

CV

NAME

Ma Guoli

DATE OF BIRTH

April 1953

CAREER

Ma Guoli was born in Beijing, China. He studied TV production at Beijing Broadcasting University, graduating in 1982. In the same year he joined China Central TV's Sports department. In 1988 he was appointed Head of CCTV Sports, rising to Deputy Director in 1989 and Director in 1993. In 1995 he founded CCTV Sports Channel (CCTV-5). From 1993-2005 President of the China Sport Broadcaster Association and Chairman of the China Sports Broadcasting Academy. When the CCTV Sports Channel set up by Ma celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2005, he made a bold move and took the position as COO of Beijing Olympic Broadcasting Co., Ltd. (BOB). Ma is also a member of the TV commission of IAAF (International Association of Athletics Federations). From January 2009 Ma Guoli is the new CEO and Managing Director of Infront China.

MEDIA USE

Does not have time to read newspapers in the morning but reads them in the evening back home. On the way to his office listens to sports radio, and before he leaves the office checks websites about news. Watches mostly sports channels

FAVOURITES

Loves to play golf and some tennis – sadly in 2008 did not have much time to practise! His real hobby is to watch sport on TV



A MAN FOR ALL GAMES

In his post of Chief Operating Officer of Beijing Olympic Broadcasting (BOB), **Ma Guoli** has become a household name the world over. He is one of the most experienced sports broadcasters in China and a veteran of Olympic reporting who has witnessed China's Olympics broadcasts develop from very little to the recent memorable spectacle in Beijing. [An interesting aside: the Olympic Games were first mentioned in a Chinese magazine in 1908. In 1984 China re-joined the Olympic family – the Los Angeles Games were the first to have athletes from Taiwan and from the PRC participating in the Olympics at the same time and China won its first gold medal.] Ma Guoli, in 2000 named as one of the top 50 "Most Influential People in Sport" in a survey by the UK's Guardian newspaper, was responsible for China's television broadcast of the 1990 and 1994 Asian Games and has worked on six Summer Games and four Winter Games in total before becoming the Chief Operating Officer of Beijing Olympic Broadcasting Co., Ltd.

BOB is the Sino-foreign joint venture funded by BOCOG and the Olympic Broadcasting Services (OBS), to perform the role of Olympic Broadcasting Organisation (OBO) for Beijing 2008 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Officially established in September 2004, it provided international TV and radio signals for some 200 broadcasters across the world; designed, constructed and operated the International Broadcast Centre (IBC) and the necessary broadcast facilities in other venues, and provided related services for the rights-holding broadcasters during the Beijing Games. The highest building in the Olympic Village was the Ling-Long Tower, the multi-functional broadcasting tower that served as the hub for international broadcasting. It was an exquisite structure: 132 meters high, made up of 7 pyramids, with glass covering a large part of its surface. Figures for the worldwide audience for the Beijing Games were around 40 billion.

The Beijing Games have a special place in Olympic history because it was really the first major sporting event that was seen in HD by viewers all over the world. How do you as COO of BOB feel the move to HD went?

Compared with my previous jobs in sport television where the spectators and the viewers are the most important people, at BOB my main responsibility were the broadcasters covering the Games. And of course, it was High Definition that was most significant. We talked for four years about HD coverage of the Beijing Games, but it was only at the start of the Games, during the opening ceremony, that people realised what HD really meant. We made sure that giant 100" HD screens were installed in the lobby of the IBC [International Broadcasting Centre] so that everyone passing through could see HD for real.

Three years ago, we still worried about HD and the special technology – whether the equipment could cope with the demands of Olympic broadcasters, such as the super slow-mo, such as the mini camera, such as the tracker camera. But at the end, I can tell you every piece of special equipment for HDTV was so perfect. Maybe you remember the super-super slow-mo from the Olympic pools. After the athletes got their medals we showed the super-super slow-mo and you saw a monster come slowly from the water. Also in archery, we saw the super slow-mo, the move of the arrow was really fantastic.

From my point of view the move to HD went very well, that was also what I heard from every rights holder. When they left Beijing they came to my office and thanked us for the coverage. The big regret and disappointment for me was that we were producing in High Definition but there are currently not many people who can receive the HDTV signal.

Did all the equipment that BOB

“ People only realised during the opening ceremony what HD really meant ”

installed live up to expectations and to the manufacturers' claims?

I think every manufacturer knew that the standard of production for the Olympics should be 100% in HD. So they sped up their research and production, also for the mobile equipment. Altogether there were 59 OB vans, around 40 came from Europe and 16 from Chinese TV stations. Two of these they came from CCTV and one from Beijing TV and also Shanghai and other regional TV stations. So overall one third of the HD OB vans came from China.

How is HD progressing in China – clearly there has been a lot of investment by broadcasters in the country?

I think it will spread very quickly. When I came back from IBC I had ten HD panels in my office already. One third of TV sets on the Chinese market are HD already. Altogether four HD channels are on air in China via digital platforms. According to SARFT [State Administration of Radio, Film and TV], the whole system of TV production and TV broadcasting in China will change to 100% digital around 2012. So after digitalisation it should be much easier to get HD signals to the viewers. In the area of sports, the organisers of sporting events in China already provide HD output. I remember the transition from black and white to 100% colour TV took more than 10 years in China but for SD to HD I think the transition will be much shorter, another five to eight years.

Going back to the Olympics, what was the biggest challenge that you had to overcome?

Personally, I did not worry about anything – not about the production, the technical side or the quality. We had very good people who had Olympic experience, we had a very good production team and technological equipment. I think maybe what made my job quite hard ▶

was that there are different operating practices between China and the rest of the world but the BOB is a totally international operation so I needed to guarantee the entire Olympic operation can move smoothly and on time. I think that was what I spent most time on. For example, we had more than 40 OB vans together with another 20 big trucks, they were transported from Europe to China. That was the first time in the history of China that so much broadcasting equipment arrived together – we needed to cooperate with the customs, police, security and quality control and also the highway control.

How many people were involved in BOB?

We had 6,200 staff. For the broadcasters we had 12,000 accreditations for the rights holders. That's why BOB needed to start three years ago, there was a lot of planning involved to guarantee that everybody could get food, accommodation, transport and so on.

Looking forward, what advice would you give the organisers of the 2012 Games?

I think in London the situation should be much easier. After Beijing, OBS – Olympic Broadcasting Services which was created by the IOC – will take care of the whole of the broadcasting issue in London. So the heart of broadcasting is Olympic Broadcaster Services London (OBSL). You must realise that for each city's organisation this job is a "once in a lifetime" job so everyone is very passionate to do their best but they don't have the experience of how to organise the Games. But as far as TV broadcasting is concerned, the IOC and OBS have the experience, they know everything about Olympic broadcasting. So my advice is: just trust them and let them do their job.

What's your most memorable moment from this year's Olympics?

Maybe for me the most incredible memory was the first day that I saw the helicopter fly over the Olympic complex! It was the first time that a civilian helicopter was flying over

Ma Guoli in the Bird's Nest stadium



“ It took 18 months to get permission for a civilian helicopter to fly over Beijing ”

Beijing. It took me 18 months to get to that point, to get the permission. It took a lot of time, a lot of energy, but finally we got it.

What will you do now – will you go back to CCTV Sports?

No. At present I am still the chief operating officer of BOB and I am waiting for the company to close. I just won the bid as the host broadcaster for the Guandu Asian Games 2010, most of the BOB local

employees will relocate from Beijing to Guandu. It is a kind of legacy of BOB. From January on I will be the CEO of Infront China, the Chinese branch of the Swiss-based sports marketing firm which has acquired the exclusive rights to represent China's two most popular sports, soccer and basketball. I was asked by Infront Sports & Media to be their Managing Director from 2009 on.

Ma Guoli, thank you and good luck. ■