

## The Press Conference

On Saturday morning, the customary press conference was held.

Present were: Gianarrigo Rona, WBF President, Marc De Pauw, WBF Treasurer, David Harris, WBF Counsel, Barry Rigal, IBPA President and Simon Fellus, Services Coordinator. Some 20 journalists and interested parties attended the event.



**Barry Rigal, president of the IBPA, David Harris, Marc De Pauw and Gianarrigo Rona, waiting for questions from the public.**

Gianarrigo Rona gave a summary of recent events in the bridge world. He started by thanking the members of the Championship Committee who had done a fantastic job in organising this event, which he considered successful.

The venue was very nice, although the distances were a bit long.

Regarding the participation, the numbers were acceptable, except for the women teams. Many women prefer to play in the open competitions, so maybe a different format needs to be found for this event. Bringing back the knock-out to 64 teams (last used in Biarritz in 1982) had turned out to be a good idea. Perhaps adding another day to the qualifying might make the formula even better.

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the WBF, a special medal was made, which was handed out to all collaborators as well as to WBF Masters and bridge personalities.

This year also saw another world event: the Youth Championships in Wujiang, where 77 teams participated in 4 categories. The full quota of 22 teams (like for the Bermuda Bowl) had been reached in the Junior and Youngster categories, while there had been 18 teams from 5 zones in the Kids category. Our idea is to teach bridge to children, and put everything in place for them to return to the sport when they reach the age of 25. Also, teaching kids might encourage parents and grandparents to take up the sport.

At the WBF congress earlier in the week, new statutes and by-laws had been confirmed. They were now more modern, according to the Olympic charter and following the ideals of democracy and transparency. From 2020, three members of the Executive Council will be elected by the Congress (the others being, as now, appointed by the zones). The president would not be able to serve more than three terms, and an age limit of 80 would be imposed on the members of the executive. A strong structure which will guarantee the future of our sport.

Regarding the Olympic Games, Rona told the conference that bridge had just made its debut as part of a multi-sport event: the Asian Games. The players stayed in the athlete village, together with participants in other sports, and they walked in the opening ceremony. This is a very important evolution and the hope is that there will be a repeat. This is very likely in Beijing in 2022, and talks are going on with the organizers of the European Games. The dream of getting to the Olympics themselves received a boost when it was announced that the IOC had recognised e-sports, certainly even less of a physical activity than bridge, but carrying a lot of financial assets. Ideas are being put forward of separate games for "sports of attention" and the period between the Olympics and the Paralympics is suggested for such an event. The IOC recognises 73 International Federations and the WBF is proud to be one of them.

The president opened the floor to questions, the first of which came from Marshall Lewis. He wanted to know how the WBF intends to defend the integrity of the sport after the recent decisions of the CAS. David Harris replied that we need to comply with the rules of the CAS, even when these seem contrary to our expectations. The WBF has introduced a clause into our disciplinary code which would compel the CAS to appoint an expert (taken from the list of top 20 World Grand Masters) that would aid the tribunal who might not understand the complexities and specific needs of the sport of bridge. We will continue to talk to the CAS.

Barry Rigal wished to know if the WBF would advise the member countries on how to write rules based on probability, not certainty for convictions for cheating. David Harris replied that the CAS uses the concept of "comfortable satisfaction", which is somewhat between the standard in criminal cases and the one in civil matters.

David Harris commented on the case of the German seniors. They had been successful in an appeal to the German legal system, not because they were judged innocent, but because of procedural matters. Since then, all participants need to sign a declaration stating they must go through the process of arbitration.

Elisabeth van Ettinger, speaking also on behalf of Jan van Cleeff, wished to know developments in the matter of