***IPRO Director’s Message April, 2022***

***Home Court Advantage***

**On the horizon (April 9-16) is the Pan American Racquetball Championships in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia. This annual International Racquetball Federation event began in 1987 in Venezuela; a year later moving to this city of about two million inhabitants located close to the *jungla.* I was fortunate to be there as part of the US Team for that event; known then as *Torneo de las Americas.* The Urbari club was host. This year *Complejo Publico* will be the venue. My duties will come under the IRF umbrella.**

**Over thirty years ago Bolivia had a strong cadre of men and women *racquetbolistas*; yet, they were more like *up and coming athletes.* How things have changed! Today, through the efforts of government and a national pride for excelling on the international stage, they are a top tier federation in terms of skill development and team success. Similar to the Mexicans, whose NGB decided in 2000 to concentrate most of its energy on youth advancement, Bolivia boasts *world class players* at all levels, from younger juniors to adults.**

**Like other international sporting teams, those on the racquetball front vie for the best players to represent them. Bolivia continually fields teams with players who are *home grown.* This is not the case across the board. In the recent past, top Bolivian men and women have been swayed to play for other federations; with political and financial expediency. Nevertheless, a determination from the government and skills from instructors/coaches, allow them to keep nourishing their own teams.**

**Pursuing athletes from other countries is not new to racquetball. A few decades ago, Ruben Gonzalez moved from Puerto Rico to the USA. It has been two years since Alejandro Landa moved from Mexico to the USA. He is current World Champ and his exploits have allowed Team USA to hoist the team gold trophy for the first time since 2014. With adherence to national and international policies and procedures for sport (some questionable), Argentina, Colombia, and perhaps others will continue to entice Bolivian players to ‘bolt’ from home.**

**In closing, I anticipate with excitement the upcoming *Championship*. It will be my 14th visit to this beautiful country. in my eyes and heart, I expect Team Bolivia to bring home the gold with their *home court advantage. Gary***

***Quote of the month***

***‘Try to be like water; soft, strong, & free B Teena***