

## Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee



### Background

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) consists of approximately 1,225 remote islands grouped in 29 atolls and five major islands, which form two parallel groups, the "Ratak (sunrise) chain and the "Ralik" (sunset) chain, spread across 750,000 square miles of the Pacific Ocean, with a total combined land area of about 71 square miles.

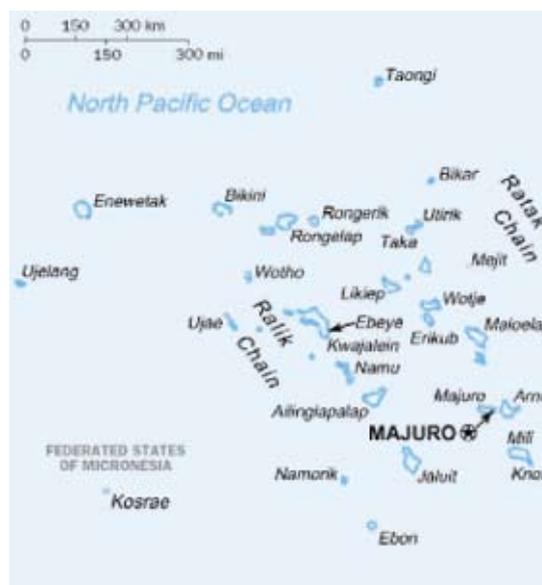
RMI's total population is over 60,000 people. Approximately 46% of that number live on Majuro Atoll, the district center, which comprises only 3.75 square miles of dry land, making it the fourth highest population density in the Pacific at around 306 people per square kilometer and the highest average household size in the Pacific at 7.2 people.

The second largest population is found on the island of Ebeye in Kwajalein Atoll. The population is growing rapidly at a rate of 3.69%; if growth continues at this rate, by the year 2014 there will be 81,272 people living in the Marshall Islands.

The population of RMI is very young with over 64% under the age of 24, and an average population age of 17.8 years. Combined with high migration to the urban centers, this has resulted in a demand for education, employment, health and social services that far exceeds the capacity of the economy, current infrastructure and institutions to deliver.



*Sports increasingly provide healthy outlets and allow youth to express themselves in positive ways.*



The freedoms and accessibility of today's global society perpetuate feelings of anger, frustration and uncertainty about the future. The materialism and influences of modern society have not been balanced with the enforcement, education and understanding of the consequences and responsibilities that come with these freedoms. What is referred to as the "youth problem" actually symbolizes a more serious problem: the inability of our communities to positively and creatively fulfill the needs, interests and expectations of its children.

There have been no organized epidemiological studies conducted regarding sports; however, there have been surveys and studies that have shown clearly that the presence of sports in communities is a great deterrent from destructive behavior and the crime rate is drastically reduced.

The Asian Development Bank recently conducted a Youth Behavior Survey in the Marshall Islands, which qualified the statement that where there is a presence of sports, the community is enriched. Sports were highlighted, by youth



*IOC recognition will provide our sports community with unprecedented opportunities. A very strong executive team and National Sports Federations demonstrate their commitment and have pursued continuous dialogue and follow-up to make their dream a reality.*

and community members surveyed, as one of the top means in which youth could be provided with positive alternatives.

Olympic Solidarity funds help address these challenges from several angles. It is our objective, as an NOC, to develop sports, first in the densely populated areas and then in the outer-lying atolls, enabling strategies to identify future elite athletes throughout the Republic. Sports increasingly provide healthy outlets and allow youth to express themselves in positive ways. By extension, their families and surrounding communities benefit. It is our belief that, especially for small island countries, the impact of the Olympic Solidarity programs will be much more far-reaching than their intended scope.

### **IOC Recognition**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee (MINOC) was formally recognized as the 203rd NOC to be admitted to the Olympic Movement by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) during its 118th Session held February 9, 2006, in Torino, Italy, during the Winter Olympic Games.

The MINOC joined the 14 other National Olympic Committees (NOCs) in Oceania, and now benefits from programs of assistance for sports development through Olympic Solidarity. And, for the first time, Marshall Island athletes will be represented at an Olympic Games, in Beijing in 2008.

Oceania National Olympic Committees (ONOC) congratulated MINOC President Kenneth Kramer and Secretary General Terry Sasser on the work they and their Executive Committee and National Sports Federations put into advancing their case for NOC recognition, and will work with them to further develop sports in the Marshall Islands.

One of the main turning points came when MINOC Secretary General Terry Sasser met with International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge and Oceania National Olympic Committees President Kevan Gosper during the ONOC General



Assembly in Brisbane, Australia in April 2005. His objectives were to formally lobby on behalf of President Kramer, the National Olympic Committee and the National Sports Federations and to state why they believed wholeheartedly that Marshall Islands should be accepted for IOC membership.



It was at that time the ONOC President Gosper promised to personally visit the Marshall Islands. He made good on that commitment when he and ONOC Vice President Ric Blas made an official visit to H.E. President Note, the Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee and its National Sports Federations in December 2005.

President Gosper was in attendance at the International Olympic Committee 118th Session in Torino to deliver Marshall Islands' bid for IOC membership to the General Assembly and to express his support for our efforts.

IOC recognition will provide our sports community with unprecedented opportunities. A very strong executive team and National Sports Federations demonstrate their commitment and have pursued continuous dialogue and follow-up to make their dream a reality.

Nine sports have active National Sports Federations: athletics, basketball, baseball/fastpitch softball, lawn tennis, swimming, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling.

Marshall Islands has begun to enjoy the benefits of Olympic Solidarity and the programs by which the NOC can further develop its athletes, coaches, management and promotion of Olympic Values.

**Commonwealth Games**

**Melbourne, Australia**

**March 6-29, 2006**

RMI delegates Daniel Andrew and Dimitrius Tarkwon were selected to attend the Commonwealth Games Workshop and serve on the support staff during the Games. During the workshop, they trained on Sportzware Software, both competition management and web-sites administration, Dart Fish Video Analysis Software. The training they received will be very useful during the 2007 RMI National Games.



**XV General Assembly of ANOC**

**Seoul, Korea**

**March 31 – April 5, 2006**

The ANOC Conference, as a whole, exemplified the true meaning of the term “Olympic Family.” MINOC was sincerely congratulated by IOC President Jacque Rogge and ANOC President Mario Vazquez Rana and many other delegates.

Secretary General Terry Sasser, on behalf of the MINOC, was warmly welcomed and was asked to stand and be acknowledged. The ANOC Conference and subsequent dialogue was of great benefit and demonstrated the vastness and wealth of opportunities bestowed on us as a new NOC. There were great meetings with TOP Program staff who briefed us about the program’s benefits and executed the TOP contract. Many hours were spent at the Olympic Solidarity Office with Pere Miro, Nicole Girard-Savoy and the various offices within Solidarity. Their staff was very thorough and helpful at all levels.



**ONOC Gen. Assembly**

**Nadi, Fiji**

**May 12-13, 2006**

President Kenneth Kramer and Secretary General Terry Sasser were in attendance at the General Assembly. Once again, much time was spent with Dennis Miller and Nicole Girard-Savoy of the Olympic Solidarity Office who were able to answer many of our questions about OS Programs. Nicole presented us with the “OS Bible” 3-ring binder and CD detailing all available OS funding. At this time it was confirmed that we could apply for the NOC Administration Development grant of \$25,000. Also, ONOC Secretary General Dr. Robin Mitchell identified a \$25,000 National Activities budget for RMI to begin developing its programs. We are very grateful to have received this funding, as RMI was not originally budgeted into FY2006.

The General Assembly was a great opportunity for President Ken Kramer to meet the Oceania Olympic Family and begin dialogue with other NOCs. Both RMI delegates returned very enthusiastic and overwhelmed by the resources at our disposal, but with greater understanding that there needed to be some additional internal development, training, performance measures and accountability within the NOC and its National federations.



**Pacific Games Council**

**Apia, Samoa**

**May 14-15, 2006**

Directly following the ONOC General Assembly, President Ken Kramer and Sec. Gen. Terry Sasser attended the Pacific Games Council. These meetings were very productive as President Vidhya Lakhani presented an aggressive agenda, which led to the adoption of the new constitution. The development of sports facilities, which were viewed during the visit, was very impressive

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and certainly set new standards for the region. The host NOC did an exceptional job for the details related to the Council.

## Micronesian Games

### Saipan, CNMI

June 23-July 3, 2006

The Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee (MINOC) sent a delegation of 78 athletes and coaches, led by MINOC President Kenneth Kramer and administered by Secretary General Terry Sasser, to the 2006 Micronesian Games in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas. The Presidential delegate was represented by Assistant Secretary of Internal Affairs Monono Dawoj.

RMI competed in athletics, men's basketball, men's fast pitch softball, golf, lawn tennis, Micronesian all around, table tennis, spear fishing, swimming and triathlon.

The Micro Games, held every four years, had its opening ceremonies Friday evening, June 23, at a jam-packed Oleai Sports Complex in Saipan. Close to 4,000 spectators cheered 1,400-plus athletes, coaches and team officials from nine islands, Chuuk, CNMI, Guam, Kiribati, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, Palau, Pohnpei and Yap.

Roman Cress, who holds the title of fastest man in the Pacific, has recently stepped up his training and is a hopeful for competition in RMI's Olympic debut in the 2008 Games in Beijing. Roman took the bronze medal in the 100-meter sprint and the gold medal in the 200-meter event. Besides Mr. Cress, the Marshall Islands Athletics Federation sent a women's team under the leadership of coach Daniel Andrew.



Roman Cress - Athletics



Robert Pinho - Basketball

Basketball star Robert Pinho had the honor of carrying RMI's flag in the opening ceremony, celebrating what may be his final international competition as an athlete. The basketball team won the bronze medal on the final day of Micro Games competition.



The men's fast pitch softball team, made up predominately of Namu Atoll's May Day winners and coached by Jeimata Kabua, won the silver medal.



Jeimata Kabua  
- Coach  
Men's Fast-Pitch  
Softball

This was the first time RMI competed in the sport of golf. Jeffery Wase led a four-man golf team from Kwajalein to a silver medal win.

Milne brothers, David and Derek, anchored RMI's men's lawn tennis team, which also included Spencer Doulatram and Jason Yamamura. The men took the bronze in their team event. David and Derek Milne also won a bronze in the men's doubles event. The Marshalls' women's tennis team



Jeff Wase, Paul Allas, Andrew Frase - Golf

consisted of two players, Elizabeth and Shimiko Nott, South Pacific Mini Games gold medalist West Nott's mother and younger sister. Elizabeth and Shimiko Nott won the silver medal in the women's doubles match. And Elizabeth Nott and David Milne captured another bronze in the mixed doubles event.

Table Tennis, a relatively new competitive sport for RMI, brought home a bronze in their team competition under the leadership of coach Luon Erakdrik.

Mr. Ati Libokmeto captured the silver medal in the Micronesian All Around, a regional sport which includes spear throwing,



**Luon Erakdrik - Table Tennis**

swimming, diving, coconut husking and coconut tree climbing. Coach Amon Tibon brought Ati from Ailuk Atoll. Two spear fishermen also competed for RMI.

This year's swimming team was very young but shows a lot of promise. Under the leadership of Cris Lindborg and Sarah Stepchew, they won several

medals. Ian Taylor brought home a gold medal in the men's 50-meter freestyle and won a bronze medal in the men's 100-meter freestyle. His brother Michael Taylor took a bronze in the men's 100-meter breaststroke. The men's team also nabbed bronze medals in the 400 and 800-meter freestyle relay and the 400-meter medley relay. The women's team also distinguished itself with two silver medals in the 400-meter freestyle



**Jared Heine - Swimming IOC Scholarship Recipient**

relay and the 400-meter medley relay. Previous gold medalist Jared Heine was absent from this year's Micro Games. He has just received an Olympic Solidarity scholarship to train for next year's South Pacific Games, the Oceania Championships and the Beijing Olympics.



**Laurie Mann - Triathlon**

Another new and exciting sport this year is triathlon, which includes swimming, cycling and running. Two Kwajalein-based athletes entered the competition with competitive times and emerged with medals for team RMI. Laurie



**Damien Milne - Tennis**

Mann took the gold in the women's triathlon while Tom Cardillo secured the bronze in the men's event.



**Ian Taylor - Swimming**

The Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee and its membership would like to express our sincere gratitude to H.E. President Kessai H. Note, Hon. Minister Rien Morris and Cabinet Members for your belief in and support of our efforts. We understand the responsibility that is entrusted with such a generous investment and we are proud of our accomplishments. Every sports federation that participated brought home medals.



**Tom Cardillo - Triathlon**

We look forward to an ongoing partnership in building the capacity of our sports programs to help in the development of our nation's youth through the discipline sport provides. It is our ardent hope that we can continue to build on our success at the 2006 Micronesian Games and our new International Olympic Committee (IOC) membership status to host the 2010 Micronesian Games here in RMI.

**ONOC Sec. Gen. Meeting**

**Suva, Fiji  
July 25-29,  
2006**

Sec. Gen. Terry Sasser attended this meeting. He had a chance to visit the ONOC offices and speak in depth with Dennis Miller regarding



Solidarity Programs. This was a great opportunity for the ONOC secretaries general to strategize and share ideas, successes and failures. Brian Minikin and Dennis Miller presented promotions of NOCs, including marketing and merchandise, which were of great interest to the delegates. A great idea was to use the SportingPulse website as the "store" for NOCs to market their merchandise.

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Delegates were made aware of current vendors who had not been fair in their licensing rights and sales to some of the NOCs. There was continued dialogue and panel

discussions, featuring President Gosper, Sec. Gen. Mitchell, and Solidarity's Girard-Savoy, on various subjects from WADA to the Olympic Games in Beijing.

Another topic of discussion was the development of materials in the various languages of the Oceanic NOCs. In many cases, English is not a strength in the countries and the information detailed would not be understood. One of the highlights was NZ Secretary General Barry Maister's power point presentation about visioning and focusing on the NOC's structure, purpose, mission, etc. It was very pertinent for smaller NOCs and we will be extending an invitation for Sec. Gen. Maister to present this to our NOC and NFs sometime this year.

### **RMI Bid to host 2010 Micronesian Games**

One of our primary objectives in 2006 was to submit our bid to host the 2010 Micronesian Games. The MINOC worked with the RMI Government to develop the bid and the Government has agreed to a 4.5 million dollar plan to develop facilities and to administrate and implement the Games. H.E. President Kessai H. Note and his Cabinet members are quite enthusiastic about this endeavor, which was evident in the President's State of the Republic address.

The Government has already begun the development of a 5 million dollar Convention Center project, which could host wrestling, weightlifting and table tennis competitions simultaneously. This facility will be completed in September 2007.

### **First Annual Olympic Day Run**

#### **Event Report**

The Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee's (MINOC) first annual Olympic Day Run (ODR) was a great success. Held on December 16, 2007, it was the first time community, business and government witnesses that the Olympic movement is all about.

Large banners, posters, radio press releases and newspaper articles publicized the event in the weeks before, and RMI's first annual Olympic Day Run will also be featured in the RMI National HIV campaign video currently in production.



#### **Rural Laura Village**

Approximately 500 participated in two simultaneous run/walks, one in the capitol city of Majuro and one on the rural village of Laura. Registration began at 5:00 am and the race began only ten minutes late at 6:10 am. Participants included senators, secretaries and assistant secretaries of government, businesses and community members and all sports federations and clubs. Participants ranged in age from 5 to 71. The first 500 participants were given event t-shirt and all received certificates as meaningful keepsakes.

At the finish line participants gathered for fruit and sandwiches and speeches were delivered by athletes, MINOC executives and representatives from the Ministries of Health and Education. All were very appreciative of MINOC's efforts in their speeches and comments.

In his speech, MINOC President Kenneth Kramer enumerated on the purpose of Olympism: “to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind, embodied by the Olympic spirit of mutual understanding in a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.” It is our responsibility to join with our Olympic Family around the world and build on all the hard work that has been accomplished to create something new and lasting in the Marshall Islands.

### World HIV/AIDS Day Collaboration

Furthermore, having the ODR coincide with Republic of the Marshall Islands’ (RMI) National HIV/AIDS Awareness Month brought increased awareness to social issues. It brought an understanding that the Olympic Movement is not just about sport but also about community and how sports can be used effectively to deliver initiatives – like HIV/ AIDS – to the community. The Assistant Secretary of Health/ National HIV Coordinator, who is also involved with the Table Tennis Federation, witnessed how sports can have a positive impact on social issues. In his speech



The capitol city of Majuro

he quoted our Olympic Day Run theme, stating that “friendship, solidarity and fair play” made disciplined athletes who could deliver these often-difficult messages to their peer groups more effectively than anyone else.

Terry Sasser, MINOC’s Secretary General as well as a community leader, has identified HIV prevention education as one of our primary thrusts. In 1996, a United Nations report predicted that the sheer small size of the Pacific islands and their population made them likely to be overwhelmed, in a manner even more ghastly than is now depopulating African AIDS-stricken countries, unless intense counter-attacks against the spread of the disease were begun immediately.



Translated: “Educating & empowering ourselves to stop HIV/AIDS” “Olympic Day Run” was on the

Today, the Pacific Islands region finds itself facing a situation similar to that which Africa confronted 20 years ago when HIV/AIDS was but an emerging threat. We believe that sports can be both a deterrent to high-risk behavior and a forum for prevention education. If we can educate athletes and coaches, their status in the community will in turn give them a platform to educate their peers and surrounding communities. MINOC executive officers have met with RMI’s Ministry of Health (MOH) regarding areas whereby they can further collaborate to provide awareness, prevention education and training. MOH has included MINOC on their committee list for all healthy living and exercise related programs and campaigns and has expressed great interest in utilizing our coordination capacity for future events. This will allow us to incorporate sports competition with these events. MOH has also asked MINOC to be a presenter at February’s HIV/AIDS Youth Forum. They have also invited some of our local sports “heroes” to participate on discussion panels and serve as role models in speaking engagements to the schools.



Participants pose with poster and banner

*The 2006 Olympic Day Run was a great success for its first year. It showed the true spirit of Olympism and sport and, perhaps just as important, demonstrated the good will that the Olympic family and movement hold for social concerns like HIV/AIDS.*

Various government ministries regularly use non-government organizations (NGOs) in community events; however, MINOC's ability to provide additional budgets to support the overall initiatives also gives us a voice in event planning and the decision-making process. This has enabled us to build strong relationships with the Ministries of Health, Education and Internal Affairs and opens doors to future collaborations.

We would like to pursue further dialogue with the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Department of International Cooperation & Development – which is working on HIV issues and undertakes several activities to promote a major involvement of the sporting community in fighting the pandemic – to seek funding streams for MINOC to develop educational materials to support these objectives.

The 2006 Olympic Day Run was a great success for its first year. It showed the true spirit of Olympism and sport and, perhaps just as important, demonstrated the good will that the Olympic family and movement hold for social concerns like HIV/AIDS. Sports can be used as a far-reaching avenue to promote this good will; athletes can be used as ambassadors to promote these initiatives.

### Lessons learned



Women passing the Capitol building

Scheduling: Unfortunately, several of our star athletic athletes were unable to participate in the ODR as they were competing in the Oceania Championships in Samoa. In the future, we need to be aware of regional event scheduling to ensure full participation by all national federations.



Three of the ODR winners

Publicity: We need to request from the Solidarity Office and obtain permission to duplicate the video "NOC Sponsors: the Power Behind the Team" and translate this into the Marshallese language. This will immediately promote our Olympic Family to the communities of the Marshall Islands.

Sustainability: Sustainability of this event is far-reaching due to the IOC funding provided. It is equally important to seek the involvement of a wider coalition including business, private sector and government, not only for their participation but also in cost-sharing. The most important accomplishment this year was the awareness raised for the Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee and the Olympic Movement. Great relationships were forged with both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, which will provide collaboration in future endeavors.

### Federation updates

#### Athletics

##### President Melvin Majmeto

##### Secretary General Terry Mote

The Marshall Islands Athletics Federation has one of the greatest potentials for success. The concept that it is, for the most





part, an individual sport will strengthen its future and talent identification is easier than for other sports. Coaches Daniel Andrew, Terry Mote and Barbara Fisher have represented Track and Field at many regional training and development programs. There is an on-going organized track and field team that is constantly in training.

They have recently drafted a new constitution, which will bring accountability and address some of the problems of the past, and will adopt it at their up-coming election. Former shot put gold medalist and discus silver medalist Rais Aho is developing field events. Some great talent has been identified in several distance runners.

During the Micronesian Games in Saipan, Roman Cress took the bronze medal in the 100-meter sprint and the gold medal in the 200-meter event. Perhaps the highlight of the year was the Oceania Championships in Samoa. 16-year old Haley Nemra took two bronze medals. In the 800m, her time of 2:31:08 was only .08 seconds behind the Australian silver and gold medalists and in the 1500m, her time was only .87 seconds behind the gold medalist from New Zealand. She will be a leading candidate to represent RMI in Beijing. Also, 16 year old Cherith Fisher took silver in the cross country event.

### **Basketball**

**President Heran Bellu**

**Secretary General Lisa Lajwi**

The Marshall Islands Basketball Federation rewrote and executed a new constitution. During the Micro Games, basketball star Robert Pinho had the honor of carrying RMI's flag in the opening ceremony, celebrating what may be his final international competition as an athlete. The basketball team won the bronze medal on the final day of Micro Games competition.

President Heran Bellu and Officer Daniel Andrew organized the Ratak/Ralik Tournament, which is the Basketball Federation's

national tournament. Held August 16-26, 2006, it showcased 12 teams and was well-officiated as the basketball program has benefited from development officer Stuart Manwaring's yearly visits. There is a great officiating team, timekeepers and officials, as well as many coaches, which Mr. Manwaring has mentored. Charles Abraham and Sailass Kotton are two of those who benefited from past training. They enjoyed Solidarity funding to develop a level-one referee course and coaching clinics on one of the small outer islands, Mejit. MIBF is working to strengthen the outer islands' capacity in basketball coaching and officiating, and this was the first opportunity they've had to do so.



The new development officer, Eddie Calic, was on Majuro August 05 - 24, 2006. He conducted Referee Course Level 1 & 2 certification, and also helped re-evaluate our 4-year strategic plan, calendar of event, and other administration work.

### **Baseball/Fast-Pitch Softball**

**President Jeimata Nokko Kabua**

**Secretary General Peter Bien**

Marshall Islands Baseball/Softball Federation also recently rewrote and adopted its new constitution. Though there are currently no active adult baseball leagues, one of their recent initiatives is to start a youth little league competition beginning in March. Fast-pitch softball is very popular and has year-round leagues. In the past ten years they have won medals at the SPG and Micro Games. The men's fast pitch softball won the silver medal at the 2006 Micro Games in Saipan. They became the 111th full member of IBAF during 2006. This was due in great part to the new relationship they have formed with their IF, specifically Chet Grey and John Ostermeyer, whose diligence and perseverance was remarkable. They are currently in correspondence with

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athletes can be used as ambassadors to promote these initiatives.*



Chet Grey to schedule a development officer's visit before the National Games in May.

President Jeimata Kabua and Vice-President Hemly Benjamin have spearheaded a transition from women's slow-pitch to women's fast-pitch, which was recently voted in as the new sport for women. They will be receiving Solidarity funding to strengthen this effort. President Kabua will also be traveling to Beijing for the IBAF Congress in March.

### Lawn Tennis

**President Wally Milne**

**Secretary General Atmita Jonathan**



Marshall Islands Lawn Tennis Federation has experience dramatic growth due in great part to the construction of two new tennis courts.

President Wally Milne devoted much time and effort into the development of many new athletes and tournaments long before the Marshall Islands' recognition as an NOC. Development Office Dan

O'Connell has also spent many years developing the tennis program here in RMI. They have participated in regional training and have certified coaches and officials. Mini SPG gold medalist West Nott inspired many young athletes. While he was unable to attend the 2006 Micro Games, his former teammates, Milne brothers David and Derek, anchored RMI's men's lawn tennis team, which also included Spencer Doulatram and Jason

Yamamura. The men took the bronze in their team event. David and Derek Milne also won a bronze in the men's doubles event. The Marshalls' women's tennis team consisted of two players, Elizabeth and Shimiko Nott, South Pacific Mini Games gold medalist West Nott's mother and younger sister. Elizabeth and Shimiko Nott won the silver medal in the women's doubles match. And Elizabeth Nott and David Milne captured another bronze in the mixed doubles event. Due the surge of tennis' popularity in the RMI, there is a greater talent pool to draw from in talent identification and we expect many up and coming youth to choose tennis as their sport.

### Swimming

**President Lora J. Kendrick**

**Secretary General Kathleen Kautz**

Cris Lindborg and Sarah Stepchew continue to spearhead the development of athletes and coaches for the Marshall Islands Swimming Federation. In July 2006, both attended Oceania to officiate at an international event for the first time, post FINA sponsored training in 2005.



This year's swimming team was very young but shows a lot of promise. Under the leadership of Cris Lindborg and Sarah Stepchew, they won several medals. Ian Taylor brought home a gold medal in the men's 50-meter freestyle and won a bronze medal in the men's 100 meter freestyle. His brother Michael Taylor took a bronze in the men's 100-meter breaststroke. The men's team also nabbed bronze medals in the 400 and 800-meter freestyle relay and the 400-meter medley relay. The women's team also distinguished itself with two silver medals in the 400-meter freestyle relay and the 400-meter medley relay. We are currently working to obtain Marshallese citizenship for many of the swimmers who were born and raised in RMI but do not have Marshallese passport. Previous gold medalist Jared

Heine was absent from this year's Micro Games. He received an Olympic Solidarity scholarship to train for next year's Pacific Games, the Oceania Championships and the Beijing Olympics. In December 2006, Solidarity funded his participation in the US Open. He continues to train at Florida State University, where he was a member of the swim team until his recent graduation. His goal not only to attend but actually qualify for the Beijing Games. He will be visiting RMI in January 2007 to conduct swimming clinics and to promote his Olympic participation.

Upcoming 2007 Events include: Five Swimmers will participate at the XII FINA World Championships in Melbourne in March 2007; Jared Heine & Giordan Harris will participate in the 2007 South Pacific Games; and a FINA-sponsored coaching clinic will be conducted by well-known trainer Milt Nelms in Kwajelein and Majuro in October 2007.

#### Table Tennis

**President Luon Erakdrik**

**Secretary General Tom Maus**

Marshall Islands Table Tennis Federation also redrafted and executed a new constitution. MITTF has been very active locally and has conducted lengthy correspondence and paid past dues to achieve good standing with their IF.

During the 2006 Micro Games, MITTF brought home a bronze in their team competition under the leadership of coach Luon Erakdrik. In November they hosted their second annual President's Day Tournament, which was a great success.



Correspondence is underway to scheduling a development officer visit early in the year. Table Tennis has also submitted a request for a large amount of special plywood to construct

20 tables for various villages throughout the Marshall Islands. Their objective in this is to generate organized table tennis tournaments. This sport is very popular in the RMI, however, it is not organized to official levels. Part of MITTF's objectives for a development officer will include organizing small tournaments and scheduling for the year. A great supported of MITTF is Assistant Secretary of Health Russell Edwards who was also involved in our Olympic Day Run.

#### Volleyball

**President Charles Abraham**

**Secretary General Monique Levy-Strauss**



Marshall Islands Volleyball federation rewrote and adopted a new constitution within the last year. Volleyball is the most popular sport among women in RMI. There are year-round leagues for all age groups and seasonal leagues for men.

Due to physical limitations, it is very difficult to be competitive outside the region of Micronesia. President Charles Abraham is working to promote beach volleyball and will host the first tournament in the spring. There is a belief that there is great potential in beach volleyball and that we could produce competitive teams in this discipline. Abraham has expressed an interest in developing a video series to help train coaches and officials, for which the NOC is pursuing financial assistance.

There will be a great effort by the NOC to bring in development officers for volleyball this year. They have been absent for many years due in great part to our lack of activity and correspondence outside the RMI. We are corresponding with the IF to further develop this very popular sport.

*After revising and adopting a new constitution, the Weightlifting Federation has decided to focus its attention on the development of clubs in the various villages and atolls of RMI.*



#### **Weightlifting**

**President Rais 'Aho**

**Secretary General Eugene Muller**

The Marshall Islands Weightlifting Federation is experiencing a resurgence after several years of limited activity. They have recruited many of their former members to again become involved in the development of the sport. MINOC President Ken Kramer is personally investing much time and energy into the further development of this federation, which has the potential to field some very competitive athletes.

After revising and adopting a new constitution, the Weightlifting Federation has decided to focus its attention on the development of clubs in the various villages and atolls of RMI. Laura Village, for example, was chosen for its rural location and has a very active, committed club that shows competitive promise.

The objective of these community clubs is to identify the lifters with the greatest potential and pour time and energy into the competitive and elite athletes. Another objective is to develop competitions among the various weight classes. Their focus in 2007 is to start three new clubs, one in the second most populated island of Ebebe and one each on Jaluit and Woja Atolls where large public boarding high school are attended by students from the surrounding atolls and islands.

Paul Coffa continues to offer opportunities and support the overall development of weightlifting in RMI. We have been asked to identify a weightlifter to train in Samoa's facilities. In addition, we will be seeking other Solidarity funds to support this effort.

#### **Wrestling**

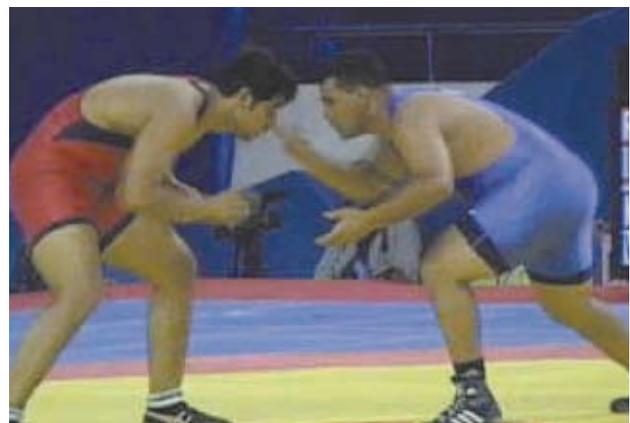
**President Francis Silk**

**Secretary General Chris Bing**

Marshall Islands Wrestling Federation is, in recent times, the most competitive RMI team regionally. This is due on great part to the fact that many of the wrestlers received training in US high schools. That generation of wrestlers are the newly elected federation officers and are focusing on recruiting new trainees. The lack of wrestling mats has hindered progress.

President Francis Silk has secured a new wrestling mat from FILA that is currently being shipped to RMI. Upon its arrival, the old mat will be taken to another location facilitating the immediate development of another wrestling program. This will enable the startup on internal competitions, which are greatly needed to further develop wrestling in RMI.

They are currently fund-raising to support the purchase of an



additional mat to start yet another program. Wrestling enjoys great support in RMI due to its ongoing success. As a result of its trip to the World Championships in Guangzhou, China September 25 - October 1, 2006, which was partially funded by Olympic Solidarity, the Marshall Islands Wrestling Federation is ranked 45th in the world, putting RMI solidly in the middle of world standings.

In the individual freestyle competition, Peter Peter ranks 30th, Jeton Anjain, Jr. ranks 28th and Waylon Muller ranks 26th in the world.

**Other organized sports** include Judo, Soccer, Tae Kwon Do and Triathlon. These sports are in various stages of organization and have only recently filed papers with the IF or are in the process of doing so.

### Government

We have fostered a strong relationship with the government, while maintaining our autonomy, and they are very supportive of our efforts. At the national level, the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for sport through its Department of Sport and Recreation. The department has a staff of seven based at the national gymnasium, which it owns and manages. The gymnasium activities are linked with MINOC, local government, schools, youth groups and individual sport clubs to organize leagues and tournaments. Local governments carry out sport activities throughout the atolls of RMI. These officers run sport programs, basically providing the main pathway for sport on the outer islands. Many of these officers are involved in sport federations.

The Department of Sport and Recreation and MINOC meet monthly to discuss all sport matters. At present, one of the MINOC vice-presidents is also the Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. H.E. President Kessai H. Note delivered on his promise to support the 2007 RMI National Games to be held in May. MINOC is co-chairing this event and its NFs have been given the responsibility of delivering the competition. The RMI Government has allocated \$150,000 for this event and has expressed its great need to have MINOC involved in the highest levels of administration and Games competition.

### Sport for people with disabilities

To meet the needs of people with disabilities, the Ministry of Education partially funds a special education program. The program operates in the public school campuses and caters to participants with various disabilities. It conducts activities in such areas as sign language skills and recreation and is also involved in wheelchair basketball, track and field, table tennis and volleyball.

Special education also conducts an annual walkathon for athletes with disabilities in conjunction with Disability Week, which as its name suggests, is a week of sport and other activities specially targeting people with disabilities. There is interest in further developing the disabled population in sport, but additional consultation is needed to do so. We will be requesting some assistance in this area.

### Women in sport

RMI women have a keen interest in sport and generally have spare time to be involved in sport. The Marshall Islands is active in advancing women-in-sport issues. Two national non-government organizations – Women's Athletic Club and Women United Together in the Marshall Islands – organize and support women in sport. MINOC and the individual sport federations are working to explore ways to strengthen this area. The MINOC Constitution was amended to include a Vice-President of Women's Development in Sport and most federations have also adopted a clause in their constitutions including a Vice-President of Women's Development in Sport.

RMI Sport and Recreation works closely with MINOC to conduct a biennial National Women's Multi-sport event. This event includes both youth and adult leagues. The MINOC will be electing a delegate to join Oceania's Women in Sport Commission and attend their 2007 General Assembly.

### In Conclusion

2006 has been quite exciting and overwhelming for the Marshall Islands National Olympic Committee. The accomplishment of finally becoming an IOC member, which has been our primary objective for many years, was the culmination of our national federations, government leaders and the NOC successfully working together for a common goal. However, we understand that, in the short time we have had recognition and subsequent funding, we have to strengthen internal protocols for the purpose of accountability.

We found ourselves trying to expedite the implementation of our objectives too quickly due to the limited timeframe (less than six months) of our first fiscal year, and have now slowed it to a manageable pace that will not lose sight of internal protocols.

ONOC Secretary General Dr. Robin Mitchell and Programs Manager Dennis Miller were key in helping us to realize that the administration of the Solidarity Funding could be either our greatest asset or our greatest liability if we did not first structure our internal protocols.

We have held two workshops with our NFs to explain the Solidarity Programs and the IOC structure. We continue to utilize the power point that Dennis Miller presented and the DVDs from the IOC Marketing department in this training. Further development and capacity-building for both our NOC and the national federations has been our primary focus for 2006 and will continue in 2007.



*We have identified and are ready to move forward with the purchase of the budget detailed in our 2006 NOC Administration Development Olympic Solidarity grant.*

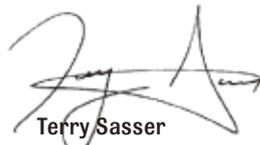
As an NOC, we completely understand that the NOC is only as strong as its NFs. We must continue to build capacity within the NFs until they completely understand Solidarity Programs. We, the NOC, have only begun to understand the great IOC support network that exists for an organized NOC. We have identified and are ready to move forward with the purchase of the budget detailed in our 2006 NOC Administration Development Olympic Solidarity grant. We are currently looking at two rental properties for our office and have reviewed applicants for the full-time role of MINOC office manager to ease the burden of the current volunteer staff.

We are very grateful to the entire Fiji ONOC staff for their support and diligence, specifically Secretary General Dr. Robin Mitchell, Dennis Miller, Brian Minikin, Hanisi Visanti and Natanya Potoi. To President Kevan Gosper and the Solidarity team, especially Director Pere Miro and Nicole Girard-Savoy, thank you for believing in the small island nations of the Pacific. We are very determined and enthusiastic about 2007.

Sincerely,



**Kenneth Kramer**  
President



**Terry Sasser**  
Secretary General