

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.