



# IRISH ATHLETIC BOXING ASSOCIATION

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Dear Secretary,

I'm writing to you as Irish boxing approaches a crossroads, following the International Olympic Committee's decision to revoke the International Boxing Association's recognition. The IBA will no longer organise Boxing at the Olympic Games. Boxing's long-term future as an Olympic sport is at risk – this is of grave concern to all of us given that, the Olympic Games is a platform on which our clubs thrive, and that, boxing is Ireland's most successful Olympic sport.

This the first time in history of the modern Olympic movement that the recognition of an international federation has been removed. It follows the suspension of the IBA's recognition, in the wake of officiating controversies at Rio 2016. As we now know, this negatively impacted Irish boxers and deprived some, of their Olympic dreams.

Leaders within IBA have had four years to address concerns in officiating, governance, and financial management. Put bluntly, they have chosen not to do so. They instead, suspended numerous federations, declined to engage fully with the IOC, temporarily suspended Ukraine boxers' from competing under their own flag, and released "an alternative qualification process" for Paris 2024, despite having no part in the Olympic Games. This is in addition to sponsorship from Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom, allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete under their national flags after the invasion of Ukraine, and holding a presidential election from which four of five candidates were disqualified by the IBA the day before the election.

The IABA have had concerns about IBA's activities and practices for some time now. The Board and Central Council have taken appropriate, measured, steps thus far. Now however, we are faced with the ultimate decision... where the future of Irish boxing lies. This is a decision for all our members. To make an informed one, we want to present what information we have to date.

Recognising early warning signs, the IABA became a member of the Common Cause Alliance of 20 federations, formed with the goal of keeping Boxing in the Olympic Games and ensuring our sport's sustainable development for future generations. As we in the IABA know, this can only be achieved through rigorous governance practices and an environment where boxers can compete and excel knowing that the integrity of the sport is guaranteed, and competition is fair. Formed by members of the Common Cause Alliance, right now, the only global governing body which places these fundamentals at its core is World Boxing.

To be transparent, joining World Boxing, would be a calculated risk, and the stakes are high. Some underdeveloped nations lured by the promise of financial reward will chose to remain with IBA. More

will remain in fear of change. Others will join with World boxing in the hope that, good governance and appropriate financial management will see boxing preserved in future Olympic Games. So, for a period at least, there will be two distinct and very different options in boxing. This will happen no matter what Ireland decides.

One side will pursue “Olympic-style boxing”. One side will pursue a “pro-style boxing”. We understand that, for some clubs and boxers, prize money at IBA tournaments is attractive. The sums on offer are substantial but may well be unsustainable beyond the short term. Although the possibility of winning a World medal is a prospect for a comparatively tiny number of boxers across the globe, remaining within the Olympic ethos ensures benefits, through funding, that are felt by every boxer in every club in the Association. Should we choose to remain in the IBA, we may well find our direct and indirect funding impacted.

In recent times, the IABA has been able to fund, or part fund, affiliation fees. Training and upskilling in areas including Coaching, Officiating, Women in Sport, Club Development, and Inclusion, has been enhanced and/or funded. Sports Capital and Sports Partnership Grant Aid has been provided to maintain and improve club facilities, and Teams of boxers across all age groups and levels have travelled internationally. Remaining with the IBA will mean funding for these areas will be reduced and, in some cases, will need to be fundraised.

For the grassroots of the sport here in Ireland, the Olympic Games are a vital part of boxing's whole ecosystem, a crucial pathway for aspiring boxers, a framework that can carry them from their clubs to elite international programs and competition. The choice is stark: if members wish to remain affiliated to the IBA, then the collective Olympic dream is over. Paris 2024 will be our final bow as Ireland's most successful Olympic sport.

And then, the Olympic Games itself is an epic stage. It creates stars in a way that is unrivalled. So many of Irish sport's biggest names have come through the Olympics, Michael Carruth, Katie Taylor, Kellie Harrington. Many of the best boxers in our country have benefited from being on the Olympic program. So many of our best prospects will too. In short being expelled from the Olympic Games would be a major blow to boxing. My fear is that we might only realise how damaging losing our Olympic status would be, at all levels, once it's too late.

It would be easy to turn a blind eye to the poor governance practices and poor decisions. Perhaps one could even justify the prize money. However, we, Irish boxing people are known worldwide for our sportsmanship, for our honesty, and for our integrity. Everything we do in our sport is for our boxers, our members, our communities. Is it truly right, to turn a blind eye and inadvertently allow our young members, our children to believe that oppression is ok, corruption is the way to win, and if you have enough money, you can essentially do anything you wish, no matter who you harm along the way? I recognise these things as the very opposite of what boxing in Ireland is known for. Surely, every member, boxer or not deserves respect. Surely, every boxer who steps through the ropes should expect, that the result is not predetermined. It's not much to ask for — honesty, transparency, fairness!

So, as said, it is time now for clubs to plot the forward path for Irish boxing – and Irish boxers. We will hold and EGM, an Extraordinary General Meeting, in mid-August, in which all successfully affiliated clubs will have one vote on the future of Irish boxing. We will share with you the formal, legal notice of this EGM in good time, in addition to the registration process, the meeting's date and location and the exact text on which clubs will vote.

In advance of that EGM, we are publishing all related documents on the IABA website which may of be interest to your club and members:

1. Decision of the IOC Extraordinary Session on 22 June 2023
2. IOC Comprehensive Report Summary
3. Asian Confederation statement on IOC Extraordinary Session decision
4. USA Boxing Letter to Membership
5. World Boxing Timeline
6. World Boxing background information, including competitions, structure, and leadership.

Clubs will also be able to request hard copies of these documents in the National Stadium during the 2023 National Senior Cadet Championships.

Whatever decision the Irish boxing family makes in August, please be assured that IABA's insurance is contracted in our own right, and is not connected, in any way, to the global governing body to which we may be affiliated now, or in future. This means the activities of successfully affiliated clubs, boards, and units is insured once the appropriate permissions have been granted.

We have set up a dedicated email address to field any questions you may have – [questions@iaba.ie](mailto:questions@iaba.ie). Please feel free to get in touch at any time.

Gerry O'Mahoney  
President IABA



Tom Geraghty  
Interim Chair IABA

