

## A Personal View on the Olympic Program Review

*Editor's Note: "A Personal View on The Olympic Program Review" has been circulated in early September 2002 to the association's membership 2002 to the association's membership 2002 as an IWGA statement and reaction to the IOC Executive Board's announcement regarding imminent changes to the Olympic Program. Why publish it again?*

*Even with the 114th IOC Session refraining from debating the issue further and postponing any action upon the recommendations by the Olympic Program Commission until 2004, 'A Personal View' has not lost any of its topicality. I consider it to be the appropriate editorial to launch discussion in THE WORLD GAMES FORUM.*

*Not a discussion of the Olympic Program! A discussion of The World Games' future development! IWGA Senior Vice President Bob de Die put it best in his federation's newsletter 'Korfball International': "I do hope that the 12 (!) IWGA member federations which saw their application for inclusion in the Olympic program rejected, will now put all their energy behind the development of the World Games so that these may grow into a smaller but no less worthy alternative to the Olympics."  
"A Personal View" was released in this very spirit.*

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On August 28 and 29, 2002, the IOC Executive Board set out to review and act upon the Olympic Program Commission's recommendations regarding the sports, disciplines and events of the Games of the Olympiad beyond 2004 and of the Olympic Winter Games 2006 and beyond.

While this happened at the Château de Vidy in Lausanne, Switzerland, quite a few leaders of IWGA affiliated International Federations (IFs) waited – with their fingers crossed and some apprehension – for the outcome of the Executive's deliberations on the Olympic Programs of the future.

Prior to making anything public in media briefings and on olympic.org, IOC President Jacques Rogge informed the IF Presidents of 13

sports – which feature regularly in The World Games and had made official requests for inclusion in the Olympic Program – in a personal letter about the essence of the Commission's findings.

It was "essentially" disappointing news that needed conveying, all around: the Commission's recommendation not to admit the sport in question to the Programs of Turin 2006 and Beijing 2008. And: the Commission's assessment that only one of the 13 IWGA sports could bring additional value – in terms of global participation and interest – to the Olympic Program.

There are those rare occasions when it's made easier to digest disappointing news. When one arrives at the conclusion that the news, though disappointing, are somewhat inevitable, because they are the product of proper analysis, sound reflection, and of due and transparent process. This may well have been such an occasion!

While the rejected IFs have every reason to be disappointed, they should attempt to derive minimal satisfaction from the Executive's decision. Either from the fact that this time there was swift and firm closure brought to their Olympic aspirations – something never the case earlier, a deficiency that had led to the unnecessary expenditure of efforts and resources in the past – or from positive interpretations of the Program Commission's assessments.

*"... any sports which were to be considered for the Olympic Program must bring additional value to the Program." (1)*

Merely the inability to bring increased value to the Olympic Program marked the difference between some of the Olympic sports and some of the sports in The World Games!

*"...broadcast and press coverage of major events for most sports did not indicate a higher level of global participation and interest than sports currently in the Program ... " (2)*

Important measurable performance parameters – public and media appeal – for some of the Olympic sports are virtually identical to those of certain sports in The World Games!

*"The traditions of the modern Olympic Games should be retained and reflected in the future Olympic Program" (3)*

"Traditionalism" can be the decisive factor in retaining some Olympic sports and not considering their replacement with other sports of The World Games. It's an appropriate policy based on legacy, continuity and – as often applied to sports – the golden rule: "Never change a winning team!"

But affirming even limited parity between some Olympic sports and the sports of The World Games should lead to an entirely different outlook on ... **The World Games!** **The World Games**, whose importance the IOC recognizes, to which it provides considerable support already, and which it is committed to develop further, jointly with the IWGA. Maybe into the multi-sport event second to only one?

The 12 rejected IFs, maybe in due time, will all acknowledge the quality of the review, the transparency of the process as well as the courtesy of the IOC; and they will pledge to further develop and promote their sports worldwide.

Together with most IWGA affiliated IFs they will participate in The 7th World Games 2005 Duisburg, where the sports' global promotion through elite competitions will be their foremost aim.

And yes, Rugby 7s will be there! Three years prior to its likely Olympic reappearance!

