

THE TICKER: Exclusive ~ U.S. to try for World Univ. Games in 2027; drama in Russia over drive to oust RUSADA head; USOPC bill now in House

By Rich Perelman - August 6, 2020



The Winter World University Games is coming to Lake Placid in 2023; will the summer WUG return to the U.S. in 2027?

The latest news, notes and quotes from the worldwide Five-Ring Circus:

- **Miller Time** • Veteran British Olympic observer **David Miller** **considers** whether a postponed 2020+1 Olympic Games in Tokyo may be devalued by the absence of countries where the coronavirus may not yet be under control. Like the United States!
- **World University Games** • The U.S. has had a mostly-disinterested relationship with the World University Games, established in 1959 and designed to be for athletes who are in college or recently completed student work and are between 17-25 years old.

That appears to be changing.

The U.S. Olympic Committee (now Olympic & Paralympic Committee) supported American participation in the WUG in the 1990s and up to about 2003, primarily with support staffing, travel and uniforms, but decided the event was not a core program and U.S. participation is now in the hands of the U.S.-International University Sport Federation (US-IUSF).

Longtime chair **Gary Cunningham**, the former UCLA basketball coach from 1978-79 and later athletic director at the University of California, Santa Barbara, retired at head of the US-IUSF and recently-retired UCLA athletic director **Dan Guerrero** has assumed the lead role.

Over lunch on a patio in a rare open restaurant in Los Angeles, Guerrero explained that he is looking for a more active role for the US-IUSF in the future: *"We're excited about what's coming up and bringing the World University Games back to the U.S."* He noted:

- Despite the pandemic, the US-IUSF is planning to field a team at the 2021 Winter World

University Games in Lucerne, Switzerland from 21-31 January. This is especially important since

the 2023 Winter World University Games will be held in Lake Placid, New York, from 12-22 January.

It's only the second time the Winter WUG will be held in the U.S. The first was also in Lake Placid, back in 1972, with 410 athletes competing in seven sports. The last event, in Krasnoyarsk (RUS) in 2019, attracted 3,000 athletes competing in 11 sports.

- The 2021 World University Games is scheduled for Chengdu, China from 18-29 August, and in Kazan (RUS) for 2023. The last WUG, in Naples (ITA) drew 5,971 athletes, but as many as 12,885 have attended for the 2015 WUG in Gwangju (KOR).
- Guerrero said that interest in the WUG is increasing, with a possible host city in Germany for 2025 and the U.S. for 2027.

A U.S.-based World University Games would be pretty interesting in 2027, one year prior to the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. The U.S. hosted a summer WUG only once before, in Buffalo, New York in 1993, with 3,582 athletes competing in 12 sports.

The current program includes 15 required sports and up to three optional sports. Guerrero indicated that preliminary discussions are underway about a bid city or area.

(The best choices would be areas with large universities already in place that can offer athlete housing and competition and training facilities. Obvious options would be the "Research Triangle" area of Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, which hosted the 1987 U.S. Olympic Festival; Houston, Texas, which constructed an excellent bid to be the U.S. candidate city for the 2012 Olympic Games and perhaps also Austin, Texas, site of the University of Texas and an increasingly popular site for conferences and events, or Indianapolis, site of the 1987 Pan American Games.)

To get all of this done, Guerrero has a building job on his hands. He and Secretary General **Delise O'Meally**, Executive Director of the Institute for Sport & Social Justice at the University of Central Florida – both volunteers – operate on an annual budget of only about \$60,000, enough for paying dues to the International University Sports Federation (FISU) and travel to some meetings. But Guerrero was a prolific fund-raiser – in the hundreds of millions – during his 18 years as Director of Athletics at UCLA and will look to expand the US-IUSF profile.

The FISU, under the leadership of Russian **Oleg Matytsin**, has also shown more vigor since his election in 2015. In fact, his efforts were noticed nationally and he was named as Russian Minister of Sport on 21 January of this year. Guerrero believes Matytsin will remain as the head of FISU and has ambitious plans to make the organization more visible within the worldwide Olympic Movement.