



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY
IWF





IWF annual review 2021

Message to the Weightlifting Family from the IWF Interim President Dr Michael Irani:

Dear Friends,

This has clearly been a turbulent time for our great sport – but in this we were not alone.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused disruption to all sports, not just weightlifting.

In particular, it created serious challenges for our qualification process for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games – which themselves were shifted to 2021 as a result of the pandemic.

Yet we have much to celebrate.

- Olympic qualifying was resumed and ultimately completed in time for the start of the Games on 23 July;
- The weightlifting competition at the Tokyo 2020 Games was a great success, with weightlifters competing clean and medals awarded to athletes from a wide spread of nations;
- And our new Constitution – crucial to the future of our Federation and of our sport – was approved by an overwhelming majority at the end of August.

As you know, I became Interim President of the IWF in October last year. One of my first actions was to extend the IWF partnership with the International Testing Agency until 2024.

I also requested it to investigate allegations made in the McLaren Report and by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

We then created a Disciplinary and Ethics Committee composed of independent experts, and we added independent experts to the Reform and Governance Commission

Dear friends, it is imperative that the IWF eliminates the doping scourge and corruption allegations that have plagued weightlifting. We know that our place in the Olympics depends on it. But, even more importantly, it's the right thing to do – for our athletes and for the future of our great sport.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Irani', with a horizontal line underneath.

Dr Michael Irani

Interim President

International Weightlifting Federation



Key Events

The COVID pandemic once again caused disruption to the IWF's 2021 calendar, with some events having to be cancelled or postponed. However, other key events were able to go ahead, either as planned, or having first been postponed, in some cases from 2020. Among them were important qualification tournaments for the (postponed) Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. Key events that took place included:

- European Championships
- 2020 Asian Championships
- 2020 Pan American Championships
- IWF Junior World Championships
- African Championships
- 2020 Pan American Junior Championships
- Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games
- Pan American Youth Championships
- European Youth Championships
- European Junior Championships
- IWF Youth World Championships
- Pan American Junior Championships
- Pan American Championships
- Junior Pan American Games
- IWF World Championships

IWF extends its warmest thanks to the organisers of all of these events, who showed great determination and dedication to hold their events successfully in the face of the difficulties imposed by the continuing pandemic.

TOKYO 2020 OLYMPIC GAMES

The weightlifting competition at the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 came to a dramatic, spectacular conclusion as Talakhadze Lasha of Georgia shattered world records en route to his second consecutive Olympic gold medal in the men's +109kg category.

In all, 42 athletes from 24 National Olympic Committees took home medals in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games weightlifting competition. China topped the medals table with eight medals, seven of them gold, and one silver. Ecuador took home two medals, including one gold. Georgia and Chinese Taipei tied for third with each nation winning one gold medal and one bronze. Turkmenistan won their very first Olympic medal, while Phillipines and Qatar won their first Olympic Gold medals during the weightlifting competitions.



IWF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2021 IWF World Championships were held successfully in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from 7-17 December 2021, with the world's best male and female athletes taking part. A total of 432 athletes (187 female, 245 male) from 74 countries participated in the World Championships.

Tashkent concurrently hosted the Commonwealth Championships, which was a qualifying event for next year's Commonwealth Games.

COVID-19 countermeasures were developed by the IWF, the local organising committee, and medical experts to ensure the World Championships and Commonwealth Championships could be held, despite the continuing challenges of the pandemic. Athletes unable to compete in the Commonwealth Championships will have the opportunity to secure qualification for the Commonwealth Games in early 2022.

FUTURE EVENTS

A range of future IWF events were awarded to the following countries:

2023

- IWF Youth World Championships – Albania
- IWF Junior World Championships – Mexico
- IWF World Championships – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

2024

- IWF Youth World Championships – Peru
- IWF Junior World Championships – Spain

2025

- IWF World Championships – Norway



Governance

ELECTIONS

On 20 December, the IWF successfully held a Congress of its Member Federations in Tashkent and online. 101 Member Federations took part (69 in-person, 32 online), approving a clear set of dates and steps related to the holding of elections for the IWF Executive Board and other Committee positions.

Elections had initially been scheduled to take place during the Congress, but were suspended on the basis of advice from the IWF's independent Legal Commission and will now take place on 25-26 June 2022.

One of the reasons for this decision was that the IWF Legal Commission found that the composition of the IWF's independent Ethics and Disciplinary Commission had not yet been ratified by the IWF Congress. Consequently, the Ethics and Disciplinary Commission could not properly constitute the Eligibility and Determination Panel required to vet candidates for the election, in the opinion of the IWF Legal Commission.

Further key dates for the electoral process, which will now be restarted, were also confirmed:

- IWF Extraordinary Congress – 30 January
- Call for Candidatures – 2 March
- Deadline for the completion of candidate vetting by the EDC – 30 April

On the agenda for an IWF Extraordinary Congress of 30 January 2022 will be amendments to the IWF Constitution aimed at speeding up the electoral process, on the basis that it will be repeating some steps that were recently undertaken. It should be noted that there are no proposals to weaken the strict eligibility criteria against which candidates will be vetted.

Interim President Irani said: "Thanks to today's decisions, the IWF has been able to finish the year as it started: on track towards meaningful reform and culture change. We were asked to deliver three things: new governance, clean competitions and faces in our leadership team. We've already delivered the first two. The third is certain to happen because of the provisions mandated by our new Constitution for more athletes and more women on the IWF Executive Board. And now we have a firm date."

In February, the IWF had agreed to adjust its new anti-doping and athlete representation rules and eligibility criteria for elections, after concerns were expressed by the IOC.

IWF also agreed to postpone its Electoral and Constitutional Congresses, and to reverse the sequence of those Congresses, in order to ensure that Elections would take place under our its Constitution.

These moves displayed once again IWF flexibility and responsiveness to the IOC, along with its determination to safeguard weightlifting's Olympic future.



PARIS 2024 & LA 2028

Also in December, the IWF welcomed a decision of the IOC Executive Board to maintain weightlifting's place on the Paris 2024 Olympic Games programme and reiterated its commitment to completing reforms aimed at safeguarding the sport's long-term Olympic future.

Interim President Irani said: "On behalf of weightlifters around the world, we express our gratitude to the IOC Executive Board for confirming weightlifting's place on the Paris 2024 programme. We take careful note of the IOC's concerns and we are confident these concerns will be overcome as we continue to implement our wide-ranging reforms.

"I am confident the future Executive Board of the IWF will be well-placed to satisfy the IOC's requirements and ensure the place of weightlifting on the Olympic Programme of Los Angeles 2028."

NEW CONSTITUTION

On 29 August, during a General Meeting in Doha, Qatar, the IWF's Member Federations voted overwhelmingly to adopt a new, independently-drafted Constitution, that will radically overhaul the IWF's governance. Of 133 Member Federations represented at the meeting, more than two-thirds voted in favour of the new measures.

The new Constitution establishes vital principles including athlete representation, gender equality and independent oversight. No fewer than three athlete representatives will serve on the reformed IWF Executive Board, while at least 30 per cent of elected positions will be filled by women. Ethics and disciplinary issues will be handled independently of the IWF Executive Board, building on interim arrangements that had already been put in place in recent months.

Robust eligibility criteria and term limits will ensure that the future IWF Executive Board benefits from a regular influx of new talents and will notably prevent National Federations with a high number of doping cases from having access to board-level representation.

Interim President Irani said: "It was only in October of last year that the IWF was able to come to consensus around appointing independent members to the Reform and Governance Commission (RGC), a critical step in putting the problems of the past behind us. To have adopted an entirely new Constitution after widespread consultation, and in just 10 months during the pandemic, is a real demonstration of the IWF's determination to move towards a brighter future that is based on solid foundations."



Anti-Doping

In November, the International Testing Agency (ITA), leading an independent anti-doping programme for the IWF, asserted anti-doping rule violations against 13 Weightlifters after the re-analysis of samples collected in 2012.

The samples had initially been reported as 'negative' back in 2012, but thanks to improvements in detection methods, the ITA requested their re-analysis in 2021 which identified several banned anabolic steroids. The further analyses were conducted by the WADA-accredited laboratory of Cologne.

The ITA reported that it had notified 13 weightlifters of adverse analytical findings for one or multiple prohibited anabolic steroids detected in their respective samples provided in April 2012:

The weightlifters were provisionally suspended until the resolution of the affair.

QUOTAS

In July, the IWF reallocated all quotas of Member Federations sanctioned for multiple Anti-Doping Rule Violations, pursuant to Article 12 of the IWF Anti-Doping Rules and/or the IWF Qualification System for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games.

The IWF took note of the [ITA's announcement](#) pertaining to the decisions of the IWF Member Federation Independent Sanctioning Panel (Independent Panel) against the Weightlifting Federation of Vietnam and the Weightlifting Federation of Colombia, as a consequence of multiple ADRVs committed by athletes affiliated to the respective Member Federations.

Based on the ITA investigation report, due to the multiple ADRVs of the Weightlifting Federation of Turkey their quotas were reduced to one male and one female quota for the Tokyo 2020 Games. As a follow up to these cases, the remaining quotas were allocated by the IWF in accordance with the rules of the IWF Tokyo 2020 Weightlifting Qualification System.

ITA REPORT

Following publication of the ITA investigation report into extensive past anti-doping rule violations in weightlifting, the IWF acknowledged the findings of the report which enabled the IWF to get to the bottom of past misconduct, ensure that the athletes and officials involved are dealt with appropriately and turn the page.

The outsourcing of the IWF's anti-doping programme to the ITA allowed for weightlifters and those who support them to have full confidence in a professional and independent approach to clean weightlifting.

The ITA's report brought resolution in 146 previously unresolved cases over the 2009-2019 period. Regrettably, in 29 cases, it proved too late to prosecute violations that were not handled in a timely manner for reasons ranging from administrative incompetence to cover-ups.

Over the course of the ITA investigation, it transpired that some IWF and national Member Federation officials had themselves also committed ADRVs of complicity and tampering in relation to certain cases. In the scope of the ITA's mandate to vigorously pursue all potential ADRVs under the IWF's jurisdiction, the ITA has thus asserted ADRVs against current and former IWF officials Tamas Ajan, former IWF President, Nicolae Vlad IWF Vice-President and current President of the Romanian



Weightlifting Federation and Hassan Akkus, President of the European Weightlifting Confederation and former President of the Turkish Weightlifting Federation.

Interim President Irani said: “I am appalled by what is asserted to have been a complete betrayal of weightlifting and weightlifters by those who had been entrusted with the sport’s leadership. While the IWF is thankful for the ITA’s clear acknowledgement that such craven acts could not be repeated under its independent results management process, thanks to the arrangements in place for some time now, today’s report shows just how dark the dark days of our sport were. To all those athletes who were cheated of the opportunity to compete fairly, I would like to offer the IWF’s unreserved apology.”

Commercial Partnerships

IWF renewed its partnership agreements with its six barbell manufacturers for the next Olympic cycle. In addition Rogue Fitness became a first-tier sports equipment supplier in this new cycle.

Digital Strategy

On 23 July, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, the IWF launched its new website, which can be found at iwf.sport. With the launch of this new website, IWF joined the effort made by the IOC, Tokyo 2020 and others to boost digital engagement for the Olympic competitions, with iwf.sport featuring a special Tokyo 2020 section.

Throughout Tokyo 2020, a dedicated IWF team was onsite, together with other broadcasters and media, reporting on the resonant stories of the Games.

In adopting the iwf.sport domain name, the IWF joined other International Federations in migrating to the ‘.sport’ platform, which was secured for dedicated use by the sports movement by GAISF.

Interim President Irani said: “We are very pleased to be able to make our own contribution to the way people will interact online with weightlifting at Tokyo 2020 and beyond, with the launch of this new website.

“Weightlifting is universally accessible and universally useful, helping people to build and maintain strength throughout life. In order to best promote weightlifting, we must take full advantage of the incredible opportunity that is the Olympic Games. We will also bring to life the stories of our athletes, our World Championships and other events.”

Anniversaries

In March, IWF celebrated the 130th anniversary of the first world weightlifting championships, held in London in 1891 and involving just seven athletes from six countries. The first world champion was Edward Lawrence Levy from England. Only one gold medal was allocated as no weight categories existed at that time.

At the first World Championships only men competed. It was not until 1987 that a women’s World Championships was held.

This compares with this year’s IWF World Championships in Tashkent, in which a total of 432 athletes (187 female, 245 male) from 74 countries participated.