



In late September, baseball-softball, skateboarding, sport climbing, karate and surfing were proposed for inclusion in the 2020 Olympic Games by Tokyo 2020. Callum Murray and Jonathan Rest run the rule over the sports and the international federations that represent them

The International Olympic Committee's Agenda 2020 reform programme, approved at the end of last year, allows host cities, for the first time, to propose the addition of one or more sports to the games programme, and Tokyo 2020 has proposed 18 additional events across the five sports, with 474 athletes in line for a place at the games.

The IOC has said that "an event or events" can be added to the programme, but has not given a definitive number, stating only that the number of additional athletes (beyond the existing limit of 10,500) cannot exceed 500. There is no guarantee that the decision by Tokyo 2020's executive board will be rubber-stamped by the International Olympic Committee, which will make the final decision at its session in Rio next August.

Eric Koston – one of the young, marketable stars of skateboarding

INTERNATIONAL ROLLER SPORTS FEDERATION (FIRS)

- Year federation was founded: 1924
- Number of member national federations: 114
- Location of HQ: Rome, Italy (but in process of move to Lausanne, Switzerland)
- Federation's annual budget: \$1.2 million for functional activities, \$6 million in total
- Main international events run by federation and their frequency:
 - *Eight World Championships, senior and junior, men's and women's (annual)*
 - *Roller Games (biennial)*
- Previous attempts to join Olympic programme: 2012, 2016, 2020
- External advisers for bid to join Olympic programme: Not disclosed

FIRS' bid to join the Olympic programme in 2020 has been controversial in that, unlike previous bids, the federation has been chosen to represent skateboarding only, a discipline in which its claim to governance is opposed by various other groups.

Moreover, the anti-establishment culture of the sport has led to the launch of a petition against skateboarding becoming a part of the Olympics – 'No Skateboarding in the Olympics' – which, by late October, had been signed by over 6,000 skateboarders.

Nevertheless, FIRS has stoutly defended its claim to represent the sport, arguing that no other group fulfils the requirements of the International Olympic Committee for a single, non-commercial, international governing body.

In an impassioned statement, Sabatino Aracu, FIRS' Italian president, said in October: "For the sake of clarity, there is no other sport federation that can claim, at the IOC level, to be involved in any way on skateboarding, and the so-called-federation that had been involved on Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing in 2014 is one of the American commercial promoters that has no recognition from any sport official body such as IOC, Sport Accord, ARISF, ASOIF."

FIRS adds that "it is important to clarify that, despite the common thought, FIRS is not looking for inclusion in the games for financial benefit, because its main priority has always been and still is the development of roller sports and the training of the athletes all around the world, especially in

less fortunate countries where the business is the last priority.

"Roller sports are easy to learn, low-cost and they can be practised everywhere: these are the main reasons why skateboarding is very popular and practiced in most of the countries around the world."

The IOC is thought to have long coveted a place for skateboarding on the Olympic programme as it bids to

halt a perception that its audience is an ageing one. But it has, up to now, been thwarted by the problem of establishing a single governing body for the sport.

Playing on the IOC's fears, FIRS claims: "FIRS strongly believes that the inclusion of skateboarding into the Olympic programme will boost the active participation of youth, because finally they will feel the IOC and the Games are 'closer' to them, talking the same language, following the same values, and this is going to create a positive domino effect for the coming years..."

"It is clear to everybody that, during the last decade, the Games have been losing appeal, especially towards the youngest. The ways youth are engaged today on their activities are completely different than in the past: a new approach is definitely needed and FIRS' proposal to Tokyo 2020 is actually wider than the 14 days of the Games.

"FIRS presented a five-year plan to the Organizing Committee that, starting from local needs, will contribute to create a solid basis for Games time, guaranteeing wider and more active audience participation both on the Olympic park and on TV and digital platforms."



From top: FIRS president Sabatino Aracu; the final of the team men's Kumite competition at the 22nd Karate World Championships in Bremen, 2014; Antonio Espinos, president of the World Karate Federation

GETTY, CHRIS GRANT, OCEANSIDE

WORLD KARATE FEDERATION

- Year federation was founded: 1970
- Number of member national federations: 190
- Location of HQ: Madrid, Spain
- Federation's annual budget: not disclosed
- Main international events run by federation and their frequency:
 - World Senior Championships (biennial)
 - World Junior, Cadet and Under 21 Championships (biennial)
 - Karate 1 - Premier League (eight tournaments per year)
- Previous attempts to join Olympic programme: 2012, 2016 and 2020
- External advisers for bid to join 2020 Olympic programme: None

With taekwondo and judo already well-established in the Olympics, naysayers might well question the necessity of adding another combat sport to the programme.

For Antonio Espinos, president of the World Karate Federation, however, the sport answers the questions posed by the IOC. He tells us: "Karate is a universal, young and dynamic sport practised by many millions of people worldwide and it has an unquestionable media interest.

"Eighty per cent of the practitioners are under 20 years old; it also has a broad presence across the world. We estimate that around 100 million individuals are involved. These elements will support an increase in numbers following the Tokyo games." Espinos continues: "The inclusion of karate in the Tokyo 2020 programme is very easy and does not represent a great increase in general organisational costs. The number of athletes is 80 and the competition has a duration of only two to three days, and will be in one of the event venues where other sports of the programme are already taking place."

Karate is particularly popular in Japan, no doubt a key consideration in the Tokyo 2020 organising committee's decision, but Espinos is confident that the sport enjoys an international fan base.

He says: "Karate competition is of high media interest, as the great demand and broad coverage of the TV channels that have shown our World Championships at the senior categories proves. The last world championship in Bremen in November 2014 was broadcast on 14 channels, which had purchased the rights, with coverage in 94 countries.

"If we replicated the great attendance of spectators that occurred during the five days of this competition, especially over the weekend, with a completely full sports hall, the participation of karate in the Olympic Games provides an unbeatable frame for broadcasters and sponsors."

WORLD BASEBALL SOFTBALL CONFEDERATION

- Year federation was founded: 2013 - merger of IBAF (est. 1938) and ISF (est. 1952)
- Number of member national federations: 208 (from 141 countries and territories)
- Location of HQ: Lausanne, Switzerland
- Federation's annual budget: not disclosed
- Main international events run by federation and their frequency:
 - Premier12 and World Baseball Classic (quadrennial)
 - Baseball World Cup (U-21, U-18, U-15, U-12 and Women's) (biennial)
 - Men's and Women's Softball Championships (biennial)
 - U-19 Men's and Women's Junior Softball World Championships (biennial)
- Previous attempts to join Olympic programme: 2012, 2016, 2020
- External advisers for bid to join Olympic programme: None

The participation (or not) of Major League Baseball players in the Olympic Games remains the elephant in the room for the WBSC. As with basketball and ice hockey, the IOC is sure to want the world's best players involved to showcase the games, but Riccardo Fraccari, president of the WBSC, cuts a relaxed figure when approached about the subject.

He tells *Sportcal Insight*: "Baseball is a global game, so naturally the availability of professional players from around the world to play for their countries in the Olympics is highly important. All of our key stakeholders are fully supportive of finding the best solutions possible."

Tokyo boasts several world-class baseball stadia, meaning its addition to the programme will not be costly, and the WBSC is keen to stress likely financial windfalls.

Fraccari says: "Baseball-softball is the biggest sport not currently featured at the Olympic Games. The vast majority of our sport's estimated 65 million male and female athletes in over 140 countries are between the ages of five and 21.

Baseball became an official Olympic sport at Barcelona 1992, and softball followed suit at Atlanta 1996, but both were struck off the list after Beijing 2008. Fraccari believes the two sports' development are proof of the benefits associated with being in the games, and is eager for another chance. He explains: "The Olympic Games is the pinnacle of sport and attracts the attention of billions of people – it's the highest platform on which a sport or an athlete can be showcased.

"During our time in the Olympics, we more than doubled the number of national federations. It was because of this worldwide boost from the Olympics that our sport is solidifying its global position today. Returning to the Olympics will help accelerate our growth and increase the appeal of our sport."

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SPORT CLIMBING

- Year federation was founded: 2007
- Number of member national federations: 86
- Location of HQ: Bern, Switzerland and Turin, Italy
- Federation's annual budget: a little under €1 million (\$1.1 million)
- Main international events run by federation and their frequency:
 - World Championships (biennial)
 - World Youth Championships (annual)
 - Continental Championships (biennial)
 - World Cup Circuit (annual)
- Previous attempts to join Olympic programme: 2020
- External advisers for bid to join Olympic programme: None

In July, sport climbing, perhaps surprisingly, took an early lead in a public opinion poll conducted by *Japan Real Time*, a *Wall Street Journal Japan* online service, to find the sport that is most favoured in Japan to be added to the programme of the 2020 Olympics.

Like FIRS, the IFSC is playing the youth card strongly, saying: "Our athletes deserve to be in the Olympics. Then, we will be able to have them and our sport visible at the highest level. We have consistently and methodically built the foundation of our International Federation to support athletes at all levels of our sport and developed our events to be a product worth watching and participating in.

"People of all ages can participate in sport climbing; much like skateboarding, snowboarding, mountain biking and kayaking. It is a lifestyle sport and it appeals to the youth. Sport climbing athletes excel on TV and the sport has been and is an important part of the school physical education programmes in many countries in Europe."

The IFSC also says: "Climbing is the only basic human movement that is not currently included in the Olympic programme; therefore, it is fresh, new, and does not compete with other sports. Other basic human movements are swimming, running/walking, jumping, pushing/pulling."

"Broadcasters and sponsors believe in the uniqueness and universality of the sport. Sport Climbing also offers breathtaking shows that attract young people and families.

"There is a documented number of people worldwide who sport climb: millions, and the number is growing. This does not include hikers or people who run in the mountains; they often incorporate climbing into their recreation activities. It is a cultural phenomenon and 'meme', to use a popular marketing term. We often see climbers used in the media to promote marketing brands."



From top: Ben Enoka of the new Zealand Black Sox; World Baseball Softball Confederation president Riccardo Fraccari (third left) at the launch of WBSC Premier12; Action from the International Federation of Sport Climbing's Vail finals 2015

INTERNATIONAL SURFING ASSOCIATION

- Year federation was founded: 1964
- Number of member national federations: 97
- Location of HQ: La Jolla, California, USA
- Federation's annual budget: \$1.8 million
- Main international events run by federation and their frequency: All annual:
 - ISA World Championships
 - ISA World Surfing Games
 - ISA World Junior Surfing Championship
 - ISA World Longboard Championship
 - ISA World Bodyboard Championship
 - ISA World Adaptive Surfing Championship
 - ISA World Master Surfing Championship
 - ISA World StandUp Paddle and Paddleboard Championship
- Previous attempts to join Olympic programme: 2020
- External advisers for bid to join Olympic programme: Vero Communications, Robert Fasulo



From top: The World Junior Surfing Championships 2015 action and, middle, the event's opening ceremony; International Surfing Association president Fernando Aguerre

The ISA has proposed a shortboard competition on natural ocean waves, rather than the kind of purpose-built wave park that the federation has been quick to champion over the past few years.

Naturally, that would keep the costs down for Tokyo 2020 organisers, but it should also add to the vibe and vista that ISA president Fernando Aguerre believes will appeal most to the IOC, and importantly its rights-holders.

He tells *Sportcal Insight*: "Surfing is a visually powerful sport that produces stunning broadcast opportunities. The compelling action and the energy of our star athletes on the waves will light up TV screens, laptops and handheld devices around the world.

"Over the last few years we have seen the arrival of portable, waterproof cameras that can be worn or fixed onto boards. Increasingly surfing events and rights-holders are also using cameras mounted on drones which hover above the ocean offering new, incredible views, angles and perspectives – bringing the TV and online audiences closer to the action than ever before.

"By being innovative and embracing new technology we can enhance the viewing experience for the Olympic audience and the millions of surfing fans around the world."

The ISA is also keen to point out that surfing is enjoyed by a young demographic, something the IOC is known to be keen to tap into.

Aguerre continues: "Of the 35 million surfers in the world, we estimate 14 million are aged 12 to 24. With our young fans and our star surfing competitors who embody coolness, the sport connects with the public in a powerful way – we are at the frontier of youth engagement at a time when

this is vital for the Olympic Movement.

"Surfing would greatly contribute to the commercial success of the Olympic Games with merchandising and licensed products that appeal to youthful fans around the world."

And Aguerre paints an appetising picture of a surfing competition at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics, saying: "World-class competition involving young, cool athletes would ensure sold-out venues full of local and international supporters. Our aim would be to create a unique 'beach party' atmosphere providing unforgettable memories for fans from across the world."

But for all the IOC's talk of rejuvenating the games programme, there remain some senior figures who might just consider surfing 'too radical' for the Olympics. Aguerre's message to them? Imagine the winter Olympics without snowboarding.

He explains: "With Thomas Bach's Agenda 2020 revolution, the IOC is clearly trying to reach out to a new wave of fans from around the world. I think it makes absolute sense to include sports that are globally popular with huge youth appeal.

"We feel that surfing can contribute greatly to this shift in focus by helping to refresh the summer games programme. Just as Nagano dramatically transformed the face of the winter games with the introduction of snowboarding, we believe that surfing can have a similar impact on the summer games – representing a groundbreaking change for the Olympic Movement and a historic legacy for Tokyo and Japan."

TOKYO 2020 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IOC

SPORT	EVENTS	NO. OF EVENTS	NO. OF ATHLETES
Baseball-softball	Baseball (men)	1	144 (6 teams x 24 athletes)
	Softball (women)	1	90 (6 teams x 15 athletes)
Karate	Kata (m/w)	2	20 (10m/10w)
	Kumite (3 weight classes - m/w)	6	60 (30m/30w)
Skateboard	Street (m/w)	2	40 (20m/20w)
	Park (m/w)	2	40 (20m/20w)
Sports climbing	Bouldering, lead and speed combined (m/w)	2	40 (20m/20w)
Surfing	Shortboard (m/w)	2	40 (20m/20w)
		18	474

Source: Tokyo 2020