



# Olympic Medals Score Golden Praise

*By Kym Conis*

In the Chinese culture, gold and jade signify honor and virtue. Highly revered, jade also is believed to be the embodiment of good luck, possessing unique symbolic energy. Combined, the two were noted as the key elements in the design of the medals for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. Noble and elegant, the medals blended the traditions of the Chinese culture with the progressive ideas of the Olympic movement, endowing the medal winners with great honor and acclamation in recognition of their achievement at the Games.

The unique medals inlaid with jade not only served as the perfect combination to present to the athletes but also, added the realistic touch to the high-end presentation folder created for medal sponsor BHP Billiton. Through the creative genius of North Design, the flawless execution of Behrmann Printing Co., and the exquisite brass die production of DeCrevel, Inc., the folder's regal design came to life with all the depth and dimension of the actual medals.

Seven different foils stamped in rich hues and embossed in lavish detail were carefully chosen to replicate the 2008 Beijing Olympic medals on the folder entitled "Celebrate with Us." Foil stamped and embossed on a bellyband for added emphasis and higher perceived value, varying shades of jade combine in perfect registration with gold, silver, and bronze to depict a stunning image deserving of golden praise.

## **Branding an Image**

When BHP Billiton became the official medal sponsor for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, the Australian-based global leader in the natural resource industry turned to North Design of Toledo, Ohio, to spearhead its Olympic journey. According to North Design Art Director and Owner David Woodward, "We were contracted to develop the Olympic brand image for BHP Billiton in its role as sponsor and official medals supplier of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games. The comprehensive Olympic Sponsorship program extended into several executions, including hospitality programs, PR, advertising, events, merchandising, and the internet."

The three-panel capacity presentation folder secured with a bellyband was designed to house a pre-departure package for important clients, CEOs, and VIPs all over the world who were invited to BHP Billiton's extensive hospitality program at the Beijing Games. The folder would contain useful information that guests needed to know for their trip to Beijing, such as pre-departure information and everyday Chinese phrases. Beyond its functionality, the folder needed to present a formal appeal – one that would draw guests to BHP Billiton's hospitality functions and portray them as *the* premier places to be while at the Olympics. The use of multiple foils and multi-level embossing was just the answer.

North Design set out to create more than just a folder; it set out to create an image – one that would marry the values of the BHP Billiton corporate brand with the values of the Olympic movement. Concepts such as fair play, unity, physical education, health, well-being, and hospitality all played a role in the folder design. "We took parts of BHP's corporate image and combined it with the Olympics," said Woodward. "You could say we 'Olympicized' it, bringing in Olympic imagery and photography. We also tied in the imagery of the ribbons and overstamped these areas in clear foil to accentuate them. These hospitality kits were going to an audience that was used to getting nicer premiums, which justified the expense of the foil and embossing."

Depicting subdued hues of blues and greens (as opposed to BHP Billiton's corporate colors in red/orange tones), the folder was designed to be calming and cool – particularly in the heat of the summer Games. Representing a global celebration and an uplifting festival of unity, flame imagery was used on the folder and was further accented by a foil stamped silver thread weaving through the imagery. The gold, silver, and bronze Olympic medals on the bellyband were masterfully depicted in seven different colors of foil and then register embossed in elaborate detail. Remarkably accurate, engraver Paul DeCrevel with DeCrevel, Inc., Napa, Calif., utilized high-resolution photographs of the Beijing Olympic medals to recreate their amazing likeness.

## The Beijing Olympic Medals

The actual Beijing Olympic medals were designed by a group formed by the China Central Academy of Fine Arts and the China Banknote Printing and Minting Corporation. The winning design was picked from 265 works that the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee received in a worldwide competition.

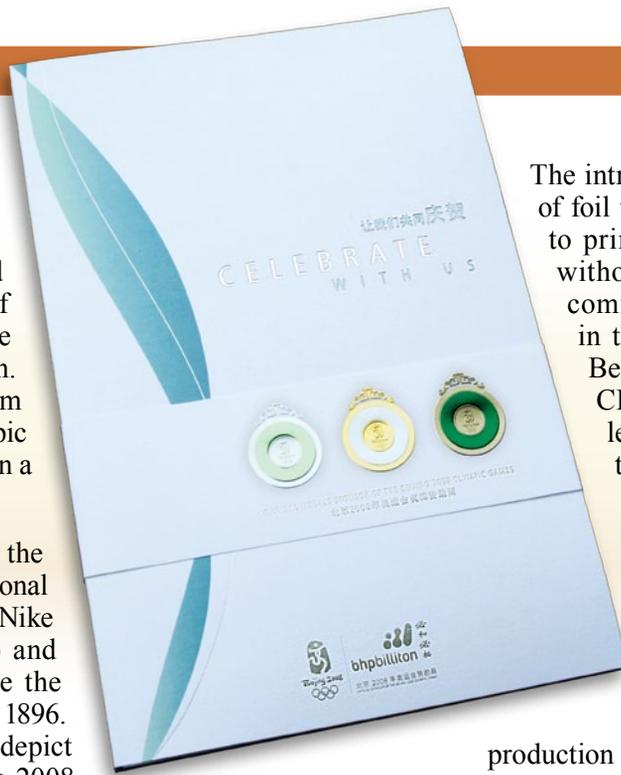
The front of the medals follows the standard design set by the International Olympic Committee – an image of Nike (the Greek Goddess of Victory) and the Panathinaiko Stadium where the Olympic Games were revived in 1896. The back of the medals, which depict the Beijing Olympic logo and the 2008 Olympic rings, are circled with an inlay of jade and finished with a gold- (silver- or bronze-) plated ring. 70mm in diameter and 6mm in thickness, the unique, innovative medals (approximately 6,000 in all) provided an added incentive for the international athletes to make it to the podium – further commanding their respect and admiration.

“As one of the judges of the Beijing 2008 Olympics medal design competition, I think the winning medal design is an image that is both immediately Chinese in its form and exemplifies the traditional style of the Olympic medal,” said Clinton Dines (March 2007), president of the China division of BHP Billiton. “It is truly an ‘East meets West’ emblem of an event that embodies China’s economic and national achievements in recent years and emergence onto the global stage.” As the medals were inlaid with various shades of jade, they represented a one-of-a-kind charm never before achieved by other Olympic medals – a feat that North Design, DeCrevel, Inc., and Behrmann Printing sought to replicate with confidence, artistry, and technical expertise.

### Going for Gold

The presentation folders, produced by Behrmann Printing Co., Inc. of Southfield, Mich., were completed in several stages: the folders (1,250 for the Olympic Games and 1,000 similar pieces with a logo change for the Paralympic Games), the bellybands, and the inner brochure covers.

Behrmann Printing, a third generation family-owned and -operated print finishing operation (by brothers Ivan, Steven, and Scott), specializes in high-end foil stamping/embossing, diecutting, thermography, and small format printing. With a growing niche in specialty work for the premium greeting card and stationery markets, Behrmann continues to look for innovative, profitable avenues of expansion, such as its recent merge into thermographic glitter.



The intricate detail and tight registration of foil to foil on the bellybands and foil to print on the folders were executed without a flaw, in large part due to communication with North Design in the creative stages. According to Behrmann Printing Co. President/CEO Ivan Behrmann, “The challenges and potential problems of this job were overcome by working closely with Designer Lindsay Findling and Senior Art Director Randy Phipps with North Design. Being able to design the bellyband with the optimal spacing between the medals so we could run three foils in one pass played a significant role in production efficiency and cost containment.”

The bellybands, 100# Classic linen cover, were run two-up as a work and twist. Each medal consisted of an outside ring with an interior logo using one color of foil and an inner ring using a second foil. In total, six colors of foil were used to stamp the three medals (and a seventh foil to foil stamp the

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fine-line copy underneath the medals). Three-up copper flat stamping dies from DeCrevel, Inc. were used for the outside and inside rings. All three inside rings were stamped in one pass using three different colored foils from API Foils (Pale Green, Antique White Pearl, and Moss Green) on a 14"x22" Kluge with a vertical pull direction.

Next, the outside rings were foil stamped in three different colors of foil from API Foils (Silver Matte, Medallion Gold, and Pewter) in registration on the same Kluge press. "We register embossed the three flat stamped medals using a three-up hand-sculpted embossing die from DeCrevel on a 22"x29" Saroglia," Behrmann explained. In the final step, the bands were diecut and scored on a Heidelberg cylinder and final trimmed on a Polar cutter. "In order to double check that registration would be completely accurate, we had the embossing set up on the Saroglia and checked registration throughout the foil run," said Behrmann.

The pocket folders, comprised of Curious Metallics 92# cover in Silver Ice, were printed in 4-color process at Colortech Graphics, Inc., Roseville, Mich. Next, they were foil stamped at Behrmann Printing on a 29"x41" automatic Imperia clamshell press. The printed bluish green flame was overstamped in a clear gloss foil (API Foils) in tight

registration. The thin silver metallic line weaving through the flame was stamped in the second pass with foil from Nakai. The blue tagline was foil stamped in the third pass using foil from Crown Roll Leaf, and the silver tagline and logo were foil stamped in the last pass (Nakai foil). "The miniscule type on the pocket folder is incredibly small and fine, yet we experienced no fill in," said Behrmann. "This is a real credit to our pressman, the diemaker, and the foil release." All copper foil stamping dies for the folder were provided by Universal Engraving, Inc. The covers for the Pre-Departure Information Brochure utilized the same materials and supplies as the pocket folders.

According to Woodward, the pocket folder and hospitality campaign was very successful, with an 85 percent response rate appearing at the events. Further proof of the pocket folder's success is evidenced by the Gold Leaf Award it received in the 2008 FSEA Gold Leaf Awards Competition. "It was an honor and a thrill to be able to produce a piece for the Olympics," Behrmann concluded. "Our pressman was actively engaged in making this job happen without a hitch; we are all very proud of the outcome." And with quality design, diemaking, and finishing in its corner, the elaborate three-panel pocket folder couldn't help but score its own brand of 'Olympic Gold.' ■

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