By the time you read this column The World Games 2005 in Duisburg, Germany will be about to start. This quadrennial multi-sport event is the absolute top in a pullers’ career. A small number of pullers have participated with their national team in two consecutive World Games and only the very best have represented their country in The World Games more than twice.

In previous World Games women participated only as a demonstration sport; in Duisburg it is a full competition sport at the Indoor event. I know several female pullers who participated in the demonstration sport at previous World Games and who trained very hard to ensure their selection into the national teams for Duisburg. Some of them have participated in three consecutive World Games as a demonstration sport; it would be the final crown on their career to win their first real World Games medal at the Games in Duisburg.

Last year TWIF formally introduced a new Junior category and the Under 23 category; in September this year the first World Championships in these categories, both for female and male pullers, will be staged in Cento, Italy. Those youngsters are at the start of their tug of war careers. By the next World Games in 2009 in Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei, they will no longer be in the Junior category but will be able to qualify for their national team to participate in The World Games.

TWIF is aware that the future of the sport starts with the youth. At a recent Seminar in Cape Town, South Africa, we focused on sport at school level, as this is where the tug of war sport can be best introduced. School systems globally are very diverse. The importance and attention given to sports at schools depends very much on economics, social status and culture and so there cannot be a standard method to introduce tug of war at schools. The national associations have to find the best approach; one that fits their national culture and economics.

I hope that those men and women who have ended their active tug of war career after enjoying many successes - including medals at The World Games - will assist their national association in promoting the tug of war sport to the youngsters at school; ensuring that the next generation is also able to enjoy this sport.

CO KOREN President TWIF

n opening the seminar, Mr Co Koren, President of TWIF, explained that for the future growth of the tug of war sport it is important that we look to our youth. As it is not a well known sport, like rugby or football, more young people need to be encouraged to participate at an early age. One way of reaching them is through schools. Some member countries who already have tug of war on their school curriculums, were invited to make presentations at the seminar.

Presentations were given by Mr Cathal Mckeever from Northern Ireland, Dr Tzai-Li-Li from Chinese Taipei, Mr Paul van der Merwe from South Africa and Professor Johan van Heerden from the Pretoria University.

In this newsletter the contributions of Mr McKeever and dr Li-Li are published, whilst the latter contributions will be covered in our next edition.

MR MCKEEVER, Northern Ireland, explained that the School’s Programme in Northern Ireland had only been running for 4-5 years and is really still in the development stage. He explained that it is quite difficult to introduce new sports into the school curriculum, so in Northern Ireland, they pursue two ways to develop the sport; namely in Senior Schools and to the under 18’s through The Boys Brigade.

The Boys Brigade is an organisation similar to the scouts. They meet in the evenings. Their ages range from 14 to 18 years. Tug of war has now been introduced to approximately 30 brigade companies in the last 2 years. The NI Federation provides mats, ropes and coaches who concentrate on these groups as it felt that it is easier to transfer from this age group into senior clubs.

Senior Schools: A pilot scheme has been running in one region of Northern Ireland for just over 4 years. This has a very large fun element, which is essential at this age and more serious training should only be considered at a later stage. It is also important to include teachers as it is they that have to organise the dates for the competitions. Four volunteer
coaches assist the schools at no cost to the association. They visit the school during school time and cover 3 schools per day between 9-11am, 11am-1pm, 1-3pm. The teachers are involved from the beginning and at the final competition it is nearly always the teachers who do the team coaching.

Support is provided from various agencies. The Northern Ireland Association will send 5 TWIF Judges, dressed in correct uniform; 5 or 6 coaches in correct track-suits to marshal the teams. The Education Authority supply transport from schools to the venues free of charge and supply all the individual trophies. The Northern Ireland Sports Council supply funding for the sports hall and all meals, whilst the District Council Sports Development Officers are involved and provide funds for the purchase of ropes for every school who participate. In the future we hope to expand to other parts of Northern Ireland.

DR TZAI-LI-LI, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) explained that they are only a small island of approximately 36 square kilometres, with a population of ±23 million. Chinese Taipei became full members of TWIF in 1997. They promote tug of war in schools as it represents:

a) TRUST; you share honour and responsibility on the rope and you are all one mind coming together through sport;

b) ESTEEM; all are equal with no ‘stars’ - so co-operation with pullers helping each other are important. In Taiwan the saying goes: One rope - One mind - One force.

**Governmental Policy:** The government wishes to promote tug of war in schools, because it recognises the philosophy and spirit of the sport, as important educational objectives. The government has sponsored National Indoor Championships since 1998, and more than 10,000 students participate. There are three age levels:

- 10 - 12 boys and girls at 400 kg;
- 12 - 15 male at 480 kg girls at 400 kg;
- 15 - 18 male at 560 kg, female at 480 kg.

Tug of war in schools is part of the Physical Education (PE) Course where teachers work out the programmes. In Taiwan 90% of all the pullers are under the age of 18 years, so the prevention of injury is a very important aspect that is looked at, whilst the fun element is also introduced. Teams sometimes pull across a strip of water!

It is very important that the coaches have the support of families, schools and the community. In Taiwan, if a team appears in the top 3 of our competitions, the pupil may obtain permission to attend a higher school without the need for an examination. In 2004 at the Local and National Competitions approximately 13,000 pupils over the age of 16 years took part. This also attracts the media.

**Present Dilemmas:**

- **Finance** - although the Government is a major contributor, extra finance from the community, schools and companies is required.
- **Equipment** - better equipment needs to be developed to reduce injuries.
- **Parents** - their assistance is required to make sure that there is a balance between schoolwork and tug of war.
- **Teachers** - need to keep the correct balance of work versus volume of training.

CONTRIBUTED BY: Tony Martin, Jnr Vice President

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The "HELLENIC TUG OF WAR FEDERATION" was founded on January 3rd, 2004 with the participation of 20 athletic associations after it was recognised by the Court as the sole Federation in Greece for the development of Tug of War. PANAGIOTIS BAKAKIS, Secretary General of Culture, reports.

The goal of the Federation, according to its Constitution, is to develop and promote Tug of War in Greece. For that reason a national coach, Mr. Stefanos Liatopoulos, was appointed to start with the training of athletes. The 1st official competition took place in October 2004 in Thessaloniki, where 8 teams participated. It is anticipated that more than 16 teams will participate in the 2005 championship.

Moreover, the HTWF will support the World Championship of Policemen and Firemen that will take place in October in Thessaloniki.

Finally, in May 2004, an application was lodged at the Greek Ministry of Sports in order for Greek national teams to officially participate in the European and World championships. It is hoped that approval will be forthcoming within the year 2005.
History of Italian Federation - why did you decide to found it?

"In the late 80’s and early 90’s there were already many tug-of-war teams in Italy but they were competing only in city fairs and without a proper organisation. There was the need to co-ordinate the sport on a national basis in order to be able to organise real competitions and a real national championship. At the beginning only 6 of the 20 northern regions decided to subscribe to the Federation but a year later, thanks to the support and interest of TWIF, the membership increased. In 1994 the Tug of War International Federation officially recognised the Italian Tug of War Federation. This recognition gave a new birth to FISTF and in 1996 Italy was able to organise a national team that took part in the European Indoor Championship in Spain. By 2002 the number of regions that subscribed to the Federation was up to 12 with a total number of 35 teams coming from all over Italy. The last success of our Federation was at the Open Club Competitions in Rochester, Minnesota, in 2004 when the northern team, Scorzè, won a bronze medal."

What are your expectations for the future of the Tug-of-War sport in Italy and what is your main goal?

"I hope that this team sport will grow in Italy, not only in the number of athletes and people that will play it, but also in the number of people that will watch and follow it. Moreover, I have two main goals that I would really like to achieve. First of all, I would like like this sport to be played all over Italy. Today most of the teams are northern ones but I would like it to spread also to the south of Italy. Secondly, I would like to be able to create a national team capable to compete at a high level in international competitions and, why not, win some medals in a European or even World competition. I know that we should really work hard to reach this goal, but I believe that in due time we could actually do it. Finally, I have a dream for the tug-of-war sport to once again participate in the Olympic Games!"

EC 2005 IN CENTO IS NEAR!

Cento is a little city in the north of Italy and it is the real centre of the tug-of-war sport in Italy. First of all FISTF head office is there and it is one of the areas where most of the national competitions (indoor and outdoor) take place. Situated on the crossing of three big cities, Ferrara, Bologna and Modena, the area of Cento is one of the richest cultural areas of the north of Italy. The urban structure of the city goes back to the Middle Ages and it is characterized by the porticoes that flank the main streets. The city is full of historical monuments and churches such as the Governor’s Palace, the Guercino Square, Pannini’s House, Rosario’s Church and two Castles! Furthermore, if you come to Cento...
you will have the chance not only to participate and watch tug-of-war and to visit Italian historical monuments and artistic and cultural places, but you will also have the chance to experience real Italian food: pizza and pasta are waiting for you!

**What to expect from the European Championship in Italy**

Upon arrival in Italy visitors will feel the Italian atmosphere of happiness, joy and friendship that will follow them until departure. The venue of the competition is really close to the city centre so it would be easy to visit the city during free time. Moreover, the competitions will take place in our football/soccer stadium that will be surrounded by many food and souvenir stands. Next to the stadium there is a basketball sport hall where the canteen will be situated. Evening entertainment will also be provided in this facility. The whole competition area will be closed to traffic, whilst the hotels are either in Cento or in towns and cities nearby. A special bus service will be provided between the competition area and hotels. Personal translators will also be allocated to each group in order to assist with communication and queries.

**The final challenge**

President Giorgio Trocchi: "My personal hope is to make the public, especially young people curious about the tug-of-war sport in order to increase public awareness about it. I would like the tug-of-war sport to grow at a national base thanks to the European Championship and of course, I would like the Championship to be memorable one, as we are working so hard to ensure the perfect realization of this event, I’m pretty confident about it. I am looking forward to meeting all of you in Cento!!!

Ciao e a presto!!!"

**Photo Competition**

TWIF is in the process of reviewing its brochures. In order to modernise the material with some original photo’s, the TWIF Executive felt that a photo competition amongst tug of war enthusiasts would be a good way in which to obtain unique material.

Therefore, all interested parties are invited to enter photo’s (limit of 3 photo’s per individual) for this exercise. TWIF will call on a panel of international photo and sport journalists to reduce the entries to a top 5 which will be publicised on the TWIF web-site. Visitors to the web-site will then be invited to vote. The person who enters the top photo will be provided with free accommodation and meals at a TWIF championship of their choice and to attend such an event as TWIF’s guest.

TWIF reserves the right to use any of the photo’s entered but will recognise the person who has taken/entered the photo in any publication and/or material in which it is used.

Apart from the winning photo, a draw will also be made from the voters who will receive a mystery prize! So please enter your best photo’s, and when the time comes, vote as often as you like. Watch this space!

Note: You are welcome to also send in "funny" photo’s, but no grand prize will be given, although some of these may be printed in future magazines. Send entries (only in JPEG/electronic files either on CD or by e-mail) to:

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