

# TPL's novel approach

Ten years ago, in February 1988, a young English businessman stood on Sydney Harbour Bridge. He, like so many before and since, was overwhelmed by the view across the beautiful harbour city to the famous Opera House below.

James Bunn had arrived to join a large multinational corporation in their Sydney office, to manage their marketing activities. Having come from the cut-throat corporate world in London and New York, he found the benefits of the Australian lifestyle particularly seductive.

"The perfect blue of the water and sky, and the clarity of the light was stunning. I knew that if we could package it for overseas, there would be strong market interest around the world for both Sydney and Australia as a whole," he says a decade later.

He settled in this new found harbourside paradise, and became an Australian citizen soon after. The opportunity to make the dream a reality finally came in 1992, when he joined entrepreneur Steve Cosser to start Australia's then fledgling cable TV industry. It was during Sportel in Monte-Carlo in 1993 that Bunn brokered an historic deal between Cosser's Australia Media and TCI, which led to Australia's first 24-hour sports channel, Premier Sports Network, and later FOX Sports Australia.

During this period Bunn had started marketing Australia using AFL Australian Rules Football with enormous success around the world. At that time Sydney was making a bid to host the 2000 Olympics, and by using the weekly AFL Highlights show as a publicity vehicle, his team were able to influence decision makers in 140 key countries. The success of this bid is now legendary and early in 1994 Bunn went on to found TPL Sports to export top quality Australian sports television coverage around the world.

From the outset, TPL Sports were responsible for exposure of many Australian sports, from netball, swimming and motor racing, through to watersports. As a keen observer of Sydney Harbour's 18 Footers, Mr Bunn joined with Bill Macartney and later Rob Brown to take these extreme watersports to the world's television viewers. With the help of Shell, TPL Sports were able to encourage the Australian domination of motorcycle racing in the early 1990's via the Shell Advance Superbike Series. Soon, their development of Australian Touring Cars globally began to catch the eye of the larger American companies, as they duly took heed and started to exploit the Australian market.

Nevertheless TPL Sports maintains their commitment to Australian sport by bringing millions of dollars back to the athletes at grass roots level. The recent *Sports Eye Report* survey named TPL Sports as the fourth largest sponsor of sailing in Australia, and their support of young Olympic hopefuls is intended to bring both Gold and the America's Cup back to Sydney in 2000.

TPL will televise the first Sydney event in the Olympic year, the key 2000 World Youth Sailing Championships. This is one way in which TPL are able to bring the success of world's athletes back to their families via local broadcasts at home. The pre-Olympic regattas featuring the new 49'er skiff also help complete the Sydney picture along with the world-renowned Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race. As the only Sydney-based sports distribution and production company, TPL have become partners with many overseas broadcasters requiring professional local help in the lead up to 2000.

TPL has also enjoyed similar success distributing a variety of documentaries, travel and lifestyle shows. Experience gained in these genres has cross-fertilised the various TPL sports magazine productions in recent years. *World of Water*, *Inside Sport* and *Total Sport* are just three of the successful magazine series' which have entertained viewers world-wide. This experience will lead to a variety of TPL Sports shows being co-produced in this lead-up to the Sydney Olympics with British, European and Latin American broadcasters.

A working relationship with Soccer legend Pele developed early in 1998, enabling TPL Sports to diversify into World Cup Soccer. Associated new projects will be announced at Sportel, developing TPL's strong catalogue still further. Also, joint productions with Latin American broadcasters will develop ties between Latin and Australasian countries, who share a love of beach sports and an all-round outdoor lifestyle. While the 2000 Games may have been a catalyst, it doesn't stop there. Mr Bunn was recently quoted as saying, "When the Olympic circus has left town, we will still be here for sport through the next millennium."

Nevertheless, the success of the TPL Sports business is such that a new sales office is being established in the Northern Hemisphere to service clients in Europe and the USA. Mr Bunn recently found himself trying to recreate that 1988 magic on Tower Bridge, and was later heard to remark, with disappointment, "Irrespective of England's charm, I just can't bring myself to view the Thames in the same way."