

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD GAMES

In opening the 1997 World Games in Lahti (Finland), IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch declared, “*The World Games are a part of the Olympic Family*”. The relationship between the IOC and the International World Games Association (IWGA) has continued to develop since that message was passed, and the principles of further cooperation between the two organizations were confirmed with the signing of an agreement between the IOC and the IWGA in Monte Carlo in October 2000. The major principles contained in the agreement were related to the relationship between the IOC and the IWGA, and support for the organizing committees of the World Games.

It was on the initiative of Un Yong Kim, as President of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), and eleven other leaders of other International sports Federations, that the decision was taken in 1980 to start a multi-sports event for those sports not included on the Olympic Games programme. This move was based on their strong belief that there should also be a promotional platform for lesser known sports, which



Signing of the IOC/IWGA agreement.  
(From l. to r.) Jacques Rogge, Un Yong Kim,  
the IOC President, Ron Froehlich and Gilbert Felli.

by Ron Froehlich\*

would assist their development. These federations took the initiative to develop the IWGA, with the founding members being IBF (badminton), IBAF (baseball), IFBB (body building), FIQ (bowling), ICF (canoeing), FMK (karate), IPF (powerlifting), FIRS (roller sports), ISF (softball), WTF (taekwondo), TWIF (tug of war) and IWSF (water ski). Following soon after the creation of the IWGA, the first edition of the World

Games were held in 1981 in Santa Clara (United States of America). Despite financial difficulties, the value of this new multi-sport event was evident, and London (Great Britain) successfully bid for the right to stage the 1985 Games. The World Games then established their long-term stability through the 1989 edition in the German city of Karlsruhe. Backed by excellent local organization, which included extensive promotion in the host region, the numbers of spectators at these Games exceeded

### World Games experience important for athletes

by Juan Antonio Samaranch\*

Throughout the twenty years and five events since their creation, the World Games have developed into a multi-sport event of global significance. The main importance of the event is to allow athletes in the sports on the programme to experience such a multi-sport event, mix with athletes from all parts of the world and from other sports. In this regard, the move toward athletes competing as members of a national multi-sport delegation is an historic one, and we look forward to NOCs and the Olympic Family supporting this development.

Another important aspect is the exposure to international audiences which the World Games provides to the sports on its programme. This is crucial to their development. Of course, several sports and disciplines now in the

Olympic Games have been previously involved in the World Games as they have continued to develop. As the IOC faces significant challenges in balancing the demands on our Olympic programme, the World Games will continue to offer involved sports a multi-sport event of global importance. The agreement signed in Monte Carlo marks both the confirmation of a partnership spanning two decades, and the basis of further development in the relationship between our two organizations. I am glad that the IOC can provide assistance to the IWGA and the organizers of the World Games, and in this manner assist the competing athletes in maximizing their experience at this very important sporting event.

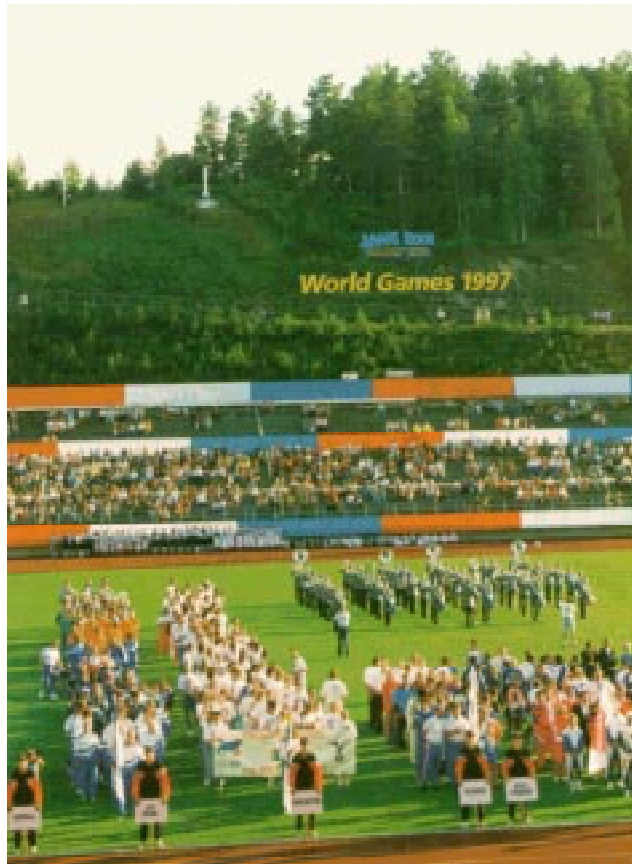
\*IOC President.

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200,000. The IOC President was among those present at the opening ceremony.

The next host city, The Hague in The Netherlands, signed on for the 1993 World Games in order to produce an event which would enhance the promotional activities, especially economic-related, of the city. Faced with challenges in raising international awareness of the event, the organizing committee was exceptionally successful in promoting television coverage of World Games IV, with the American cable network ESPN broadcasting daily summaries of 25 minutes internationally. In this respect, The Hague represented a breakthrough in levels of media awareness, with a particular focus on beach volleyball in its preparations for an Olympic debut three years later. Participating competitors also confirmed that the Games were a great success, and reflected the special value of participating in a global multi-sport event.

When Port Elizabeth (South Africa) withdrew as the organizing committee of the 1997 World Games, the Finnish city of Lahti swiftly accepted the opportunity available. These Games, officially opened by the IOC President, were a well-organized event, with most of the competition venues within walking distance of each other. The television coverage produced by host broadcaster YLE offered excellent images of popular and lesser known sports. Inter-



*Opening ceremony of the World Games in Lahti in 1997.*

national coverage, including Eurosport, reached 200 million households worldwide, as the event reached new standards of organization and media interest.

## **The sports programme of the World Games**

Since the founding of the World Games in a hotel room in Seoul, Korea, many things have changed, including membership of the IWGA. Badminton and baseball have found a firm place on the Olympic programme and have consequently withdrawn from the World Games; softball was added to the programme of the Games of the XXVI Olympiad, the Centennial Games, in Atlanta in 1996, and together with taekwondo, tram-

poline, triathlon, women's waterpolo and women's weightlifting, was part of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad in Sydney in 2000.

While membership of the IWGA does not automatically lead to inclusion in the programme of the World Games, a considerable number of additional federations have become affiliated to the organization in the twenty years since its creation. Eight of the original founding federations are still affiliated, while the total number of members has grown to 31, with the addition of aikido, air sports, billiards, boules sports, canoe polo, dance sport, fistball, flying disc, gymnastics (for non-Olympic disciplines), handball (beach handball), hockey (indoor hockey),

ju-jitsu, korfbal, lifesaving, netball, orienteering, pelota vasca, racquetball, rugby (seven-a-side), squash, surfing and underwater sports (finswimming), joining the ranks.

The composition of the programme is now influenced partly by the existing sports facilities in a host city, while there is also a limit to the total number of competitors and officials. For the World Games 2001, the total number will not exceed 2,500, while for the World Games 2005 the number will be raised to 3,000 to allow further development of the programme.

## **National delegation representation**

In the five World Games to date, athletes and team officials have been organized by sport, in their accommo-

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dation, uniforming and marching in ceremonies. Although this was the case, some National Olympic Committees such as Belgium have supported the participation of athletes from their nation, while others such as Chinese Taipei and Korea have also lent their support to the World Games participants.

In order to enhance the experience of the athletes as part of the international multi-sport Games, starting in Akita 2001 athletes will be organized as a national delegation. This will allow them the opportunity to mix with other athletes from their country, gain a wider experience from their participation in the event, and create further national interest in following the delegation to the Games. In this regard, we look forward to continued growth of the support of NOCs.

## 2001 and beyond

The host for the first World Games in the new millennium is also the first Asian venue for the event. From 16 to



26 August 2001, the northwestern Japanese prefecture of Akita and its capital Akita City, will welcome 2,500 athletes and officials representing 22 member federations of the IWGA. The organizers reached an agreement with Japan television company NHK for daily summaries of 52 minutes. There will also be live coverage of some sports, while the sales of the

international rights are currently being negotiated.

The announcement of Duisburg (Germany) as host of the VII World Games in 2005 was also confirmed in Monte Carlo. For the first time a bid of a host city included a letter of intent from a host broadcaster, West Deutsche Rundfunk (WDR), which will help guarantee the exposure, financial security and therefore athlete experience at future Games.

With this solid period of development, the exciting new elements for the Games, and continued support from the IOC and all constituents of the Olympic Family, the World Games have fast become a prominent element of the international sports landscape. We look forward to the continued growth of our Games and the maximum experience of exposure of our sports and athletes.

\*President, International World Games Association.

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## News

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### Fair Play

The Italian striker Paolo di Canio was the subject of an exceptional act of fair play in an English Premiership match last December. His act came in the closing minutes of the match between his team, West Ham United, and Everton, which ended in a 1-1 draw. With the Everton goalkeeper lying injured on

the ground, di Canio refused to go for the ball in a goal-scoring situation and instead caught the ball with his hands so that his stricken opponent could be given medical treatment. FIFA President and IOC member, Joseph Blatter, wrote to Paolo di Canio: "Gestures like this are all too rare in

football, especially at the professional level. High-profile players like yourself are in the privileged position of role models who can have a positive influence on young people, but unfortunately this opportunity is taken only too seldom. Your spontaneous action in the game against Everton thus

deserves our special recognition and respect. I would like to congratulate and thank you on behalf of FIFA and all fair-minded football fans for this splendid gesture made in the true spirit of fair play, and encourage you to continue to set such positive examples for others to follow".