



3rd April 2019

Dear Billiards Sports Community, Dear Friends,

I write in my capacity as Chairman of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association (the **WPBSA**) about recent events that have taken place in the World Confederation of Billiards Sports (the **WCBS**) that have exacerbated our long-standing concerns over its governance.

Now that the Olympic and Paralympic campaign appears to be over, it is important for the WPBSA to ensure that misleading information in the public domain is corrected and to make you fully aware of the conduct of the WCBS and the damage it has caused.

Despite repeated offers of support to the WCBS and offers to share independent cohesive membership of the WCBS with all Billiards Sports in the quest to gain Olympic and Paralympic participation, there has been a concerted effort by members of the WCBS and International Billiards and Snooker Federation (the **IBSF**) to remove the WPBSA and its group organisations from any meaningful involvement. In fact, on 19 December 2018, the WCBS wrote to the WPBSA confirming that it had removed the WPBSA from the WCBS entirely. This was confirmed following a WCBS meeting in Paris in March 2019 where the WPBSA attended in a conciliatory and supportive manner. The WCBS board made these decisions during what was a crucial period to capitalise on Billiards Sports' strong case for participation in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. These decisions were taken despite the WPBSA holding vital relationships in global television and media, which were clearly valuable assets in any Olympic and Paralympic campaign.

Sadly, the WCBS has become an inefficient and ineffective organisation that hides behind the benefit of recognition from the International Olympic Committee (the **IOC**), but does not have the ability to elevate Billiard Sports to higher levels. There no longer appears to be any possibility of inclusion in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and little hope of participation in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. As a result, it is now abundantly clear that major reforms are needed within the international structure of Billiard Sports if we are to truly demonstrate the appropriate standards of sports governance to the IOC. It is now the right time to bring about changes and reform how Billiard Sports are operating under the IOC structure.

## **Governance issues and repeated breaches of the WCBS Constitution**

Upon becoming President of the WCBS in 2015, I was very optimistic that I would be able to use that position to help to drive forward the Olympic and Paralympic aspirations of Billiard Sports. However, it became increasingly apparent to me that the WCBS fell well short of meeting the basic standards of sports governance that the IOC rightly expects of an IOC-recognised international federation.

These concerns were significantly exacerbated following the holding, against my will and in my absence as President and in the absence of the General Secretary, of an unconstitutional WCBS General Assembly supported by the remaining member federations of the WCBS. Several invalid resolutions were passed at the General Assembly including my purported removal as WCBS President which was indirect breach of the WCBS Constitution.

The following day, this unconstitutional behaviour was unprofessionally reported on Facebook by a WCBS board member, including comments which had the potential to be defamatory towards my character relating to my removal. This was also picked up by the International World Games Association (*IWGA*) Chief Executive Officer who spoke to me with concerns for the ongoing World Games. You will note that the General Secretary, myself and the WPBSA event team completed what was a very successful World Games Billiards Sports event without releasing any of this information or complaining. This was due to a promise I made to the IWGA that day to protect the 2017 World Games event, continue to maximise our profile in IOC circles and to try and protect any future Olympic and Paralympic campaign.

### **1. Financial and accounting concerns**

During my tenure as WCBS President, I had cause to raise concerns about the WCBS's accounting and financial practices which were far below minimum standards. I refused to sign off accounts upon my election in 2015, because there had been no independent audit for years in clear breach of the WCBS Constitution. I instructed the then WCBS Treasurer, Ian Anderson, to bring records up to date, which was done belatedly, but this only caused me to raise further concerns about how the WCBS had historically been using the annual IOC grants.

### **2. Use of IOC grants**

The WCBS receives IOC funding that is granted to the WCBS for sports development projects. There has been a lack of transparency over the use of this funding and it became clear once accounts were brought up to date that this funding had been used to fund WCBS meetings and travel.

### **3. Other financial practices**

In advance of and at the 27 July 2017 WCBS board meeting, there was again a failure by the WCBS Treasurer to present independently audited 2016 accounts, despite my instructions to do so, all in breach of an express WCBS constitutional obligation.

In addition, it had become apparent around that time that payments out of the WCBS bank accounts had been made without the required approvals, also in breach of the WCBS Constitution.

### **4. Other Constitutional Breaches in July 2017**

At a WCBS board meeting on 27 July 2017, one day prior to the WCBS General Assembly, there was an illegitimate attempt by Michael Al Khoury, on behalf of the IBSF, to take control of snooker's membership of the WCBS for the IBSF and to the exclusion of the WPBSA (and in clear breach of the WCBS Constitution).

### **5. Failure to recognise the WPBSA as a member of the WCBS despite a previous ruling by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)**

The WCBS have failed to recognise the complete autonomy and independence of the WPBSA and have repeatedly interfered in Snooker's affairs. There has never been a barrier to the IBSF and WPBSA holding joint, but separate membership of the WCBS other than that put in place by the current Board of the WCBS.

Snooker's membership of the WCBS has since its inception, been nominally held through the World Snooker Federation (the *WSF*). This body had never previously been established as any form of legal entity (until its formal establishment on 5 October 2017), instead existing from time to time as no more than the name of a joint initiative to try and bring amateur and professional snooker together, through the WPBSA and the IBSF.

An informal agreement between the WPBSA and the IBSF was ratified on 7 September 2013 through a one-page memorandum of understanding (the *MoU*). However, despite the WCBS requirement to formally establish the WSF and the WPBSA's best efforts to ensure the WSF was a joint initiative between the WPBSA and IBSF, the IBSF terminated the MoU without notice in April 2017 and then ended any discussions about further joint collaboration between the parties regarding the establishment of the WSF on 27 July 2017.

As a result of a sustained period of poor governance in the WCBS long prior to my term as President, I had completely lost confidence in the board's ability to govern in line with the required international standards, I therefore resigned as President of the WCBS and as a member of the WCBS board on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 2017 to protect the reputation of the WPBSA and myself.



In the period between August 2017 and December 2018, the WPBSA worked with the WCBS and IBSF to try and resolve the issues between them for the good of all Billiard Sports. However, it proved impossible to reach an agreement due to the regular changes in approach and the continued aggressive stance from the IBSF.

As mentioned above, on 19 December 2018, the WCBS wrote to the WPBSA to confirm that the WPBSA and in fact the sport of Snooker in its entirety was no longer a member of the WCBS. Nonetheless, the WPBSA continued without public complaint and even sent professional players, at significant cost to the WPBSA, to Paris in order to support the efforts of the French Billiards Federation with the Olympic and Paralympic bid. The WPBSA were very disappointed to find that the WCBS were staging their Olympic demonstration event some weeks after decisions had already been made on which sports would be recommended to the IOC for Paris 2024.

There is a binding precedent relating to the WPBSA's membership of the WCBS. In January 2004, a CAS Panel found that the IBSF had acted without power and authority when it claimed to represent the WSF as the sole Snooker member of the WCBS. In effect this ruling means that the IBSF cannot be the sole Snooker member of the WCBS, a position that the WCBS have again adopted despite this ruling. Under the WCBS Constitution at 11.5 the WCBS is bound to comply with any award rendered by CAS.

## **6. WADA enforcement failures**

It has also been necessary to question and review the WCBS delivery of the WCBS Anti-Doping Rules. The Anti-Doping Committee has been convened and acted outside the WADA rules adopted by the WCBS.

## **Conclusion**

The WPBSA invites all of you to support it in its efforts to achieve much-needed governance reforms of the WCBS. We have now referred a number of matters to our legal team. We have also filed formal letters with the IOC and the organisations responsible for IF governance; namely, the Global Association of International Sports Federations and the Association of Recognised International Sports Federations. It is important that we have complete transparency with these organisations while we consider potential legal proceedings and necessary changes.



In the meantime, the WPBSA Group will be distancing itself as far as possible from the WCBS to avoid reputational damage and we will continue to develop our fast-growing sport through our many group initiatives. These include Snooker, Billiards, Women's Billiards & Snooker, World Disability Billiards & Snooker, Academies, Cue Zone in Schools and working with national and regional federations to provide more opportunity for players and officials who share our vision and passion for this beautiful sport. We are a sport for all and our door is always open. We look forward to seeing the reality of snooker appearing in the 2019 African Games for the very first time, a territory which has great potential for future sustainable growth and we commend our African regional federation in their efforts in securing this milestone.

We will keep you informed of any further developments, however, should any of you want to discuss any of these matters with me personally, my personal mobile number is +44 7792 509541 or you can contact our Bristol office on +44 017 317 8200 should I be traveling.

I am saddened to have to finally send this letter, however, it is now time to change and focus on what is required to deliver greater opportunities for our players of the future.

On behalf of the board of the WPBSA and its group organisations, we look forward to continuing to serve our sport and players for future generations.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jason Ferguson', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jason Ferguson

For and on behalf of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association