

The **Olympic Movement's** Next Best Thing

Editorial by SporTVision's Jay Stuart

The World Games are facing many challenges. Or should it be The World Games 'is' facing many challenges?

I'm not being playful. I would suggest that this seemingly silly question in itself gets at one of the biggest challenges being faced – that of establishing a coherent identity for The World Games in the general public's mind.

Put aside the brand for a moment. It has been decided to dispense with 'the' World Games in favour of 'The' World Games. There is a new logo. These things are no doubt important in practical commercial terms. But they are really superficial and cosmetic compared with the bigger issue. For a brand to have meaning, the general public must know what it stands for in the most basic sense, what The World Games is or are. This requires something that can be readily explained when it comes to effective branding. I'm referring to the need for explanation. If you have to explain, you can be lost. Imagine you are coming into a living room full of strangers. People ask –Who are you? What do you do? It can be tough enough for an individual to answer, especially if he's something nebulous like a 'financial consultant' as opposed to say, a fireman. For The World Games these questions are on a larger scale, but the situation is the same. The strangers in front of their television sets need answers before deciding if you're worth giving any of their attention to. Unfortunately, The World Games' reply cannot be as simple as pointing to a new logo. That only works if you're a fireman. So, trying to establish an identity, having to explain what you do, can be tough. To show you just how tough, let me turn to an example from the recent past – men's tennis. The ATP Tour struggled for years to come up with an identity and brand for its top tier of tournaments, now called the Tennis Masters Series, with a Tennis Masters Cup at the end for the world championship. The process entailed not only a mere change of name and logo. The ATP had to get the tournament organisers on board and the commitment of the players to take part in the events and a new approach to the rankings. Over time, The World Games, will probably need to undertake a similar re-evaluation of its shape and stakeholders.

The ATP Tour's battle for identity is by no means over. The Masters Series/Masters Cup set-up is still tricky to explain (the top eight ATP Tour players qualify for the Tennis Masters Cup and the only way to qualify if you're not in the top eight is to win one of the Grand Slams). If you were to ask people in the street what the Master Series is, most of them probably still would not know. Most sports fans probably would not know. Even many tennis fans would not know.

Here we are talking about a single sport and tennis players who are household names, and establishing identity is still tough. How much tougher for the World Games with its ('their?') multitude of different sports and disciplines.

To make matters even harder, some of those sports and disciplines – perhaps even most of them – require explanation and need to establish identities themselves! Casting? Fin swimming? Who are you? Fistball? Korfball? What do you do? Basque Pelota? Pétanque? Please translate!

But there is a big advantage for The World Games when it comes to answering these questions. There's a short cut!

The World Games can tell what they are by pointing to what they are not – they are not the Olympics.

Instead, they are – it's definitely 'are' – the **Olympic Movement's Next Best Thing**.

Jay Stuart is the editorial director of Perspective Media, which publishes SporTVision, Football Insider and AGFIS Mag (the official magazine of the General Association of International Sports Federations). His monthly Sports TV Report newsletter is read by television executives around the world.



Editor's Note: THE WORLD GAMES FORUM - Issue 2 - April 2003 is available as PDF file from the IWGA website. Your efforts in making this known among your organization's respective community is greatly appreciated.

We also remind the IWGA Member International Sports Federations that they may add up to 25 addressees each to the mailing lists for THE WORLD GAMES FORUM in print. Simply provide their names and addresses to the IWGA Headquarters.

While we hoped to have contributions to the contents of this issue from nearly all IWGA constituents, we acknowledge the efforts by the Duisburg Organizing Committee and the International Sumo Federation in providing us with imagery and texts. Next time it's your turn!

Roland Hilfiker
IWGA Vice President

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Your Views
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