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Athletes Commission Report 2012-2013

In year 2012, we completed the election of representatives of Athletes commission of the World.

The representatives voted are:

- **Asia Representative:**
Mr. Hou Yao
- **Senior Representative:**
René Ewals
- **Oceania Representative:**
Antonio Michele
- **European Representative:**
Ashli Williamson
- **Professional Representative:**
Paolo Bosco
- **Youth representative:**
Paul Moldovan
- **Americas Representative:**
Anton Belyayev
- **Chair of Athletes commission:**
Zoran Plohl

The first meeting of athletes' commission was held in Slovenia Ljubljana on 11th and 12th April 2013

WDSF Athletes Commission Meeting minutes:

At 10:30a.m. The members of the WDSF AC met in the meeting room of the Austria Gate Hotel, Ljubljana, Slovenia and the Chairman Zoran Plohl called the meeting to order. The following members were present: Senior Representative Mr. René Ewals; Oceania Representative Mr. Antonio Micheli; European Representative Ms. Ashli Williamson; Professional Representative Mr. Paolo Bosco; Youth representative Mr. Paul Moldovan; Americas Representative Mr. Anton Belyayev.



Mr. Plohl welcomed all members and communicated that the Asian Representative Mr. Hou Yao had not yet responded to any of the attempts made to contact him and that efforts would be made to make sure that an Asian representative would be present at the next meeting.

Mr. Plohl also mentioned the difficulties behind selecting an appropriate Youth candidate, as the finalists in the World Youth Championships are usually in their last year of Youth, and the Junior 2 candidates are too young. The Youth candidate should therefore represent the Under 21 category.

Mr. Plohl communicated that Mr. Stefan Green had been selected by him personally to attend the meeting as acting secretary and in order to write these minutes. The members agreed unanimously to this decision and that a secretary may be nominated from time to time to perform these services.

1. Goals and Objectives of the WDSF AC and internal business.

A general discussion was held on the goals and objectives of the Athletes Commission. The following points were concluded to be fundamental in the coming months for the AC:

- Education of athletes through communication on the WDSF website and through the National representatives, athletes need to be made more aware of their obligations but more importantly of their rights;
- Open communication channels for athletes towards the commission in that athletes are often happier to speak to the Athletes Commission rather than other organs;
- Lobby for the creation of Athletes Commissions within the member Federations which can deal with relations between the national athletes and their federations and inform the WDSF AC of any problems faced by a their countries' athletes on an international level;
- Create a structure and guideline for national and international representatives.

Mr. Plohl also stated to be happy with the way the Presidium has reacted to the suggestions made by the AC in the past and communicated that the Presidium respect greatly the AC work as the voice of the Athletes.



In order to create an efficient international system of athlete representatives, Ms. Williamson will prepare a Facsimile of national member election and create email contact with as many national members as possible.

Mr. Ewals presented the Operating Policy of the AC as had been drafted in the past. A working group consisting of Mr. Ewals, Mr. Micheli and Mr. Plohl would look over and re---draft the Operating Policy at the next meeting.

After a general discussion about meetings using Internet technology which has proved unreliable in the past, the decision was made that the AC meeting would be held at the GOC in August and would be open to National AC representatives.

A discussion was then held on the merits of instituting other roles within the Athletes Commission:

- The figure of secretary, as discussed earlier would be sourced from outside the commission when possible in order for the members to concentrate on meetings;
- Mr. Ewals was unanimously appointed as Treasurer
- Ms. Williamson was unanimously appointed as Vice Chairman, who would take over Mr. Plohl's duties if for any reason he was unavailable;
- Mr. Micheli was unanimously instated as the Ranking List Communications Officer whose role would entail informing the WDSF Sports Director of problems with the Ranking List.
- Further discussion on the roles of national athletes commission representatives brought the AC to the conclusion that national issues (regarding the national federation of a country or the rules regarding national competitions) should be dealt with by the national member, but the WDSF AC has the moral responsibility to advise and communicate with the national AC when serious or difficult problems arise.

The AC also suggests that as well as a European member there should also be an Eastern European member on the Athlete's Commission because of the difficulties that the European Member has in representing the views of ALL European athlete opinions. The Eastern European area has its own problems and given the number of athletes representing this area it would be useful to have a delegate from this zone.



2. Competition Season

Ms. Williamson introduced this point to the AC as brought up by an athlete who had contacted her directly. After a brief discussion on the merits of stabilizing an international break from competitions, the following suggestion was drawn up to be taken by Mr. Plohl to the next Presidium meeting:

A break from World Open / Grand Slam Competitions / Championships / Cups in June and July would give internationally competing athletes the possibility to choose to break from competing at a certain point in the year. Other WDSF competitions could still be organized (International Open / Open).

3. Sanction Commission to reinforce rules/codes of conduct for athletes, judges and organisers.

3.1 Athletes

The AC asked the secretary to read some of the rules and the Code of Conduct for Athletes, Judges and Competition Organisers available on the WDSF website. Particular attention was paid to several aspects of the Athlete's Code of Conduct:

A general discussion was held and it was generally concurred that many points regarding the conduct of athletes are very clearly stated in the rules and the Code of Conduct, but many situations have arisen, especially in recent events, and even though these events were publicized on the WDSF YouTube channel and significant evidence was available, the athletes were not sanctioned in any way, giving the impression that this type of behavior is somehow condoned by the WDSF (e.g. --- athletes turning their backs on other competitors dancing, athletes not showing up to competitions in which they are registered, or even registering in more competitions on the same day, couples splitting during standard dance performances).

A long discussion ensued evaluating the merits of the current methods of complaint, of the Disciplinary Council's efficiency and the necessity to make a complaint was also brought to issue. Mr. Plohl stated that if any of the rules were broken at any time, the responsibility to vigilate should not necessarily be the responsibility of other competitors.

The AC concluded that a separate entity with power to immediately sanction made up of the sports director, WDSF president and AC chairman should be proposed at the 2014 AGM in order to allow swift decisions to be made. Some sanctions could also be enforced by Competition Chairmen. The



Disciplinary Council could be used as a board of appeal if athletes consider any sanction to be unfair.

Sanctions should range from the loss of 100-500 points from the Ranking List for a period of three months to disqualification from competition or from competitions in general for a certain period of time.

A further related discussion was held about the rules regarding competition entry and the following suggestions were put forward:

- No stars for couples who do not enter the competition in time;
- Stars based not on number of couples dancing the competition but on the number of couples entered minus 15% (the number of competitors who normally do not show up at the competition for some reason).

3.2 Judges

A general discussion was held on the judging of WDSF competitions and several issues were brought up including the importance of fair play of judges at all competitions in fairness to the effort, investment and hard work of all of the athletes competing. The WDSF should not condone or appear to condone in any way judges who evidently try (whether or not they succeed) in altering or influencing unfairly the results of a competition. The silence of the WDSF may be taken as condoning certain behavior and this should be avoided through the use of a Sanction Committee.

The rules binding judges and the Code of Conduct were read and decided to be of absolute clarity but many examples were made of situations which could be easily seen as against these rules where no action has been taken. After a long discussion on the merits of judges and their behavior in general the following conclusions were drawn:

- The WDSF should implement an education system for judges. A lot more time should be spent explaining the Code of Conduct as well as the Technique;
- Strong sanctions should be made against judges who do not adhere to these rules;
- A grading system of judges should be used based on education; experience; judging performance and dancing career;
- A motion should be made to cancel the word "substantial" from Rule 3 (c) of the judges Code of Conduct;



- AC should be present at the selection of judges for Championships and have the possibility to declare any anomalies they see fit.

3.3 Organisers

A general discussion was held about the rules binding competition organizers and it was noted that there is no document entitled "Organisers Obligations to Athletes" and that this should be seriously looked into. Several general points to be included in this document were made:

- First round times: competition rounds should not be held before 0930 because athletes must usually prepare for several hours before a competition and competitions may last until late in the evening;
- Parades of countries should be permissible at opening ceremonies or at the start of evening sessions but competitors must be given 15 minutes break after this for required warm-ups and preparations. Often dancers are required to dance directly after the parade;
- A maximum time of two hours between rounds should be instituted except where the whole competition is adjourned for an evening session in which case one longer break of four hours may be considered.
- An international standard for medical assistance and coverage must be decided. Some competitions are still run in some countries without a medical staff or ambulance on call;
- Compensation Insurance for competitions which are cancelled should be obligatory for organisers especially when a competition is cancelled for organisation problems and not political disruption or natural disasters;
- Competitions should not be cancelled for lack of couples but run anyway.

A further conversation was held about the granting of competitions to organisers and their obligations. Where competition organisers do not adhere to rules and obligations, the Sanction Committee should have the ability to downgrade the competition the next year or apply financial sanctions.

The AC also discussed that when competition rights are granted, factors which are currently not taken into consideration should be contemplated as extremely important. The treatment of the athletes and the importance of the venue should also be considered as extremely important when granting World Opens and Cups and Championships.



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Factors such as:

- Changing room space
- Temperature
- Athlete's accommodation and treatment
- Floor size and lighting
- Hotel
- Dancesport competitions should also have a VIP area where past champions, finalists and generally highly respected members of the dancesport community should be seated. Comments were made about World Champions watching the World Championships in Bassano such as Gioia Cerasoli who supported the WDSF left without a front row seat and Blackpool Champions being honored with mentions from the organizer and front row seats.
- In general dancesport athletes are what make up the WDSF and therefore should be treated as true stars (even from the first round).

4. Honour Role, Prize Money and Ranking List Awards

The AC discussed the fact that the WDSF website contains no history or honour list of champions, ranking list history, grand slam history or finalists or statistics of any type. It was generally concurred that this is necessary in order to promote respect for those couples that have reached the apex of dancesport.

Mr. Plohl explained to the members of the AC that the Presidium has asked for the AC's opinion on a possible awards evening or Gala event to celebrate the 1st placed couples on the ranking list. The following points will be communicated to the Presidium as decided by the Commission:

A Gala evening including awards ceremony should be inaugurated at the Annual General Meeting. The AC considers that national delegates need to be in closer contact with top couples as the rules and regulations decided by them affect the athletes directly.

The awards should be not only for the top 6 athletes in the amateur standard and latin ranking lists and the top 3 in the other ranking lists but also for:

Best country



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Best club

Contribution to dancesport

Most competitions won; o...

5. Judging System 2.0

Mr. Plohl outlined the Judging System and asked the secretary to go through some of the results of the first Grand Slam competition in Spain, and how the system works.

The commission agreed that theoretically the system structure represents the best version so far of judging in dancesport, but that in practice the system should not have been applied in such a short amount of time. The reasons that were discussed are the following:

- The judges need more time to train in the system in order to provide a reliable result;
- Practical problems occurred at the competition like some heats dancing for 2:30 and others for only 2:00.
- The education and congresses provided for judges do not guarantee that all judges use a similar scale of values. The WDSF education department should be responsible for educating not just the judges but also the lecturers in order to conform the information being given (e.g. --- lecturers should not speak against choreography in Viennese Waltz, whether or not they personally like or do not like the idea).
- Furthermore the order of dances should not be changed, no matter which solo dances are chosen. The preparation of athletes is highly specialized and changing the order of dances can change the performance dramatically.

The television coverage, which was seen on Eurosport, was held to be fantastic, but the AC suggested that the commentators should be flanked by a WDSF spokesperson or representative in order to explain some finer points of the technique as several unfortunate remarks were made.

6. WDSF PD

After Mr. Plohl and Mr. Bosco, the PD representative, introduced this topic a discussion ensued which lasted for over two hours. Various points were discussed especially Article 17 of the WDSF statutes and the current direction of the PD. The following statement was drawn up and unanimously



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voted to present to the Presidium and AGM:

"The Athletes Commission strongly believes that the WDSF PD should follow in all its facets the Competition Rules and Regulations of the WDSF and that Article 17 allows the PD to work as a separate entity for or against the rules and ideals of the WDSF. In the memorandum of the WDSF AC dated 16/08/2012, the athletes expressed their strong desire to follow these very rules and ideals. The PD should be instated as a category just as Youth, Adult, Under 21 or Senior. Furthermore, the PD representative indicates that many couples have no intention of continuing to dance in the PD under the current direction."

Furthermore, the AC considered and approved the idea that the WDSF AC PD representative should have a place on the Presidium of the WDSF PD.

7. ID Cards

A general discussion took place about the new ID Cards as many athletes have complained about not being able to dance competitions because their federations or the postal systems have been slow in getting the documents to the WDSF. The AC suggest that for 2013 athletes may present a copy of the request for the ID card as they cannot be held responsible for their own member bodies' slowness.

8. Senior Category issues.

Mr. Ewals asked to put forward a motion to the Presidium making Solo dances compulsory for Senior Championships. The AC agreed unanimously.

Also questions were raised by some athletes about why dancesport was not in the program of the Masters Games in Turin, Italy. Mr. Plohl said he would ask the authorities why this was and inform Mr. Ewals as soon as possible.

9. North American and Continental Situations

Mr. Belyayev made a brief statement about the WDSF situation on the North American continent and a discussion ensued about possible solutions to the lack of competitions in the zone. In general the AC believes that investment must be made in creating competitions because the athletes and judges do exist but they have no possibility to compete or organize competitions.

Both the Americas and Asia Pacific representatives viewed the Asian Pacific Development Project proposed to the Presidium and back the project entirely, together with the rest of the AC.



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10. Various other business

Several topics were brought forward at the end of the meeting by different delegates:

- WDSF website. The WDSF should work on a database system where entries to competitions including registration and check-in for all competitions can be dealt with directly through the WDSF website.
- Some documents on the WDSF website still contain mentions of the old IDSF acronym. This should be checked over.
- Youth couples who change partner and country should be allowed to dance for the new country after 6 months and not one year as often they are forced to change country because they do not hold the same passport as their previous partner. Waiting for one year often means they miss their only possible chance at a world championship title.
- Couples should only be allowed to dance for a certain country if one of the two partners has a passport or at least permanent residence of that country.

With no more to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 2130. The chair thanked all of the delegates for their effort and time, and these minutes were written and sent to each member for signing.