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## Creation of World Martial Arts Games Seen as Panacea for Sport

**Organizations with differing mandates attempt to control global phenomenon**

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Though they include some of the world's oldest and most intriguing sports, martial arts have failed to gain much recognition from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). But that could change as different martial arts bodies promise to bring the sport a higher profile and greater recognition.

Today, only two martial arts—taekwondo and judo—are actually Olympic sports, but attempts are underway to unify and bring structure to all martial arts thereby creating a globally recognized event akin to the Olympics.

It is hoped that the World Martial Arts Games, being run or planned by at least three organizations, will become such an event.

These organizations, boasting numerous international allegiances or member federations, include the World Organization of Martial Arts Athletes (WOMAA), the World Martial Arts Games Committee (WMAGC), and the General Association of International Sports Federations (AGFIS). Since 2000, WOMAA has been staging a global martial arts competition. This year's edition is being called the "European" World Martial Arts Games. Their games operate as a tournament where the number of entrants determines the prize money given to the winner and the success of the event.

Last August in Victoria, Canada, WMAGC held its inaugural World Martial Arts Games attracting seven-time world champion Mike Chat and former undefeated world kickboxing champion Carl Emery. WMAGC's mission is to "unite the practice of martial arts through world competition," in hopes of one day seeing the World Martial Arts Games become the



Mike Chat, creator of Xtreme Martial Arts and former Blue Power Ranger from the hit Fox series, participates in the World Martial Arts Games opening ceremonies in Victoria, Canada, last August. (Rebecca Belcher,

Olympics of martial arts.

Imagewear Photography/CNMAA)

In a similar vein, AGFIS, an IOC-recognized organization, held a December meeting in Brussels and decided to create yet another World Martial Arts Games. AGFIS plans to hold its inaugural games in 2010 at a date and place to be confirmed at its next meeting.

The AGFIS-run event will only be for "la crème de la crème" according to the World Association of Kickboxing Organization's Web site. A further explanation of their view on the games is provided there: "The World Martial Arts Games will be open only to top fighters and athletes who have to qualify through the various regional and World Championships."

Thus AGFIS's vision for the World Martial Arts Games is significantly different from WOMAA's but similar to WMAGC's in intent.

According to WMAGC Chairman Ken Marchtaler, it is believed that some AGFIS members may feel threatened by WMAGC's rapid progress and increasing number of national members. "It shows us that we have been on the right path in initiating and implementing our thoughts and ideas. However, I do not believe that the governing body of the AGFIS or the IOC are aware that the concept and name World Martial Arts Games is already established and being used. If they had, I am sure they would have approached us with their intent. They would not want to risk any type of controversy."

Marchtaler also shared with The Epoch Times that a high-ranking official of the International Wushu Federation has questioned the legitimacy and authority of WMAGC.

With many of the martial arts having their own organizational bodies, putting together a showcase event of international caliber requires a tremendous amount of work and co-operation.

Clearly, the initial stages of the unification of the martial arts are characterized by numerous small organizations with different mandates, rules, competitions, and intentions.

But Marchtaler is optimistic about the future. "We are not interested in controlling the martial arts community, but rather see what we are doing as way of bringing the best of the community together, under one roof, regardless of discipline or affiliation.

"Each athlete, each discipline, each national and international federation is part of a bigger, greater picture that is shaping the very future of the martial arts world."