



Management strategies of the Paraguayan Tennis Association with the Olympic Solidarity Programmes

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ABSTRACT

The National Tennis Federations (NTFs) are the governing organisations of tennis at the national level. They are affiliated to their respective Regional Federations, their National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Tennis Federation (ITF). Olympic Solidarity (OS) is an organisation of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that helps NOCs to develop the sport in their countries through a range of programmes targeting athletes, coaches, infrastructure, programmes, events, and values. The purpose of this article is to reflect on the importance of an efficient and professional collaboration between the NFs and OS, through the NOCs, to use the available resources to improve the management of tennis development at national level. After outlining some general aspects regarding the different organisations and their programmes, a section is included in which the strategies carried out by the Asociación Paraguaya de Tenis are presented to serve as an example of good practice for other NFs.

Key words: IOC, management, development, strategy, structure, strategy, structure.

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INTRODUCTION

National Federations

National Tennis Federations or National Tennis Associations (NTFs) are organisations that represent the interests of the national tennis industry within their geographical area. Their tasks are many and varied as they are responsible for organising and managing national and international tournaments, as well as providing technical and coaching services and competitions to players and clubs, among others. The NTFs manage tennis on a national level, while acting as a resource and assistance in developing the structure and programmes of local tennis clubs. The NTFs work to ensure efficient administration and generate appropriate competitive opportunities among their members, while seeking to increase participation in tennis throughout their national territory. In terms of structure, the NTFs are part of bodies such as the International Tennis Federation (ITF), National Olympic Committees (NOCs) or Regional Federations by being affiliated to them (ITF, 2023).

These national governing bodies are responsible for the governance of tennis at their respective level of operation, including overseeing and regulating the national tennis programmes, the schedule of major tournaments at different levels of play, tournament regulations, marketing and promotion of tennis activities, representation of the country in international tennis competitions and their national tennis development programme, including participation projects (Martínez-Gallego, et al., 2022). Their main task is to organise



and coordinate local and national tournaments and leagues, train players, provide specialised instruction to players and organise the training of officials. The NTFs are also responsible for ensuring that all local and national competitions are conducted in accordance with official regulations, approved by the competent bodies. They also develop new initiatives to increase participation, organise social activities to improve awareness of the sport and provide training for players and coaches on the rules of the game.

The NTFs themselves are organised according to "best practice principles" and have varying levels of autonomy and responsibility within each nation. The role of NTFs in the

development of our sport is highly influential and beneficial, as these organisations offer expertise, guidance, and support, as well as access to world-class professionals and facilities (Browsers et al., 2015). These entities create a network of institutional collaboration that spans from the local level to the international stage in a way that helps them play a key role in the governance of world tennis. The numerous initiatives offered by the NTFs promote, develop, and grow tennis at local and national levels.

The activities of the NTFs have a lasting impact not only on the sport of tennis, but also on the entire sports industry. They help to develop strong connections between different stakeholders such as players, coaches, sponsors, officials, and tournament directors. The activities organised by the NTFs are also important for the popularity of tennis as they help to highlight new stars and increase the number of fans.

The NTFs are affiliated to their respective National Olympic Committees (NOCs) who are the representatives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in each country. Therefore, to access any IOC assistance, the NTFs have to apply through their NOCs.

Olympic Solidarity

Olympic Solidarity is the IOC's programme to support the development of sport around the world. It was created in 1961 and its mission is to use the resources of the Olympic Movement to help NOCs develop sport in their countries. Olympic Solidarity assists the NOCs in the form of grants, educational programmes and training opportunities for athletes and coaches. It also assists with the organisational and technical aspects of sport and helps the NOCs with the financial aspects of organising the Olympic Games. Olympic Solidarity has a wide range of activities designed to assist the NOCs (IOC, 2023).

Olympic Solidarity awards grants to develop sport through the creation or strengthening of NOCs, providing support to athletes and coaches. It also offers training programmes for athletes and coaches, including courses on sports administration and coaching. In addition, Olympic Solidarity supports the NOCs in organising and hosting the Olympic Games. Olympic Solidarity has been successful in helping NOCs develop sport around the world (Henry & Al-Tauqi, 2008). Since its inception, it has provided more than \$1 billion in grants, training, and educational opportunities to NOCs, helping them to bring the Olympic Movement to their countries.

The importance of Olympic Solidarity for National Federations

Olympic Solidarity is a fundamental part of the Olympic Movement that works to support athletes, coaches, NOCs and NFs in their development. It is important to highlight the great importance of Olympic Solidarity for NFs, as it provides them with a powerful tool to help broaden the participation of their athletes in international competitions and promote Olympic values (Guzey & Ozbey, 2013). It also enables them to create and maintain the necessary infrastructure, such as sports facilities, and to invest in the staff and organisations needed to sustain a successful national sport system. It also helps to create development and support systems within federations that are critical to identifying the best talent and providing them with the necessary resources to help them play on a world stage.

Olympic Solidarity therefore plays an important role in bringing sport to the far corners of the world and enabling the sport system to flourish at the national level. It motivates and encourages NFs to strive to improve the development of their athletes. By providing both direct support and scholarships, Olympic Solidarity helps NFs to adopt a strategic approach to their management and administration, making it a key player in promoting success at the international level and transforming the Olympic dream into reality (Robinson & Minikin, 2011).

How does Olympic Solidarity help national federations?

Olympic Solidarity assists NFs through the respective NOCs in each country. The programmes therefore contribute to strengthening their capacities by providing support in different areas, such as finance, education, training, and technical support. The support is generally directed towards athletes, coaches, programmes, events, facilities, and values. Overall, Olympic Solidarity plays a vital role in helping to ensure that the Olympic Movement and its ideals are promoted, and that athletes, coaches and sports officials can develop their skills and knowledge (Chappelet & Bayle, 2005). Olympic Solidarity's support helps to ensure that NOCs can offer their athletes the best possible conditions to excel in their sporting careers.

What are some of the programmes available?

Development of a National Sport Structure (DNSS)

The Olympic Solidarity DNSS programme is an initiative developed by the IOC to support athletes, NOCs, and NFs in their efforts to develop and manage their sport programmes. It provides financial and technical support to NOCs to help them build capacity and develop their national sport structures. Funding for the programme comes from a variety of sources, including the Olympic Solidarity Fund, the Olympic Foundation for Culture and Heritage, and donations from individual NOCs. The programme has been running since 2000 and has provided more than USD 800 million in grants to NOCs in more than 160 countries.

The programme includes financial support for team preparation, training, and competition, as well as providing technical support to help NOCs develop their sport systems and structures. It also provides athlete development support, which includes funding for the development of young athletes, coaches, and sport administrators, as well as support for athlete education and professional development.

Programme of training courses for coaches

The coach education programme aims to provide training and certification for those responsible for implementing coaching sessions to athletes in the country. In the case of tennis, NTFs are encouraged to align themselves with the ITF coach education programme which is available on the ITF Academy in 11 languages and has written and digital resources for different levels of education and certification (ITF Academy, 2023).

NTFs can contact their NOC to request SO to organise a certification course. However, to facilitate the process, it is suggested that NTFs contact the regional development officer in advance so that the course can also be approved by the ITF.

Coach training scholarship programme

Coach education scholarship programmes offer grants for coaches of Olympic sports, such as tennis, to participate in courses organised by institutions such as International Federations, High Performance Centres, or Universities.

In the case of tennis, the ITF offers the opportunity for scholarship coaches to undertake courses for advanced player coaches (CAP-Level 2) and high-performance player coaches (CHP-Level 3) in Spain. Coaches must be proposed by their NTF, endorsed by the ITF development officer, and submitted by the NOC to Olympic Solidarity, which in turn requires ITF approval.

Other training opportunities are also available at centres in the USA, Switzerland, and Hungary.

Why is it important for national federations to maintain good relations with their NOC?

Maintaining a strong relationship between NFs and their NOCs is of great importance. As the NOCs are responsible for coordinating the organisation of national competitions and the entry of athletes into the Olympic Games, the two must work together to achieve success for their countries in international competitions. Working actively with the NOC helps national federations establish better relationships with the governing bodies of international sport, which can lead to greater access to resources, funding, and other support (Ferrand & McCarthy, 2008). In addition, working together creates a more transparent and organised approach to national sport events, which helps to ensure that athletes and coaches are treated ethically and fairly. NFs can benefit significantly from the experience of their NOC.

NOCs can provide advice on financial planning, marketing strategies and sport regulations to guide their NFs. This advice can lead to improved Olympic results, as coaches and athletes will have a better understanding of the regulations and rules set by the governing bodies. In addition, NOCs provide support and funding to athletes that NFs alone cannot facilitate (Camy & Robinson, 2007). The establishment of strong relationships between NFs and their NOCs is important to ensure that countries have the necessary resources to succeed in international sport competitions. NFs benefit from the guidance and support provided by their NOCs, and for their countries to be successful at the Olympic Games, both must establish and maintain a collaborative relationship.

What has been the impact of Olympic solidarity programmes on the NF landscape?

The Olympic Solidarity programmes implemented by the IOC have had a significant positive impact on the NF landscape. Overall, these programmes have had a positive impact on the development of national sports federations and have increased opportunities for athletes around the world.

The Olympic Solidarity Programme has been particularly effective in helping these countries find the training resources and skills needed to create and develop a high-performance NF. Through this programme, NFs have contributed significantly to the development and promotion of sport in their respective countries (Henry & Cuschieri, 2014). As a result, these national sport federations now play an important role in promoting the Olympic ideals around the world.

The Olympic Solidarity Programmes have had a very positive impact on the development of national sports federations. Countries experience an improvement in sporting standards, see increased sponsorship and marketing opportunities, and strengthen relationships between NFs, the NOC, and the IOC (Parry, 2003). Through better communication and a more fluid exchange of ideas, Olympic Solidarity programmes have advanced the development of NFs considerably.

What do NTFs have to do to be eligible for support under the Olympic solidarity programmes?

The following is a list of actions that NTFs must take into consideration to access support from Olympic Solidarity programmes. NTFs must:

- Align with the ITF's development strategy.
- Align with the policies of the national sports authorities.
- To have an in-depth knowledge of the regulations of the Olympic Solidarity programmes.
- To know the structure of the NOC and the people in charge of managing each of Olympic Solidarity's programmes.
- Have a development strategy based on evidence-based programmes that is aligned, monitored, and approved by the ITF development officer for the region.
- Submit the application for access to the programme to the relevant sports department of the NOC approved by the highest governing body of sport in that country.
- Provide the necessary and required documentary evidence of the basic organisational structure and its activities since its creation.
- Demonstrate and justify the necessary and required experience in the organisation and management of sporting activities at regional or national level.
- Outline a detailed programme of activities to be carried out over a three-year period.
- Communicate the benefits that the programme requested by the NTF will provide to its members if approved.
- Commit to relevant national anti-doping legislation, good governance, and athlete support measures.
- Provide evidence of financial autonomy, financial transparency rules and develop a strategic financing plan and a budget for activities.
- Understand and adopt the financial regulations of the Olympic Solidarity programme, such as procedures for accessing grants, prerequisites payable, financial management rules and their need for exemptions or exceptions (if applicable).
- Follow the communication, financial and progress reporting guidelines established by the NOC and its relevant sports department.
- Enter the Olympic Solidarity system the monthly updated list of athletes, coaches and team officials receiving NOC support.
- Comply with general ethical codes and provide an informative and interactive website.

- Demonstrate a clear policy on gender equality, child protection and commitment to athlete welfare.
- Show evidence of training activities and programmes in areas such as sport development, athlete and coach education and training, and sport management.
- Emphasise that NF programmes and activities focus on the development of athletes, coaches, and sport administrators, while satisfying gender balance requirements.
- Participate actively in international sport development programmes and initiatives proposed by the IOC.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Management strategies of our National Federation

For the Paraguayan Tennis Association, it has been fundamental to use and take advantage of the various Olympic Solidarity programmes to consolidate the work we have been doing in the area of training. The main key is the coordinated and interrelated work between our national federation and all the parties involved. This progress was especially due to the implementation of various strategies and activities that facilitated this improvement, led by our federation.

The strategies implemented for the use and exploitation of Olympic Solidarity programmes are detailed below.

Strategy No. 1: Interrelation of the federation with the Paraguayan Olympic Committee, the International Tennis Federation, and the Secretariat of Sports.

Objective:

Promote active communication between the Paraguayan Olympic Committee COP, the International Tennis Federation (ITF), and the National Sports Secretariat (SND), to be fully interrelated to take advantage of the various programmes.

Strategic actions:

- Relationship and management with the Olympic Committee to be able to take advantage of and carry out at least 2 to 3 Olympic Solidarity programmes every year.
- Early communication and co-ordination with the ITF to set up a calendar for the year with all programmes and projects and the management of the same with SO.
- Early application to the Olympic Committee for the year's programmes ahead of other sports.
- Support from the Secretary of Sports in the adaptation and improvement of the facilities for greater comfort to be able to carry out more projects at the headquarters of the federation.

Strategy No. 2: Professionalisation of the federation

Objective:

Recruitment of trained technical staff for the federation, capable of carrying out and managing various programmes, thus achieving the professionalisation of the sport.

Strategic actions:

- Recruitment of persons responsible for the areas for the elaboration, monitoring, control, and accountability of the various programmes.
- Having national tutors to carry out the training has raised the level considerably, giving us greater reach and coverage at the national level.

Strategy No. 3: Improved communication and wider dissemination of actions in sport

Objective:

Reach and reach more people through the right channels with the right communication.

Strategic actions:

- The various programmes implemented will be successful to the extent that they can be used by students and coaches.
- Clear and concrete communication.
- Opening of other communication channels to publicise the various events.

Strategy No. 4: Enhance the training programme for coaches and their insertion into high performance.

Objective:

Our objective within this strategy has been to raise the level of our coaches, from the initiation and development stage, through the intermediate level and up to high performance.

Strategic actions:

- The incorporation of teachers and/or students of physical education in the various training events has been an extremely important step forward in increasing the number of trainers at the initial or developmental level and for the various projects in schools.
- Ensure training work with the Olympic Committee's interdisciplinary team in the area of applied sciences and sports methodology so that coaches have a general vision in their insertion into high performance.
- Retain or re-incorporate former players in tennis who can add value.

CONCLUSIONS

The Olympic Solidarity programmes are an important factor in helping NTFs benefit from assistance that will help them improve their services and products. This programme provides increased opportunities for the development of sport in countries that may lack funding and resources. It also supports training, development, and technical assistance in Olympic sport disciplines such as tennis for athletes, coaches and support staff from these nations, in order to achieve better results at the Olympic Games.

The sports development of an NTF supported and funded by Olympic Solidarity can improve the performance of the players, the structures of the NFs and lead to increased organisational performance at all levels. Such programmes can also serve to foster a more professional and effective management and administration of NTFs. We hope that this article will be a practical and useful contribution for NTFs wishing to access Olympic Solidarity support. We believe it is vital that NTFs become more proactive and work together with their NOCs to benefit from such programmes.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND FUNDING

The author declares that she has no conflict of interest and has not received any funding for this article.

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