

Andrew Jennings, Dortmund-Conference, February 15th, 2008

The stories they don't want you to tell

Thank you. It's nice to be invited anywhere these days. I'm still recovering from a 6-year ban by the IOC, I've been banned by FIFA for the last 5 years, the English FA decline interviews – I must be getting something right.

Perhaps, in 18 months time – when hopefully Herr Blatter and his co-conspirators at FIFA have been publicly shamed as a bunch of bribe-taking crooks – and some facing jail time – a new leadership at FIFA might give me press credentials again.

And now . . . a private message to Herr Beckenbauer who is my best bet for the next president of FIFA. He and his backers won't dare make a move until Blatter is indicted for corruption by the Swiss authorities. But I think he will beat Platini who has tied himself too close to Blatter and his key FIFA greaser of wheels, Jerome Champagne.

Please, President Beckenbauer-in-waiting, can I again be given that elusive piece of neck plastic? (Neck Gesture) Will you admit me to FIFA press conferences?

Meanwhile . . .

Investigative reporting has been in retreat in Europe and some of the developed economies for the last three decades. That's bad news for the health of any society.

Why has this happened? Some of the reasons are that conducting effective investigations takes time and money. It means giving reporters time to think, think some more, and research, to track down potential sources and the documents they have hoarded. You cannot impose an arbitrary deadline on an investigation.

Too many media groups are cutting staff and budgets, giving reporters too many assignments, relying on recycling press releases and clips from speeches. Speeches that are often designed to deflect and divert reporters from the real story.

Lazy bosses blame the Internet for circulation losses. But they are not using the Internet with enthusiasm. Too often they are recycling the same crap, quickie stories, some low-level porn pictures - and tonnes of unadventurous wire-service copy.

The Murdochs, the Springers, the Montgomeries, Associated Newspapers in Britain, the American predators buying British media, cutting jobs and budgets and squeezing more profits, hold their readers in contempt, bleeding extra profits from their publications rather than investing in good reporting.

Yes, that is bad news. But stop complaining and worrying about the future - there's good news, great news – I think the best news for young journalists in the last 100 years. I'll come back to that later.

But first, why should we do this job? Who should we be investigating? I've got a simple test. When I look at a big company, a government, a public organisation, I examine the face they offer to the public. Then I dig and I dig until I find out what they do in private, who are these people taking decisions that can affect us all?

If there's a gap between that public façade and the private reality – then that's the starting gun for an investigator.

The French sociologist and activist Pierre Bourdieu put it brilliantly.

He wrote:

‘Among the tasks of a politics of morality [is] to work incessantly toward unveiling hidden differences between official theory and actual progress - between the limelight and the backrooms of political life.’

That’s what we do. Look for the hidden differences.

And sometimes the story is so obvious that most of those respectable reporters – you know – the ones who want their photographs taken with the rich and powerful – can’t see it. They are too close, too respectful. They have no vision, they see no need to ask questions, especially if they might embarrass the men who hand out the press releases.

Permit me to tell you an old story – but one that is still running. Your job in the future is to dig to find truths like this. And to keep this saga in the news.

You’re looking at the most important photo in sports history. It was taken in 1974 when Juan Antonio Samaranch, sports minister in the Franco dictatorship, was still a vice-president of the IOC. Six years later, he became IOC president.

Now you know why Samaranch’s right arm is more muscular than his left!

But what are the implications of this picture? Is it enough to be disgusted with him and the entire IOC membership – and their hangers-on - who refuse to acknowledge the politics of this man?

No. Disgust is a proper reaction but it must be followed by cold analysis. What has this man done to sport? What are Pierre Bourdieu’s “differences” in this case? What should we be researching, discovering – and publishing?

Let's say a Hello to Nazi Juan's best friends. He calls them his "partners" and most sports reporters – unquestioningly – follow his lead – even though they are the enemies of sport.

Samaranch and his squalid comrades at the IOC invite us to meet "partner" Coca-Cola. We are told this company "creates programmes and events to bring the spirit of the Games to consumers."

That's odd – I thought that Coke was a drink that rots children's teeth and helps make them obese. So you bet that the Coke company wants to buy Olympic, healthy, inspiring values.

Same with McDonalds. We know that their burgers are a questionable product in so many ways. Chemically fattened beef sold by low wage workers and making our kids FAT. That's the words. Fat and unhealthy. So we can see why McDonald's are spending so much money trying to divert reporters from the truth. And the IOC does all it can to assist.

Exactly two years ago McDonalds issued this press release:

07 February 2006

McDonald's, a Worldwide Olympic Partner, launched today in Turin major global initiatives to promote balanced, active lifestyles. The event highlighted the commitment by McDonald's to promoting a balance between proper nutrition and exercise to its customers.

IOC President Jacques Rogge attended the event, saying: "McDonald's has supported the Olympic Movement for more than 30 years now, and we share many of the same ideals. We are happy that McDonald's has chosen the Olympic Games — where the

world is watching — to showcase Turin as the first market in the world to feature nutrition information on McDonald's packaging. It is fitting that the Olympic Games be the stage for launching this McDonald's programme."

Yes, Rogge really spoke this crap. Does he actually eat this crap? And nobody laughed at him. Or were disgusted.

Don't be surprised. McDonalds – and the other "partners" - pay IOC president Rogge's fancy expenses. He wouldn't want to travel in the back of the airplane with the athletes and the fans. He's too important.

Buy a burger, pay by VISA, contribute towards covering up a positive dope test at the Olympics – or funding corruption at FIFA, VISA's latest "partner." That's the reality. Have you seen VISA's claims? They say they "support programmes that teach the youth of the world about the values and ideals of the Olympic Movement."

Can you imagine the youth of the world in the jointly funded IOC-VISA classroom. In walks Rogge and the boss of VISA. "Class – Pay Attention! Students, our topics are the values and ideals of the Olympic Movement. Today; how to take a bribe from an Olympic bidding city. After that will come - How to beat a drugs test – followed by how to polish your boots like President's Samaranch's.

And then there's General Electric – or GE as they like to be called. The biggest single sponsor of the IOC and their sports event.

Their NBC-TV subsidiary – which makes its money out of advertising from the other Olympic "partners" - portrays the Games as some simple practice of heroism. NBC doesn't rush to tell us that elite sport is so doped that you cannot believe what you see

on TV. How they – and the other networks report the Beijing Olympics will be of interest to “free” reporters.

GE’s Olympic slogan is their ‘products make life better.’

Not if you are an innocent civilian in Iraq. GE manufactures jet engines for some of the most frightening American warplanes currently bombing civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq. GE helps terminate their lives on a daily basis. Not better – worse. Dead.

GE’s finance division – or loansharks as some call them - are also one of the biggest operators in the global subprime market. Check and see. Now you know who to blame for the economic recession.

But that’s the wrong kind of reporting. GE help fund the IOC’s Olympic Truce and endless silly conferences about Peace And Sport! That’s what the IOC calls Olympic Idealism. Try asking whoever is left of an Iraqi family that’s just been rocketed, machine-gunned and bombed, courtesy of GE.

Sometimes investigative journalism only requires that you take a step back and think independently and clearly and don’t let your mind be fogged by propaganda.

Let’s analyse this phenomena of dirty global brands buying the supposed idealism of the Olympics, pasting the five rings on to their consumer image to obscure the truth about their money-making activities. And let’s stress the words brands. This sponsorship is not about immediately selling more consumer products. It’s about pirating what many people still believe is decent.

Only Samaranch could have led sport into this dirty trap. A career fascist from the age of 18, he grew up in a culture of corruption and greed. He brought this absence of morality to the previously harmless IOC – indeed he was put in place by those commercial

interests to deliver the Olympics to them. This coup was organised by Horst Dassler and his ISL marketing company, the commission agents who arranged the marriage. To keep the sports officials under control – the ones who awarded the contracts were offered bribes. Many took them, selling out the sport they claimed to love.

And now we are told that without the sponsors, we cannot find the money to stage sports events. But these are not always true sports events anymore. It's a simple calculation. To get TV networks paying big bucks, the Olympics must deliver world records. World records so often have to be the result of illegal doping. The sponsors – sorry – Partners – then jumped in with more money. The IOC got rich and to keep sponsors happy – positive tests were covered up by the IOC. But hey – we got world records.

So can we have please have some realistic coverage of Beijing this summer. Can we look at how the brands are using the Olympics to expand their dirty businesses.

How can this be done when so much of the media is funded by advertising from sponsors? Do what you can. Busy editors will often go for a well-written revelatory story and not always realise the moral implications.

If they don't want these stories – that's where today's good news starts. Investigative journalism can be great fun. Finding out what the bad guys don't want the public to know is the point of our existence. It's hard work – so what's new? – but very rewarding. You can sleep at night if during the day you did your best to tell the truth.

The Internet offers us the most exciting development we've ever had in investigating reporting– that is since the big media groups with their ties to other business interests got their stranglehold on freedom of speech and publication.

Never forget that the people out there **want** the stories we do. And now we are free to tell them. The Internet gives us space. We can not only write the story – we can upload the evidence, the confidential documents we have acquired so all the world can read what is being said in private. Add in some video clips and audio and you have true multi-media exposes.

And it doesn't cost very much. No more expensive printing presses, no costly distribution to retailers. But will the public find us buried in the Web? I think they will. I already get a satisfactory response to my cheap little web site because it contains exclusive content.

The next generation of search engines are going to make it even easier for people to find us. And when they do, word of our existence is swiftly passed on through word of mouth, bloggers and chatrooms.

Yes but . . . how is it going to be paid for? Who is going to pay us? I don't know but somebody is going to figure it out. And where we lead, the established media will have to follow. If they won't, we can watch them join the dinosaurs and cease to exist.

There's a huge test coming in 4 weeks time for sports news reporters. On March 11 a criminal trial will commence in Zug, in Switzerland. Superficially, it will be the trial of six executives of the ISL company who had the right to market the World Cup. They went bankrupt in the Spring of 2001 and their dirty secrets have been unfolding ever since.

Perhaps one of the most exciting phone calls I ever had was when Jens Weinreich called me in late 2000 to say that he and Thomas Kistner had discovered that the ISL company was heading for collapse.

Why was I excited by this news? Because it was now inevitable that the company's private records, bank accounts and evidence of bribes paid to sports officials would soon come under the control of an independent liquidator, someone with no allegiances to sports officials or company bosses – and no great desire for secrecy.

And it did. Since the Spring of 2001 I've worked closely with Weinreich, Kistner and the splendid Jean-Francois Tanda in Zurich on digging out evidence, complex court judgements - and scoops!

And we did it without the help of press releases. Because there weren't any. In November 2005 the most astonishing thing happened. The intrepid Investigating Magistrate Thomas Hildbrand, from Zug, led a raid by fraud squad detectives on FIFA House and seized documents from the archives of Herr Blatter and his then General Secretary, Urs Linsi. Imagine if the offices of the Federal President, the US president or the British Prime Minister were raided? Would that be in the newspapers? I think it would and it would be there every day until the story was thoroughly exposed.

But Blatter has never issued a statement about this raid. So it didn't happen and if you read most newspapers around the world, the reporters don't report it. Partly because they haven't bothered to find out what happened and why? So they've turned away, hands over eyes, fingers in ears and pegs on their noses, anxious not to reveal that they know nothing. Perhaps they hope this embarrassment will go away.

Blatter did his best to stop the criminal investigation into ISL. He secretly put pressure on Zug to halt the investigation. He was behind a story that Magistrate Hildbrand was biased and should be taken off the case. That's been thrown out by the Swiss courts.

And so the ISL managers face charges next month that they embezzled around \$100 million dollars they should have paid to FIFA. They took the money from sponsors – and

kept it. This wasn't stealing by the executives. They were desperate to keep the cash to keep their business running. But they failed and when ISL went bust – they were in trouble. You might wonder why FIFA did nothing to force ISL to hand over the money earlier. That's a story I'll do later this year.

The 228-page Bill of Indictment will give you material for months of analysis and stories. For the first time this dirty world is being exposed with documents provided by independent investigators. We can be confident that there will be a few names of officials who took bribes and there will be a lot of detail about the way the money was laundered to them and others through offshore bank accounts.

When the ISL bribes evidence is revealed in court next month the credibility of FIFA's leaders will be severely damaged – if the journalists do their job thoroughly. Not just the rogues who took money but the entire leadership of the Executive Committee who have sworn the FIFA oath of *Omerta*. See no evil, speak not of it and enjoy the magnificent life style of Gods, the marvellous expenses and the 100 thousand dollars a year honorariums. I can hear them now, "We didn't know, we didn't guess, it's nothing to do with us."

We reporters have a duty to hold them to account. You can be sure the cowardly national football associations will be more concerned to continue getting their bundles of World Cup tickets, their pointless positions on FIFA committees. Do you think any of the well-fed mice will squeak? Will any of them shout "Stinking Fish" and cleanse FIFA? Will the German officials speak up? Will the British? Don't hold your breath.

Herr Blatter's current meaningless slogan is something like "Taking Football to the World." Here's a mantra for you, to chant under your breath on the bad days when sources are not delivering. Remember the great British journalist Louis Heren who instructed young reporters: "Find out **why** the lying bastards are lying to us."

It's the **WHY** that matters and if you find those answers – the **motives** behind the lies and lying press releases and speeches - you'll soon be discovered by the millions of people out there who want to learn truths and are bored by reporters who write to please authority, not the readers.

These citizens are there, waiting to hear from you. Go and find them and inform, educate and, sometimes . . . entertain them. At last, we are being liberated from Editors and executives who prefer the easy status quo. But do you really want to be free?

You'll make a living - and when the kids ask – Mummy, Daddy, what did you do in the great wars for press freedom and putting the truth in front of the public? – you will have nothing to be ashamed of.

Thank you.