



I've always believed actions speak louder than words and as a result whenever there was an opportunity to create unity amongst the competing international governing bodies WPF has always stepped to the plate. WPF is presenting our application to the IOC after the Paris Olympics. Based on conversations I've had with IOC members, consultants and other Presidents of International Sport Federations our application will cover all the requirements and we are hopeful of a positive response.

Pickleball changes peoples lives, I've seen it and the vast majority of people I've met around the globe has a story to share of how their life or that of a friend or loved one was changed as a result of being introduced to pickleball. Pickleball is simply a vehicle which I believe can change the world. Therefore, growing pickleball at the grass roots in every country world-wide is something that I've embraced and care deeply about.

Unfortunately, despite the rapid growth of pickleball both in the United States and worldwide the headlines that capture the interests of media is usually about the divisiveness within our sport. This is certainly true at the international level, the professional level and most recently with a competing NGB here in the US.

While all the leaders and competitors within the pickleball community are trying to one up each other the bigger threat is sitting in the background and smiling. The ITF (International Tennis Federation) has been watching the growth of pickleball and seeing the amount of money that is being poured into our sport. They revel with the seemingly childish manner in which all the major players within the pickleball community are attracting attention. So too, is the IOC! The IOC has been watching the growth of pickleball for quite some time. Pickleball as a newly developing sport worldwide checks all the boxes that the IOC find attractive. The one strike against us is ourselves! I've been told by several IOC members we must get our own house in order. What if we don't? The IOC can decide they want pickleball to be an Olympic sport but they could decide not to accept WPF, or any other IF because of all the bickering and divisiveness that has occurred. They could take the easy way out and simply say that pickleball is being accepted but under the ITF banner! That would be an absolute nightmare and a disaster for our sport.

Think that can't happen? Think again, here's a precedent: Skateboarding applied to the IOC for admission. The IOC did not like the International Skateboarding Federation for a number of reasons. So what did the IOC do? They assigned skateboarding to Roller Sports so the IOC would not have to deal with the International Skateboarding Federation and the IOC could control it. The IOC does not want a sport that is going to cause problems or create controversy. Timing is everything when it comes to applying to the IOC for membership and pickleballs time is now! Having our own IF recognized is the ONLY protection we have against the threat of tennis taking us over.

Therefore, I am reaching out to you today as the leaders of Global Pickleball Federation, International Pickleball Federation and USA Pickleball (who although an NGB) has done so much for pickleball to get us to where we are today. I propose a face to face meeting to do what we all know is best for pickleball. Every country wants a strong international governing body to lead our sport on the global stage. Let us put our differences aside and honestly discuss the issues, with the objective that we will not leave the room until an agreement is reached. Our sport deserves one strong unified governing body and each of the 4 organizations mentioned has much to offer. I believe in my heart that each organization wants what's best for pickleball.



If we cannot put our petty differences aside, and come together our sport will appear to be vulnerable and the ITF (International Tennis Federation) will be in position to take us over. I propose that we have an impartial moderator who will lead the negotiations. Although, I've had a long standing relationship with Mike Jacki, one of the most respected international sport consultants for many years, I don't want anyone to think WPF has an unfair advantage.

Therefore, I'm recommending Michael Lenard, a 1984 Olympic athlete, and current lawyer who also served as:
Vice President of the US Olympic Committee for 8 years
Helped create the US Olympic Committee Athletes Advisory Council
Member of the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games
Senior Vice President of CAS (Court of Arbitration of Sport) of the IOC He has served on CAS during the last 5 Olympic Games

Michael makes decisions every day on issues revolving around the IOC and its member countries. Michael has agreed to moderate with certain stipulations in place. Once I hear a positive response from all of you, Michael will provide a date/time and what to expect next.

I want to emphasize our objective is to create one IF with representatives from all four organizations who are participating.. We all need to commit to doing so. We will not leave the meeting without that objective being achieved. Please let's come together and save our beloved sport before the unthinkable happens.

Respectfully,

Seymour Rifkind
President, WPF
Pickleball Hall of Fame Inductee, 2023