

IWGA President Ron Froehlich: **Bright outlook for the World Games**

Photo courtesy: IWGA

BY BARBRO RÖNNBERG

The World Games is an international multi-sports event organised every fourth year as an exhibition event for the promotion of sports not yet included in the Olympic programme. The International World Games Association (IWGA) and the World Games are currently in a phase of rapid and exciting development.

Some 2,500 athletes representing twenty-six official sports will be competing for medals and glory at the forthcoming 6th World Games in Akita, Japan.

IOC patronage strengthens the World Games

In October last year, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the IWGA, and the IOC has granted its patronage to the Akita World Games.

– The Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the IWGA and the IOC was the first step in making sure that we were going to be given the recognition by the IOC for a multi-sport event where they could contribute by not only helping us with some of the drug-testing funding, but also by giving us the recognition in terms of having so many of the Olympic recognised sports participating in this event, says the IWGA President Ron Froehlich.



In October 2000, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the IOC and the IWGA. From left to right: IOC Executive Member Dr Jacques Rogge, IOC Executive Member and GAISF President Mr. Un Yong Kim, IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, IWGA President Ron Froehlich, and IOC Sports Director Gilbert Felli.

– In the short term the memorandum has been very beneficial. I think we have seen a tremendous increase in the participation of the National Olympic Committees sending their teams, not necessarily bearing the full costs, but certainly providing the official team clothing, not only for the Opening Ceremony but also for the competitions. In the long-term, we are looking at a situation where we may expect a lot more interaction between the IWGA and the IOC's different offices in Lausanne. I am

of the opinion that we will see quite a number of IOC members in Akita and of course, with a successful event, we are certainly looking forward to the event that will take place in Duisburg, Germany, in 2005.

– I realise that there is only one Olympic Games. However, here is an opportunity for world elite athletes to participate, to meet athletes of other sports and have the opportunity for an exchange of culture and, above all, to compete with each other in a

In this issue: An interview with the IWGA President Ron Froehlich; World Games participation – an important step for orienteering; WOC and the World Games – the main goals for Simone Luder; World Games – orienteering in a nutshell; An interview with the World Games controller Øivind Holt.

spectacular multi-sport event. I believe that we will have the opportunity to be able to allow the World Games to grow in stature and hopefully, with the International Federations sending their very best athletes, we will see that the World Games will become known for its events and also give publicity to those sports that need it in order to be able to promote their sports across the globe, says President Froehlich.

Akita strives for the perfect Games

– The Akita Organising Committee is progressing exceptionally well with the organisation of the event and we will find that the Games will be, I would think, pretty close to 100% perfect. The reason I say this is that, if you have ever dealt with the Japanese, you will understand they are perfectionists and are very concerned about every item to the very finest detail.

– The International Federations which are participating in this 2001 Akita World Games will be sending us their very finest athletes, the best in the world, and of course we are looking forward to seeing these athletes compete. The International Federations have inspected the arenas and sports fields where these events will be taking place.

– They have endorsed them and we therefore feel that, with the International Federations' input, the AOC should be able to host one of the best ever World Games in

terms of facilities, accommodation, the meals that have been planned and, above all, the extramural activities after the competitions in terms of being able to gather and meet other athletes, says Ron Froehlich.

– The athletes are coming and I know that they are going to do their very best to try to win medals. In particular, I would like to congratulate those sports that will now be participating in the World Games for the first time. I wish you every success in your event and may it bring you many more new athletes to participate in your specific sport.

Several candidate cities for the 2009 Games

The first ever World Games was held just 20 years ago, so it still is a fairly young, rapidly developing event. This year, the twenty-six official sports participating in Akita will send a total of 2,500 athletes.

The next World Games will be held in Duisburg, Germany, in 2005, and we already now know that the number of athletes will increase from 2,500 to 3,000. The question of adding new sports or new events in the program will have to be addressed by the IWGA Executive Committee and the Duisburg organisers.

– It is indeed encouraging that we already have a number of cities that have shown



President Ron Froehlich is looking forward to an exciting World Games in Akita 2001.

interest in hosting the 2009 Games and we have not yet closed the door for additional cities to submit bids.

– We are hopeful that we will have many more cities participating in the bid process and we look forward to receiving any information that could lead to such bidding by interested host cities.

– We are looking forward to an exciting Games in Akita 2001 and we hope that the athletes will enjoy the Games as much as the public and the viewers. We are grateful to the media for their promotion of the sports and the Games and I look forward to welcoming all our athletes, judges, coaches, doctors, administrators, as well as our spectators and supporters to the World Games in Akita, concludes President Froehlich.

World Games – orienteering in a nutshell

Participants:

40 men and 40 women representing 19 countries



Event programme:

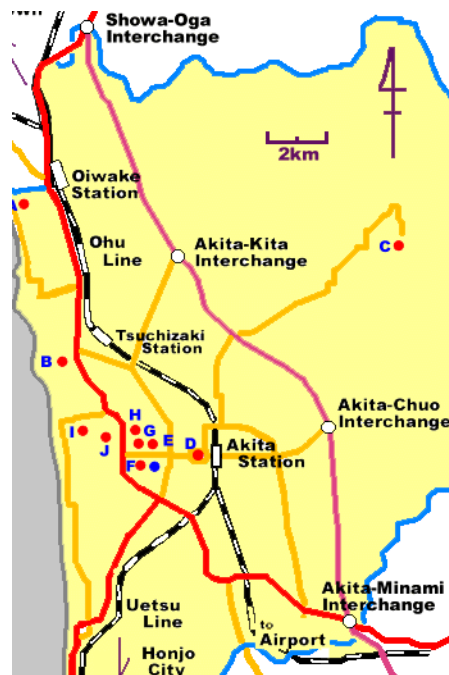
- 15th August: arrival
- 16th August: jet lag day, training, opening ceremony
- 17th August: model event
- 18th August: individual race
- 19th August: mixed team relay

Venue:

Akita Prefectural University

Course information:

Individual men's race: 6.7 km, 22 controls, estimated winning time 32 minutes
 Individual women's race: 5.5 km, 18 controls, estimated winning time 32 minutes.
 Mixed-team relay: Men's courses 5.25 - 5.35 km, 18 controls; Women's courses 4.47 - 4.54 km, 15 controls.





The orienteers participating in the World Games will be staying at the Akita Prefectural Personnel Training Center.

World Games participation important step for orienteering

BY BARBRO RÖNNBERG

Eighty orienteers, 40 men and 40 women, representing nineteen nations will be participating in the Akita World Games in mid-August. In addition to orienteering four other official sports, Flying Disc, Billiards, Rhythmic Gymnastics and Rugby will be making their debut in the World Games.

The Opening Ceremony of the sixth edition of the World Games will be held at the Yabase Stadium in downtown Akita on 16 August.

The first events will be held on 17 August, and by the Closing Ceremony on 26 August, athletes representing twenty-six official sports and five demonstration sports will have competed for medals in a total of 167 events.

The individual orienteering event will take place on Saturday 18 August, and the mixed-team relay is scheduled for Sunday 19 August. Spectators will have an opportunity to participate, too, as open foot and trail orienteering events will be organised with the World Games races.

Local primary school children will acquaint themselves with orienteering on Saturday 18 August, and the organisers hope that those elite runners not participating in the relay will assist in instructing the children.

An excellent showing a must

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) aims at making the World Games a premium multi-sport event. With the closer relationship between the IOC and the IWGA, the World Games has become a very important stepping stone towards the Olympics.

– The profile of the World Games will increase substantially because of the IOC patronage, says the IOF President Sue Harvey.

It will take a while for this new situation to filter through the layers of the Olympic movement, but the inclusion of the World Games as a major official part of the Olympic structure means that orienteering is now in, not out. There are still at least ten sports outside both the World Games and the Olympic Games and the number of such sports will increase steadily in the future.

– This will be our first showing at a major multi-sport Games. It is a great challenge for the IOF and the local organisers to present excellent events, and an equally great challenge for the IOF member federations and the elite runners to make it a worthy, high-quality competition.

– We need to ensure that our bit of the Games is good. An excellent showing is a must. There are some very important med-

als to be competed for in Akita and I am very pleased to see that all the participating federations have entered their top athletes, says Harvey.

National team entries



(still provisional)

Nation	Men	Women	Total
AUS	3	2	5
CZE	2	2	4
DEN	3	2	5
ESP	-	1	1
EST	2	2	4
FIN	4	4	8
FRA	2	2	4
GBR	3	3	6
GER	2	2	4
HUN	-	1	1
JPN	2	2	4
LTU	2	2	4
NOR	3	3	6
POL	2	2	4
RUS	2	2	4
SVK	1	-	1
SUI	3	4	7
SWE	3	3	6
UKR	1	1	2
In total	40	40	80



Simone Luder, last year's second in the World Cup:



“World Games is one of the three major events”

BY NINA VANHATALO

One of the orienteers who achieved a breakthrough into the top of the world's elite last year is Simone Luder from Switzerland.

Luder, a 22 year old biology student at the University of Bern, surprised even herself with her achievements last year, which included such successes as winning the Finnish Short Distance Championships, four Swiss Championships, three wins in the World Cup races and finally second position in the overall ranking in World Cup.

– Already in my first senior season I had some major success and in the second season, last year, I won my first World Cup races. But for me this has all come much sooner than I expected.

She is a good example of how the different aspects of orienteering need to be combined optimally in order to achieve success.

– I think that I have a good feeling for the right combination of fast running and reading the map. And the “detachment“ of my comparative youth is surely an advantage too.

No wonder Simone Luder has become one of the favourites for this year's major races, and this year sees more tough international competitions than ever. The first major test for Luder and all the other international orienteers will be the Open Nordic Championships (NOC) which will be held in a couple of weeks' time, at the beginning of June, in Mikkeli, Finland.

The fact that the World Championships will also be in Finland has lured many participants from all over the world to Mikkeli. That means, that the competition will be tougher than ever right from the start of the international orienteering season.

Photo: Erik Borg



Last year, Simone Luder won the World Cup event in Lahti, Finland. This year, she will be striving for success not only in Finnish but also in Japanese terrain.

– The Nordic Championships will be the first major international event and it will be good preparation for WOC. WOC and the World Games will be the main goals this season, states Simone.

The climax of the international season will of course be the World Championships (WOC) at the beginning of August, closely followed by the World Games in Akita, Japan just a few weeks later.

Timing even more essential

Simone is one of the athletes who will participate in all of the major international races this year.

One major issue will be maintaining fitness levels and achieving peak form at the right time for these races.

– On the one hand it's quite tough because the World Games are so close to WOC, on the other hand I believe it will be possible to maintain form over these weeks, she believes.

Last year's success didn't bring any extra pressure to the young Swiss.

– No, not really. It showed me the chances I have, and my goal will be to do my best. Her new sense of self-confidence has also brought a peace of mind to Luder. She didn't have to plan anything extra for training for this year's main events.

– I have had a good winter's training with mainly endurance training. Beside running I have also incorporated cross training such as strength-training, volleyball and cross-country skiing in my training programme.

– In the spring we have had several training camps in France, Switzerland and Norway where we practised orienteering technique. I think I have trained well both this winter and spring and I have managed to build a good base for the season.

– I feel good at the moment and I hope to be technically and physically in top form

at the right moment.

What does she expect from the World Games then?

– That's a difficult question, because I haven't heard much about it earlier. I think it's a good competition for the sport of orienteering, the best runners will take part there.

– On the other hand I hope it will be fun to be part of a great sports event with many other disciplines and competitors. I hope that our sport will become a little bit more popular with this event.

Simone also believes that the World Games can provide some welcome PR value for orienteering.

– I hope that orienteering will be shown in a manner that will allow everybody to see how fascinating and challenging our sport can be. The World Games can be a big step to achieving more PR for orienteering.

The IOF controller for the World Games, Øivind Holt:

“An excellent opportunity to promote our sport”

BY NINA VANHATALO

It started two years ago with the first control visit. After that there has been the selection of the event centre and preparation of a new map of the area by an Australian mapper.

And now everything is almost ready for welcoming 80 elite orienteers from all over the world to the first World Games. The finalisation of the courses themselves is the only task yet to be completed.

The IOF controller of the orienteering events in the Games, Norwegian Øivind Holt, is looking forward with expectation to the start.

– This is a very good opportunity to see how orienteering can fit into a multi-sport games format. We can demonstrate how we

can adjust the format of our sport in order to fit into the overall format of the Games themselves.

– We will also have the opportunity to see what kind of media coverage we can expect from similar events, provided that we and the organisers can prepare optimum conditions for TV and other media representatives. It will also be interesting to receive the runners' evaluation of the Games.

Some innovations have also been introduced

The World Games' audience we will be able to view two kinds of orienteering events. There will be a mixed relay for national teams comprising 2 men and 2 women, where the time on each leg will be around 25 minutes.

The other event will be an individual event

both for men and women with an expected winning time of approximately 30 minutes.

– For the first time we will try out starting in pairs for the individual event. Two runners will start at the same time but will run different loops before they face some common controls at the end of the course.

– We hope this format will produce many very close and exciting direct battles between the various pairs of runners which we hope will be interesting to watch. The terrain is fast so I expect a very close race in both competitions, explains Holt.

According to Holt, the terrain has inspired the course makers into making the courses very technically demanding. Therefore we really hope that the image of our sport which is presented will also be the best possible one.

Photo courtesy: AOC



– The terrain is a sandy area along the coastline with some quite intricate sand dune areas which will present a technical challenge to the runners. It is mostly pine forest and the runnability is very fast.

However, the organisation of the orienteering event at the World Games has not been without problems.

– The major problems are on the financial side since there is no orienteering club in Akita and consequently the event organisers live hundreds of kilometres away. The other general problem from my point of view is the language issue since I do not speak Japanese and few people speak good English, and also you soon discover that a European mobile phone does not work in Japan, comments Holt.

Of course from the orienteers' point of view the courses and the maps are the most important things, but for the sport as a

whole the World Games is a chance to present the sport to a wide audience right across the world.

– The Akita World Games will be an excellent opportunity to promote our sport both internationally as a recognised sport, and also locally. In addition to elite courses there will be some introductory courses for beginners where children and adults coming to the event will be able to try orienteering. We hope the World Games runners themselves will be able to assist the new beginners to try the sport.

Holt also believes that participation in the World Games could bring some positive long term PR benefits for orienteering.

– I believe that the long term effects will be the most important. The IOC is now involving itself more and more in the Games, thus giving the Games an increased status approaching that of the Olympics.



The way forward lies mostly in the Internet

– I do not believe that orienteering will be able to change its media coverage very much on a national or international level in the near future. The opportunities lie rather in new technology like the Internet where we can present our sport in the way we wish to and also adapt the presentation to different target groups around the world, concludes Øivind Holt.

World Games PR bus sets off !



The "Nummy and Huggy" Limousine Bus connecting Akita City and Akita Airport

began operation on the 26th of July 2000. It will make three daily round-trip journeys

between the city and the airport until the end of the competition next August.

Welcome to the second issue of the O-zine!

O-zine is an on-line newsletter published by the IOF and designed as a means of communicating with all members of the international orienteering family.

O-zine will be published 4-6 times a year, and you'll be able to pick up your own copy by downloading it from the IOF

Internet home page at www.orienteering.org. Provide us with your e-mail address and we'll notify you every time a new issue has been released!

Enjoy reading your O-zine!
BARBRO RÖNNBERG, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF