



BackSoftball

Back Softball – Blueprint for Olympic Return in 2016

Softball's 2016 Olympic reinstatement campaign pledges greater support for youth and female athletes

Enschede, Netherlands, 27th June 2007: The International Softball Federation (ISF) today launched its campaign to get softball reinstated for the 2016 Olympic Games by unveiling a new look and a ten-point blueprint.

ISF President Don Porter launched the two-year initiative at a press conference here on day eight of the VIII Junior Women's World Championship (19-and-under, fast pitch). The campaign is supported by a new-look logo that is a contemporary design of a softball, in the five Olympic colors, above the campaign name, **Back Softball**. [This logo is available on-line at www.BackSoftball.com.]

Porter also unveiled a ten-point blueprint for the **Back Softball** campaign designed to improve the sport even further across the criteria the International Olympic Committee (IOC) uses to assess sports for the Olympic Programme.

The International Olympic Committee meets in October, 2009 in Copenhagen for the 121st IOC Session and will vote then on the sports to be included on the Olympic Programme for the Games of XXXI Olympiad in 2016.

In particular, within the **Back Softball** blueprint, the ISF pledges to:

- Increase the number of national Softball Federations from 128 to 150 by 2009. Porter revealed that in the last few weeks two more nations had applied for, and will be granted, National Federation status: Sierra Leone and Jordan.
- Increase the number of worldwide Softball participants – especially youth - to an estimated 12.5 million, an increase of 25%, by 2009.
- Increase the number of federations across the Middle East with an emphasis on providing women and girls in the region with an accessible and acceptable route to sporting participation.

The blueprint is based on the recommendations of the ISF Strategic Task Force (an advisory group comprising key opinion formers and decision makers in the Olympic Movement) which has met twice already this year.

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Commenting on the blueprint, Porter said:

“The decision by the IOC in 2005 to exclude Softball from the Programme for London 2012 was a wake-up call for our sport. We have since widely consulted the Olympic Movement and have taken on board some very valuable advice. Today is a reflection of that advice as we lay out our plans to meet and exceed the IOC evaluation criteria.”

“In particular, we are looking to increase the number of young people playing Softball across the world as well as help more women and girls play sport across the Middle East and other similar societies. That is why we welcomed the recent application from Jordan to set up a national federation. This will be the first of many new Softball federations in the Middle East.”

Porter also announced that the ISF will have several campaign surprises in the next two years, which could include appointing a Campaign Director from Europe and setting up a **Back Softball** Campaign headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Porter concluded:

*“Two years may seem like a long time, but in campaigning it’s just enough time to make some real improvements and then communicate them. This will be an action-orientated campaign. Through this initiative, we are also internationalizing our administration. For example, we’ve talked about setting up the campaign headquarters in Europe, run by a multi-lingual **Back Softball** Campaign Director. Even the designer of our new campaign logo was chosen from Valencia in Spain.”*

“There will be a series of other announcements about our campaign over the coming months. We will be focused, dynamic, and flexible. Many people firmly believe that Softball is a real asset to the Olympic Movement. Today is the start of proving just how much of an asset we will be in 2016. We are in this to succeed.”

Softball has been a prominent sport on the Olympic Programme from 1996 to Beijing 2008 and was the first sport to successfully run a test event for Beijing during the ISF’s XI Women’s World Championship in August/September 2006.

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Back Softball: Campaign Blueprint

In the drive to get Softball re-instated in the Olympic Programme for the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in 2016, the ISF is proud to announce the following campaign blueprint for the next two years. This will be revised and updated as required.

1. Increase Number of Nations Playing Softball

It is the intention of the ISF to increase the number of participating National Softball Federations from 128 to 150 by October 1st 2009 and then push for a further increase to 160 National Softball Federations by the 2016 Olympic Games.

2. Increase Number of Worldwide Participants Playing Softball

The drive to increase National Softball Federations will be part of an overall commitment by the ISF to increase the number of worldwide Softball participants – especially youth - from a current impressive level of 8.4 million to an estimated 12.5 million, an increase of 25% by October 1st 2009. The ISF will then be seeking a further 25% in number of worldwide participants by the 2016 Olympic Games.

3. Increase Number of Youth Accessing Sport Through Softball

The ISF is totally committed to increasing worldwide, the number of young people playing Softball. Each National Federation will increase the percentage of players under age 15 who are regularly playing Softball.

4. Place Even Greater Emphasis on Opportunities for Women in Sport

The ISF is to place an even greater emphasis on increasing the number of federations and participants across the Middle East, highlighted by providing women and girls in the region with an accessible and acceptable route to sporting participation.

5. Provide Even Greater Worldwide Access to People with Disabilities

The ISF is to develop further programmes and opportunities across the world to allow people with disabilities to play softball on a regular basis. This will be monitored from now on and percentage increases on participation of people with disabilities will be expected across all National Softball Federations.

6. Provide Softball Equipment / Coaching Where There is Most Need

The ISF pledges to develop further its initiative of providing regions of the world that are suffering from man-made or natural disasters with free softball equipment and coaching clinics to train new coaches. This will require even closer working relationships with organisations such as the IOC and United Nations (such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees).

7. Increase the Amount of Worldwide Television the Sport Enjoys

The ISF recognizes the vital importance of television and pledges to increase by at least 25% the amount of free to air worldwide television coverage of Softball in two important categories:

- a. Number of countries broadcasting Softball competitions
- b. Number of worldwide viewers watching Softball events and activity

This will assist in achieving other elements of this blueprint and will assist in securing more prestigious commercial partners – each paying greater levels of commercial fees for the development of the sport.

8. Increase the number of dedicated Softball Federations

Wherever viable, the ISF will seek to create independent Softball Federations that are not integrated within other sports or federations. This will help avoid confusion over identities and will further strengthen the central administration for the worldwide development and growth of the sport.

9. Achieve Even Greater Inclusion and Internationalization in the ISF

The ISF will use the **Back Softball** campaign as a platform to internationalize even further the administration of the sport. The best international candidates will be chosen for administrative posts and the administration will strive to reflect the ratio of gender and people with disability contained in the sport.

10. Back Softball Campaign to be Conducted in True Spirit of Olympism

The ISF pledges to ensure that the **Back Softball** campaign will be run in the spirit of fair play and will uphold all the values of Olympism. However, the ISF is mounting this campaign to succeed and not just to take part. The ISF aims to prove that Softball is an asset for the Olympic Movement by meeting and exceeding all criteria used by the IOC to evaluate sports for the Olympic Programme for the Games of the XXXI Olympiad in 2016.