Introduction

This chapter is concerned with how London won its bid for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The analysis draws on various documentation, texts and three interviews: Sir Craig Reedie, Chair of the British Olympic Association (BOA) and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) Executive Board member; Mike Lee, the Director of Communications and Public Affairs for the London bid; and Richard Caborn, the UK Government’s Sport Minister at the time of the bid.
There is a mystique that surrounds the bid, in particular around the final presentation in Singapore to the IOC members when London was declared host. With London seemingly going into those final days in third place, certainly with the media extolling Paris as the favourite, the question arises as to how influential that presentation was. This chapter will look at that question but is more focused on an analysis of the extensive planning prior to that event, which enabled that presentation to be effective.

How the bid developed

It is important to consider where the London 2012 bid came from. Why and how London was selected and how previous bidding contributed are important questions, not only for the selection of London for the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, but also for the development and shape of the bid.

Previous bidding

London hosted its first Summer Olympic Games in 1908, having stepped in after the winning bidding city, Rome, had pulled out. London therefore did not bid for these Games. London then unsuccessfully bid for the eventually cancelled 1940 Games and successfully for the 1944 event; however, these latter Games were also then cancelled due to the ongoing Second World War. As a consequence, the first post-war Games, in 1948, were awarded to and hosted by London.

London and the Greater London Council, led by Horace Cutler, did undergo a feasibility study into a west London-based and Wembley Stadium-focused 1988 Games, but this was not supported by the Government (Barker, 2003). More recently the city unsuccessfully rivalled Manchester and Birmingham for Britain’s 1992 bid. The winner, Birmingham, bid for the 1992 Games and in so doing was only the second British city to bid to host the Games. The selection of Birmingham was made by the BOA (Great Britain’s National Olympic Committee) following a Britain-wide process; at the time this selection was somewhat controversial in that London, the capital city, was not put forward.

In retrospect we can see that the BOA, with the Government in support, was keen on hosting a Summer Games. Despite Birmingham’s fifth-place ranking, it was decided that a further bid should be made and thus Manchester was given the immediate opportunity for the following Olympiad. This bid also failed (fourth place), but again this failure was put aside and Manchester went again for the 2000 Games. It fared better, ranking third, but what the BOA was left with was a series of failed bids. There are two important points to make here in relation to what has since followed. First, London had clearly not been favoured in any way as a potential bid city – its campaigns to be the BOA’s nomination had been weak in comparison and it had lacked support from the Government (Reedie, 2011). Second, despite three attempts, provincial bids from England’s second and third largest cities had not been capable of winning.

1997 feasibility study

These failed bids were key factors when the BOA first started sowing the seeds for a future London bid. Despite their size and prominence, an Olympic Games in any one city starts as only an early notion of an idea; in London’s case this started as early as 1993. Manchester’s second losing bid in 1993 was a significant factor in how the BOA would press forward. For Craig Reedie, the relatively new Chairman of the BOA, this was a key point at which to determine
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which direction the BOA should take. Reedie became an IOC member the following year and was then able to gauge critical opinion. What became apparent was that only London would be capable of winning any future bid:

It became quite clear that if we were ever going to bid successfully again, it had to be with London, they [the IOC] simply wouldn’t do it with a provincial city, no matter how worthy.

(Reedie, 2011)

It also became clear to Reedie that a bid led by the National Olympic Committee (NOC) was critical – the BOA was Britain’s NOC. A BOA-led bid would not only be more warmly received by the IOC, it would also provide a more solid base for a future set of stakeholders to be involved in the bid, history having shown that this is not the case where there are disjointed relations (Reedie, 2011).

The idea remained small at this point and there were still important questions about how London could be a host, and indeed which Olympiad would be the best one to go for. A research-underpinned feasibility exercise was required and BOA Chief Executive Simon Clegg gave that task to the goalkeeping hockey player from Britain’s 1996 Olympic hockey team, David Luckes (Lee, 2006). In 1997, Luckes set about the task of producing a report that was focused on ensuring that a winning bid could be produced, something that ultimately would not become clear until 6 July 2005.

East London focus

There were different options available, and an Olympic Games based in west London was on the planning table. However, it became clear that the Football Association would not support that with a new Wembley Stadium that was for anything but football, and so the most feasible option was an east London bid with a regeneration angle. A long stretch of available and mainly derelict land had been identified along the Lea Valley, but what was critical was that it would not remain available for long (Lee, 2006). In 1997, British sport wasn’t hugely successful and relationships in sport were also complicated and the Government was not that engaged; consequently, there was no point in submitting a bid that year and going for the 2004 Games. Athens would be too tough a competitor in any case. Similarly, the thought of taking on Beijing and bidding in 2001 for the 2008 Games appeared futile. Indeed, a 2001 bid would only have served as a trial run at best and that was considered to be a route too expensive to take (Reedie, 2011).

In retrospect it is clear that when Paris bid against Beijing in 2001 they ‘got rather badly bruised by the process’ (Reedie, 2011). The BOA did not feel that it had either the time or the funding to compete or trial for these Olympiads and so it became clear that if London was to bid for an Olympiad and also take advantage of the favoured option identified in the feasibility study it would have to be for 2012.

Early impacting factors

There were two events that had contradictory impacts on the development of preparation towards a decision on whether to bid or not. In July 2001, London, having won and accepted its bid to stage the 2005 World Athletics Championships, withdrew on the order of Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport following late financial assessments. While avoiding a financially disastrous event was to be admired, unfortunately London instantaneously
gained a reputation as a city that could not deliver an international sports event (Masterman, 2009). At best this would be a mantle that would need to be addressed by a bid, and at worst would be a factor standing against going ahead with a bid at all.

However, another event may have provided a counterbalance. The 2002 Commonwealth Games were hosted in Manchester and in many ways were hailed a great success. Jacques Rogge, the President of the IOC, saw that event firsthand and witnessed the fact that Britain could indeed deliver an international sports event.

The Cassani period

The bid team began from very humble beginnings and with an American businesswoman in charge. Barbara Cassani, formerly with the British Airlines budget airline, Go, was the first appointment and took up her role as Chair of the Bid in August 2003. She was responsible for building the team from scratch and was critically acclaimed in providing the solid base that was required to work towards the first target, completion of the IOC applicant city questionnaire, due to the IOC by 15 January 2004.

Cassani came in on the back of a number of months of wrangling over costs. In late 2002 expenditure had been estimated at £1.8 billion in an Arup-produced study (Arup, 2002). This was received somewhat sceptically by a number of Government cabinet members and an internally derived estimation from civil servants came up with a substantially higher figure of £2.4 billion. It is difficult to know whether this was contrived by ministers who were clearly against hosting an Olympic Games, but in any case the estimate was a formidable barrier to overcome. This new cost was seen as too prohibitive and a new financial model was required if progress was to be achieved. This came from key player Tessa Jowell, working with her Sports Minister Richard Caborn and supported by a deal made with the City of London. London Mayor Ken Livingstone, while not an expert on sport, was aware of what a Games might do for London and so agreed to a deal that provided the difference in costs via a model that saw £0.9 billion coming from the London Development Agency (LDA) and an increase in Londoners’ taxes. The remaining £1.5 billion was to come from Lottery funding supported by a whole new programme of ticket sales.

There was a nagging doubt at this time and, in particular, Prime Minister Tony Blair wanted to know if London could win a bid. This was far from being only an internal concern as the media had picked up on the significance of Tessa Jowell going to Lausanne to meet IOC President Jacques Rogge in January 2003 (Sports Illustrated, 2003). Although she returned with positive news that London had as good a chance as any other applicant city, it still took until 15 May 2003 for Blair’s Cabinet to finally declare that it would bid for the 2012 Games (Parliament, 2003).

The decision to bid

Cassani was appointed relatively quickly in June 2003, taking up her role two months later. Next came Keith Mills as Chief Executive and Mike Lee as Director of Communications and Public affairs, with further team building having to run alongside a BOA official declaration to the IOC that London was an applicant city. This was done by 15 July 2003 and the required fee of US$150,000 was paid the following month. This allowed London to use a ‘mark’ in the public domain that denoted its status as a 2012 bidding city. By this time the decision to bid had taken six years to develop. The focus now was on the preparation of answers to the IOC questionnaire.
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The Applicant Questionnaire

The questionnaire is relatively short and a response is submitted in report form, which is then evaluated by an IOC team consisting of technical experts to assess each applicant city. Generally applicants are assessed on: (1) the city’s and host country’s potential in hosting the Games; and (2) a demonstrated compliance to the Olympic Charter, ethical and anti-doping codes as set by the IOC.

The questionnaire is designed to provide the IOC evaluation team with an overview, rather than detail, of an intended event concept. In this case each of the applicants – Havana, Istanbul, Leipzig, London, Madrid, Moscow, New York, Paris and Rio de Janeiro – had to cover seven themes, with each answer required in both French and English. At 25 pages per language, the challenge was to ensure there was sufficient detail to convince the evaluation team to select a city to go through to the next round as a Candidate City. The themes were as follows:

1. Motivation, concept and public opinion. This section covers measures of public support, indication of intended legacies and how the venues would look from a geographical perspective. For London this was a section that needed to show how there was widespread support for an Olympic Games in the city, bearing in mind London had not been the preferred choice for the 1992, 1996 or 2000 bids from the BOA.

2. Political support. For this section London had to clearly demonstrate a serious intent for hosting the Games. Therefore the withdrawn hosting for the 2005 World Athletic Championships could have been perceived as a limiting factor, while the successful 2002 Commonwealth Games were an asset. Letters from the Government, the City and the BOA, and declarations of key personnel involved from both a political and management perspective were required in order to demonstrate just how serious the city was.

3. Finance. This section required each city to give a breakdown of how it would fund both a hosting of the Games and also the upcoming candidacy phase. London submitted the financial model it had agreed the previous year.

4. Venues. This section was where London showed how it would reclaim and build a new zone in east London with a sports focus consisting of new venues. It also had to relate its Olympic Park to other venues at a distance from its main delivery centre, showing that this was a benefit for those areas rather than a geographical or transportation problem.

5. Accommodation. Hotel provision was confidently presented by London as it showed how it could cater for event visitors, including the media, adequately without any new investment.

6. Transport infrastructure. For many cities this is a section that requires considerable consideration; transportation was certainly an area of concern for London. It had to try and demonstrate how it would move large numbers of event-related people by air, road, rail, underground and light rail in a capital city already suffering congestion issues. Little had been prepared or negotiated in the five months the team had to prepare for this questionnaire, so this was an area of vulnerability.

7. General conditions, logistics and experience. This section required information on city population expectations at the time of the event, meteorology conditions, environmental approach and security provision. It also required a 10-year history of expertise in hosting major international sports events. Clearly this was another section to be wary of, considering the 2005 World Athletics Championships issue, but a great opportunity to play up the 2002 Commonwealth Games success.
What was important for the BOA was that the Applicant Questionnaire was produced so that it was clearly coming from Britain’s NOC (the BOA) and from a sport perspective, ‘rather than from the city or anybody else so that the whole campaign was based on sport and from sport’ (Reedie, 2011). The overall highlight for London was that its concept was based on a very compact plan and that there would therefore be a Games predominantly based in a new Olympic Park. It was also felt that there would be a substantial legacy, particularly because the new venues would be located in a new park setting that would bring about much-needed regeneration to this part of east London (Reedie, 2011).

Candidacy

To coincide with its submission of the Applicant Questionnaire response on 15 January 2004 the London team provided a launch event at the Royal Opera House in order to promote public and media support. It had achieved the first task – registering the bid – but would have to wait until 18 May 2004 to find out if London was indeed to be taken seriously.

Only five cities went through to the next phase, with London joining Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris as a Candidate City. However, this success came with a fair degree of negative feedback and a clear indication that it would have to improve its bid if it was going to win. Indeed, London was a good way behind Paris (8.5 points) and Madrid (8.3 points), with only 7.6 points; New York was almost level pegging at 7.5 points. Moscow appeared a long way behind with 6.5 points (Daily Mail, 2004; Lee, 2006). Worryingly, London only came top in one of the seven themes, accommodation, and even that was a joint-first placing. The feedback London gained indicated that security, low public support (62 per cent) and a lack of event management expertise and experience were all areas of concern. The loss of the 2005 World Athletics Championships in particular appeared to be counting against London (Caborn, 2011). However, the most critical area of concern was transportation. This was certainly not the start the Government had wished for as many ministers remained unconvinced that London could win (Caborn, 2011). The production of a Bid Book (Candidature File) was the next task; this was due on 15 November 2004, so the London team only had six months to progress from third to first place.

The clear message from the IOC was that London would have a problem with its ‘obsolete transport infrastructure’ (Reedie, 2011). This meant the task was to produce a Bid Book that would provide sufficient technical detail on what the venues would be, where they would be and how London would organise a great sporting event. A critical part of this was to address a whole programme of work with a new diverse set of stakeholders in order to get London’s transportation systems up to the necessary standard. What transpired was a lot of work pulling together the right parties to achieve upgrades on the Underground, extensions on the Docklands Light Railway, implementation of construction of a new railway system, and also the establishment of a link to the Games using the Channel Tunnel rail system. The bid team therefore entered a high learning curve whereby it had to effect change in order to eradicate the IOC’s damning evaluation.

Other key Bid Book considerations were Government support and guarantees and also a strong effort to make the Games sustainable and environmentally friendly. A firm budget is also required in a Bid Book, which was complicated by the fact that it had to be bid in US dollars based on 2004 prices. This planning was further complicated by the numbers of stakeholders involved, each with their own budgets and development agendas. Ostensibly the bid team had to function as a catalyst. For example, the issue of transportation was the city’s concern and indeed their cost, but if London was to win a Games there had to be considerable
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A collaborative effort in producing a solution. What transpired was a plan to build an improved infrastructure as part of a development programme focused on the Olympic site, ‘so that 75% of the total enhanced cost was effectively infrastructure and 25% was the sports facility’ (Reedie, 2011). Innovation was also applied with a declaration that spectator tickets were to be sold at a price that included travel on the London Underground on the day of the event (LOCOG, 2004).

From a communications perspective the post-questionnaire position was seen more positively. While a lot of new and original work was now required, there was a confidence in the London bid team that this could be achieved. The Applicant Questionnaire allows only so much detail and bid teams at this stage of the process are small and generally without specific expertise to hand. Getting through that stage and then having the chance to build that expertise and detail was a relatively positive place to be (Lee, 2011).

The competition

While London would, of course, focus on its own bid, there is always the need to keep an eye on the competition. Each of the other four cities had their own differential, but there was a public perception that Paris and Madrid were clearly in the lead following the scoring of the Applicant Questionnaires.

Paris

Having bid for one recent Games (1992) and the immediate previous Games (2008), Paris was considered by many to be the 2012 favourite. They also appeared to have ‘an air’ of being the favourite too (Lee, 2011). A key factor was that the city is considered a major tourist destination and therefore would make a good Host City for IOC members, athletes and tourists alike (Reedie, 2011). The city also had a strong technical base in an already established focal point in its main stadium, the multi-use Stade de France (Lee, 2011). In addition, Paris looked to have a reasonable, centrally located village concept. This amounted to a better set of existing facilities than London had, and utilisation of those venues was perceived to be in a ‘safe set of hands’ from an event-management perspective (Caborn, 2011). Overall, and because this was their third bid in recent times, there was a feeling within the London bid team that Paris had a key factor of ‘it’s our turn’ (Caborn, 2011). Ironically, this was considered by some to lead to the city’s downfall, their communications strategy appearing conservative throughout their campaign as if not wanting to upset a ‘winning game’ (Lee, 2011).

Madrid

Madrid was generally seen to have built its concept well. It had a large indoor convention centre at its disposal and was also a capital city that had not hosted before. Barcelona is generally considered to have put on a successful Games and indeed developed its legacy since, and as it is the only city in Spain to have hosted a Games there was a fear that if it was not Paris, then it was Madrid’s turn. There was also the ‘Samaranch factor’ (Lee, 2011). Former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch and his son, Juan Antonio Samaranch Jr, the leading executive for the Madrid bid, were visibly well connected to the IOC. There was a fear that Madrid could even be a more formidable opponent than Paris if it came down to a two-horse race (Caborn, 2011).
New York

New York was not considered to be offering strong competition, despite a strong, charismatic leader in Dan Doctoroff. There also appeared to be strains in the relationship between the US Olympic Committee and the IOC (Lee, 2011). While New York has an aura that extends worldwide, the London team were not convinced it offered a strong Games concept and saw early that there would be issues surrounding security and its proposed main stadium (Reedie, 2011). This did indeed prove to be New York’s downfall in the latter stages as its intended Manhattan-based site fell through.

Moscow

The London team saw Moscow as being last in the race. The venues that were the base of Moscow’s plan were already built and while for some this could be considered an asset, these were the facilities that had been used when the city hosted the 1980 Games. These were generally seen as tired and in need of upgrading (Reedie, 2011).

Highlights from the Candidature File

The Candidature File that London eventually put together and submitted on 15 November 2004 was clearly a successful Bid Book. It had taken the previous Applicant Questionnaire feedback and used that to produce a winning position. It is therefore important to consider how this was done.

There was a sense that ‘British sport was beginning to come together in a way that it didn’t always do’, this being a helpful position to promote as well as use to achieve a coherent bid (Reedie, 2011). There was also growth in public support via bid communications and supporter sign-up mechanisms, and while the British media can be sceptical, even cynical on occasions, when London became a Candidate City the bid seemed to pick up momentum. A key moment was the visit of the evaluation commission in February 2005. This needed to be a success of course, but London also used this to promote the notion that it had a chance of winning. In order to get this event right, the team ran its own trial event with Craig Reedie chairing a mock-up event. He was able to bring expertise to that role, having previously been on two evaluation committees. Alongside a team of other experts, Reedie presided over five days of rehearsal and as a result this process revealed a number of issues that the team were then equipped to address and thus receive the evaluation commission with confidence. The outcome was a very satisfactory report (Reedie, 2011).

The London bid: key success factors

The Bid Book cannot stand alone. Its content needs to be believed and for that there needs to be considerable activity in the public domain throughout the six months prior to submission and then up to the decision day itself. This is how and when a bid is won; a team has to work hard to create and promote its own success factors. In analysis, London had a number of key success factors that combined to help them get the job done. These are discussed below.

The bid team

The outcome of any project is entirely dependent on the quality of the people and the decisions they make. For an event project there is an overarching target and an immovable deadline, and so whatever decisions are made the event has a date on which it must take place. This makes for
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Management teams are composed with that one target in mind, and event planning periods have little time to waste. It is important, then, that talented individuals are selected. However, what is also critical is the composition of the event-management team as a cohesive unit whereby individuals are moulded into a team for optimum performance.

The London bid team did this very well. What is clear to see is that there remains great loyalty, respect and admiration between members of the bid team, and yet at the outset this team was made up of a disparate set of individuals. There was a pride in the job that was done and the comradeship among members demonstrates just how close this team became. The combination of the three major stakeholders (BOA, the Government and the City of London) working together was a significant advantage and no mean feat to achieve (Caborn, 2011).

Barbara Cassani was a critical first appointment as Chair of the London Bid. She built the team from scratch, putting all the initial blocks in place in order to assemble what was ultimately a winning team. She receives a great deal of praise for this and yet there was a certain amount of controversy created by the media both at the time of her appointment and at the time of her resignation (Caborn, 2011; Lee, 2011; Reedie, 2011). In particular, there was some surprise at an American being appointed to such a role, and indeed this may have been a factor in the reason she left the post in May 2004 (Reedie, 2011). The media made quite a big deal out of her resignation as it came at a time when London had won through to be declared a Candidate City (Telegraph, 2004). This looked to be bad timing for a bid that had just come through the first stage but was sitting in third place. However, in retrospect it appears to be both critical that Cassani was appointed to successfully kick things off and equally important that she left the post when she did. She was pivotal in bringing people together to achieve the mission of getting the bid through the first stage and onto the shortlist (Caborn, 2011). However, she herself perhaps recognised that she could not take the lead role beyond this point and take the bid to an IOC membership she did not understand (Caborn, 2011). While the media questioned whether she was moved aside, the reality is that she had resigned several days before the IOC decision and that a new Chair had been found very quickly but expertly kept under wraps until after the decision (Caborn, 2011; Lee, 2011).

For some commentators, Sebastian Coe was also a controversial choice to take over from Cassani. Indeed, it was an interesting issue for the Government’s Labour Cabinet to endorse the appointment of a former Tory Member of Parliament (Caborn, 2011). However, Coe has been seen since to have taken on the role and dispelled any thoughts that he was not the right choice. The role he played is seen as critical in winning the bid and is discussed below, but an important point to make here is that events are projects that require clear leadership and hierarchy structures (Masterman, 2009). The decision-making processes from planning to implementation require clear lines of communication within those structures and that is what Cassani started and what Coe was then able to develop.

Keith Mills is seen to have played a significant role. Mills was appointed Chief Executive for the London Bid, but was already a very successful businessman and sports enthusiast. He appeared to take on the role for the love of it, and in so doing brought both a great amount of deal-making skill to the team as well as dedication (Caborn, 2011; Reedie, 2011).

Craig Reedie’s role as BOA Chairman and the initiating of the bid is clear to see in the discussion above, but Reedie continued to play an important role, in particular alongside Coe and Mills after the submitting of the Candidature File. His position as an IOC member allowed him access to other members, providing invaluable insight into where the bid needed to focus.

There were several figures from politics who played key roles. Tessa Jowell, as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, was important at the outset. She and her Sports Minister Richard Caborn, having decided that they wanted to back the bid around late December 2002,
Guy Masterman

became very supportive of the BOA. She, more than any other Cabinet member, was influential in persuading her colleagues that the bid was worthy of support, clearly understanding that a successful bid would need to be led by sport but underpinned by the Government, rather than the other way around (Lee, 2011). At the outset there were no offices, funding or committee, just a number of enthusiasts and a report from Arup indicating that an event could be hosted in the East End of London with support from Mayor Ken Livingstone. Jowell provided the funds and stood back to let the BOA develop the project (Reedie, 2011). Livingstone was a key political figure with an agenda for the redevelopment of the city but, along with his counterparts, he approached his role by ensuring that no-one or their individual agenda was more important than the team effort required to win (Lee, 2011).

A number of team executives stood out. Mike Lee was one of the first employees appointed by Cassani, and as Director of Communications and Public Affairs he proved to be a skilful operator and shrewd in identifying issues early. An example of one of the trickiest issues was the BBC Panorama broadcast dealing with bribery (see below), but this was ably dealt with by Lee and his team (Caborn, 2011). David Magliano worked very closely with Mike Lee in his role as Marketing Director and played a key role in the whole communications plan.

Consultants were also used. Of particular importance was the hiring of Jim Sloman and his MI Associates consultancy to help move on from the Applicant Questionnaire and through to the more detailed Candidature File. Sloman was one of the key operating officers at the 2000 Olympic Games hosted by Sydney, an appointment that in itself was a good story to tell at that stage in the process (Lee, 2011). Sir Howard Bernstein, Chief Executive of Manchester City Council, brought important advice, having been instrumental in a successful delivery of Manchester’s 2002 Commonwealth Games. Bernstein also introduced Alison Nimmo, who put together the original plans for the Olympic Park and then went on to establish the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA), which is now responsible for delivering the infrastructure for London 2012.

Communications

There were a number of successful aspects to the communications that were undertaken by the London team during the bid period. The ‘Back the Bid’ campaign generated three million signed-up supporters to show that London wanted the Games. London was presented as one of the world’s great cities using its landmarks alongside sport in its campaign (London.net, 2005). High-profile supporters such as politicians and Olympians were well utilised. For example, Daley Thompson was cleverly used to show how a global sports star could emerge from the East End of London (Lee, 2011).

Successful plans need to be able to respond to issues because they can often be usurped by surprises. The key is to react quickly with planned response systems. There was one particular threat that required all of these elements. In August 2004, the BBC’s Panorama programme unearthed a bribery issue with a claim that IOC votes for bidding cities could be bought. There were no allegations that London was going about this prohibited practice, but it was perceived as a BBC attack on the IOC and consequently became the most potentially damaging crisis London had to contend with (Lee, 2006). When the issue was raised at an IOC Session in Athens at the 2004 Games, the key response by the team was to ensure the IOC members got to see the programme, but in a private airing as had previously been agreed by Craig Reedie and Jacques Rogge. Members of the team, including Sebastian Coe, Craig Reedie and Mike Lee, were waiting outside, and after the screening spent their time quashing the rumour that the bid team had been involved. They ostensibly distanced the London bid from the broadcast. The
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suspicion may still have remained, but the quick and personal response from key team members was critical in dampening this touch paper. Fortuitously this was also helped by another incident in which two sprinters failed drug tests, pulling media attention away from London.

The key theme throughout all communications was the need for distinguishing London from four other great cities, and this was captured in the vision (Lee, 2011).

The vision

The focus on using a London Games to inspire young people to take up sport was a key vision. As part of this approach, a critical decision was also made to ignore the temptation to focus on highlighting comparisons with the other cities and to concentrate on how the Olympic Movement could be developed for the future. Michael Payne, a former IOC Marketing Director, served as an advisor and he was used to identify how London might transform the IOC and the Movement. The team agreed that the decision to take the previous 2008 Games to China was a momentous, historic point for the IOC and that a similar impact might be required for 2012. The concept that this should be a bid that was focused on inspiring the young was further enhanced by talking with sponsors as well as IOC members, and, interestingly, broadcasters. In the United States, for example, there were concerns that Olympic television audiences were getting older and so consequently broadcasters might be keen to hear of a focus on getting the young more engaged (Lee, 2006, 2011). It was a bold decision, but London decided to focus on an inspiration of young people from around the world to get them into sport, a focus that would hopefully be welcomed by many stakeholders because of their concerns over future audiences and markets.

Lobbying

A successful skill and tactic adopted by the team was in the lobbying of all the different people that needed to be swayed and brought on board throughout the different stages of the bid. At the outset it was a nationally focused job to get politicians and the Government’s Cabinet on side. This worked and it led to the Diplomatic Service, Foreign Office, UK Trade and Investment and British Council all working towards this common goal. Caborn himself travelled many miles to ensure the British Council got behind it in the 30+ countries they were active in with sport-led projects (Caborn, 2011). At the outset the City of London was also an important stakeholder to win over.

The latter stages became highly focused on one target area – IOC members’ votes – and while the London team had a strategy, it was not one to be found in any document. Effectively this was something that evolved between three key players: Coe, Mills and Reedie. Unlike Coe or Mills, Reedie was able to legitimately access IOC members at many more events because he was a fellow IOC member. Together they worked out where they could and should be, and how they should contact people. This was supported by a comprehensive approach to intelligence gathering, and so the team of three was underpinned by a whole host of other executives who were knowledgeable about IOC members’ opinions and feelings in different parts of the world. An international relations department was set up for this process and they provided analysis whereby the three leads could operate effectively. However, the real success of this approach was the communication they had between themselves, despite being miles apart most of the time, they were in constant contact with each other and always evolving the strategy. Essentially, the strategy was in their heads. The outcome was an ongoing analysis of the likely intentions of IOC members who would and would not be sympathetic towards London, who would be in favour of the other cities and a complex set of scenarios consisting of who might second-pick London once cities were eliminated in the voting (Reedie, 2011).
Another successful aspect in support of this approach was the development of a good presentation system. When the team was allowed to go and make presentations to NOCs, for example, they would frequently be accompanied by distinctive athletes, so it was made clear that the London bid was derived out of sport rather than politics and that it was for the development of sport. The fact that Reedie led, demonstrating his IOC and BOA affiliations, followed by Coe, an Olympic athlete, with politicians only coming later, was key in this approach. This was in contrast with the Paris approach, for example, in which presentations were led by politicians who came in, made their presentation, and then left directly afterwards (Reedie, 2011).

The London team made another critical decision – to go to Singapore early. The IOC decision day was 6 July 2005 and the other teams came into town just prior to that. The London team was there a week early, in another hotel. Here they rehearsed their presentation many times and so were ready when IOC members came to town around 4 July. By that time they were comfortably established in the hotel and had a clear plan about how they would organise the approaches they needed to make. The main thrust of this was the use of a Prime Minster and personal audiences with IOC members. They planned it so that some members would see Tony Blair, Cherie Blair, Richard Caborn and/or Ken Livingstone. Craig Reedie’s wife, Rosemary, was also able to introduce Cherie Blair to IOC members’ spouses. The time spent with IOC members in this way was seen as a critical advantage compared with the other teams’ approaches (Reedie, 2011).

The presentation

A lot has been made of the effect the presentation in Singapore had, so it is important to put this into perspective. It was of course a presentation that was given on behalf of what turned out to be the winning bid, and because of the widespread feeling that Paris went into that day as the favourites, for many what transpired was a presentation that won the day. However, a successful final day presentation such as this can only portray what is already prepared and the success of this presentation was that it portrayed the depth of a bid that was already very well conceived and built (Caborn, 2011). Reedie (2011) put it succinctly: ‘You could never win the Games by a presentation but you could lose one with a bad presentation.’ The key to the presentation and its success was that it was able to draw on the vision of inspiring young people to take up sport, a plan that took two years to create (Lee, 2011).

The decision to focus on this vision and devote the presentation in this way was brave, especially as the norm had always been for cities to focus on key aspects of a city and country and what they could offer, more or less from a visitor’s perspective. The bid team had thought long and hard about whether to pursue the new, risky route as it was unprecedented. However, the decision was made to go into it wholeheartedly, and if they were going to take 30 children into the presentation hall then they needed to do so bravely, out front and with that as the whole focus. The prospect of competing at an event against four of the greatest cities in the world also inspired the team to go with this approach because it gave them the differential it believed it would need. The films that were used were inexpensive but were able to support this integrated focus by focusing on children, in particular a young runner, young cyclist, young gymnast and young swimmer. Including David Beckham was also carefully thought through in that his presence was based on him not being there as one of the most famous sports persons in the world, but as an East End lad wanting to host the Games (Caborn, 2011; Lee, 2006). They did gamble on the other cities going with the usual approach, and in particular London needed Paris to go this way. The other cities did take a tourist-focused approach, with Paris using a very expensive technical video that focused on the city, its buildings and lifestyle.
Preparing and winning the London bid

In further testament to the whole approach taken by the London team, the team had a strong feeling they were going to Singapore with a bid that could win (Reedie, 2011). Interestingly, the scoring from round to round in Singapore shows that preparation and presentation were a good match, as London came out of the first round ahead and was only ever behind in the second round (see Table 3.1).

Tony Blair

Tony and Cherie Blair committed time to go out to Singapore. Not only that, they worked very hard to ensure their presence and support were felt. This alone is perceived by some to have been critical (Caborn, 2011; Lee, 2006). Once he was convinced the bid could win, Tony Blair wanted to give it full support; his decision to work the two days in Singapore and meet the IOC members was critically important. He is said to have thrown himself enthusiastically into this task, conducting back-to-back meetings over an intense few days (Lee, 2011). Whilst he was unable to stay for the final day, this appears not to have been significant, as his reason was to attend the internationally significant G8 Conference in Scotland. On the other hand, Jacques Chirac, the French President, did attend that day but his decision to only come to town the night before and also leave early (to go to the G8) was perceived to be a comparatively poor one (Caborn, 2011; Lee, 2006).

Sebastian Coe

When Sebastian Coe took over as Chair for the London bid in May 2004 he came with a strong set of credentials: Olympic double gold medallist, national hero, political and business experience. He had also been one of three vice-chairs for the bid and so he had prior experience. He was able to work with and inspire various stakeholders, in particular Tony Blair and Ken Livingstone – two Labour politicians often opposed to each other – were brought together to work in harmony for the good of the bid. Coe brought thoroughness and presentability and demonstrated this particularly by leading from the front. His thorough rehearsal of the Singapore presentation and its polished delivery, capped by his own role in that event, is an example of that style. Generally, the ‘Coe factor’ has been seen by many to have made a difference in winning the bid (BBC, 2005; Lee, 2011).

Summary and conclusions

It can be seen above that while the presentation in Singapore was strongly delivered, it was the culmination of many years of work and strong decision making that won this bid. Of critical

Table 3.1 Election of the 2012 Host City by the IOC Session, Singapore, 6 July 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First round</th>
<th>Second round</th>
<th>Third round</th>
<th>Fourth round</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrid</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moscow</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eliminated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gamesbids.com, 2011.
importance was the boldness of the decision to go with the vision, whereby sport was at the heart of the London bid. This decision led to a bid that had significant competitive differential. London also produced a bid that was successfully aimed at Olympic ideals and therefore had great appeal to IOC voters. This had to be built and promoted well and so a strong and cohesive team was required, with communications and a very personal approach to lobbying coming to the fore. The bid was supported well by the Government, including key political players such as Tony Blair being able to provide an impact on the IOC when Paris, in particular, did not. The cohesion that can be seen in the delivery of these factors was also inspired by Sebastian Coe, but what is clear is that it is the combination of all of the above and not any one factor that led to London winning its chance to host the 2012 Games.

References


