



ENGLISH KARATE FEDERATION NEWS

The EKF is extremely pleased and enthusiastic about having a presence in *MAI*, with whom we are now partnering to promote Karate to a wider audience than our own members. Whilst we will, naturally, report on EKF matters there are wider issues about Karate that we will be covering in the column and we touch on one such issue below, that of a new, recognised England Karate National Governing Body.

ENGLISH KARATE FEDERATION HISTORY

The English Karate Federation rose out of the ashes of the collapse of the last English National Governing Body (NGB) - 'Karate England 2005'. Since then there has been no Sport England (England's GB for sport under Sports UK) recognised NGB for Karate in England, although more about that later in this article. In the EKF, however, we style ourselves as the England NGB for World Karate Federation (WKF), to which the EKF is directly affiliated. Of all the world Karate organisations the WKF, we would submit, is the largest in terms of not just sheer size, measured by its international membership of 190 member nations, running into millions of Karateka, but also when it comes to its World Championships, Europeans, and all its other direct, or approved events, it has by far the best organised and supported events around the globe.

The evidence for this is that it is WKF Karate that has been chosen (in other words its specific Kumite rules), after many years of campaigning, for Olympic inclusion of the sport at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The development of World Karate bodies has managed to mirror the political upheavals of many country's internal Karate organisations and none more so than the UK and England Karate arenas, with endless attempts at unification, under official, national sports governance auspice, or simply combining Karate associations into larger groups that have then vied with each other for official recognition; evidence the EKC/EKB conflict, resolved only for a short time by the well intentioned but eventually doomed EKGB which ceased to exist in 2005.

Peter Consterdine reports on the events of sport Karate, looking forward to its inclusion in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and developments in the formation of the England Karate National Governing Body (NGB).



➤ The Arena - WKF World Senior Karate Championship 2016 in Linz

In England we're once again looking at another officially sponsored 'box' that the EKF and other Karate organisations may well be part of, with England the last of the home nations that has yet to have a UK Sports (via Sport England) recognised governing body; we'll come on to where we are with that shortly, but first a better overview of the EKF itself.

Although the EKF hasn't the status of a recognised English NGB it is, nevertheless, along with the governing bodies of the other home nations, a member of the British Karate Federation (BKF), whose history goes back to the late 1950's, and which is the de facto point of consolidation of these national Karate governing bodies from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as the EKF in England and, tracing the links internationally, the BKF is then aligned with the European Karate Federation and then to the WKF.

As at 31st December 2016 we had just short of 30,000 individual members registered via some 120 clubs and associations, making us the largest single Karate organisation in England. This size permits investment in many key areas, be that our in-depth referees and judges organisation, regional and national team and individual Kumite and Kata training and selection, as well as a range of contracted management services that ensure efficient and transparent operational delivery of EKF services. Good



➤ Exciting action - Azerbaijan v France Team Kumite. WKF World Championship 2016

governance and 'best practice' across all our areas of operation are paramount.

With the EKF's international relationships our athletes have access to some of the WKF world events as well as the very prestigious international Karate 1 Premier League competitions. The Karate1-Premier League/Series A are the most important league events in the world of Karate. It comprises of a number of the most prominent Karate competitions and endeavours to bring together the best Karate athletes in the world in an open championships of unprecedented scale and quality. Initiated in 2011 with two tournaments held in Paris and Istanbul, the Karate1-Premier League has made exponential progress in terms of magnitude and status of the tournaments as well as the number of participants and countries represented and in 2017 will be held over 9 competitions in countries as diverse as Okinawa to Istanbul. These events will now have ranking points for athletes towards Tokyo 2020, with a 'Grand Winner' prize on offer.

Our Kumite and Kata national and regional training and selection calendars are posted on the EKF website and illustrate the opportunities that exist for elite training, selection, as well as home and international competitions. These are packed calendars which, even with the pages of events we list, still don't incorporate all the opportunities for competitive Karate athletes.



➤ EKF President Mick Billman hands out medals at the BKF International Open

WORLD KARATE FEDERATION (WKF)

Although it took place over six days in October 2016, taking a look at the WKF Senior World Karate Championships is very informative. It was hosted by the city of Linz in Austria; this being the first World Championships as an Olympic sport. As mentioned elsewhere in the article it is WKF Karate specifically that is the Olympic choice.

Some statistics should give you an idea of the size of the event, with some 110 countries and 1049 athletes, but supported by some 600 people working on the project, 370 volunteers and catering for a third more competitors than took part two years before in Bremen. To get a really good flavour of the championships, check out the video *Karate Magic in Linz* available on both the Olympic and WKF Youtube channels.

Interestingly, of all the International Sports Federations, only the WKF includes disability Karate within its normal world championships. Para Karate in Linz, in terms of participation, nearly doubled from the event in Bremen and can only grow to be a major feature of the event in two years time in Lima Peru.

On the WKF technology front and to ensure (as much as is ever possible) absolute fairness of decisions, 'Video Review' technology is now deployed to assist decision making where a score is contested. Two way radios link the Coach Controller with the video review referee and like all progressive sports this has been a major leap forward in solving the

perennial problem of a combat sport where a flawed decision unfairly impacts an outcome. This and other highly professional refereeing, judging and overall management makes WKF Karate extremely fit for purpose, in very good shape and ready to take its place in Tokyo 2020.

On the WKF calendar this year, amongst other direct and approved events are the WKF European Junior Championship in Bulgaria in February, 52nd European Senior



➤ Jordan Thomas (EKF) WKF World Karate Champion 2016

Championship in Turkey in May, WKF World Junior Championship in the Canary Islands in October and the World Games. The Games, which take place this year in Poland in July, as with the Olympics, includes the WKF Karate. The World Games is, in respect of Karate, an invitational event and we are very pleased to announce that our EKF National Kumite team member Jordan Thomas, WKF World Gold medallist has received his invitation.

KARATE AND MARTIAL ARTS

Karate, as a participant martial art is thriving, as evidenced by the EKF membership which increases month on month as well as the overwhelming attendance by athletes at our domestic competitions. On Sunday 15th January we held our Kyu Grade Championships which had an amazing 1000 plus entries from 608 athletes. People are often surprised at how healthy Karate is, not just in England but across the UK as a whole, even competing supposedly against those 'flavour of the month' combative sports such as MMA. We will never see the day when a MMA event has over 1,000 competitors, whilst bearing in mind that across the Karate firmament it is only ever a small percentage of practitioners who ever compete.

It's hard, if not impossible, to think of a sport, or pastime, that can mean so many things to so many people, whether it's about competition (now at Olympic level), fitness development, physical challenges, personal

development, confidence building, an engaging pastime, with mental stimulation and an aid to personal safety; this multiplicity of outcomes cements Karate's place as a sport with amazing attraction and longevity. It's also a sport that can fully engage disabled athletes, irrespective of the nature of that disability. Mirroring the WKF Para Karate development, at our January 2017 KYU Grade Championship we had our disability athletes compete in Kata events, and over the coming months we will be developing a programme of regional training courses to hopefully cater for the range of disabilities that we believe can equate to sensible competitive categories to incorporate these into our regular domestic championships.

In the EKF we are committed to both protect Karate and its image and good name whilst working for our members whatever their preference about the sport.

ENGLAND KARATE NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY

For a year or more, under the sponsorship of the Sport and Recreation Alliance, the major English Karate organisations have been meeting, along with Sport England, to endeavour to create another federated national governing body (NGB) for Karate in England. To say 'another' infers a 'here we go again' attitude from us and it can't be ignored that other attempts - some more successful than others have come and gone - some more spectacularly than others - and from an EKF perspective we have approached these negotiations with a degree of caution.

England is the last of the home nations that has not got a recognised NGB for Karate, a function of which is to work to standardise rules and procedures for Karate and to establish a quality standard for teaching and grading. So as the NGB development meetings and work progresses there will be a formal application at some future point for English Karate to seek recognised NGB status on behalf of its member associations.

The founder members of what will have to be a properly governed body are the EKF, Karate England, Federation of English Karate Organisations, Karate Union of Great Britain and the AMA - each with allocated voting rights. The structure of the organisation, in terms of governance, will make this version a different animal from those that have gone before, with a Board constituted by representation from the founder members, but with an independent Chair, and 4/5 independent Board members, who could be drawn from industry, commerce, or sport, but who must have no connection with the world of Karate.

This structure will meet the governance standards required under the Voluntary Code of Good Governance and the recently published UK Code of Sports Governance. We are at the stage where all parties have now accepted these broad arrangements and will move forward by establishing working parties to develop strategy and a defined purpose for the organisation. The SRA should, by the time this edition of the magazine is on the shelves, have issued a press release to this effect.

The EKF fully support the aims of this project and will be active participants in shaping the organisation to be fully fit for purpose.

■ PETER CONSTERDINE

Again, we look forward to having a continuing contribution to the magazine and for further information on the EKF have a look at our website or contact us; www.englishkaratefederation.com admin@englishkaratefederation.com Tel: 07717 454 669 EKF Ltd, PO Box 4422 Hornchurch, RM12 9FD