

# REPORT

## FORUM FOR ATHLETES

Organized by the ITTF Women's Working Group  
4<sup>th</sup> May 2009, Yokohama Arena, 09h00-14h00



The ITTF Women's Working Group successfully organized an International Athletes' Forum on 4th May 2009, entitled '**Player Today, Leader Tomorrow**', during the H.I.S. World Table Tennis Championships in Yokohama. About a 100 delegates, officials, coaches and players from national federations present at the forum were provided with information and objectives of the ITTF Women Working Group for ensuring equal participation of women in table tennis. The forum was structured in a way that the persons responsible for development, education & Training, Competition and Marketing at the ITTF could also present their strategies for improving women's table tennis.

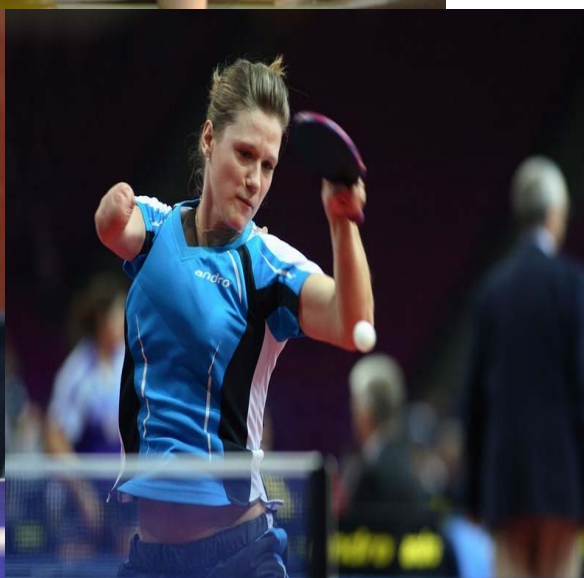
Following the Asian representative in the ITTF Women's Working Group, **Ms Sachiko Yokota**, ITTF President, **Mr. Adham Sharara**, delivered his opening message and spoke of positive change through a more professional structure of the ITTF.



**Lila de Soysa**, ITTF Project Manager and Coordinator of the Women's Working Group made a progress report and highlighted the achievements made in the past 4 years, in particular the creation of a post for a female Executive Vice-President, equal prize money, special training camps to encourage the development of more high performance women coaches, strategies to encourage more women to attend the Annual General Meeting etc. She stressed the importance of involving the athletes more in all decision making processes and the importance of educating the athletes through the ITTF structures so that they are more professional, better role models and better prepared for their after sport careers.

She also explained that the Women's Working Group was striving to integrate table tennis for women with a disability in all their activities, hence the invitation to the guest speaker Ms **Lydia La Rivière-Zijdel** from the Netherlands, the highest ranked wheelchair martial

artist in the world holding a 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Black Belt in Karate and 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt in Aikido and a world renowned expert on gender and disability. Her talk entitled “Table Tennis: A Sport for Team Players Only” was highly inspirational and very much appreciated by the audience.



Players and officials gathered at the Athletes Forum which tabled the following topics and brought forth the following **recommendations** for action from the ITTF:



# LEADERSHIP

## CREATING ROLE MODELS AND KEEPING OUR ATHLETES IN THE SPORT

Led by Hajera Kajee & Annolyn Lulu

Athletes: Sameera Maal (RSA) & Toriola Segun (NGR)

Rapporteur: Judit Faragó (ITTF Competition Director)



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- To increase awareness of role models by educational tools on national and international level.
- To introduce a Role Model Development programme based on long-term mentoring relations and involving all individuals and stakeholders (parents, teachers, sports officials and companies).
- To create a mentoring programme involving the ITTF Hopes Team and a top athletes. Each player should have a top athlete who would be his/her role model and correspondent. To be planned together with the Education and Training Department, the Women's Working Group and the Junior Commission of the ITTF.
- To initiate more interaction between the ITTF officials and the athletes, with special regards to keeping athletes in the sport close to the end of their career. To be planned together with the ITTF Athletes' Commission.

# EDUCATION

## About the "second Challenge" – After Career for Athletes

Led by Mary Musoke and Dorte Kronsell

Rapporteur: Mikael Andersson (Director ITTF Education & Training Programme)



### RECOMMENDATIONS

- That the ITTF Education & Training Department should create partnerships with Universities and other Centres of Learning where table tennis athletes could be educated and better prepared for their "after career".
- That the ITTF should organise educational seminars and workshops when possible for athletes regarding career management
- That the Continental Federations should dedicate funds to send an athlete to the AiSTS Sport Management Seminar for Women in Lausanne

## EDUCATION

**No Cheating, No doping, No Bad Behaviour - We are all responsible!**

Led by Alejandra Gabaglio and Petra Sörling

Rapporteur: Glenn Tepper



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Education and Training Department to investigate what educational tools are available through IOC and WADA in this area and where possible provide to Continental and National Federations.
- Education and Training and Marketing Department to produce educational tools that can be used for Continental and National Federations
- Education and Training and Marketing Department to work closely with the Women's Working Group, Athletes Commission and the URC regarding education of athletes.



# MEDIA & MARKETING

## Marketing Women's Table Tennis & Improving the Image of our Sport – the role of the athletes

Led by Claude Bergeret & Norma Jara

Athletes: Peter Karlsson (SWE) & Naomi Yotsumoto (JPN)

Rapporteur: Steve Dainton



### RECOMMENDATIONS

The ITTF and National Associations should ensure that athletes, male and female, are educated so that they know how to present themselves as best as possible, to the general public, to the Media, to the fans etc and therefore recommends the following:

- That the ITTF Education and Training Department together with the Women's Working Group, the ITTF Marketing Department and the Media Committee, organise educational workshops from time to time for the players and ensure that the athletes get the appropriate educational tools.
- The ITTF Marketing Department should strive to find sponsors for women's activities and the Women's Development Programme.
- The ITTF Marketing Department together with the Competition Department should work closely with the sponsors and the manufacturers so that all ITTF athletes and events are showcased at the highest possible level.

It was noted with regret that many athletes had not taken the opportunity to attend this first forum for athletes. However, the Women's Working Group thanks all the participants for their involvement and support and wishes to invite them to the next World Forum in 2013.



*Report by Lila de Soysa & Christina Chee – Photos courtesy of WWG  
13<sup>th</sup> May 2009*