



Mr Goran Petersson
President
International Sailing Federation
Ariadne House
Town Quay
Southampton, SO14 2AQ

RYA House
Ensign Way, Hamble
Southampton SO31 4YA
United Kingdom
Tel +44 (0) 23 8060 4100
Fax +44 (0) 23 8060 4299
www.rya.org.uk

5 December 2007

Dear Goran

2012 Olympic Sailing Competition - Decision on Events

I write on behalf of the RYA, and many other organisations, commentators and sailors, who believe that the decisions made by ISAF last month on the 2012 Olympic Events are not in the best interests of the sport of sailing throughout the world and should be reviewed. We believe the decisions could prejudice our future as an Olympic sport, and restrict the global growth of sailing, for the reasons highlighted below.

However, if ISAF takes the opportunity to review the decisions in May 2008, the Executive and Council members will then be able to take into account all the comments and feedback that November's decision has generated, and as a result sailing will be stronger and our future more secure.

1. The decisions weaken sailing as an Olympic sport, and do not comply with IOC guidelines

The IOC has specified¹ that the inclusion of sports within the Olympic Programme should be supported through analysis of each sport against identified criteria, and that to be considered for admission to the Olympic Programme, a sport must show a direct emphasis on youth and development.

IOC's current evaluation² is that sailing has a **low** number of nations taking part, **very low** hours of television and number of viewers, **high** television production costs, and that ISAF has a **very high** reliance on Olympic revenues.

In its 2002 report, the IOC Commission stated that sailing has a high number of events in comparison to its media appeal, and that its cost and complexity presented challenges to the development of the sport. As a result, in addition to recommending a reduction in the number of events, the Commission noted that keelboat Events are expensive both in Equipment and infrastructure, and recommended the reduction in Events be made through the exclusion of keelboat events.

The 2005 IOC report states that in order to improve the presentation of its sport, ISAF has introduced "Equipment innovation introducing faster and more spectacular boats ...".

However, the decisions now made by ISAF in November 2007 run counter to both the wishes of the IOC, and ISAF's earlier response to IOC. These decisions mean that ISAF is:

- removing the highest performance boat (multihull) and choosing not to include a women's high performance dinghy,
- preserving the more expensive keelboat Equipment and infrastructure, and introducing additional match racing infrastructure cost, and
- preserving those Events that suit the resources and physiques of established Olympic sailing nations and are hardest for new nations to break into.

Given that ISAF has to reduce the number of Events from 11 to 10 in 2012, priority should be given to Events that are lower cost, more globally inclusive, and more spectacular.

2. The current decisions will bring fewer new nations and young sailors into the sport of Sailing

Our Council members are required, when exercising their vote, to "have regard to the interest of the sport of yachting throughout the world as a whole".³ Sailing federations can only attract public funds and support when there is suitable Equipment available, and there is some prospect of Youth Championship and Olympic competition. Only if we maximise the appeal of Olympic Events among young people, and in emerging sailing countries, will we grow our sport.

ISAF should ensure its Olympic Events, taken as a whole, support a range of athlete physiques and weights to suit all countries, test as wide a range of sailing skills as possible, and appeal to the youth of the world to attract them into sailing, or retain them in the sport. To minimise overheads in-country, ISAF should be maximising commonality between Men and Women events.

Against this background, ISAF's November decision runs counter to the direction ISAF needs to take because:

- Women have been denied a high performance Event, despite the Men's high performance Event receiving 34 out of 36 votes. Events Committee recommended increasing the number of high-performance Events by 1, Council decided to reduce it by 1.
- The women's high performance dinghy would have helped to reduce the loss from our sport of youth women sailors looking to sail a modern 2-person dinghy at the highest level.
- Multihull sailing is common throughout the world, from inexpensive off-the-beach holiday sailing to long distance racing, and could therefore grow nation participation. However ISAF has removed this option and potentially alienated this group of sailors.

- The keelboat is normally the most expensive Equipment for MNAs to support and does not suit typical Asian physique. And now Men's keelboat racing is fleet racing, women's is match. This further increases costs, and makes our sport even harder to explain to the media.
- Match racing events typically support far fewer entrants than fleet racing, and will be the most expensive Olympic event (in terms of officials, number of coaches, and supplied Equipment).
- The skills demanded by Men's keelboat are very similar to those demanded by both Men's 1-person dinghies today - for instance many Star competitors have previously competed in the 1-person dinghy Events. Whereas multihull and high performance dinghies typically test different skills, and would therefore enable additional sailors and nations to experience Olympic competition.

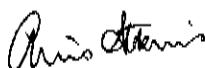
3. Voting Procedure

We also believe the amendment to the voting procedure agreed by Council was hasty, and has subsequently been shown to be unwise. The Working Party's May 2007 report to Executive and Events Committee had identified that no Event should be excluded unless it received less than 50% of votes, either in the first ballot or in a subsequent run-off ballot.

The consequence of Council using a different procedure was that Council never actually made a choice between specific alternatives, and both the Multihull and Women's High Performance Events have been excluded even though they both received over 50% of votes. In addition the changed procedure opened the door to tactical voting. These are the two main reasons why, we believe, the ISAF Council decision to overturn the recommendation of Events Committee has been greeted with so much disbelief and loss of respect.

We therefore request that ISAF does not nominate to IOC the list of Events for the 2012 Olympic Regatta on 18th March. We request that instead ISAF defers this nomination, and reconsiders the voting procedure and Events decision at its May 2008 Council meeting.

Yours sincerely



Chris Atkins, GBR
ISAF Councillor, Group A

References:

1. IOC Olympic Programme Commission Review and Recommendations Report, dated August 2002, http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_527.pdf
2. IOC Olympic Programme Commission, May 2005 Report, pages 135-140, http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_953.pdf
3. Article 41 of the ISAF Constitution