

International Federations and National Governing Bodies: The Historical Development of Institutional Policies in Response to Challenging Issues in Sport

Jörg Krieger Lindsay Parks Pieper
Aarhus University University of Lynchburg

Ian Ritchie
Brock University

Historical accounts on the institutions that have shaped the history of sport (and sport history) have increasingly emerged in recent years.¹ The main body of academic literature within the historiography of sport focuses on the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Despite the IOC's significance, international high-performance sport is also shaped by people and policies from outside the Olympic Movement. International Federations (IFs), National Federations, and other nongovernmental bodies are powerful stakeholders in the international sport system.

The IOC first acknowledged the important role of IFs in the 1910s. During the 1914 Olympic Congress, IOC President Pierre de Coubertin hesitantly accepted that the IFs would be the main bodies to determine amateur rules for their respective sports.² The IOC subsequently shifted eligibility issues to the federations; however, questions about the scope of IFs' authority continued as the IFs believed their oversight also extended into determining the technical aspects of their sports. Fearful of a reduction in the size of the Olympic program, the French cycling administrator and journalist Paul Rousseau united all IFs under the "Permanent Bureau of International Sport Federation" in 1921, a forerunner to organizations such as SportAccord, the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations, and the Association of International Olympic Winter Sports Federations. The Permanent Bureau arranged meetings between the IOC and IFs to facilitate dialogue and express federation needs.³ Yet the IOC and IFs continued to dispute the balance of power. During the 1925 and 1930 Olympic Congresses, IOC and IF members debated responsibilities with federations ultimately assuming

Krieger is with the Department of Public Health, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark. Pieper is with the University of Lynchburg, Lynchburg, VA, USA. Ritchie is with Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. Address author correspondence to Jörg Krieger at krieger@ph.au.dk.

authority over the technical aspects of their individual sports. The arrangement established during this time provided IFs authority over sports but maintained their close connection to the IOC.

International Federations today are not-for-profit associations that govern an Olympic or non-Olympic sport on the international level.⁴ They are generally considered among the most important stakeholders of the Olympic system, together with the IOC itself, the National Olympic Committees, and the Organizing Committees of Olympic Games.⁵ The rights and obligations of each federation are defined in the Olympic Charter, which awards the IF the exclusive right to govern the specific sport. For example, the International Swimming Federation (FINA) oversees water sports, including artistic swimming, diving, high diving, open water swimming, swimming, and water polo.

Despite the academic and public focus on the IOC and the Olympics, all IFs host separate championship forums that generate tremendous profits. Although smaller IFs with little popularity outside the Olympic Games depend heavily on the television income of the Olympic Movement—which renders them more dependent on the wishes of the IOC—others have an independent economic impact on the sporting industry (and beyond). This grants them independence from Olympic governors. Perhaps as the most notable example, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international governing body for the sport of football, opted to install its own world championships in 1930. The IOC's strict interpretation of amateurism as a requirement for Olympic participation convinced FIFA to host a separate championship tournament with less stringent eligibility rules.⁶ The decision paved the way for the financial success of the FIFA World Cup; according to FIFA financial documents, the 2018 FIFA World Cup generated \$6.1 billion in revenue.⁷ FIFA's World Cup profits also allowed for professionalization in football outside of the IOC's control.

Similarly, the International Lawn Tennis Federation's (ILTA) dissatisfaction with the organization of the tennis events at the Olympic Games and its desire to enforce a more lenient definition of amateurism led the federation to leave the Olympic Movement ahead of the 1928 Olympic Games.⁸ Indeed, tennis did not return to the official Olympic program until sixty years later, by which point it had developed into a fully professionalized sport. In both cases, FIFA and the ILTA considered the Olympic Games unnecessary for their own success. The two federations regarded its championships as more prestigious and lucrative than the Olympic Games.⁹

In addition to economic influence, IFs also create policies that affect athletes, coaches, and officials. In reacting to perceived problems in their specific sports, international federations often act before the IOC, consequently influencing the ways in which Olympic governors eventually respond. For example, when the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF; since 2019 called World Athletics) believed male imposters were competing in women's track and field, it introduced sex testing. In 1966, the IAAF required all female athletes undergo a visual inspection prior to participation, before switching to a chromosome test the following year. The IOC followed the IAAF's example and required compulsory sex testing in 1968.¹⁰ Likewise, the IAAF was the first international sport organization to provide a definition for "doping" in 1928. This rule was the basis for the IOC's initial doping regulation, introduced in 1938. Similarly, when the