



8th August 2021

**A PASSIONATE PLEA to IWF Executive Board and all IWF
MEMBER FEDERATIONS to save OLYMPIC WEIGHTLIFTING**
What we stand to lose if Weightlifting is kicked out of the Olympic Movement!!

The Olympic sport of Weightlifting is at a crossroad, with the scrutiny over the proposed constitutional reform which must be to the satisfaction of IOC. The decisions at the upcoming IWF Constitution Reform Congress and all the behind-the-scenes negotiations are going to “make it” or “break it” for the sport. We have taken time to document what we stand to lose, if the right decisions are not made in a timely manner.

Below is a high-level summary of the **risks associated with losing Weightlifting as an Olympic sport.**

1) Profile of the Sport of Weightlifting

- a. **Olympic Sport** - Weightlifting will no longer be an Olympic Sport. This means that the sport will not be on the program for Summer Olympic Games and the Youth Olympic Games. (Where reference is made below to the Olympic games, this covers both of these Games).
- b. **Compulsory sports status** at Commonwealth Games, Pan American Games, Pacific Games and various Continental Games – As a consequence of the sport losing its place at the Olympic Games, there is a major potential risk that the sport of weightlifting could be dropped as a compulsory sport for these and other multi-sport games. Weightlifting will lose these important global pathways for athlete development, as these games have acted as important Olympic Qualification events.
- c. **Olympic Broadcast** - without major Television broadcast of the sport during the Olympic Games, it will lose its appeal and promotion of the sport globally.
- d. **Loss of brand association and profile for the sport.** This will have a major impact on the attractiveness of weightlifting as a sport. Our sport with its two-lift format is generally referred to as “Olympic Weightlifting”. If we were no longer an Olympic sport, obviously this will no longer be the case.

2) IWF Financial Position and longer-term capacity to maintain existing programs

- a. **IWF Financial Position** – It may be a small comfort that IWF Reserves have been steadily built up over the years (US\$20 million as at 31.12.2018) and that in 2021 IWF will receive Revenues from IOC of around \$18 million for Tokyo 2020. However, this will disappear very quickly depending (based upon what the actual IWF financial position is presently), as our Net Expenses over Revenues is around \$5 million annually. We will be therefore start digging into our Reserves by 2024, with future Revenues at risk.
- b. **Olympic Television Rights Funds** – We understand that in the previous quadrennial (2017 – 2020), IWF received about 47% of its total income from the IOC through Olympic Games Television Rights and TOP Program. IWF will lose this revenue. That is about 47% of future IWF’s Revenue will disappear.

Affiliations

International Weightlifting Federation
Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation
Oceania Weightlifting Federation
Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee

- c. **Non-Olympic Revenues** - With a substantially weaker brand, it will have further repercussions and impact the funding of the remaining 53% of IWF Funding sources, which comes from IWF Senior Championships, sponsorship, marketing revenues and commercial ventures. All these will be severely affected, as the attractiveness of the sport will diminish greatly.
- d. **Development Programs** – With reduced revenues and reserves, IWF will no longer be able to support their Development Programs to current levels through annual development Grants to the Member Federations.
- e. **Continental Federations (CF)**- IWF will no longer be able to support their CF to the same level, as they will no longer have access to sufficient funds. This means that CFs could lose up to US\$250K per year.
- f. **IWF Congress** - IWF will no longer be able to subsidise or pay for the MF delegate travel to the IWF Congress, and this will lead to further weakening of the governance and accountability within the sport, as only those who can afford to will be attending.

3) Member Federations (MF) Revenue (Immediate impact)

- a. **IOC Funding & Olympic Solidarity** supports between 20% to 80% of most MF activities through support for competitions, equipment, Coach Education, Team Preparation and development Grants. If weightlifting is no longer on the Olympic programme, national weightlifting federations will be ineligible for funding assistance from Olympic Solidarity funds.
- b. **Government Funding** – MF receive substantial sums from their respective Government for overseas competitions, development, elite athletes support, facilities, team preparation grants amongst others. Once the sport ceases to be an Olympic Sport, the importance of the sport to Governments and domestic stakeholders will be severely affected.
- c. **IOC Development Funds and special grants** – additional annual grants will be lost.
- d. **MF Marketing Revenues** – MFs' income will also decrease by losing the Olympic status.
- e. **Access to IOC Platforms and services** – MF will also lose this beneficial access.
- f. **International Competitions** – Member Federations will be hard pressed to provide current levels of opportunity for its athletes to participate in international competitions.

4) Athletes (Immediate impact)

- a. **Loss of IOC Scholarships** - with no Weightlifting in the Olympic Games, Athletes will no longer be eligible for IOC Scholarships. For the 2021 – 2024 Quadrennial, this can be up to US\$18,000 per annum, in some cases for IOC Scholarship holders. Athletes through their Member Federations rely heavily of the IOC Scholarships for the support and training of their elite athletes. We believe that Weightlifting has the greatest number of athletes from any sport on IOC Scholarships, in some Continental areas.
- b. **IOC Support** – IOC funds athletes travel costs for major internationals which serve as Qualification event. This will be lost. This will mean that many island athletes will not be able to leave their islands to go to major international events, as the Olympic Qualifications provided them with the funding and platform to take part in competitions such as World Championships.
- c. **Athlete Development and Competition Pathways** – the dreams and aspirations of our athletes, the very athletes that we are responsible for, will be forever destroyed.

Affiliations

5) Anti-Doping

- a. **IOC / WADA / ADAMS / ITA support for Weightlifting** – the Antidoping program is substantially supported by these global Institutions, by way of research, technical support, subsidy and cross-subsidisation. These could be severely affected, as Weightlifting will no longer be a priority sport.
- b. **Doping to re-permeate the sport** – without the stringent oversight of the multiple integrity and probity institutions, and the sport not being on the Olympic Program, doping will once again permeate through the sport. All the recent changes and gains will be forever lost.

6) Status of the sport

- a. **Olympic Sports Program** - There are a number of sports, particularly modern sports, which are waiting in the wings to become an Olympic Sport, by getting on the Olympic Program. The sport of Weightlifting could potentially be replaced by another power sport on the Olympic Program. This could be Powerlifting or maybe even the very popular CrossFit, which already has Olympic Weightlifting as part of its program. If this happens the chances of Weightlifting ever getting back on the Olympic program will be severely diluted.
- b. **Leadership of the sport** – the sport must be led by elected individuals who have not been tainted in any way whatsoever, be this doping violation, cheating, unethical behaviour or criminal conviction. We must support, promote and practice only the highest levels of governance, ethics, integrity and accountability.
- c. **One-third of the IWF Members / Olympic Movement are small NOC's / MF's** – The cost for these countries in places like Oceania region to even leave the island is huge. The sport will eventually “die” in most of these smaller nations, around the world. And yet the sport of weightlifting is probably the most likely sport in which the smaller nations can excel and win medals at the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Continental Games and World Championships.

7) Weightlifting in Oceania – A CASE STUDY

The below is a Case Study of the importance of the sport to Oceania Region. Similar analysis can be done of the impact in other Continental Regions of the world.

- a. With the antidoping and eligibility provisions in the Constitution being tightened will provide a greater level-playing field and provide a higher level of accountability. All these provide Oceania Member Federations with a higher chance of competing on equal footings.
- b. Weightlifting is the strongest of all Pacific Island sport at the Olympic Games, with huge investment by the IOC, Olympic Solidarity, NOC, IWF, Member Federations and Governments. All these integrated funding and support programs have allowed us to come through and compete and shine at the highest levels. Weightlifting in the Pacific will lose its appeal.
- c. The majority of Flagbearers and qualified athletes at Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games and Pacific Games, come from the sport of Weightlifting for many Pacific Island Countries. This will be lost, and our Federations and athletes will no longer have these moments to cherish.
- d. Our weightlifters have the opportunity to leverage their weightlifting prowess to secure College / University academic Scholarships. This opportunity will be lost.

Affiliations

International Weightlifting Federation
Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation
Oceania Weightlifting Federation
Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee

- e. The sport of Weightlifting has had the opportunity to secure additional funds from the Australian and New Zealand Governments' Pacific Sports Partnerships Programs, for the development of the sport in the Pacific Islands. While this has not been leveraged over the years by the current leadership, other than the more recent PacificAusSports program for Tokyo 2020, the opportunity for development of the sports in the Pacific using these partnerships are huge. Given that Brisbane will be host to the 2032 Olympic Games, there will be a heightened level of long-term support of the sport in the Pacific, if Weightlifting remains on the Olympic Program.

A FINAL PLEA!!!

Ultimately the IWF can do whatever IWF / MF want and legally IOC does not have to approve the Constitution. But IOC can kick the sport out of the Olympics anytime they want. So, if IWF does not satisfy the IOC, there will be severe consequences. The messaging from IOC cannot be any clearer.

We have a choice – a choice to retain the sport as an Olympic sport OR a choice to bring permanent damage to the sport. Ultimately, the current leaders within our sport have the control over the outcomes.

The current leadership of IWF, IWF Executive Board and Member Federations of IWF have the option of saving the sport as an Olympic sport and mitigate all the risks mentioned above, and continue to provide a pathway for our athletes.

This means that that we must not dilute the provisions of the proposed Constitution, as proposed by the Independent Advisors and endorsed by ASOIF and IOC.

The interests of the sport must always be above that of any individual interests. We must all remember that no one is (or should be) bigger than the sport!!

If we lose the sport as an Olympic Sport than the current leadership of IWF and Member Federations will be forever held responsible for the downfall of the sport and accountable to the weightlifters throughout the world.

The choice is simple!!!!

Yours in Weightlifting



Della Shaw-Elder
President – Weightlifting Fiji



Atma Maharaj
Life-Member – Weightlifting Fiji
Chair – Special WF Governance Committee

Affiliations

International Weightlifting Federation
Commonwealth Weightlifting Federation
Oceania Weightlifting Federation
Fiji Association of Sports and National Olympic Committee