FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Congress welcomes new countries

The 2012 TWIF Congress took place at the beautiful seaside resort of Volendam in the Netherlands. The peaceful surroundings were much enjoyed by all in attendance as was the hospitality of our hosts.

The assembled membership endorsed the tender of Volendam to host the 2016 World Indoor Championships and I’m sure everyone is looking forward to returning to the city on that occasion.

Northern Ireland won the right to put on the 2015 European Outdoor Championships which will be their first time in hosting a major TWIF championship. It is significant that the 2015 event will be the 50th anniversary of the first European Championship which was held at Crystal Palace, London in 1965.

The Congress was pleased to receive applications for membership from no less than seven new countries from a wide spread of areas throughout the world. Hungary became the latest member from Europe whilst Thailand joined the growing number from Asia. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Zimbabwe increased our numbers on the continent of Africa whilst the Dominican Republic and Brazil added to our foot-hold in the Caribbean and South American region.

Hungary has attended the development course on the 19th and 20th May in Latvia, Zimbabwe played a full part in the recent Cape Town course and it is hoped that the South American countries will join the training course in Colombia later this year.

CATHAL MC KEEVER

WORLD INDOOR TUG OF WAR CHAMPIONSHIPS
PERTH 2012

REPORT BY CRAIG MITCHELL

The World Indoor Championships 2012 were back in Scotland for the second time in 8 years. In 2004 the event was held in Scotland’s biggest city, Glasgow. This time the Scottish Tug of War Association took the event to the ancient capital and the seat of Scottish kings in the City of Perth.

Perthshire was an ideal location for the Championship to be held. The venue, The Bell’s Sports Centre has hosted many international events such as hockey and gymnastics and the staff were well versed in the demands that we would place upon them. Furthermore we were sure that the main arena’s dome shape would create a unique atmosphere with almost 1000 people in it. We weren’t wrong about that at all. As an athlete you tend to block out the noise of spectators when you are in the zone of competition, however I could certainly “feel” the noise when fighting for the bronze medal in the Mixed 600. That special atmosphere is something that will live with me for the rest of my life.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Perthshire also had something else that STOWA (Scottish Tug of War Association) badly wanted. A luxury hotel complex that could cater for all of the competing athletes and officials. The Crieff Hydro Hotel fitted the bill completely and added to the overall experience of the Championship. We really wanted the TWIF family to come together not just for the competition but also for the social aspects too and in that I feel that we succeeded. STOWA’s Vice Chairman Bill Meston was in his element on the Friday evening, teaching an array of Dutch, Basque, Swiss and Irish athletes how to “Strip the Willow” or do “The Dashing White Sergeant”.

The competition itself was intense, as is to be expected for the premier event that the indoor code has to offer. The successes in the club events were spread across the globe. Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland gave the men a distinctly British Isles air of domination. The women’s championships went to Badaioz! And Chinese Taipei. Chinese Taipei was dominant in the U23 men and the Mixed 600 had a very Iberian look to it. No one nation was able to completely dominate. From the sport’s perspective this can only be a good thing.

When the World Championship started on the Saturday morning we were delighted to have the Minister for Sport, Shona Robison to open it. She was very interested in our sport, I enjoyed watching her trying (and failing) to remain impartial as Scotland’s men fought for medals in the 560 Kg. The local Member of Parliament, Pete Wishart was also an interested and partisan supporter on the Saturday. I hope that the spectacle that these influential people witnessed throughout the day will help in our efforts to spread the word about Tug of War in Scotland.

Once again the medals were spread around with Northern Ireland, England and Chinese Taipei all successful. With Scotland still to win a Championship the pressure was mounting but the 600 kg. Men responded magnificently to make it 4 wins in a row. The Republic of Ireland and Chinese Taipei completed the winners and it meant that Chinese Taipei finished up as the most successful nation at the Championships.

From a Scottish perspective the event was a success for the organisers, it was also a qualified success on the rope. Scots won 2 gold, 2 silver and 3 bronze medals over the four days of competition. There was only one International weight that Scotland did not win a medal in so we really should be very happy, however we set high standards for ourselves in this small nation and we’ll look to do better next time.

On a personal level as an organiser and official and a competitor it all went very well. I have many happy memories of the 2012 Championships. I am proud that a Scottish club side at last won a World Open Clubs Championship, I was delighted when our 600 team won again and I have never been so happy to hear a whistle as I was in that Bronze medal match in the Mixed. There are other memories that I will cherish, such as Ruth Linaza’s and Ruth Cayero’s delighted faces after so many near misses, the tug of war nations united in Scottish dancing on the last night and the positive wishes and feedback I’ve received from so many people from all around the world. At the end of it all I’m glad that it’s all over and that in 2 years I’ll hopefully be able to concentrate on just pulling a rope. I wish my Irish colleagues the best of luck in their 2014 preparations - Scotland has just given you a new standard to aim for.
LARS-AKE LINDH
One of our valued and favourite judges on the TWIF Panel is Lars-Ake Lindh from Sweden.

Lars is a very quietly spoken person who is married to Rose Marie and they have two sons. He retired as a Production Manager at the end of 2011 after ten years.

He has been involved in tug of war in Sweden since 1975 - first as a puller, then in 1980 after returning from his National Service, he decided to take up judging. In 1987 he took the Twif Judges Course and was successful the very first time.

In Sweden Lars is responsible for the education of judges and is also a member of their Technical Commission and his immense knowledge of our sport and memory of rules and regulations is a real benefit to Sweden.

In 2001 he became their international representative after the retirement of Carl Hagstrom and he had a hard task to follow but he has excelled himself on international circuit.

In 2003 he was elected to join the TWIF Technical Commission to which he has offered his expertise on many issues backed up by the knowledge gathered by his expert technical experience of our sport.

In 2011 he was very honoured to be elected as Vice President of the Swedish Tug of War Association. a well deserved honour to a man who has given his all to the sport.

Lars has an outstanding record of International judging; he has judged at 21 Outdoor European/World Championships, 5 World Indoor Championships and 4 World Games. In 2001 and 2003 he was assistant chief judge and has also been an evaluator.

Next year will be his last year for international judging as he reaches retirement age and he will be missed. Lars goes about his work in a quiet and unassuming way, watches what is happening, and what should not happen! Always willing to give advice and encouragement. He is like an encyclopaedia of tug of war and despite his hearing problems has continued to participate in and enjoy our sport. Hopefully he will not fall by the wayside but continue his tug of war career down other channels. We need more people like the lovable Lars.

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT CHAMPIONSHIPS
CAPE TOWN 19-21 APRIL 2012 REPORT BY ANTON BOTHA

From Tuesday 17 April 2012, teams started to book in at the competition’s hotel, the 4 star Strand Tower Hotel in Cape Town. On Wednesday we did accreditation at the hotel, providing all participants with the standard accreditation card. Wednesday evening a briefing session was conducted to inform everyone on the weigh in procedure.

The weigh in was conducted on Thursday morning 19 April strictly according to TWIF procedure. Prior to weigh in, SATF (South African Tug of War Federation) wrote a detailed procedure to streamline the functions of the officials conducting the weigh in.
This was tested on the morning of the weigh in and resulted in an average weigh in time of 30 sec per athlete.

After breakfast, a total of 63 people were transported to the Helderberg Tug-of-War club where a comprehensive development clinic was conducted. Banie Engelbrecht presented a Judging and Officials Orientation course to three of the Zimbabwe officials, whilst the coaches and athletes received a detailed clinic comprising the theoretical aspects of the sport (including infringements) as well as practical. Here athletes from our federation teams actively assisted. Feedback from Zimbabwe were overwhelmingly positive.

An evening weigh in were conducted on Thursday evening, primarily for South African Teams, and after this a briefing was held for all teams to ensure they were prepared for the Open Club Championships the following day.

Friday 20 April was a beautiful, sunny day in Cape Town - the venue was at the sports fields of one of Cape Town’s elite schools (Jan van Riebeeck). Halfway up the slopes of Table Mountain, it had a beautiful view of the mountain on one side and the city and sea on the other. Apart from the team tents and control tent, the facilities included a clubhouse that overlooked the venue.

A total of 14 clubs from the RSA and Zimbabwe were involved in this competition. The Zimbabwe teams only participated in the 700 kg category where they entered 3 teams. A total of 9 teams participated and the Hawks club from Zimbabwe won a well-deserved silver medal.

On Saturday 21 April the Closed Championships were opened by Anton Rabe on behalf of TWIF. A Test match between the Zimbabwe National team and a Federation (Development) team representing South Africa ensued after this. The match (700 kg) was won by South Africa. After this, the championships continued with the Zimbabwean National team participating with the SATF team and other Provincial teams from South Africa - 7 teams in all. The Zimbabwean team claimed bronze against much stiffer opposition.

Other weight divisions that participated on both days of the event, were 640 kg Men, 540 kg Women and 600 kg Mix. Development teams from all over South Africa participated on both days.

At the farewell function on Saturday evening at the hotel, Participant Medals were handed to all our foreign guests - a gesture deeply appreciated by them. All in all, although the participation from African countries was disappointing, this African Development Championships was a great success and the start of something big in the future. Already Zimbabwe requested to host the next championships. It was enjoyed by South Africans and Zimbabweans alike and a lot of positive feedback was received from both athletes and officials.