



BACKSOFTBALL TEAM 'QUIETLY CONFIDENT' AFTER COMPELLING PRESENTATION TO IOC

Don Porter – “Softball shares all the IOC’s principles – they’re part of our DNA”

Lausanne, (Switzerland); 15th June 2009: International Softball Federation President Don Porter is 'quietly confident' after a compelling presentation by the BackSoftball team to the International Olympic Committee Executive Board this afternoon to try to convince them that the sport deserves to be reinstated onto the Olympic Programme.

The BackSoftball team spoke of softball's 'Olympic Odyssey' since they were voted off the Olympic Programme in Singapore in 2005, highlighting the huge impact the sport is having across the globe including providing team sports opportunities for youth and women, particularly in Africa and the Middle East where female sports are not encouraged.

The team explained to the IOC how softball is hugely inclusive, costing little to play and simple to learn, and how the Olympic Games is the pinnacle for all softball players with an exemplary anti-doping record at the highest level.

The IOC were told of the progress the ISF has made in recent years, including the opening of three regional training centers with another to come in Beijing; how Japan broadcaster NHK enjoyed peak viewing figures of 51 million during Japan's victory in the 2008 Olympic gold medal game against the USA, a result which underlined the growing competitiveness of the sport.

The ISF also underlined that Olympic Programme status would be the catalyst for more sustainable global growth and although the focus was on women's fast pitch, the ISF also offered the possibility of including a world class men's fast pitch Olympic competition as well as a full wheelchair competition for the Paralympic Games in 2016.

ISF President Don Porter said, "The presentation went very well and we're quietly confident. The culture and aspirations of the International Softball Federation and those of the IOC are indivisible. We share a common culture ... and the same DNA. Softball shares ALL of the IOC's principles. They are part of OUR DNA, not just adopted for special occasions such as today.

"We have players who continue to dream of Olympic Gold, the ultimate prize in softball. We have more players, more member federations, a more solid and appropriate organizational framework, and development programmes that are producing results on every continent.



“Softball will be enriched by its inclusion in the Olympic Games and my pledge as president of the ISF is that our sport will enrich the Olympic Movement.”

Ms. Gergana Handjiyska, an Athlete Ambassador from Bulgaria, told the IOC Executive Board, “I guess you could say that I am typical of the new breed of national softball administrators in the twenty first century. We bring modern-day skills, attitudes, and influences to our work and the promotion of our sport.

“Our federation is growing fast. Our schools programme has led to tens of thousands of youth playing softball and they are advancing through to our established teams. And what is happening in Bulgaria is also happening around the world.”

The BackSoftball team consisted of Mr. Porter, BackSoftball Co-Chair and member of the IOC Women in Sport Commission Ms. Donna de Varona; Malaysia’s Ms. Low Beng Choo, ISF Deputy Secretary General; South Africa’s Ms. Lynn Alexander, international athlete and coach; Ms. Danielle Stewart, Australian Olympic bronze medalist at Beijing 2008; and Ms. Handjiyska, Bulgarian Softball Federation secretary general, coach and player.

Softball was first featured in the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996 and last year’s competition in Beijing was hugely successful with a total attendance close to 180,000 and a continuation of the sport’s excellent record of no positive doping tests at any of the Olympics since the sport’s debut on the world’s stage 12 years earlier.

A final decision on which sports will be added to the current roster of 26 at the 2016 Summer Olympic Games will be made at the 121st IOC Session in Copenhagen in October this year.

Further information is available in the OTHER DOCUMENTS section of www.BackSoftball.com.

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