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Dear All,

The 2016 Olympic Bid – a Review and Critique post Berlin

Further to the short statement sent out immediately after the result was announced, President Ramachandran would like you all to have a much more detailed report and analysis of the campaign, Berlin and the future. I was in Berlin all Wednesday and Thursday and we both attended the press conference. First, our thanks to the many of you for the warm, supportive and encouraging messages received and much appreciated.

We were deeply, deeply disappointed to hear the decision announced, like so many of you all around the world.

So first, how come this decision? I think I began to suspect it might go this way in Lausanne in June. Particularly telling was a conversation with an ex journalist massively experienced in the workings of the IOC who congratulated us on our presentation but said; “you do know that the decision is made, it will be rugby and golf”. We had IOC President Rogge publicly stating his wish that rugby would be chosen by his EB colleagues. In Berlin another quote emerged from a powerful EB Member – “we hope to reach consensus on the sports before voting”. I became personally aware of this operation being planned late Thursday night, not being totally bereft of political antennae! One comment made was along the lines that 5 sports provided a veneer of respectability for a process in which 2 sports, pre-ordained to emerge, duly did so!

I would urge those who are particularly upset at what appears on the surface to be a rejection of squash when one looks at the EB voting trail to recognise that, if the situation I have described might indeed have been in place, such analysis is fundamentally flawed as it is impossible to obtain a true reflection of support for each sport (see comments from the softball and baseball fraternities). With such a small voting number the process changes from an arithmetical exercise into, shall we say, ‘an art form’!

Why the decision? I think it is all summed up in President Rogge’s reply to a question “these two sports bring **extra value** to the Games”. None of the other sports could match the potential for bringing in spectators, sponsorship and TV of these two huge and very commercial sports. What this therefore represents is a significant shift on the part of the IOC, adding the need for such commercial value to the long established Olympiad criteria and ideals, which we certainly fulfilled so well. The IOC is far from immune to the effects of the recession and long term needs to ensure income to maintain what is an expensive operation. One can see the logic though saddened by the implications.

Are there any positives? Yes indeed, positives must be taken from this. The press conference was delayed an hour to allow President Rogge to write to President Ramachandran, and I quote: ***“On the occasion of your presentation to the Programme Commission and the Executive Board, we have been most impressed by the professionalism and thoroughness of your proposition. Upon review of your documents, we certainly noted progress on many fronts since 2005, and you should be commended for this positive evolution. We are convinced that your dedication will further contribute to the development of your sport. Once more, on behalf of the IOC Executive Board and the Programme Commission, I would like to thank you and the entire squash family for the work engaged and the excellent collaboration we have enjoyed throughout the 2016 Programme review process”***.

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Also massively positive was the way the squash community at all levels came together to support this bid. From the miniest Junior to the wrinkliest Master involved in the Squash 2016 Day, through Clubs, Centres, Member National Federations and Regional Federations, the Players Organisations and so many individual professional players, our Accredited Companies, the squash media – your support in donating, publicising the cause and wishing it well showed the strength of our great squash community; we can and should be proud of that.

The Olympic Future? There may be one slot available in 2020, hence we must maintain contact with the IOC and keep a watching brief through our Olympic Committee so that, if such an opportunity should emerge, we are ready. All the experience gained from this campaign will be fully documented and available. Those responsible will have to examine every aspect of our sport to see how squash might evolve to present a product with the 'added value' spoken of by President Rogge.

For WSF, we must now refocus and plan for life without the dream. We hope that many Members will come to the AGM in Kuala Lumpur in November. It won't be the celebration party we had hoped for but nor should it be inward looking nor a wake. We must be positive and we want you to contribute to a ManCom led debate on the strategy for the way forward.

So 10 months of very hard work come to an end. It has been a privilege as WSF Bid Co-ordinator to oversee the incredible work and contributions by so many involved - the original task force, ManCom, ExCo and Olympic Committee Members, Lorraine and Jazz in the WSF office, Natalie, Peer et al in the USA, especially at Sportaccord, the superb presentation team in Lausanne, our PR/Media Company Juniper, our Media Consultant Howard Harding, our Olympic insider specialist Ms Ramona von Ondarza, and very much our inspiring Bid Manager, Scott Garrett. My most sincere thanks to all involved, and of course to those who prepared the way these many years before – our marvellous Patron, HRH Tunku Imran, past Presidents Susie Simcock and Jahangir Khan, as well as our ex CEO Ted Wallbutton.

Finally, whilst he is reluctant to let me add this, I feel it essential to state that when President Ramchandran took office in October he committed himself totally to this campaign. He personally established the platform, which allowed us to make the fully professional, highly credible presentation of which we should all be proud and so warmly applauded by President Rogge. Without this platform we would never have got anywhere and we all owe him a great debt of gratitude for it, plus our support now in his time as our President as he leads us in re-focussing and taking the sport we all love so much forward again. Let's bounce back – and higher!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'George Mieras' with a long, sweeping underline.

Dr George Mieras,
WSF Olympic Bid Co-ordinator