



BackSoftball

Eight Olympians among Athlete Ambassadors

New program will further involve athletes in reinstatement campaign

Plant City, Florida, USA; 21st November 2008: The list of softball players from around the world that have been chosen to participate in the Athlete Ambassadors program was announced today. A list of twelve females that will complement the current efforts of the BackSoftball campaign was revealed by International Softball Federation President Don Porter.

The list shows representation from all five regions: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania, and eight of the dozen athletes are Olympians.

Mr. Porter indicated that the process by which these individuals have been chosen began with nominations that were solicited in September from among the ISF's member federations, who responded "in good numbers." He said, "We thank not only the national governing bodies that submitted candidates, but certainly all of these athletes that are so willing to help our efforts to get softball reinstated for the Olympics in 2016. The Games are all about the athletes and though we've had some assisting with BackSoftball already, this program will formalize and more deeply involve some of the very same girls that are ambassadors of not only our sport, but of Olympic softball."

Two-time Olympian Michele Smith (USA Softball, 1996 & 2000) will serve in a chairperson role for the group, which consists of the following:

<u>NAME</u> (Position)	<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>HIGHLIGHT</u>
Lynn Alexander (OF)	South Africa	Played in 2007 Africa/Europe Olympic qualifier
Alison Bradley (OF)	Canada	Two-time Olympian (2004 & 2008)
Daniela Castellani (P/1B)	Italy	Two-time Olympian (2000 & 2004)
Luciola Figueroa (C)	Puerto Rico	Played in 2007 Americas Olympic qualifier
Gergana Handjiyska (IF)	Bulgaria	Played in 2007 Africa/Europe Olympic qualifier
Saskia Kosterink (OF)	Netherlands	2008 Olympian
Jessica Mendoza (OF)	USA	Two-time Olympian ('04 – gold medal, '08 – silver)
Chueh Ming Hui (P)	Chinese Taipei	2008 Olympian
Rubilena Rojas (OF)	Venezuela	2008 Olympian
Danielle Stewart (IF)	Australia	2008 Olympian (bronze medalist)
Zhou Yi (OF)	China	Two-time Olympian (2004 & 2008)
Sibylle Zuercher (P)	Switzerland	Played in '07 European Women's Championship B

The ISF is already underway with plans to host the Athlete Ambassadors at its world headquarters here in January, with exact dates soon to be announced. In addition to being further educated on the BackSoftball campaign they will receive tutelage on dealing with the media, especially in relation to the Olympic reinstatement efforts. Other guest presenters besides Michele Smith will be on-hand to speak to the attendees as well.

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The Athlete Ambassadors will represent softball at different international events and be utilized to garner more support from other softball players as well as influential people in various international audiences. Although the ISF already has an Athletes Commission that meets every other year at its Congress, this initiative is the most aggressive in putting softball players at the forefront of the steps being taken to get the International Olympic Committee, at their Session in October 2009 in Denmark, to vote to reinstate the sport to the Summer Games for 2016.

ISF Director of Competition Laurie Gouthro, herself a former softball player and coach, will oversee the Athlete Ambassadors program.

Visit the official campaign website at www.BackSoftball.com.

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