
EDITORIAL

Gathering for Competition and Celebration in Rio—a Time of Cautious Optimism for Wrestling

Every four years, those of us in the wrestling community look forward with great anticipation to seeing our greatest athletes compete on the Olympic mats. It is the pinnacle of our sport. In this issue, we celebrate this gathering in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, beginning with greetings from the president of the Confederation of Brazilian Wrestling. It is exciting to see the growth in wrestling in Brazil, and indeed in all of South America, since the announcement that the Olympic Games would be held in South America for the first time.

Using the occasion of the Olympics, United World Wrestling, the international governing body for the sport of wrestling, has named 15 former wrestlers, coaches, officials, and community members to their 2016 Hall of Fame class. The class will be presented on August 12 in Rio de Janeiro preceding the start of the wrestling competition at the 2016 Olympic Games. United World Wrestling president Nenad Lalovic said, “This is the 13th anniversary of the Hall of Fame and this class pays special tribute to individuals in our sport with legacies of excellence which are worthy of recognition and preservation.” Of particular interest to those of us in wrestling science, Stan Dzedzic, who heads the Hall of Fame Commission, announced the introduction of the “Order of Merit,” which will be presented to Dr. Harold Tünnemann. Said Dzedzic, “Dr. Tünnemann has become a fixture in our sport, helping to advance wrestling’s scientific progress for more than 50 years, and is a deserving first inductee in this category.” Dr. Tünnemann has been a sport scientist involved with international wrestling since 1973. At present, he is a member of United World Wrestling scientific commission and head of the video analysis team. He is the author of more than 200 articles and the book *Fitness and Strength Training*, which has been translated into five languages. He has been the editor of more than 60 pedagogical Olympic and world championship highlight videos. He helped produce the ground-breaking Wrestling Database with Dr. Hartmut Sandner at the IAT Institute in Leipzig, Germany. Dr. Tünnemann has provided competition management support at 11 Olympics and more than 200 continental and world championships.



Dr. Tünnemann shown delivering the inaugural Rayko Petrov.

Wrestling can also use these Rio Games to celebrate its recent success in remaining in the Olympic program. United World Wrestling has worked hard for the development of wrestling around the world. Of particular note have been the education programs for coaches in emerging areas. Having Lalovic becoming the first International Olympic Committee member from wrestling, followed by an appointment to be the International Olympic Committee representative to the World Anti-Doping Agency Commission speaks volumes for wrestling. However, we cannot become complacent. We must continue to pursue core sport status, if that continues to be a part of the process for inclusion as an Olympic sport.

During the lead up to Rio, doping has been a prominent issue and threatens to undermine a positive view of Olympic sport held by the public. The wide spread use of meldonium by so many athletes prompted this drug to be added to the banned substances list in January, and led to a number positive results, perhaps from athletes not being aware of new classification. Wrestling has not been immune from this threat. In March, it was announced that

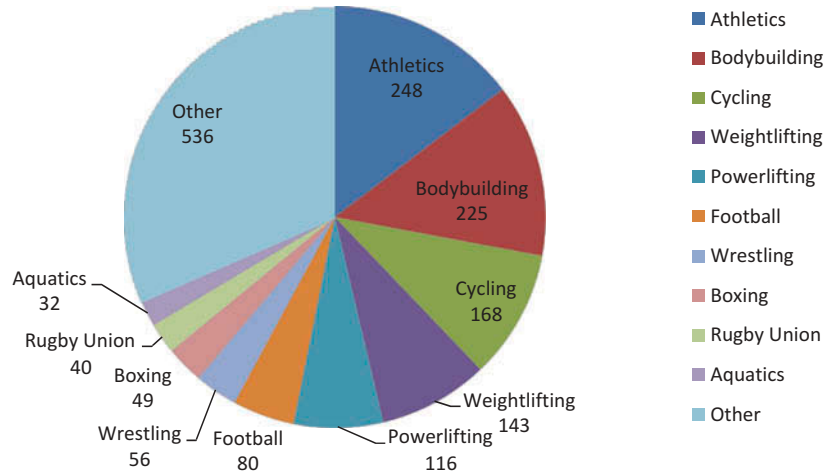


FIGURE 1 Total antidoping rule violations: Top 10 sports.

an Olympic silver medalist and World silver medalist were among athletes who tested positive for meldonium. These wrestlers avoided sanctions because of a lack of scientific evidence on how long the recently banned drug stays in the system, and the World Anti-Doping Agency provided an amnesty of sorts by allowing these provisional suspensions to be lifted if it was determined that an athlete took meldonium before it was placed on the list of banned substances on January 1. In May, wrestling’s Olympic qualification process was marred by seven positive tests in qualification tournaments in all three styles! Data released this year by the World Anti-Doping Agency in their 2014 Anti-Doping Rule Violations Report included the following figure showing that wrestling ranked seventh among sports they monitor.

This is one top-10 list we do not want to be on! During the current quadrennium, three world champions have been sanctioned for violations. All of us must attack this problem head on, just as we did with our Olympic crises. We must be unshakable in our integrity and ethics and not allow the foundation of our sport to be undermined, whether by complicity, looking the other way, or ignoring the problem. Let us use this time in Rio to

both celebrate and rededicate ourselves to moving wrestling forward.

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