



An interview with IGF Executive Director Antony Scanlon

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As a leader in the golf industry, the World Golf Foundation has included you on a list to receive our e-newsletter, World Golf Foundation Links. For those new to the list, and as a reminder to those already receiving this e-newsletter, it will be sent three times a year and will focus on an issue of import to the industry by assimilating information from around the world on that issue. This month's topic focuses on the 2016 Olympics. In order to best examine the preparation for this global event, we contacted International Golf Federation Executive Director Antony Scanlon. He was gracious enough to take time out of his busy schedule and answer our questions. We hope you find the publication useful and welcome your thoughts and comments.

Steve Mona, CEO
World Golf Foundation

Antony Scanlon joined the International Golf Federation as its Executive Director in November 2010. Previously, he had served at the International Olympic Committee (IOC) as Head of Olympic Games Operations and Services. Scanlon has worked on Olympic Games since 1998, with roles on organizing committees for the Sydney (Coordination, 2000), Salt Lake City (2002) and Athens (2004) Games before joining the IOC full time.

The IGF is the organizing federation for golf in Olympics. With the Rio2016 Games five years away,

Scanlon answered several questions about how the process is moving forward.

The Olympics are roughly five years away. What is your strategy for planning two events (men and women) of this magnitude?

Delivering golf to the Rio 2016 Olympic Games is a partnership. The International Golf Federation (IGF) is working closely with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Rio2016 Organising Committee. We have an elaborate project plan to select and prepare the Olympic venue, conduct test events and then stage the Olympic competition.

Golf has considerable international experience dealing with comparative logistical issues, including security, with events such as men's and women's major championships, the Ryder Cup, the Presidents Cup and the Solheim Cup. Each of these championships is conducted by organisations that are members of the IGF and that would lend their expertise. So we are confident in our ability to conduct a competition worthy of the magnitude of the Olympic Games.

Outside of helping in the course selection, what are some of the major responsibilities of the IGF as the Olympics approach?

Some of the IGF's major responsibilities include:

- Golf for All: Enable access and increase participation by reducing the barriers and increasing the opportunities to play golf at all levels.
- A Great Games: Delivery of a great Olympic event and a memorable experience for the athletes, fans and golfing fraternity that will cement Golf's permanent placement within the Olympic program.
- Pathways: Facilitate innovative educational and developmental programmes that provide pathways for athletes, coaches and officials from the grass roots to the elite levels of golf.

The Olympics, according to many of golf's global leaders, were to increase interest and participation in golf, particularly in countries where golf is not well entrenched. How do you see this developing?

To develop interest and participation in any sport you need resources and time. Since golf's admission to the Olympic Program, we have seen that many of our national members – through their affiliation to their National Olympic Committees – now have access to resources they did not have before, with the main one being funding. Transferring these resources into tangible results in terms of increased participation will take time and the IGF is there to support our membership in developing these programs.

Similarly, the Olympics were to help create world-class golfers from countries who do not currently boast players of that caliber. How do you see this as a long-term vision?

Golf is a universal sport, and currently no single country can lay claim to dominating golf. Golf championships for both men and women have been and continue to be won by players from throughout the world. A perfect example is Venezuelan Jhonattan Vegas' recent victory at the Bob Hope Classic.

Additionally, recent top-10 world rankings for both men and women have featured players from as many as eight different countries, including Australia, England, Germany, Northern Ireland, Norway, South Korea, Taipei and the United States.

Creating world class golfers from any country takes time for programmes to be implemented and pathways to be established to facilitate their development from the amateur ranks through to playing at major championships or the Olympic Games. The newly created high-performance programs – resulting from access to increased funding and resources due to Olympic admission on the programme – are yet to bear fruit but we are confident that golf’s universality will continue to become even greater.

Golf is part of the Olympic programme in 2016 and 2020. What must golf do to ensure it remains part of the Olympics in 2024 and beyond?

Firstly, we need to honour our bid commitments to the IOC.

One commitment was that the best players of the world will be there competing in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 for a chance to earn an Olympic medal. The best players in the world supported golf’s bid to become an Olympic sport. Whether it has been Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson of the United States, Lorena Ochoa of Mexico, Ernie Els of South Africa or Suzann Petersen of Norway, the world’s leading players voiced their support and desire to compete as Olympic athletes. This support and desire from the players remains.

Golf also made the commitment to the IOC that no major championships will compete with the Olympic schedule, voiding any concerns about potential player conflicts.

Secondly, we need to deliver a stellar competition and experience at the Rio2016 Olympic Games – for the athletes competing, but also for the many spectators and lovers of golf who will either be watching it at home or traveling to Rio to share in this historical moment. It is to be an event that will attract new audiences to participate in golf and inspire new generations to compete for their country at future Olympic Games.

What do you foresee as golf’s biggest challenge and opportunity between now and the time the first tee shot is struck at the 2016 Olympic Games?

No doubt the IGF has a big job ahead of us. We have a championship course, and two Olympic events to deliver in Rio de Janeiro. We also have the tremendous opportunity to introduce to many people around the world the great sport of golf. Although golf currently has approximately 60 million participants worldwide, we will expand our reach, not only by developing the game in countries where it is not well established, but also where it has a strong base. To do this, we will need to look at strategies that will enable accessibility to courses, facilities and equipment – ways at making this great game, a game for all.

What has been the most enjoyable part of your job to date?

Meeting the dedicated group of professionals that work in golf has been the most enjoyable part. Coming from outside golf, it really has been a pleasure to meet those working within our membership. They are truly a great bunch of people whose commitment, dedication, passion and love for golf is infectious. Seeing their incredible enthusiasm for golf’s return to the Olympic Games drives us to make sure our return will exceed expectations at the Games in Rio2016.

[Click here](#) for more information on the IGF and the Olympic Games in 2016.

Summary

While there is much work to be done over the next five years, golf's Olympic effort is in full swing. As Rio2016 approaches, the IGF will be working even closer with many of golf's organizations to ensure a successful re-entry into the Olympic Games. It will truly be a collaborative effort.

Addendum

Thank you for the response to our [December edition of WGF Links](#), focusing on the worldwide development of junior golf. One of the missions of this newsletter is to spark conversation about our industry and we believe this was accomplished. In continuing the discussion, we felt it was appropriate to pass along one more source of information.

In addition to its competitive circuit, the [American Junior Golf Association](#) has programs that are encouraging the overall growth of junior golf, including the ACE Grant program, Leadership Links and AJGA Junior-Am fundraisers.

As Founding Partner of the World Golf Foundation, Shell Oil Company provides ongoing financial support and plays a lead role in charitable initiatives aimed at introducing golf to young people, preserving the history of the game and ensuring the future vitality of the game.

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