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USA Pentathlon Boss Predicts Podium Finish at Tokyo 2020 – Federations Focus

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(ATR) Newly appointed USA Pentathlon chair Tom Shepard believes with the sport's latest innovations and marketing strategies great things can come for the USA at the next Olympic Games.

"Our potential to be on the podium for Tokyo is very good and we are excited about what we have in the hopper," Shepard tells *Around the Rings*.

The United States has not won a medal in modern pentathlon in 17 years, the last being Emily deRiel at the Sydney Games.

Though the sport has been a longstanding event at the Olympics it has struggled in recent years to draw a large audience. Despite rumors of it being discontinued, Shepard believes modern pentathlon is in good standing and will stay on the Games program.



Tom Shepard (Team USA)

"Fortunately we have a very strong base of support within the IOC for this sport. The International Federation (IF) has done a great job to make sure that we remain on the Olympic Agenda," says Shepard.

"While there is no immediate concern for our status, we will continue to make sure that we take the necessary steps as a governing body to stay relevant to the Olympic Movement."

The latest IF innovations including the lead changes to the run shoot, changing regular pistols to laser pistols, shortening the time in between the events and the trial of adding obstacles to the mixed relay are expected to draw more youth to the sport and gain interest from spectators, according to Shepard.



"Those are important strides to making the sport itself more audience friendly, exciting and accessible to people," he says.

Starting at the Tokyo 2020 Games the event will be held during a full day in one venue instead of expanded over the week which intends to draw more attention to the event as well.

USA Pentathlon has been given the challenge to take a good look at the sport and find ways to make it more marketable.

(IOC)

According to Shepard they have made headway getting back to the basics by continuing to work with the IF to become "revolutionary not evolutionary", developing their assets, driving awareness through social media, expanding events and more.

"We want to be the USOC's or NOC's best in class NGB, that's the vision" adds Shepard.

Shepard is no stranger to the Games as he has worked with Olympic TOP sponsor Visa as the International Merchant Partnerships and Sponsorship Executive Vice President . During his time with Visa he conceived the first ever Visa Olympians Reunion Center which allows former athletes to come together at the Games. The Center, now used at every Olympics will be featured once again at Tokyo 2020.

"It [The Reunion Center] is one of my proudest legacies to the Olympic Movement," says Shepard.

New Hosts, New Logo for World Taekwondo Federation

The World Taekwondo Federation council meeting in Thailand on March 7 determined the host cities for major WTF events as well as the federation's new logo design.

Five cities have been chosen to host events in 2017 and 2018.

Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt was named host of the 2017 World Taekwondo Cadet Championships to be held Aug. 23-27. The Russian capital of Moscow was selected for the 2017 World Taekwondo Grand Prix Series 1 on Aug. 4-6.

The 2017 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix Series 2 scheduled for Sep. 22-24 went to Marrakech, Morocco while Taipei City, Chinese Taipei will host both the 2018 World Taekwondo Poomsae Championships on Nov. 15-18 and the 2018 World Taekwondo Grand-Prix Series 2 taking place Sep. 20-22.

The next WTF Council meeting will be held on June 22 in Muju, Korea during the 2017 WTF World Taekwondo Championships. The newly approved WTF logo will be officially unveiled at the Championships.



WTF President Chungwon Choue poses with Council members during the WTF Council meeting in Bangkok (WTF)

Agitos Workshop to Aid Paralympic Development

Each of the summer Paralympic sport International Federations will gather for a development workshop this week in Bonn, Germany.

The meeting will take place from March 9-10 and marks the first time the Paralympic IFs are brought together in this capacity.

The workshop will focus on sport technical education, competition models and planning and development leading up to the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics. The sessions allow for the exchange of ideas between Paralympic professionals and experts to determine best practices for each sport moving forward.



(Agitos Foundation)

Delegates will also listen to presentations by the Brazilian and Rwandan Paralympic Committees. The BPC will present on its work in technical education including its initiatives with Agitos leading up to the Rio 2016 Games. The RPC will discuss its competition models for sports such as athletics and sitting volleyball.

“Following the rapid growth of the Paralympic Movement around the world in the last few years, it is a good time to gather IFs together to share best practice and provide support to each other on the evolution of their sports,” said IPC chief executive officer Xavier Gonzalez.

“We believe this will benefit all Para athletes in their build-up to Tokyo 2020.”

The workshop is supported by UK Sport which provides a grant of £100,000 to the Paralympic Movement and the Agitos Foundation. Approximately 45 IF delegates are expected at the workshop along with UK Sport representatives.

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