



PRESIDENT'S EDITORIAL

Dear Members and Friends of the ESF,

I am happy to introduce you to the new Newsletter of the European Softball Federation, a production of our new Director of Communications, Helena Novotná. We are confident that Helena's skills will bring us to another level in communication. Over the past two years she covered our major tournaments in an excellent way and we wish her success in her new job.

I also want to thank Anton Kops for his work over the past two years in giving this Newsletter a good start. Due to a lack of time, Anton will now concentrate on developing BeeBall and assisting on the ESF Media/PR Committee.



In December we received the news that Jesus Suniaga, President of the Venezuelan Softball Federation, President of Conpasa and Second Vice President of the ISF, passed away. His death came only 15 days after he had lost his wife Maura. Jesus brought softball in Venezuela to a world level and with him we've lost a friend and a big promoter of softball worldwide. We wish his family strength to overcome this huge loss. May he rest in peace.

December was also the month that the IOC opened the door for baseball and softball to participate in the 2000 Olympics in Tokyo. The final decision is expected early in June this year – but we still have some hurdles to overcome.

We are not the only sport that wants to be added to the Olympic program and sports that are currently participating in the Olympics don't want to give up disciplines – but this will be necessary if new sports are to be added, because there is still a maximum number of athletes allowed.

The WBSC, together with the Japanese Baseball and Softball Federations, did a great job to bring us to where we are now. But a lot of work still has to be done before the final decision in June as well as on the issue of participation beyond 2020.



The Organising Committee for the Softball World Championship in Haarlem has received a well-deserved award for the promotion of softball in the Netherlands. It was a well-organised Championship, though it coincided with a period in which the Netherlands had more rain in two weeks than during the whole rest of the year. But there were great games and, despite the rain, a great audience that supported their teams.

Our ESF tournaments in 2014 were successful, and as a Board we have made additional improvements that we will tell you about at our annual Congress in Dublin. As promised at the Congress in Prague last year, we will bring interesting issues out of the workshops on Friday as discussion points at the Congress plenary session. In addition, we will invite speakers to inform us about issues we all want to hear about. At the Dublin Congress, Michael Schmidt, Director of the WBSC, will update us on the latest news.



Finally, I wish you, your family and all the members of your Federation a happy and healthy New Year and together we look forward to a great year of softball in Europe.

Your President
André van Overbeek





ESF NEWS

ESF CONGRESS

Softball Ireland, in association with Baseball Ireland, is honoured to welcome the 2015 ESF/CEB Congresses to Dublin, Ireland on 6th-7th February 2015.



Based on provisional schedules, delegates will arrive in Dublin on Thursday 5th February and depart on Sunday 8th February. The Congress will be held at the renowned Ballsbridge Hotel in a Dublin suburb.

A Congress webpage is now available on www.softball.ie to provide up-to-date information on the programme for the Congresses. If you have any questions, please email president@softball.ie or go to: <http://www.europeansoftball.org/congresses/>.

NEW ESF COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

The main reason for establishing this new position is to have a communications professional responsible for two main aspects of the ESF agenda: communication and presentation.

Helena Novotna, who has been selected for the position, will run the organization's social media, including the website, and will compose and distribute newsletters and press releases. In specific cases, Mrs Novotna will lead on information campaigns, and her duties will include assisting the EC with outputs and helping with media coverage of top ESF events.



President André van Overbeek said: "The ESF took a big step forward by introducing the position of ESF Communications Director and I am happy that Helena is the person appointed to this job because of her excellent work over the past two years."

Some of you may be more familiar with Helena as the first base woman for the "A" squad of the Prague softball club Joudrs, that won silver in the Czech Extraliga and gold at the Czech Softball Association Cup. Or you may have met her at European Championships last year or at the World Championships in August, wielding a mobile phone or a camera. She and her husband Slavomír are the people responsible for the successful video project called "The Dailies."

During the World Championships in Holland, the couple took care of the official Facebook profile, which was followed by more than 6,000 fans from all over the world.





NEWS FROM NATIONAL FEDERATIONS



SERBIA

The Serbian Softball Federation participated in a Sport Fair organized by the Serbian Sport Association and sponsored by the Ministry of Health and Sport in Belgrade on 27th-29th November 2014. The three-day event featured national sports and anti-doping organizations, along with sport equipment manufacturers. The Fair offered the opportunity to expose softball to over 30,000 visitors who attended.



The softball booth featured softball equipment and educational brochures, plus an area for visitors to try their hand at throwing and hitting.

Federation officials were able to meet with the Serbian Sports Minister, Vanja Udovicic, and the Deputy Sports Minister, Uroš Zeković, to update them on the state of softball in Serbia and also to thank them for their financial assistance.



Both Serbian Softball Federation President Slobodan Djuric and Secretary General Sara Markovic were interviewed by the national TV channel RTS (Radio Television Serbia) on the rules of the game.



LITHUANIA

The President of the Lithuanian Softball Association, Diana Pupininkiene, has been trying for years to increase the profile of softball in Lithuania, and will now have greater opportunities to do so. In 2013, the ESF Congress accepted the Lithuanian Baseball and Softball Federation among its members, but in May 2014 a decision was made to separate the national organizations. On 9 December 2014 the Lithuanian Softball Federation was registered.



Meanwhile, Lithuanian softball teams have been increasing their participation in international tournaments. In 2012 the Lithuanian Junior Team took part in European Junior Championships in the Netherlands. Now Beeball has been introduced and an important visit by ESF president André Van Overbeek has helped Lithuanians to believe that there is a future for softball in the country.



SPAIN

The Spanish Women's National Team will now be led Hector Torres, a former USA coach from Cuba. In recent years, Hector has worked with the Real Federacion Espanola de Beisbol y Softball (RFEBS), conducting clinics and holding the position of pitching coach with the U-22 national team that won a bronze medal in 2008. He then became the national team's bench coach in 2009 and 2013.



Hector has also been a head coach at the collegiate level in the United States and is currently a member of the Athletics Department at the prestigious Gulliver Schools as an Assistant Head Coach and Pitching Coach.



Hector said: "I am honoured by this nomination. I appreciate the confidence that RFEBS have placed in me. I know the situation of softball in Spain. My knowledge, experience and contacts will be useful for the Federation. We have to raise the competitive, technical and strategic level of our players and coaches." (Source: <http://www.isfsoftball.org/>)





COMPETITIONS INFORMATION

2015 ESF COMPETITIONS: DEADLINES for CUP PARTICIPANTS

- 31 Dec 2014 – Send provisional list of International Umpires.
- 31 Dec 2014 – Send entry form duly completed and signed.
- 7 Feb 2015 – If LATE entry form, pay penalty.
- 28 Feb 2015 – Pay entry fee IF organizer is appointed at Congress.
- 28 Feb 2015 – Cancel entry without penalty.

2015 ESF COMPETITIONS: DEADLINES for CHAMPIONSHIP PARTICIPANTS

- 31 Dec 2014 – Send provisional list of International Umpires.
- 31 Dec 2014 – Send entry form duly completed and signed.
- 7 Feb 2015 – If LATE entry form, pay penalty.
- 28 Feb 2015 – Pay entry fee IF organizer is appointed at Congress.
- 28 Feb 2015 – Cancel entry without penalty.

TOURNAMENTS WITH SPECIAL CONDITIONS

EUROPEAN SUPER CUP JUNIOR WOMEN (ESCJW)

28 Feb 2015 – Deadline for entries.

Any club, representative or national team can participate, providing all players fit the Under-19 age regulations. Players do not require an ESF player licence.

NEW!

EUROPEAN MASSIMO ROMEO YOUTH TROPHY (EMRYT)

15 April 2015 – Deadline for entries.

This tournament is designed as a youth festival event for girls under 13. There will be no entry fee and there will be a new two-section system; which competition you enter is your choice.



For more information:

<http://europeansoftball.org/articles/detail/248>

Entries for ESF competitions can be seen here:

http://www.europeansoftball.org/data/documents/2/17/26_FINAL-ENTRIES-20150101.pdf





2014 RECAP



Country	Gold	Silver	Bronze
The Netherlands	3		1
Czech Republic	2	2	1
Italy	2	1	2
Russia	1	1	1
Germany	1	1	
Switzerland	1		
Denmark		2	3
Great Britain		1	1
France		1	
Spain			1

The ISF held the Women's World Championships in Europe for the first time in August 2014, and we congratulate the Dutch Federation and all their workers for hosting this event.

In 2014, 390 games were played by 91 teams at official ESF tournaments. A huge thank you goes to all organizers who hosted ESF tournaments last year, and also to all of the TCs, UICs, SICs, EC members, umpires, scorers and so many volunteers. Special thanks to ESF Director of Umpires Andrea Marcon for his excellent contribution, to Cornelia Chwojka, the game schedule creator, and to Dennis Duin for an excellent job with scorekeepers and the arrangement of website play-by-play.

A great deal of work behind the scenes was done by the Technical Commission headed by ESF Technical Director Mike Jennings, the Umpire Committee headed by ESF Director of Umpires Andrea Marcon, the Competition Committee headed by Cornelia Chwojka and the Scoring Committee headed by Dennis Duin. A big step forward was finishing a revision and reorganisation of all technical regulations and dividing them into relevant sections.

Thanks to Mike Jennings for the implementation of changes to ESF regulations and for maintaining an overview of all those regulations.

2014 has to be considered as a pivotal year for the ESF's future umpire system. For the first time in our history, an Umpire Convention was organized (in Rome from 7-9 March), with 60 umpires from European Federations attending.

The introduction of play-by-play reporting and video streaming has represented a significant advance in the quality of the ESF's service to players, spectators and the wider softball audience over the past few seasons. The broadcasting of EChM games in 2014 set a new high standard, but also raised the expectations of spectators trying to access other ESF events.

An issue for the ESF itself to resolve is server overload.





EDITORIAL: WHAT ARE OUR OLYMPIC CHANCES?

We are all wondering what our chances for Olympic reinstatement are now after the IOC decisions in Monaco in December 2014. Will the next step be a notification that baseball and softball will compete in the Tokyo Olympics in 2020? We hear rumours that we are in for sure, then we hear that other International Federations will be fighting us because in order for baseball and softball to go in, someone has to be taken out as the number of athletes must stay at 10,500.

So where are we really? The answer is – nobody knows!

We have been trying to get back to the Olympics ever since the decision was made in 2005 to drop our sports after the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. We were denied reinstatement in 2013, even though our bid was put forward by the new World Baseball and Softball Confederation (WBSC), created at the behest of the IOC. On that occasion, we lost out to wrestling.



So what are the main reasons we seem to have a chance now?

Tokyo beating out Madrid and Istanbul to host the 2020 Games gave us a major boost. Had one of those other cities won, we would have no chance for 2020.

Thomas Bach, the recently-elected IOC President, seems to be more open to change, and more sympathetic to baseball and softball, than his predecessor Jacques Rogge, and Bach has hinted at support for us in the past. But as always - you never know!

However, IOC members voted in Monaco to adopt Bach's 40-point "Agenda 2020" reform plan that touches on everything from lowering the cost of Olympic bidding to reforming the program, and this has opened the door for both softball and baseball, under the WBSC umbrella, to regain a place in the Olympics in Tokyo.

The new reforms include a provision for an Organizing Committee to propose the inclusion of one or more additional events on the program for their edition of the Olympic Games. It is now up to the Organizing Committee for Tokyo to ask for our inclusion. Have they done that yet? We are not sure. Will they? We have been told that of course they will. International Softball Federation (ISF) President Dale McMann, who is also the Executive Vice President for Softball on the WBSC Executive Board, is hopeful. Along with his counterpart, International Baseball Federation (IBAF) and WBSC President Riccardo Fraccari, Dale will be working hard to make sure that Tokyo makes the request so the IOC can make a decision at their next session this summer.

We are coming closer to our dream. In the famous words of Victor Hugo, "There is nothing like a dream to create the future," and we have to continue to dream for a little bit longer.

