

SID Looks Forward To Olympic Challenge

By HENRY DUVALL
Contributor

While athletes from around the globe tune up for the 1984 Olympic Games this summer in Los Angeles, Alois "Ricky" Clemons, sports information director at Howard University, prepares for quite a different challenge at the 33rd Olympiad.

Clemons has been named "venue press planner" for the Summer Olympics, one of three professionals who will formulate press operating plans for each of the locations, or venues, for the 23 sports represented in the first Summer Olympic Games to be held in the United States since 1932.

Planning for the media blitz is no small task, considering that more than 8,000 journalists and technicians from some 154 countries are expected to converge on the Games, scheduled from July 28 to Aug. 12.

Press operations equipment has to be installed, interviews have to be arranged and interpreters have to be provided at each competition site.

"Ricky is part of a select group of people who have spent most of their working lives in the service of the news media," says Richard B. Perelman, associate vice president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC) and director of press operations.

Clemons will also serve in a senior management capacity for one of the venues, or sites of competition, according to Greg Harney, manager of venue press operations.

In meeting the Olympic challenge, the 28-year-old Howard SID says, "I compare myself to an athlete trying to win a gold medal."

Like the athlete preparing for Olympic competition, Clemons has had to hone his professional capabilities to advance to the Games. "I've always been a guy to look toward the future," he says.

His break came when Howard track Coach William P. Moultrie, who will coach U.S. Olympians in the 200-meter dash this summer, showed Clemons the road to the Olympics.

Last summer, Clemons worked as a volunteer media liaison for the U.S. Olympic Committee press staff at the Fifth National Sports Festival in Colorado Springs, Colo. But the volunteer work was a sacrifice that he wasn't sure would pay off.

He departed for the 12-day stay in Colorado with limited funds and a feeling of uncertainty of what lay ahead. He also had to leave behind his wife, Gail, who was six months pregnant. "A little man on my shoulders was asking me: 'Why am I doing this? This is a serious sacrifice.' I didn't want the trip to be for naught," he says.

And it wasn't.



Howard's Derek Caracciolo attempts to block an Aggie shot from behind in a January victory over arch-rival North Carolina A&T. Though, at press time, the

Bison hovered below .500 overall, they tied the Aggies for the conference lead (photo by Brian Branch-Price).

"I was working with some of the finest SIDs in the business," Clemons says, noting that he became the first black ever to work as a media liaison at a National Sports Festival.

Now over one major hurdle, Clemons wasted no time preparing for the 1984 Olympic Games. He volunteered again, and was assigned in December to an unpaid position of assistant venue press chief for either boxing or basketball.

But Venue Press Operations Manager Harney was so impressed with Clemons' enthusiasm that he and LAOOC Associate Vice President Perelman decided to offer him a full-time paid position as venue press planner. "We knew we needed a person

who could see the big picture," says Perelman. "We think Ricky is an individual of exceptional talent."

Clemons is taking a leave of absence from Howard to report in February to the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee.

"We're grateful to Howard (for lending Clemons' services)," Perelman says. "The fact that Howard is sharing its valuable resource with us is in the best tradition of the Olympic spirit."

A 1977 University of Maryland journalism graduate, Clemons joined Howard's public relations staff in 1980 as a sports information specialist. He had previously served as an organizational manager for the Southwestern Publishing Co. in Nashville Tenn., and

worked as a stringer for *The Washington Post* and *The Carolina Times* in Durham, N.C.

He was named Howard's sports information director in January 1983, after serving several months as acting SID. "If it weren't for the hands-on experience in running the sports information office at Howard," says Clemons, "I would not have had the experience and confidence to become a part of the Olympic Committee."

The admittedly career-oriented Durham native perceives his Olympic challenge as a stepping stone toward his goal of becoming an executive with a major professional sports franchise.

Says Clemons: "There's a need for experienced blacks in the front offices of all the professional sports."