

JOVENTUT DE BADALONA

THE BASKETBALL CLUB JOVENTUT, FOUNDED IN 1930 IN THE TOWN OF BADALONA, KNOWN AS THE "CRADLE OF BASKETBALL", HAS DOUBLED ITS MEMBERSHIP IN A FEW YEARS. THE RECENT INAUGURATION OF THE PALAU MUNICIPAL D'ESPORTS, WITH ROOM FOR 12,500 SPECTATORS, HAS BEEN A BOOST TO "LA PENYA" ON THE SPORTING, FINANCIAL AND SOCIAL LEVELS.

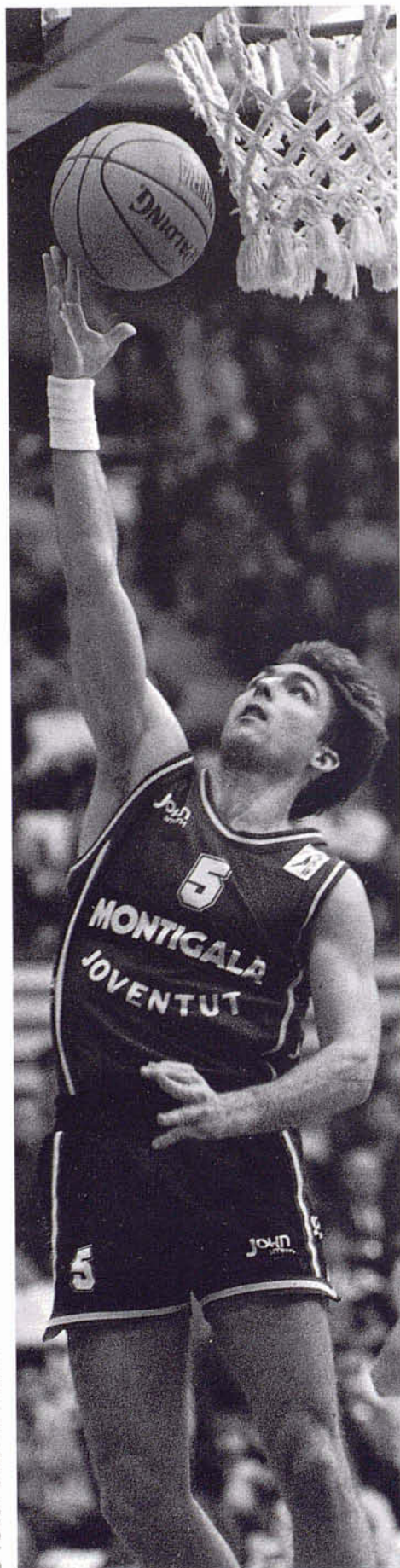
ANTONI CASTELLÀ JOURNALIST

With 11,200 members, Joventut de Badalona is currently the basketball club with the largest membership in Europe. This has been possible thanks to their move to the Palau Municipal d'Esports de Badalona, inaugurated on 1 September 1991, and which this summer will be the setting for the men's and women's basketball events of the Olympic Games. For years the Club Joventut had to make do with having 5,000 members, because of the limitations imposed by its pavilion in the Carrer d'Ausias March, with its capacity for 5,500 spectators. With the loan on the part of Badalona City Council of the Palau Municipal (12,500 spectators) for 15 years, Joventut has been able to double its membership and make progress on the sporting, financial and social levels. Badalona is a city of almost 220,000 inhabitants, where you breathe basketball everywhere you go. In its schools it is difficult to find a boy or girl who has never, in his or her spare time, tried to get a ball into a basket, and a lot of the young people belong to one of the basketball teams and take part in the school competitions. Not for nothing, then, is Badalona known as the "cradle of basketball". Its proximity to Barcelona means that

some of the activities taking place in Badalona are overshadowed by others in the Catalan capital. In this respect, there's no doubt that if Badalona has a sign of identity of its own, this is none other than the Club Joventut, an organisation which, since its foundation, has taken its name and that of the city all over the world. The people of Badalona thrill to Joventut's victories and suffer when things go wrong, but more than anything else, they are proud of their club.

It is precisely this symbiosis between the city of Badalona and Club Joventut that has given most energy and drive to the club since it was formed on 30 March 1930, when a group of friends formed the "Penya Spirit of Badalona". The group's chief activity was sport, especially bicycle outings, football, table-tennis and basketball. After the Spanish Civil War, in 1939, the organisation modified its statutes and changed its name to "Club Juventud Badalona", its directors choosing a name that sounded practically the same in Castilian as in Catalan.

The new statutes were approved on 20 August 1943, and in article 2 they specified that the club's aim was the promotion of basketball. For some years, the Club Joventut also had roller hockey





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and handball teams, but these sports never caught on in the same way as basketball, which today is the only sport the "Penya" takes part in. "Penya" is the name Joventut is popularly known as, in memory of that "Penya Spirit of Badalona" of the thirties, and the fans also cheer the team on with the cry of "Força, Penya".

In its 62 years of history, Joventut has won a number of official titles, although a few less than they would have liked in Badalona, because for a long time the team was overshadowed by Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, who easily surpass them in funding and have therefore also been able to get hold of the best players. Amongst the Penya's titles are four Spanish Leagues (1966-67, 1977-78, 1990-91 and 1991-92) and



two Korac Cups (1980-81 and 1989-90). One of the aspects Joventut has traditionally concentrated on is the encouragement of local players. The Penya's first team has quite a number of players that have come up from the club's secondary teams. In 1974, Joventut was the first club to start a basketball school, which now has 700 boys and girls grouped in 40 teams which take part in the championships organised by the Catalan and Spanish Federations in the different categories.

The main sporting successes of these training teams have been those of the junior team, which was Spanish champion in its category for three consecutive seasons, from 1986 to 1989. The team had players like Juan Antonio Morales, Carles Ruf, Jordi Pardo and To-



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màs Jofresa, now in the Penya's senior team.

Alongside them, Jordi Villacampa, Rafael Jofresa, Ferran Martínez, the naturalized Spaniard Mike Smith and the North Americans Corny Thompson and Harold Pressley, trained by Lolo Sainz, make up the present team of a Club Joventut which in the last few seasons has grown spectacularly in every sense, thanks largely to the financial contribution of its sponsor, which at present is Montigalà, a company belonging to the banking group Banesto.

This financial effort –with a budget of 814 million pesetas– has allowed Joventut to take a leap forward, a leap which last April almost took them to the height of European basketball. But a basket by the Serbian Djordjevic just three



seconds from the end of the European league final left the Penya, who had been followed to Istanbul by more than 800 fans, without a title which no Catalan team has yet achieved.

A few months earlier, in October 1991, in Paris, Joventut also got within a hair's breadth of breaking the myth of the NBA, when at the Open McDonald's they lost by just two points against the legendary Los Angeles Lakers, in one of Magic Johnson's last matches.

But in spite of these two occasions, Joventut at this moment has an organisational structure and a popular support that allow it to face the future with optimism. We can be sure that for a long time yet to come, when people speak of Badalona, the first thing to come to mind will be the name "Club Joventut". ■