

**CHANGE—WE MUST!**

These following reflections have been born from an analysis and comparison between various countries on the current situation of the IBAF and international baseball in general. After diligent inspection and examination, there is definite shared viewpoint on the matter—a viewpoint that calls for URGENT CHANGE.

We do not want to make a list of "good intentions", as often happens when ones speaks of or outlines a political agenda; we do not want to make grandiose statements and give campaign promises that are easy to put on paper, but then difficult to apply and accomplish in the real world in which we live. Let's turn to the IBAF website section marked "New Dynamic Direction"; just how much of this "new dynamic direction" was actually implemented?

What we do want is to change methods: to promote and encourage a greater participation from all the federations with regard to the IBAF, indicating in concrete terms that which we intend "to do", and with what resources and under what timeframe, which in turn, to us, reflects a serious, professional and responsible mode of conducting successful operations. We want member Federations to feel they are represented by the IBAF. We want the IBAF to become truly the "home" of all the federations, where each member feels itself an active participant in the discussions, organization and planning of programs and activities.

**CHANGE IS NEEDED—THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IBAF OPERATES HAS CHANGED DRAMATICALLY**

Baseball won't be on the Olympic program in 2012 or 2016, and this definitely means fewer resources allocated to the IBAF by the IOC. In addition, individual federations will face budget cuts from various Olympic Committees. Thus, we are forced to give member federations other reasons and motives to be part of the IBAF.

The loss of resources imposes a major fundamental change in the current structure of the IBAF. Decisions will need to be made to drastically reduce spending, and new research into locating and obtaining resources from other means will need to be conducted to increase revenue. For this, it is required that the IBAF become structured like a real company that can build and enhance its own product (IBAF Baseball Tournaments) that can be advertised and sold (specific marketing programs and new relationships with the media) in order to generate resources to develop and sustain the baseball movement.

With a modern organizational restructuring of the IBAF (along with a new definition and formulation of its tournaments), it will be a top priority to single out and recognize people able to work actively and who are only motivated in furthering the baseball movement, and not motivated by personal interests.

This is the only way to ensure the achievement of these goals.

## THE IBAF MUST CHANGE ITS STRUCTURE

We need the Executive Committee to be held more accountable, while giving a greater appreciation to Continental organizations.

1) The Executive Committee should not only be the "place" for decision making, but must become a "place" to work and represent the motor of this change. And this change will be made through a greater accountability of each component, through an increased sharing of initiatives and by working more as a team. Each member must be assigned specific tasks/functions for which it shall be directly responsible, in addition to coordinating the work assignments of the various committees. With modern technology (e.g., email, Skype, video conferencing, etc.) it's possible to communicate without the need for costly meetings or traveling all over the world.

The new Executive Committee cannot isolate itself or be divided from the presence of its own internal parts within the organization. Thus, it will be important to invite ex-officio members and representatives of major professional baseball organizations, such as MLB and NPB, to participate and play a role within the Executive Committee.

2) The current Continental organizations (e.g., CEB, COPABE, etc.), as they are designed today, are but "bodies" fairly disconnected from the workings of the IBAF. Up until today, the IBAF distributed a cash contribution to these organizations, but these funds were originally derived from the IOC when the IOC had been allocating monies to the IBAF to be put toward baseball's participation in the Olympic Games.

With the loss of this contribution from the IOC, now is the time to rethink the structure of the Continental organizations, rendering them more modern and efficient, thereby enhancing their relationship with the IBAF. It is necessary that these Continental organizations, as it's done in other sports, are integral parts of the International Federation (IBAF), representing the various continents and transforming into their very own organizing/managerial branches within the International Federation itself (i.e., IBAF AFRICA, IBAF AMERICA, IBAF ASIA, IBAF EUROPE and IBAF OCEANIA).

It's quite easy to understand the positive returns in various arenas such as image, economics and organizational management for each of the continents. Among these the most important benefit is the commercial value that is gained from the various Continental competitions that are held, which are basically manifestations of the International Federation, but run by individual Continental organizations. The image now becomes unique and unified, like that of the whole project and the marketing to promote them. From the marketing standpoint, it is certainly easier, more efficient and rational to promote one single "brand" than five different brands.

The given structure also creates a closer link between the IBAF and the individual continents, which eventually will become the pillars of the entire international, playing an important role in the development and management of IBAF competitions and activities.

## TASK FORCES

In order to be able to come face to face with all this activity in an attentive and practical way, the new IBAF will need TASK FORCES IBAF to work on different areas. These Task Forces will refer to a member of the Executive Committee and will consist of professionals that will have to reach objectives in the short-, mid- and long term.

In each competition the following three task forces work strictly together

- **MARKETING** (with the task of defining and implementing a new and extensive international marketing strategy exploring the market, putting together packages and personally contact potential sponsors)
- **MEDIA** (with the task of defining and implementing a communication strategy and new media relations, IBAF website, TV rights, etc.. The media task force together with the marketing task force will promote the various IBAF competitions and events, including mainland)
- **BASEBALL OPERATIONS** (with the task of putting together the best format for tournaments and oversee the international schedule)

We must also create the following task forces

- **LEGAL** (with the task of reviewing not only the statutes, Norms and Regulations, but also contracts that involve commitment IBAF)
- **MEMBER FEDERATIONS** (with the task of having and maintaining proper dialogues with the member federations)
- **DEVELOPMENT** (with the task of helping baseball thrive in the different countries, with specific projects tailored to the realities)
- **COACHES AND UMPIRES** (with the task of supporting the improvement of coaches and umpires in the different member countries)
- **SCORERS AND STATISTICS** (scoring the games and making data available; will work on IBAF website together with the Media Task Force)
- **WOMEN'S BASEBALL AND RELATIONS WITH SOFTBALL** (the grass roots initiatives may be shared with softball)
- **OLYMPIC REINSTATEMENT** (with the task to study, evaluate and propose an effective strategy and intervention[s] toward baseball's readmission onto the Olympic program).
- **SPORTS AND ENVIRONMENT** (with the goal to develop good environmental practices in our events, according to the recommendations of Agenda 21.)

## **THE IBAF MUST REINVENT ITS OWN COMPETITIONS AND TOURNAMENTS**

We absolutely have to analyze all the activities and competitions of both the IBAF and of those in various continents in order to render them more up-to-date, interesting and commercially attractive to the media, TV and sponsors. We must distinguish between the competitions that aim for development and the competitions that are marketable and “sellable”; therefore, each is to be treated differently according to individual needs and the value of each competition.

Some competitions probably should be abolished altogether because they are no longer relevant or of importance (e.g., Intercontinental Cup), whereas others will be renovated and redesigned to give greater value (e.g., World Cup), while others will be created to satisfy current market demands (e.g., World Club Championship). These are but some considerations and examples; obviously, a full analysis will need to be carried out by the new Executive Committee, which will involve the various National Federations.

In order to accomplish these stated objectives, a determining role will have to be played by the Organizations of the professional Baseball, with which the IBAF will have to establish a close collaboration. These professionally sanctioned tournaments will be used as a constant comparison for the reorganization of the IBAF’s own competitions. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to obtain the involvement and participation of the MLB, NPB, Korean Major Leagues, Taiwan Pro League and Caribbean Winter Leagues, to name a few.

## **THE IBAF MUST HAVE A REAL AND CONCRETE POLICY ON DEVELOPMENT**

To have an effective, tangible and real policy on development, one of the main objectives of the IBAF must be implemented. With the various Continental Branches newly installed, they can (or must) play a key role in the support of various National Federations according to the different level of development of baseball in each particular country; therefore, there will be undoubtedly different sets of needs across these diverse nations. The new structure of the Continental IBAF will make it easier to coordinate these initiatives, thereby creating a rather global approach, which would be appealing and attractive to international sponsors.

Numerous development initiatives can be identified by the IBAF:

- the development of Manuals for umpiring course, scorers course and basic field construction course (also via the website)
- dispatch of instructors for these courses
- courses for baseball promoters

- Templates for baseball brochures printed in every language
- Sending envoy coaches (in cooperation with the professional baseball organizations)
- Equipment donation program, etc.

A fundamental aspect that the IBAF needs to address, if it is to improve the qualitative development of game on different continents, will be the creation of Regional Baseball Academies in various countries, but here again, the assistance and cooperation of professional baseball will be a crucial determining factor in meeting the technical and economical needs of such an endeavor.

### **THE IBAF MUST REDEUCE SPENDING AND INCREASE REVENUE**

No need to say that costs of IBAF must be lowered dramatically in order to come in good financial health in future. The headquarters will need to be reorganized; spending will need to be prudent and strictly linked to the IBAF's activity. Furthermore, there is need to eliminate costly per diems that to this day have been paid in exaggerated, excessive and unchecked sums with no regard for the Executive Committee, which needs to carry out detailed audits of expenditures.

The IBAF needs to make sure that all costs of their bodies and VOLUNTEERS are made through clear, accepted and confirmed rules. The Executive Committee will be obliged to remain current of the costs and expenditures incurred by the federation.

There must also be an initiative to organize a real and concrete research campaign to locate and tap new resources and sponsorship. This campaign must be comprised of real and proven professionals in the field to implement a careful marketing strategy to significantly boost the currently almost non-existent revenue of the IBAF.

### **THE IBAF MUST TRULY BE TRANSPARENT**

There is an urgent need to reexamine the statutes, by-laws and regulations to ensure that they are modern, transparent, fair and democratic.

All executives must work according to good governance, and National Federations must be informed in a clear and transparent way, demonstrated and made apparent through their activities and also through the IBAF's website.

It will also be necessary to restructure the official IBAF website, so that it becomes a real instrument of communication for the Continental Organizations and National Federations. Furthermore, the website should incorporate a forum strictly dedicated to all the communications between the various organizations. The IBAF website could and should become a common reference point and international landmark for the entire baseball community.

Annual financial and budget reports must be made available and sent to the National Federations each and every year.

The congressional meetings must be true moments of participation in the workings of the IBAF and not just mere moments of hasty ratification of decisions already taken.

**SHARING AND PARTICIPATION MUST BE THE KEYWORDS OF CHANGE.**

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