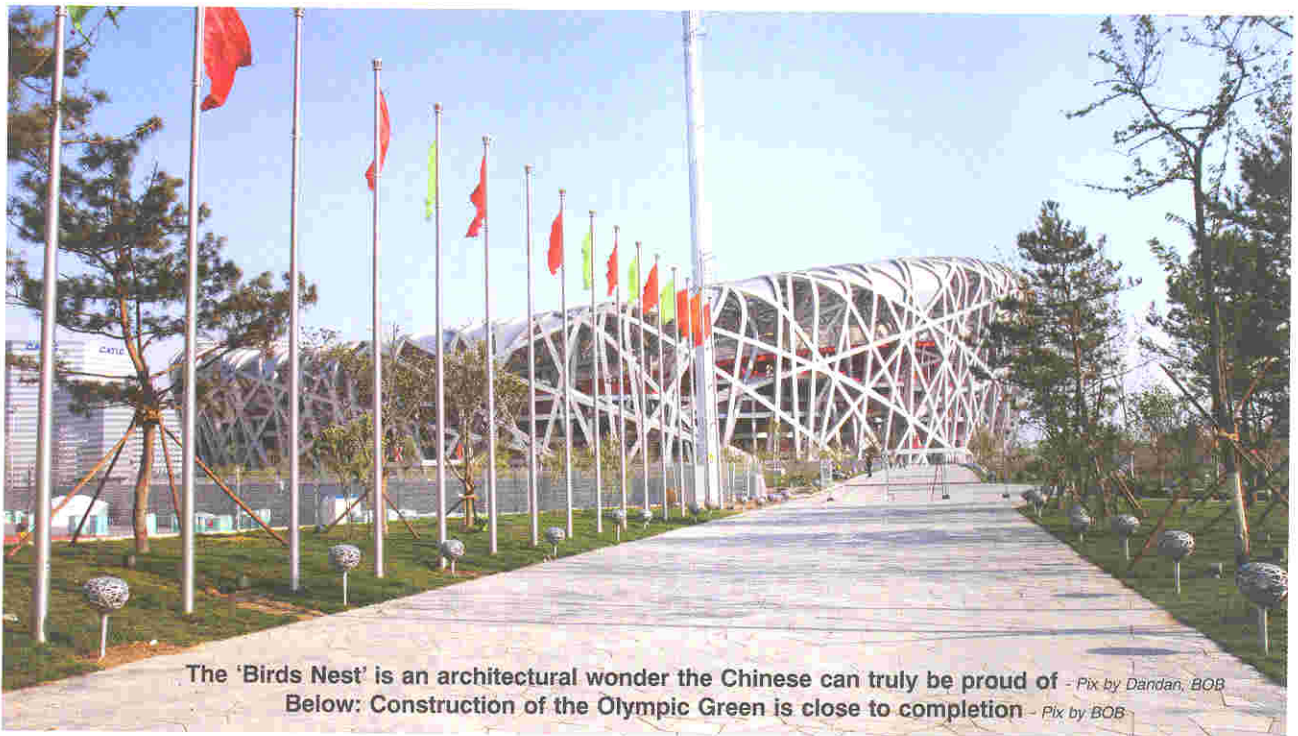
One comment was made during the discussion on the subject that it was

pointless to build the biggest brand in football (the EPL) and hide it away on pay TV.

Mr Lines said the 20 clubs wanted more 'eyeballs' but when it came to the offers from the various media groups the chairmen always plumped "for the money".

Head of Sport at the ABU, John Barton, said he would be pushing the case on behalf of the FTA market for more EPL matches and would make it a major discussion point at the next meeting in Bali on 19-20 November. □

Beijing ready to stage the 'Greatest Olympics in history'



The 'Birds Nest' is an architectural wonder the Chinese can truly be proud of - Pix by Dandan, BOB
Below: Construction of the Olympic Green is close to completion - Pix by BOB

Tourists have already started to flow into Beijing to be part of the Olympic experience. They are coming early to see the soaring structures in which Olympians will struggle to reach sport's highest honour: an Olympic Gold medal.

When they step off the plane and enter the city's brand new international airport they get an inkling of what the Chinese government has done to put its mark on the world's most important sporting occasion, one that reaches down through history over thousands of years.

The airport, like the Olympic buildings, typifies the scale of the investment that will put China at the centre of the world's television stage throughout the 16 days of competition. The airport is stunning. Its lines gently swaying and curling, a building full of air and light, and where everything seems to work, unlike Terminal 5 at London's Heathrow Airport.

No city has ever built venues like Beijing.

The iconic 'Birds Nest' or Main Olympic Stadium, is the centre piece of the Olympic Green, itself a marvellous construct of sports stadia, an enthralling boulevard where all and sundry will mix daily, and drawn together by a garden of China's outstanding flora.

In keeping with its 'green' theme the authorities have carefully selected plants, shrubs and trees from its 31,000 different species to decorate and enhance the beauty of the long boulevard and the dominant buildings.

"We will do everything possible to make sure that everyone has the Beijing experience, one that makes everyone feel comfortable and pleased," said Sun

Weijia, Head of Media Operations for the organising committee – BOCOG.

There is no doubt that the authorities have gone to extraordinary lengths to turn a page on Chinese history, and put the country and its people in the most positive light.

There are 1,000 'good manners' centres around the city where officials and volunteers have been schooled in the finer points of behaving impeccably, especially when the foreigners arrive in droves at Games time.

No spitting in public places, no queue jumping, no touting; in effect the most concentrated effort to erase the culture of kiasu [fear of losing]!

"Have a nice day! Take care! You're welcome! Do come again! Pardon me for racing to the head of the queue. I forgot my manners!" All said with the curl of a mandarin tongue and a warm smile.

