

Clean Up on Aisle Pickleball

An IPF Op-ED

Carl Burnett, 1st Vice President
Marlon Schulman, BOD Advisor

*This opinion piece is written to bring to light the realities of certain inactions by the previous officials of the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) and how the newly ratified, independent entity, the **International Pickleball Federation (IPF)** is blazing a ground-breaking and proper path for the sport and players of pickleball.*

By January 2022, the International Federation of Pickleball (IFP) had planned to come out of the COVID pandemic lockdown and showcase pickleball tournaments again. An ambitious plan was developed for the federation. However, on February 14, 2022, the President of the IFP received a "No-Confidence" letter from two board members and ten program directors. Six weeks later, the co-signers and ten countries left the IFP.

In July 2022, the President of the IFP stepped down, and the Vice President took over. At the same time, a new quasi-organization, the Unify Pickleball Task Force (UPTF), was formed by the two seceding IFP Board of Directors and exited ten countries. Hoping to rectify all, in August 2022, two non-profit consultants were brought in to assist in rebuilding the IFP. The resulting consultant's report to the Board of Directors (September 2022), described the dire circumstances of the IFP.

Two months later, the curtain of secrecy was more fully pulled open, revealing unethical and financial mismanagement going back six years to the federation's inception. These organizational management failures were not wholly attributable to the immediate past presidents or treasurers of the IFP but to all the previous officers, board members, and directors of the IFP.

These malfeasant officials included a previous president, board member and founder of the IFP. One is now the current Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the United States of America Pickleball (USAP), the other is the Director of Membership for the Pickleball Federation of Americas (PFA). They also included a previous IFP Secretary and the current President of the Philippines Pickleball Association. In our opinion, they left the IFP after years of gross professional mismanagement.

Looking Back

The IFP, over the six years of its existence, took in significant donations for the Olympic movement. However, the IFP was never a recognized Federal non-profit organization. The IFP also paid out personal expenses even though individual costs are not payable according to the federation's bylaws. As a result of these (and other) financial irregularities, the IFP filed a for-profit tax return and now can never be recognized as a non-profit organization.

Being a non-profit organization is a requirement to be admitted and recognized as an Olympic federation, and therefore the IFP will never be able to become a recognized Olympic federation. The mismanagement was conducted, condoned, and hidden by all the previous IFP officers and board members since the IFP's inception.

The Present Reality: A New, “Clean” IPF emerges:

Based on these six years of operational and financial irregularities and mismanagement, the IFP is being shut down with its required “final tax return” to be filed in April 2024. In April 2023 the new, unencumbered International Pickleball Federation (IPF) was formed and ratified by the country's members at its April 2023 Annual General Meeting (AGM). While the name/abbreviations are similar, the entities are not – and the IPF does not carry the baggage of the IFP. We have taken meticulous care to address the concerns of previous exiting members as well as presenting a bold vision for the future.

Wait, What?

However, in 2023, these same individuals who started the IFP in 2015 and abandoned it in 2022 are creating “continental federations”, even having misled the IFP member countries for years and operating that federation unethically. The new continental federations may again take unsuspecting countries on another ill-fated joyride to establish these continental federations.

This exercise would seem to be another wholly self-serving endeavor led by the most prominent national pickleball organization to keep all other “smaller country” pickleball federations from more properly participating in the management and financial fortunes of the sport of pickleball globally. They want to continue total control of pickleball by never allowing one nation – one vote in any international pickleball organization (or at least continually “kicking that can down the road”).

What to Do?

The countries that are now forming continental federations need to question the integrity of the people leading this push for new continental organizations, especially given their past financial improprieties and mismanagement of the IFP.

Additionally, for countries considering joining these new entities, ask if your voting rights are equal to all the other members from the inception of the federation. The International Pickleball Federation (IPF), the new global authority for the sport of pickleball, has begun operations and continues to celebrate and protect the national voting rights of each country by electing the new officers in 2023 based on equal voting rights for all national federation members.

Will the IPF stop there to ensure all players have a say in the sport of pickleball?

Most emphatically: **No.**

What the IPF has plans to do in the coming months is the most radical shift ever in any field of sports. It is a radical shift away from the current sports ownership model. The new model is

based on pickleball communities that are designed for players, fans, volunteers, open competitions and dedicated all-season pickleball facilities.

What's coming up next is a pickleball revolution. A revolution that makes every player, from the occasional recreational player, to amateur players, to professional players – ***“owners of pickleball”***.

Stay tuned.