



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 1 (8)



To all WTBA member federations

RE: Tokyo 2020 Olympics – additional sports

Dear Federations,

I advised you on August 17 that the Tokyo Organizing Committee would announce its decision on the additional 2020 sports proposed to the IOC no later than September 30. As you almost certainly know by now, the TOC did not include bowling in the list of proposed sports that was announced on September 28: baseball/softball, karate, sport climbing, inline skating and surfing. Needless to say this was one of the most disappointing days of my life, I really felt we had a legitimate chance to be included. I would like to repeat my sincere thank you to all the World Bowling staff and volunteers that put their hearts and souls into this effort, particularly including our 6 person delegation that spent 3 days in Tokyo during the interview process. Of course, we also deeply appreciate the time and resources of the Japan Bowling Congress, led by President Takebe, throughout the 9 month process.

Where do we go from here? It would be easy to say that we will never be included in the Olympic Games, let's just go back to doing what we do. That thought briefly crossed my mind Monday morning, but only for about 5 minutes. Our sport deserves to be in the Olympics. Our children and grandchildren deserve the opportunity to be an Olympic athlete. Your federation deserves to have a level of funding that is sufficient to develop and train a competitive national team, along with an effective grass roots development program.

What do we have to do? It's only been a week since the Tokyo decision, so that's probably not enough time to reflect on this. However, there has been some informal feedback from the Tokyo decision, as well as comment and opinion from Olympic media sources,, to offer some clues. I also had the opportunity to be involved in several media interviews and discussions last week, and some of their observations were also helpful. My initial personal conclusion is that we still need improvement in 3 areas: youth appeal; image; and presentation of our events to media and spectators. These are global problems, they cannot be resolved by the small staff and volunteer base of World Bowling alone. We have to have cooperation from you, the federations, as well as the proprietors and bowling manufacturers. More information and a proposed plan of action will be presented to you at the December Congress.

The 11th Frame media has recently posted perhaps the most thorough evaluation of the history of our sport's Olympic effort, and his current analysis. The entire article (it is quite lengthy) is attached to this Newsletter. Our Olympic effort must continue, there really is no other option, because in reality the Olympic effort is nothing more than improving our sport.

I would be forgetful if I failed to thank the Friends of Bowling partners, the Bowling Proprietors Association of America (BPAA), USBC, Brunswick, Storm and Kegel, who have greatly assisted in funding the Olympic effort in 2014 and 2015.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Kevin Dornberger'.

Kevin Dornberger
President, World Bowling



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER



2015-10-05 2 (8)

2015 World Women Championships (WWC)

2015 WWC will be held in Abu Dhabi, UAE December 5 – 14, 2015.

Until now 28 countries have registered. We suppose some have missed to register so we extend the time for registrations until **November 1, 2015**.

2015 WWC Bulletin 1 is available on www.worldbowling.org/events/championships and on 2015 WWC website www.2015wwc.worldbowling.org/

Questions about the championship contact 2015WWC@worldbowling.org

For all questions about room reservations please contact the Centro Capital Centre directly groups.ccc@rotana.com . To be sure to get rooms at the official hotel it is urgent to contact the hotel.

WTBA/FIQ Congresses

Last week we sent a Congress Bulletin for the Congresses 15-16 December, 2015 in Abu Dhabi. You find the Bulletin and the forms on <http://2015wwc.worldbowling.org/> Click on Information.

Please send your registrations to participate latest November 15, 2015

Seminars on December 14

December 14 the Executive Boards of FIQ and WTBA will have meetings. At the same time we will organize two seminars for all representatives from the federations who want to attend. You are all welcome!

13.00 – 14.00 Lane inspection and Technical Delegate issues – Marios Nicolaides

14.30 – 15.30 Building a better federation – Dave Steiner

Nominations for WTBA Congress

Deadline for nominations to WTBA President and Vice Presidents was September 15. We have received the following nominations:

WTBA President

Kevin Dornberger, USA

Sheikh Talal Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwait

WTBA 1st and 2nd Vice Presidents

Pekka Korpi, Finland

Mike Seymour, Australia

Marios Nicolaides, Cyprus

Suwalai Satrulee, Thailand

Ulf Sjöblom, Sweden

Kevin Dornberger

WTBA President

Email: president@worldbowling.org

Christer Jonsson

WTBA Secretary General

Email: christer.jonsson@worldbowling.org



2015-10-05 3 (8)

Attachment World Bowling Newsletter 2015-10-05

The 11th Frame: Why the Olympics rejected bowling again and why we can't quit the quest

JEFF RICHGELS | Posted: Thursday, October 1, 2015 8:00 am



The Tokyo 2020 committee announces the sports it is recommending to the IOC for addition to the 2020 Olympics. From Tokyo 2020 news release.

It is not difficult to understand the primary reason the Japanese organizers of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics rejected bowling: They made it crystal clear in their announcement and in statements to the media.

As I detailed in [this story](#), the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Organizing Committee on Monday announced that it would recommend to the International Olympic Committee that five sports — baseball/softball, karate, roller sports (skateboarding), sport climbing and surfing — be added to the program for the 2020 Games, with the other three under consideration — bowling, squash and wushu (a form of martial arts) — not recommended. Baseball is the No. 1 sport in Japan and the country is the birthplace of karate so it was widely expected that those two sports would be recommended.

As surprising as the other three recommended sports might have been to some, they have one vitally important thing in common: youth appeal.

That is only one of the criteria laid out by the IOC for sports seeking to join the Olympics and while the three chosen sports may fall short in others such as gender equity and wide participation, youth appeal clearly is most significant to the Olympic movement.

Tokyo 2020 in [this news release](#) said:

This package of events represents both traditional and emerging, youth-focused events, all of which are popular both in Japan and internationally. They will serve as a driving force to further promote the Olympic Movement and its values, with a focus on youth appeal, and will add value to the Games by engaging the Japanese population and new audiences worldwide, reflecting the Tokyo 2020 Games vision.

This possibility for the OCOGs to propose events in new sports to feature at the edition of their Games, is a completely new and fresh approach in the development of the Olympic programme. It builds on the ongoing focus of flexibility, innovation and youth, allowing Tokyo 2020 to reflect the sports culture of Tokyo and Japan, destinations that have always captured the imagination of the world's youth.

And it followed with this statement attributed to Fujio Mitarai, Chair of the Additional Event Programme Panel:



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 4 (8)



"Each of the eight shortlisted international federations amply demonstrated their potential to add to the value of the Games and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to each of them for their outstanding efforts. We firmly believe that by connecting with youth, bringing to life Olympic Agenda 2020 and the Tokyo 2020 vision, our proposal constitutes the best possible package that will add the most value to the Games."

That is five uses of the word "youth" in three paragraphs.

The Associated Press also focused on the youth theme in [this story Monday on the recommendations](#), noting that skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing met the IOC's call that additional sports have a strong youth appeal.

"It was quite a difficult task," Toshiyuki Akiyama, vice governor of Tokyo and a member of the additional event program panel, said in [the AP story](#). "Baseball, softball and karate were proposed and supported by the Tokyo metropolitan assembly. As for skateboarding, sports climbing, surfing, the key word is youth."

"We know younger people tend to stay indoors nowadays, and we believe we included events that will drive people outside," Tomiaki Fukuda, the president of the Japan Wrestling Federation, said in [the AP story](#). "It will create a new image for the Olympic Games."

Mitarai also noted that skateboarding is an urban sport, fitting for a metropolis like Tokyo.

Tokyo had to stay within 500 added athletes and the 18 recommended events for the five sports would add 474, with the Tokyo committee cutting baseball's plan of eight teams to six, and limiting surfing to two events, shortboard for men and women.

The youth appeal of surfing even trumped the fact that Japan has no surfing, said World Bowling President Kevin Dornberger, who led bowling's Olympic effort.

"The answer is they have machine that can create waves," he said during a nearly hour long phone interview on Tuesday.

International Surfing Association president Fernando Aguerre [told AP](#) that "Surfing embodies a cool, playful lifestyle that would add a completely new element to the program."

The recommendations were welcomed by the IOC, [AP reported](#).

"This is another concrete step forward in the implementation of Olympic Agenda 2020, showing a new, fresh and very exciting approach to the Olympic program," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said in [the AP story](#).

"The proposal ... reflects ... a particular appeal to youth."

Why youth? It is, as the cliché goes, the future. Young people set trends and are the demographic advertisers and therefore TV networks desire.

Attract young people and make them Olympic fans for life. Fail to attract them as youngsters and the Olympic flame may fade.

The IOC will decide what, if any, of the recommended sports will be added at the 129th IOC Session in Rio de Janeiro during the Summer Games next August.

While there is no deal for Major League Baseball to allow players to compete while the season is going on, Dornberger said he "can't see" the IOC rejecting baseball/softball and karate, "and the other three are youth sports, which the IOC has been preaching. So it may be that they just take them all."

That would only drive the message home even more to bowling (and other sports) on how to get into the Olympics: focus on the youth and create as youthful an image as possible. (There are no countries where bowling is the national pastime.)

Those in bowling might point to [the 2014 World Youth Championships in Hong Kong](#) that featured 262 bowlers from 46 countries competing in singles, doubles, team and all-events, or to the more than 3,000 bowlers that competed in [the Junior Gold Championships in the Chicago area in July](#).

But events like that may not be known to and/or impact the image of bowling for officials involved in the Olympics.

"I think they don't see it the way we see it," Dornberger said. "And maybe we see it with rose colored glasses on. You and I can say bowling is attractive to youth but is that our image? Do we really look like a sport that is attractive to youth? How to solve it is a good question."

The IOC has changed enormously from when I took the fascinating class "The Political History of the Olympics" in my senior year at the University of Wisconsin, a few months before I won the U.S. Team Trials and then two gold medals in the 1985 FIQ American Zone Championships in Bogota, Colombia.

That was the year before I joined the PBA and the only reason a non-professional like me of far lesser talent and renown than the best pros could be on Team USA is that members of professional organizations were banned.



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 5 (8)



The biggest change for the Olympics was embracing the notion that the competition should feature all of the world's best athletes, thereby opening the doors to professionals, most famously the 1992 U.S. Dream Team in basketball.

The reason was simple: IOC wanted to keep/boost its appeal to fans, sponsors and TV networks. And political realities changed to make it possible with the falling of the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its empire.

Bowling's Olympic aspirations were harmed after the rule change by the fact that FIQ, which has morphed into World Bowling, didn't allow professionals to compete in its championships until 2007!

It could not have pleased the IOC that a sport that wanted in the Olympics didn't comply with a key requirement in its own competitions, as FIQ suffered through years of political infighting that delayed the needed change.

Bowling was an exhibition sport in the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, South Korea. And Brunswick built a center for Olympic athletes in 1992 in Barcelona, Spain, and renovated the center at Georgia Tech for 1996 in Atlanta.

All of the efforts cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$25 million, much of it footed by Brunswick, and it was widely talked about that there was a price for bowling to essentially buy its way in as a medal sport. Over the years, I have heard \$10 million was that figure from more than one source I'd consider knowledgeable.

"I heard from a couple of trusted sources that there was a price tag announced — I didn't hear the number," said Dornberger, who was only on the periphery of some of those efforts and didn't get more involved until nearly the turn of the century. "Whether it was a payment to somebody or to build a grandiose stadium I don't know. It obviously didn't happen."

While the once legendarily corrupt IOC — think of the current FIFA scandal — has done much to reform itself, and Dornberger thinks the days of direct and indirect bribery are "pretty much gone," he said economics do matter for sports wanting to join the games.

"We were asked for Tokyo to present an economic model that showed we were at least self-sufficient, if not to the black," he said. "And I think that is probably part of the deal going forward — they don't want new sports to be a drain on the current structure. The funny thing is it might not even be the IOC; it might be the sports that are already in, because if you're draining you're taking their money."

For Tokyo, bowling was planning a temporary build in an arena, something Dornberger said is necessary to accommodate the fans and media an Olympic competition should attract.

He attended the special **Bowling World Open** in Japan in July that was designed to boost the Olympics effort and in qualifying "there were so many people in the center you couldn't get within 15 feet of the end of the concourse. We wouldn't have met fire code anywhere. You couldn't see anything. And I thought, 'How from a spectator and media standpoint could we justify this being an Olympic event in this kind of venue?' " After the eight sports went through their interviews with the Tokyo 2020 committee in early August, Dornberger pronounced himself "optimistic," as I wrote up [here](#).

"I was pretty optimistic until about a week before the finalists were announced," he said. "There were rumors out there and they were all pretty good until right at the end when we started getting some negative vibes. I was prepared for anything."

After he read the email from Tokyo 2020, "for the first 30 minutes I was probably like a lot of people and had a 'The hell with them' attitude. But I got over that pretty quickly."

Then it became what comes next.

The IOC will give Dornberger feedback in November in Switzerland.

"If it's not about attractiveness to youth, image and presentation, I am going to be shocked," he said. "I think we have made improvements but not really enough."

The Tokyo 2020 committee wants bowling to consider being an exhibition sport in Tokyo during the Olympics, but Dornberger said he has "mixed feelings about that."

World Bowling last year tentatively selected Tokyo as the site for the 2020 World Championships and if the Olympics would allow that grand event to take place during or close to the Olympics it would be "wonderful," he said.

"Historically, IOC has had a rule about recognized sports not having their world championships in the Olympics city from 30 days before to 30 days after the Games," he said. "But maybe this situation will be special. I see value in that."

The focus will be the 2024 Olympics, which won't even have a host city selected until next year.



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 6 (8)



Before getting into that effort, I think it's important to get Dornberger's views on some of the issues people brought up in social media as reasons they believe bowling was rejected.

Drug testing is a non-issue for bowling, as the sport complies with all of IOC's anti-doping requirements. "IOC won't accept us (as a recognized sport) if we don't do that," he said.

Canadian team member and former Wichita State star Francois Lavoie said on Facebook that he was drug tested at the Canadian Team Trials in May, two months before the Pan American Games, and also at the 2013 World Championships, while teammate and PBA Tour player Dan MacLelland was tested on site at the 2013 World Championships in Vegas.

The logistics and number of competitors also were fine: Dornberger isn't allowed to say how many were envisioned in bowling's proposal, but said bowling "could have replaced any of the non-baseball/softball sports easily."

The ever-present issue of lane conditions, left vs. right, invisible playing field, ball technology, etc. was not a direct factor, he said.

"I don't think the IOC has a clue about that and I don't think they care," Dornberger said. "The IOC has had some history of being behind the times, but they're ahead of the times on this one: They rely on all of the sports they have recognized to be technologically correct when they put on their events. It's up to us to ensure that there isn't some kind of imbalance, etc., etc."

Obviously, that means there would have been (hopefully someday will be) tough issues for World Bowling to deal with.

"But you know what?" Dornberger said. "It might have been good. It might have required us to think outside the box. Maybe it would have gone toward solving the issue of distinguishing the pros from everybody else." That, he said, is the other main problem bowling has in persuading IOC officials that it is worthy of being in the Olympics.

And it makes lane conditions and everything involved in the scoring issue an indirect factor in so much as it creates part of bowling's image problem.

Dornberger said he read a report last week from an independent Tokyo source that included off the record comments from someone involved in the Tokyo 2020 effort that talked about the pluses and minuses of the sports under consideration.

"The things they said about bowling was that there was a narrow gap between top athletes and league bowlers that blurs the lines" between elite and non-elite competition, he said. "We've always thought the situation where league guys are averaging 240 won't hurt us. Well maybe that's not true."

It also may have made what was thought to be a strength for bowling of having the Olympics in Japan actually a weakness: the country has the second-largest recreational bowling segment in the world behind the U.S.

"The image is blurred over there as well," he said.

The problematic issue is what to do.

Toughening league conditions and lowering league scores is not feasible, with the likelihood of even larger uncertified competition at centers run by proprietors happy to put down soft conditions to please customers. "The horse herd has been out of the barn for too many years and we're not going to rein that in," he said. "I do think it's possible to educationally separate the elite competitors from everybody else."

Visible (colored) oil might play a part in that, although gaining wide acceptance is problematic, Dornberger said.

Talking about the issues on PBA shows doesn't have much effect "because outside people don't watch," he said, meaning non-bowlers.

Radical ideas might be the only possible solution.

A simpler scoring system is desirable, said Dornberger, who for the first time detailed another new one that will be tried at the World Bowling Tour Finals in February in [my story here](#) on Wednesday.

"I'm going to go out in left field," Dornberger said. "I think we have to think out of the box. I think maybe in the future elite athletic (bowling) competitors are wearing athletic shorts.

"The first time I heard this I laughed and said, 'We don't dress like that.' But when you think about it, what competitors in the Olympics don't wear some kind of athletic shorts? Not very many. I'm not laughing anymore."

He said he went to a 9-pin competition in Europe a couple of years ago and the competitors were dressed like 1980s NBA players in short shorts and tight athletic tops, and they all were pretty much in shape.

"It has to be something that says to anybody who is watching, 'These people are different,' " he said.



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 7 (8)



For the record, I have suggested shorts and some sort of jersey (which has come to pass) for PBA competitors several times over the years — admittedly usually when sweating in muggy centers in the summer — as a way to make the statement that this is an athletic competition. Most people laugh as if it's a joke. But maybe it shouldn't be.

"It will be interesting to see what the golfers wear next year in (the Olympics in) Rio," Dornberger said. "I wouldn't be shocked if they're wearing shorts."

The old stereotype of beer drinking, chain smoking, overweight bowlers comes into play because of the blurred lines between recreational and elite competition, even though alcohol and tobacco are banned from PBA and World Bowling events and most pro bowlers train physically these days.

Golf might deal with the same blurred lines, except that top level golf competition is on TV all the time, with constant major media coverage so everybody — including IOC officials — sees it, Dornberger said.

Bowling's lack of significant prize money, sponsors, TV viewers and fans is more a result of the problems than a cause — if elite bowling had a positive image and large amounts of mainstream media coverage it would naturally gain all of those things, and likely the Olympics, he said.

"Until we get Reuters and AP and so forth to report on what a great experience it was to be at this bowling championship, we're not going to attract sponsors," he said.

And without all of those things, how many youngsters aspire to be elite bowlers?

The notorious negativity of so many bowlers toward bowling also plays into the issues.

The whole interrelated mess is "a bowl of spaghetti — where do you start?" Dornberger said.

"It's a problem," he added, "that will require our member federations, the bowling industry and the proprietors to sit down and say, 'Is this a worthwhile cause?' And if it is, 'How do we go about it and how do we cooperate?' Many people have said it, but the general lack of cooperation in the bowling industry continues to amaze me."

Jason Belmonte, the No. 1 player in the world, also discussed bowling's rejection by the Olympics in this chat with fans on Facebook (there are technical difficulties with this video that we are working on — sorry!):

In the wake of Monday's disappointing announcement, some advocated that bowling should quit spending time and energy on the quest to get into the Olympics. I advocated that [in this blog in 2012](#) around the time of that Olympics when I was down about bowling not being in, though I've since changed my view.

Giving up the quest to get into the Olympics essentially means saying you are not a sport, which is unacceptable, Dornberger said.

"How else are we going to separate our sport and regain some of our popularity if we're not an Olympic sport?" Dornberger asked rhetorically. "There is no other way. If we give up, we just become a recreation.

"There's hundreds of sports and activities out there that compete. How do you separate without a platform? We must gain the Olympic platform. And if we improve our sport and our image, we're going to get in the Olympics."

The only other way to separate from other niche-type sports, Dornberger said, "is to become outrageous like MMA or go big into drinking and gambling like darts. If we're drinking and gambling or beating the crap out of each other I am out."

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to getting into the Olympics.

The Winter Olympics aren't likely to drop the rule that sports must be competed on snow or ice, Dornberger said: "I think the primary reason is that there are only seven sports that currently share Winter Olympics revenue, and they are powerfully placed sports."

Logistical issues mean the Summer Olympics are unlikely to expand further — it was a big step to go from 10,000 to 10,500 athletes for 2020 to open spots for more sports.

"They don't want it any bigger," Dornberger said. "Fifty (thousand) to 100,000 media cover it. Where do you put all these people?"

Getting other sports removed so there is room to get in runs into harsh political realities — consider [what happened with wrestling](#).

Bowling simply will have to get on the short lists for the 2024 Olympics and then get chosen.

The IOC short list will be in 2017 and the host city short list process probably not until 2020, Dornberger said.

"We don't even know what the long term shortlist process will look like after the changes made by IOC last year," he said. "That's due out before end of year. This was the first time a local committee had this much say. And it's going to continue like this indefinitely. Locals in 2024 and beyond will have the same option."

If the IOC approves the Tokyo 2020 recommendations, this will be the first time in Olympics history that a sport on the short list for the first time got in, a distinction bowling would have enjoyed if it had made it.



WORLD BOWLING NEWSLETTER

2015-10-05 8 (8)



So being a veteran of the short list could help going forward.

The contenders for 2024 are down to five: Budapest, Hungary; Hamburg, Germany; Los Angeles; Paris; and Rome.

Dornberger said competitive bowling is not that big in France, Italy or Hungary.

“You might think Los Angeles is the one you want, but I don’t know,” he said, raising the issue of the huge recreational segment in the U.S. blurring the lines between recreational and elite bowling. “And I think the LA area sees itself as hip. And would they see bowling as hip? No.”

Germany is a fairly strong bowling country and the lines between recreational and sport are not so blurred.

“But 9-pin bowling in Germany almost as big as tenpins,” Dornberger said. “So what is their image of bowling? That might be the next issue.”

One issue to be addressed before that is whether Dornberger will continue to be the one leading bowling’s Olympics effort.

A former high-ranking United States Bowling Congress official said Dornberger has been the Olympics effort for the past several years and the reason bowling came this close.

But he is 66 and uncertain if he will run for re-election to another 4-year term in December. A Kuwaiti sheik is the only declared candidate, which could broaden the sport politically, although more than half of IOC members are European. And little seems to be known about his expertise and plans were he to be elected.

“I can tell you what this last eight months has taken out of me and I don’t know yet if I’ve got four more years of it energy wise,” Dornberger said. “Earlier this year I thought about retirement for the first time in my life. I know one thing: the next process runs to 2020 and I’ll be out after that for sure.”

One thing that is certain is that the No. 1 company in the long Olympics effort will remain on board.

“Obviously, we’re all disappointed with the decision of the Tokyo Organizing Committee,” Brunswick Bowling Products CEO Brent Perrier said in a message. “Yet we should also be very proud that bowling did make the ‘short list’ of possible new sports for inclusion in the Olympic Games. We at Brunswick have always supported the Olympic dream for bowling. Although this is indeed a setback, we remain committed to the effort past 2020.”

There really is no other option for the sport of bowling.

Reprinted curtesy of Jeff Richgels, a bowling media blogger under the 11th Frame, located in Madison, Wisconsin USA. To read more from Jeff Richgels, go to www.11thFrame.com and subscribe. The cost is \$1.99 per month or \$19.99 per year.