

BISFed Annual Report to Members 2020

Dear BISFed Member,

2020 has not been the year any of us could have predicted or planned. By now we are all well aware of the devastating effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our lives and of course on our ability to play competitive sport. As soon as it became clear that the virus was a major global issue, your Board took the decision to cancel all our sanctioned events in 2020. Our first priority has been to protect the health and wellbeing of boccia athletes, and we have therefore also cancelled competitions for the first half of 2021. The very recent news regarding potential widespread deployment of a vaccine is most welcome. We will decide in February whether it will be possible to stage one event ahead of the Paralympic Games (the World Open in Povoá, Portugal.) We are, however, extremely hopeful that the Paralympic Games can now take place in August 2021 and we are planning for a return to a full calendar of boccia competitions (the Regional Championships) in the final quarter of 2021.

I do hope you have managed to stay safe and have found ways to keep alive the dream of playing boccia for real. We have certainly seen some amazing films of boccia being played on social media in the most unlikely settings with displays of skill and ingenuity, virtual matches and more. We hope you have enjoyed the replays of the final matches from the 2018 World Championships which we streamed with additional commentary from many of those involved.

BISFed's approach during the pandemic has been to find ways strengthen what we do so that we will emerge from the crisis as a stronger International Federation than we were at the beginning. The pandemic has at least given us the luxury of time in which to deliver projects which are more difficult when we have the pressures of a full competition programme. We are particularly grateful for our Members' support during this difficult year. Having had to cancel all competitions, our revenue in 2020 has been reduced dramatically. Income from Membership fees is therefore critical to our ongoing survival. As I have noted in previous reports, your Board has historically been very prudent financially as a result of which we are confident that our balance sheet will allow us to operate through the pandemic in 2021.

This short report provides some details of the work we have carried out during the year together with some of our plans for 2021.

Competitions

We started 2020 with a full programme of competitions already planned. Sadly, the only activity we were able fulfil was to conduct the Test Event for the Paralympic Games in Tokyo. This took place at the end of February, just as major concerns over the impact of the virus were building up. Consequently, instead of running the event with boccia athletes as normal, we asked volunteers from the Tokyo 2020 team to play the role of athletes. This approach worked very well as we were able to test all of the possible issues which could arise, some of which we would not normally expect to see in a real competition. The event was a real success and we may well use the same approach for future Games. I want to thank the small core of BISFed Technical Officials who travelled to Tokyo to make the Test Event such a success.

Looking forward to future competitions, our current plans, subject to easing of the COVID-19 restrictions are:

- **July 2021: if possible** we will sanction the World Open in Povoá. We will prioritise entries so that athletes and NPCs who have qualified for the Paralympic Games have a chance to compete internationally before the Games. This event would also provide the opportunity to classify the small number of athletes who are currently on the World Ranking but do not yet have a review status date after 31st December 2021.
- **August 2021:** We continue to work closely with the Tokyo 2020 team in anticipation of the postponed Games. The venue and schedule for boccia in Tokyo remain the same and I am sure this will be a very special experience for everyone. We are especially pleased that the boccia event will be broadcast live through the various Rights Holders.

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- Quarter 4 of 2021: we have bids for all of the Regional Championships which are planned towards the end of 2021. We expect these events to be very popular as they will be direct qualifiers for the 2022 World Boccia Championships.
- 2022: We expect to sanction a full programme of competitions during 2022 and already have a number of bids to host these events. The highlight of the programme will be the 2022 World Boccia Championships for which BISFed had three very strong submissions; following the withdrawal of one of the submissions, the two remaining bids are now in the final stages of evaluation. We expect to announce the venue for the 2022 World Championships in January 2021.

Membership

We have attempted to stay in contact with our Members during the year both via the BISFed Website and emails and also through the Webinars we ran in September. The webinars were very well attended with over two thirds of our Members participating and we received very positive feedback that this was a worthwhile exercise.

We were delighted to welcome a new Members to the BISFed family this year: Ghana has joined and we look forward to welcoming them to a competition as soon as possible. We now have 73 Members in good standing and a small number whose fees remain to be paid

We are very aware of the financial pressures faced by many Members and are grateful for your ongoing support. Athletes will be pleased to know that those who have paid their Athlete Licence fees in 2020 will not have to do so in 2021; we will roll the Licence fees already paid in 2020 over to next year.

Technology

One of BISFed's early decisions was to use technology to enable as many of our business processes as possible and over the last 7 years we have built our business model on this basis. The pandemic has given us a window of opportunity to ensure that we have the most effective technology in place for when competition resumes. We have therefore re-negotiated our relationship with our main IT partner (Sport:80) who will continue to service many of our IT needs but at a much lower cost. We are also in the process of rebuilding our main competition software (the 'Boccia Competition Management System' or BCMS) to make it more flexible and responsive. We will own the BCMS and plan to be able to licence the software to our Members so that they can run their local competitions enabled by the same software as BISFed uses.

We have also redesigned and refreshed the BISFed website which will go live at the beginning of January 2021. We hope this will provide a much more interactive platform for our Members and the wider boccia community.

Branding

In a previous report I mentioned that BISFed plans to start using 'World Boccia' as our go-to-market branding.

We will continue to use 'BISFed' as the name for your International Federation and in formal settings, such as representation with the International Paralympic Committee.

'World Boccia' will be used in conjunction with all our sanctioned competitions, on our website and in any marketing activities. The new branding is a simple evolution from the familiar BISFed logo – we hope you like it.



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Committees

I would like to thank all of our Committees who have continued their voluntary work despite the challenges of the pandemic. Some highlights of what is being done on your behalf include:

- **Competition Committee:** design and planning for a new Ball Licencing procedure which will ensure all athletes have access to the same range of balls for competition and raise some much-needed revenue for BISFed; and design of the World Ranking System to support the new 2021 – 24 Competition System.
- **Rules Committee:** have been evaluating the possible changes to the Boccia Rules for the next Quadrennial. These will be finalised and announced towards the middle of 2021.
- **Referees Committee:** a lot of work has been done to finalise the process for evaluating and developing our International Referees.
- **Development Committee:** have delivered several on-line courses for coaches, covering not only the basics of coaching but also topics such as self-reflections, pre-competition warm-up and also the development of new course educators. These courses have been very well subscribed and received.
- **Classification Committee:** have finalised the Classification Rules, ensuring that they are in line with the IPC's requirements and delivered an on-line seminar on Classification for Coaches.
- **Anti-Doping Committee:** have amended and finalised the Anti-Doping Rules to ensure BISFed continues to comply with the WADA Anti-Doping Code.
- **Bids Committee:** have revised the BISFed competition pathway and followed a rigorous evaluation process of the 2022 World Championship bids, as well as all other competition bids.

Support from our Members and Sponsors

I want to thank all of our Members once again for their support during this difficult year. We know it is important to you to have a strong International Federation, and I am sure we will emerge from the pandemic with stronger processes and technology and with a full programme of events for athletes to look forward to.

I also want to acknowledge the continued support we receive from other supporters. We are particularly pleased to have received a significant donation from the Carrier Corporation in Korea, facilitated by our Board Member Mr Kang, as well as the continued support from our legal advisers Hogan Lovell and our Branding Consultants Giant Arc.

Lastly I wish you all health and happiness over what should normally be the 'festive' season. It will be different this year, but we can look forward with hope to resuming boccia competitions in 2021.

With kind regards



David Hadfield
President

December 2020