

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK



Co Koren, President TWIF

Tug-of-war is seen as a simple sport - which indeed it is. It is a straight forward contest of team strength and endurance.

Those who have reached the top in international tug-of-war know that making it is certainly not a simple affair. The training of pulling techniques, the physical strength, the staying power and teamwork is a complex and long road. Planning and organizing the international tug-of-war competitions is also not an easy job; the number of participants, the number of matches in competitions and the amount of weight classes in these events surpasses the scale of many other sports.

Therefore even more than in other more 'sophisticated' sports, the 'simple' tug-of-war sport needs modern and up-to-date management tools such as software programmes for administration, competition and score presentation. The use of these tools is not limited to organizers and officials; all participants find that they now have to use modern technology such as online accreditation. This is now globally feasible - the internet being a tool almost as common as using pencil and paper nowadays.

In a relatively small organization such as TWIF the need for tailor-made software creates a burden on the ExCo. Not only due to the amount of work but also because the required level of expertise is no longer available, TWIF has outsourced a number of projects to professional businesses. TWIF has indeed anticipated this and catered for it in the Policy Plan. Planning of projects is one thing, implementation and realization is another matter. Although TWIF uses its reserve funds prudently, the need for additional financial resources is approaching. We will need all our creative potential to find the ways and means to realize projects in the coming years.

From my desk I look into our garden which, after this first week of summer is coming into full bloom. Nature continues its eternal cycle of seasons and doesn't need new technology to keep up! I wish you all a good summer season (or winter time for our friends down under) and lots of success in future tug-of-war competitions.

CO KOREN

THE FUTURE ... BEYOND 2006

The recent TWIF seminar, held prior to the annual Congress in Minehead, England focussed on the future of tug-of-war. Topics ranged from youth development, medical issues with regard to weigh-in and weight classes, and the rules. Modernising the competition, accreditation and scoring systems were also discussed - sometimes with very lively and constructive debate.

We analyse these comments and ideas in order to enhance the sport's image and to increase the enjoyment for participants and spectators. Tony Martin compiled this report. The discussions were facilitated by Anton Rabe and Glen Johnson. In our next newsletter Co Koren will deal with the electronic systems and computer programmes required to modernise the administration of the sport.

JUNIOR AND U23: After a number of years of intensive debate, and experimenting with varying models and age groups relating to the participation of juniors and U23, it has now been settled that World Championships will be held in these CONTINUED OVERLEAF



The development of new software for use in accreditation, the competition programme and electronic scoreboard is one of the exciting new TWIF projects currently receiving attention. This will change the manner in which the recording will be done at future events. An article on this project will appear in the next edition.

(PHOTO: EDDY VAN RAAMSDONK)

classes every year. The first competition was held in Cento, Italy last year in conjunction with the European Championships. After some initial hiccups, it will again be held in Assen in September this year, but not as a separate event. Questions raised during the discussion, centred around how to stimulate these classes for future growth, and a separate day event and how this process could be facilitated by TWIF. It is clear that a number of countries are very active in the youth classes. The GENSB (Germany, England, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium) competition is very good and is expanding to nearby countries. In South Africa youth competitions have been conducted for many years and a number of teams have visited there. All these competitions are however at different levels and weight classes and are not pulled strictly according to TWIF rules. The focus is on participation, fun and development.

There is participation in schools in China, South Africa and Northern Ireland, and very recently also in one area in Canada. Ways in which different countries approach the challenges associated with development at youth level was discussed. The ideal would be an annual separate event, but practicalities and cost considerations seem to force these classes to be held in conjunction with senior international events.



The possibility to amend the traditional weigh-in procedure by individual once off weigh-in and also the night before an event, is one aspect which will be explored after the last TWIF seminar. The consolidation of weight classes will also be investigated in order to streamline the competition procedures.

(PHOTO: EDDY VAN RAAMSDONK)

FUTURE WEIGHT CLASSES:

With the growth in the number of participating countries the current competition programme is becoming very tight. A possible consolidation of some of the weight classes may be the way to address this. The health issues relating to 'making the weight' (especially with M560) identified in the TWIF medical study, the declining numbers of teams in M720, the W560 class being too high for Asian teams, and W480 being too low for European countries, were all dealt with.

It became clear that increased competitions (and status associated with more teams in a lesser number of weight classes), health issues and the need to balance the physical realities of the European and Asian countries with regard to weight and build, should direct the debate. It was agreed that a possible way forward may be to join the lower and higher male weight classes with a gap of 60 kg's between 'new' weight classes, and to amend the female classes by

lowering the W560 and increasing the W480 divisions by 20 kg's respectively. In future the international weight classes could therefore look something like:

- M560 & M600 join to become M580 kg,
- M640 remains the same
- M680 and M720 join to become M700 kg; and
- W500 & W540.

2007 World Conference on DOPING IN SPORT

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) announced its upcoming World Conference on Doping in Sport, which will be held in Madrid, Spain from 15-17 November 2007, recently.

The conference will be organized with the assistance of the Spanish Government's High Council for Sport.

The meeting will be the third of its kind after the conference organised by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in February 1999 in Lausanne, Switzerland and the second held by WADA in Copenhagen, Denmark in March 2003.

The first World Conference resulted in the Lausanne Declaration, the document that led to the creation of WADA; the second Conference led to the acceptance and introduction of the World Anti-Doping Code.

Representatives of national governments, related public authorities, the Olympic Movement, other sports governing bodies, athletes and expert groups will be invited to attend the Conference.

Another option may also be to have only M600, M640 and M680 and retain the 40 kg gap between weight classes. These weights would then be the same for both Indoor and Outdoor.

It was concluded that the number of weight classes needs to be reduced and that a way must be found to get to the most acceptable weights for most member countries. Most countries were therefore in agreement with this and requested that the TWIF Exco should further investigate and put forward a firm proposal at the next Congress for future implementation.

MIXED /CO-ED WEIGHT CLASSES: Another matter that has come forward in recent years is the need of some countries to look at a mixed (men & women) competition. Given the already overloaded programme and the fact that the medical study clearly indicated differences in endurance and strength between men and women, which could have some negative implications on the health of participants, this was always a somewhat problematic topic to deal with effectively.

From the feedback it became clear that there is currently no real need for such an event to be introduced on an international level, but that mixed teams play a vital role in the development of the sport on a national and local level, and also for introducing the sport to possible new entrants on a youth and fun level. Some countries have in fact used this practice for many years already with great success and without any negative consequences.

During the second session of the seminar, Glen Johnson dealt with a number of practical issues which may impact on the manner in which competition programmes are conducted and could lead to some future rule changes. These included:

- 10 minute rule / inactivity
- Overnight weigh-in,
- Separate finals
- Weigh-in schedule,
- Single weigh-in; and

TIME LIMIT ON PULLS: This rule was introduced after extremely long pulls had taken place in a previous event which had led to the public and press losing interest, and the whole competition programme being disrupted. Although some other matters since dealt with will lead to better prepared competition arenas and grounds, the issue is whether the time limit should be changed or not.

Various comments were made - varying from keeping the 10 minute rule - to having no time limit at all. It was felt that if the ground was good enough, no pulls would be longer than 10 minutes. It was also suggested that teams should have a quicker turn-around, and not be allowed such a long breaks between pulls. It was unanimously agreed that very long pulls were not good for pullers, public or the media. They also affect the programme time-table. It was concluded that the present rule should stay in place.

WEIGH-IN SCHEDULE: Some countries have successfully experimented with a system whereby teams or clubs are given pre-allocated time slots for weigh-in, preventing a big rush at the start or end of weigh-ins. It was agreed that this is not feasible at an international level, but that countries should continue with developments for possible future fine tuning.

OVERNIGHT WEIGH-IN: is being used by a few countries with success as it is believed that it is better for the health of pullers to have a proper meal the evening before a competition.

On an international level, this practice could cause some problems for officials and coaches, due to the briefings and some ceremonies during the evenings, whilst the stamping and control of teams could also prove to be problematic. Weigh-ins during the afternoon could address this. Views were expressed that this will mean that the team on the rope the next day would be much heavier than at the weigh-in. However this also happens now - with teams weighing-in at 06:00 in the morning and not pulling until 13:00 they are also much heavier on the rope than at weigh-in. So, if the same system was applied for everybody it should not be a problem. Countries who have used the system call the teams back the next morning to be stamped.

An alternative would be to ask teams to assemble in the marshalling area 30 minutes before the start of the competition in order for the pullers (using accreditation numbers) to be checked against the weigh sheet and then be stamped. It was concluded that the overnight weigh-in would be good for the puller's health, and that possible ways of implementing this should be investigated.

SINGLE (ONCE OFF) WEIGH-IN: Linking with possible weigh-in overnight, it has also been suggested that a single (individual) weigh-in prior to the start of an event would be the ideal system to address a number of issues relating to health risks and procedures during events. There could be a single weigh-in for all pullers before the beginning of the competition and this should cover the four days of the Championship. Coaches would be able to have more time to select their teams. The weight need not be on the accreditation card but would be entered into the computer programme separately. If TWIF members wanted this system, it could work. It was indicated that such a system - although not perfect - is currently being used in South Africa and that it works well for a two day competition.

It was once again concluded this system holds great advantages and that its feasibility needs to be investigated further.

The final topics dealt with ways to amend the event programme and the scheduling of finals to make the sport more attractive for the media and spectators. It was indicated that some of the ideas have merit and have been tried at various levels in the past without great success. By scheduling all the finals in a specific afternoon or allotted time period might be a solution for TV slots, but with various individuals pulling in more than one weight class, this has always proved to be problematic. It was therefore agreed that the current competition programme should stay whilst other factors are looked into before further changes are contemplated.

WADA appoints new Education Director

Julie Carter will be responsible for the Agency's activities in leading and co-ordinating effective doping-free education and assisting stakeholders in their implementation of anti-doping education programmes.

Born in Washington D.C. of Australian parents, Carter grew up in Geneva where she obtained a French Baccalauréat. She studied architecture in Brisbane (Australia) and worked as an architect for several years. Returning to Europe, Carter joined the IOC and, four years later, moved to Toronto to work for the Toronto Ontario Olympic Council on Toronto's bid for the 1996 Olympic Games. In Montreal she obtained degrees in civil and common law from McGill University.

She worked in private practice and then as legal counsel for an international company. She is perfectly bilingual (French and English) with a strong command of Spanish and German. In addition, Carter has a long abiding interest in sport, and has competed throughout her life in Alpine skiing, field hockey, rowing, swimming, squash, and, more recently, triathlons. She began at WADA in April 2006.

Carl Hagstrom was a very valuable member of the Swedish Tug of War Association. In his younger days he was a very keen tennis player and even became an umpire but only became involved in the sport of tug-of-war in his mid-fifties when he worked in a travel agency alongside Ake Owetz, the treasurer of the Swedish Association.

In 1983 he became an assistant and interpreter to the former Chairman of Sweden, Mr Torgny Falck. In 1984 he not only became the secretary of the Association but also the International Representative and attended the 1984 TWIF Congress with Mr Falck. He was then elected secretary of the TWIF Technical Commission and served on the commission until April 2001. His contribution was invaluable.

In Sweden issues such as marketing, education and equality in sport were his main tasks and he saw results in Congress 1985 when Ladies Tug -of-War was first introduced. It brought great joy to him to see ladies competing in the World Championships in the Netherlands in 1986 after the Swedish initiative.

1987 was a busy year for Carl with the organisation of the World Championships in Malmo in 1988. They were a great success. He continued as secretary until he was elected President at the Annual General Meeting in March 1989, succeeding Tony Falck. He had a major task ahead of him as he had to work with a negative financial situation. He introduced a captain for the Swedish Youth team and Indoor tug-of-war became a reality in 1990. He remained chairman until March 1998.

During this time and up to 2001 he was the International Representative for Sweden and was a very good ambassador for the sport. He spent many years promoting and working for the sport with Baltic and Latvia. From the start in 1991, when they were still a part of the Soviet Union, the foundations were laid for the formation of the Latvian Tug-of-War Federation in December 1997. In 1996, he put forward a motion for a network for the ladies which was accepted by the TWIF Congress. Also that year he started working for the sport of tug-of-war to become recognised by the Olympic Commission (IOC). In 1997 TWIF appointed Carl as their Representative/ Liaison Officer in Lahti, Finland for the World Games.

In 1993 he was employed as Consultant of Sports - after hard work with the financial responsibility and the contribution by the government - through the Swedish Sports Federation. The 1994 World Championship in Uppsala, Sweden was also another challenge for him. The Championship was a great success with eighteen countries participating, but on the financial side, sadly there was no profit! In 1995 he pointed out the issues and instructions from the IOC and also the regulations from TWIF concerning doping and tests. The following year he introduced the Internet and e-mail



CARL ERIK HAGSTROM

A great Ambassador for Tug-of-War

Although retired as an Official in the Association he is one of Sweden's staunchest supporters and is still seen at competitions and was present last month at the Annual General Meeting. Carl is also a great family man, he has been married to Dagny for many years, and they had one son and two grandchildren of whom he is very proud. He has led a most interesting life travelling the world not only in his job in the travel agency but also to Tug-of-War Championships all over the world. He was and still is a great ambassador and has made many friends worldwide over the past thirty plus years in the sport of tug-of-war.

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His last engagements during 2000 and 2001 were when, with the support of TWIF and together with the Latvian Federation, co-operation was started with Belarus and Lithuania. This work he had to leave to his successor and to the Swedish Commission. At Congress the results were seen when we saw Lithuania become members of TWIF.

In 2000 Carl was appointed as Liaison Officer during the World Championships in Blackpool and again in 2001 at the European Championships in Switzerland. Today he is an honorary chairman and at the age of 78 he is still planning the celebrations for the formation of the Swedish Tug of War Association over seventy years ago in 1933.

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