

Karate Fails Olympic Scrutiny for the Third Time

Another sad day for Karate; despite numerous attempts over many years, Karate will not feature in the Olympic Games for the foreseeable future. The question on the lips of many Karateka Worldwide will be why? The decision to exclude Karate was by secret ballot, so unless the reasons leak out, we can only speculate.

As far as we are aware, all the short-listed sports could go forward to the final selection, providing they met the selection criteria. We believe that Karate will have met most of these criteria; it is practiced extensively in almost every country; it is accessible to all ages, genders and social and religious groups. However, we believe it would have failed to meet some key criteria such as inclusiveness, governance and acting within the spirit of the Olympic Charter.

The IOC already supports a Karate body, the WKF, but it is our belief that they do not have full confidence in this body. Why would this be?

Research by the IOC would establish that the WKF is not universally liked or supported; this is demonstrated by the existence of a large number of other World bodies, which operate independently of WKF and some of which have formed in opposition to WKF.

We believe WKF is largely responsible for this lack of unity and harmony in World Karate. Rather than use its mandate to encourage groups to join, it has sought to bully them to join through the imposition of Rule 21.9. This has created disharmony and resentment in many countries and in a number of cases led to court action against WKF on grounds of violation of human rights, most if not all of them successful.

The WKF does not govern Karate – it merely organises International Championships for a tiny minority of elite performers.

In many countries Rule 21.9 has divided Karate and left its image tarnished in the eyes of their government. A very good example is the United Kingdom, where the majority of Karateka in the component countries of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are outside of the WKF recognised bodies.

In England, the largest of the UK countries with an estimated 150,000 practicing Karateka, only around 20% belong to the WKF recognised body, the English Karate Federation. Despite this, the EKF has tried to act like the official National Governing Body, which has led to Karate being dropped from the London Youth Games, almost had Karate dropped from the British Universities and Colleges Sport competition, and has to date been a major influence in preventing Karate from achieving recognition by the highest sporting authority, Sport England.

It is our contention that Karate deserves to be an Olympic Sport, but it has to be in the right circumstances and with the right people in charge.

If it is to have a chance of appearing at the 2024 Olympics, WKF needs to drop rule 21.9 and create alliances with other World Karate bodies. This would also allow Karate to govern itself and help protect the public from the many Karate 'cowboys' by providing guidance and sound advice; at present, it is all too easy for people to be taken in by false claims.

It would be highly beneficial if Karate bodies in countries where there is disunity could find a way to work together and therefore allow Karate to present a unified front to the IOC in 2024.