



# MUAYTHAI GAINS IOC RECOGNITION

December 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 will go down in history as the day that Muaythai gained recognition by the International Olympic Committee.

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There are no differences in the rights and possibilities of cooperation afforded to provisionally or fully IOC recognised International Federations. The International Federation of Muaythai Amateur, led by Dr. Sakchye Tapsuwan who is also the former Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand and for over 20 years, former Vice President of AIBA, the International Federation for the Olympic sport of Boxing. IFMA boasts a hundred and thirty national member federations from all five continents and research has shown it carries huge credibility in the world of sport.

The successful recognition was the direct result of strategic planning over the last decade which has focussed on important areas such as youth development, sport integrity, anti-doping, gender equality and the establishment of cooperation with partners such as UN women and UNESCO. The General Secretary of IFMA is also a very active and respected person in the world of sport, a former champion fighter who is now the president of the Alliance of Independent Recognised Members of Sport (AIMS) and also



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the Vice President of SportAccord, both organisations recognised by the IOC. IFMA and Muaythai were recognised by GAISF today known as SportAccord in 2006 and was already recognised by the Olympic Committee of Asia in 1998. Muaythai under IFMA is also a full medal sport in the SportAccord World Combat Games and World Games; recognised by the International World Games Association (IWGA) and by the International University Sports Federation (FISU), both of which are organisations are recognised by the IOC.

Thailand is regarded as the motherland of the sport. However, in Thailand there have still existed organisations which carry little or no international recognition; none except IFMA are compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code nor are they a signatory of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

In a recent interview, the Governor of the Sports Authority of Thailand Mr.Sakon Wannapong stated that IFMA's achievement of IOC recognition has put an end to this ambiguity, and that the Royal Thai government will strictly follow the Olympic movement. This explicit statement may be seen as directed towards an organisation he had previously supported called the World Muay Federation (WMF).



Dr.Sakchye Tapsuwan, IFMA President giving a heartfelt address at the official press conference.

The WMF organises small championships in Thailand with no support from the Royal Thai Government at which participating teams are made up of individuals and gyms rather than official national teams. The President of this organisation, Lt. Gn. Akachai Chantosa, had given an interview on Thai Television at which he claimed to have information confirming that IFMA could never be recognised and alluded that only 'Muay' and not 'Muaythai' could be recognised by the IOC. He was however unable to produce the documentation to prove his claims during the interview and IFMA's recent successes have indeed proven him much mistaken.

The WMF is a family-run organisation led by a Romanian couple and their children. It seems now that they have fallen out of favour with the Governor of the Sport Authority of Thailand, whom now must follow national law with the only



Dr.Sakchye Tapsuwan, IFMA President with IFMA Sport Director, Charissa and IFMA General Secretary, Stephan Fox at the official press conference.

organisation officially recognised in Thailand to govern the sport of muaythai the Amateur Muaythai Association of Thailand (AMTAT) under royal patronage and member of IFMA. In giving his interview, the Governor has clearly indicated the direction and orders he has received from the Royal Thai government to follow strictly the IOC and OCA in Asia. This can only be good news for the sport within the world sport structure.

A similar message can be inferred for other organisations which have been causing confusing the world of sport like for example “WBC Muaythai”; it is not clear why an association already respected in the world of boxing would now seek to involve themselves in Muaythai. The President of the World Muaythai Council (WMC) which is under Royal Patronage stated “December 6<sup>th</sup> is a day which fills everyone with pride. The WMC which was established under the directive of the Royal Thai Government in 1995 from day one has been a firm partner of IFMA and this cooperation has paid off and will continue”.

The IFMA General Secretary stated at the press conference in Bangkok following IFMA’s IOC recognition that “it is about protecting the traditional values of muaythai and Olympism; putting the athletes at the heart of the sport, ensuring fair play on all levels and being a CREDIBLE organisation. We would just like to add 2 letters to this, “I” and “N” making IFMA incredible!!”