



Roger Brigham, Chair

Wrestlers WithOut Borders (WWB)

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To: Gene Dermody, treasurer, WWB

Re: Wrestlers Without Borders Delegate Designation

24 February 2010

Dear Gene,

I understand some Antwerp organizers approached you to know what level of support Wrestlers WithOut Borders (WWB) will offer a third World OutGames (WOG), currently scheduled to be held in 2013 in Antwerp. I will summarize our response below and you may share this with your contacts as necessary.

WWB published its answer to this issue in July 2009, just before the staging of WOG2 in Copenhagen, and our decision was recently discussed and reconfirmed this month. The short answer is **we love Antwerp**, we have heard only wonderful things from our members who were able to be part of the Antwerp EuroGames in 2007, and **would heartily welcome a return of the EuroGames to Antwerp**, but regrettably, because we believe the **WOGs have proven to be a costly and divisive burden** on LGBT sports and cultural organization, **we will not support a WOG3 or any other future WOG.**

We believe the decision to hold WOG2 was unilateral, premature, and without the support of the LGBT organizations or concern for their members. We believe the decision to hold WOG3 even more untenable in light of the sports results of WOG2 and the damaging burdens a continuation of the WOGs places on sports groups.

Our full statement, sent to the members of the conference group on the Future of LGBT Sports that was being held in conjunction with WOG2, is readily available to the public on the web site <http://lgbtsportsfuture.wordpress.com/>, along with similar position papers from other LGBT sports organizations.

At the time we were offering support for wrestling at WOG2, which as it turned out drew only seven wrestlers to its 'tournament,' which was an even lower turnout than our worst predictions and not a sufficient number to provide a safe and competitive bracket ("critical mass"). We stated categorically at the time that based on the drain we had seen on fellow organizations that had been caused by divided attempts to support both the Gay Games and World OutGames (WOGs), the geographical fracturing in WWB that we had sought to heal in the wake of Montreal 2006, and the desire to see the LGBT global sports reunited at the Gay Games as it had been before the advent of the WOGs, we could not and would not support WOG3 in 2013 if it were held, nor any other future WOG.

Our exact words were:

"WWB will continue its WWB Cup in non-Gay Games years, will continue to encourage wrestling clubs to be members of their local city teams and participate in sports festivals, and will continue to support the Federation of Gay Games and the Gay Games event itself. We cannot sanction a World OutGames (WOGs) tournament past 2009."

We also suggested:

"WWB would love to see the EuroGames restore their previous calendar of competition in every three years out of four: 2011-13, 2015-17, etc." and "Preparations are already begun for Antwerp 2013. The community would be best served if those games were EuroGames rather than a World OutGames. End World OutGamesafter World OutGames2(WOGs2) in Copenhagen."

We have heard nothing but praise for the wrestling that was held in 2007 in Antwerp at the EuroGames – the first time North American wrestlers were allowed to compete in those Games. We would **love to see the EuroGames** restored to their former glory, we would love to see the LGBT sports and cultural community continue to **unite in the Gay Games**, and we would love to see GLISA continue to develop the **Continental OutGames in under-served areas** with the conference-sports-culture-party formula that has proven to be a valuable success in those areas where at this time a more sports-centric global event is not feasible.

Events and reports which have become known since we took our position last July – such as the declining participation numbers cited by Team Berlin in its objections since the advent of WOG – only strengthen our belief that it would be a mistake to continue the WOGs, and that those who would do so, while their intentions may be noble, do not serve the interests of the LGBT sports world per se. Their own words, as recorded in the final official status report from Copenhagen, confirm as much. That report, also available at <http://lgbtsportsfuture.wordpress.com/>, says:

"If the secretariat had copied the concept which formed the basis of the first World OutGames (WOGsI) in Montreal, we would be seeing an event where sport was the overwhelmingly dominant aspect. But in Copenhagen, as mentioned above, we chose to raise the priority and give the human rights dimension and the cultural meeting between the event and the city the same weighting as the sports activities.... There is no doubt that there was also an expectation among the politicians at the outset that World OutGames (WOGs) would primarily be a sports event. But if the secretariat had only held onto the sports concept, the human rights concept would have either been non-existent or very diluted, and the cultural bridge-building between the event and the city would also been as good as non-existent."

Previous reports from the Copenhagen event indicate that local politicians at the time they agreed to fund such an undertaking were unaware of the resentment within the global LGBT sports and cultural community against the existence of the WOGs because of the fracturing of loyalties and dilution of limited resources it had caused and the stronger desire for the community to be instead reunited at the Gay Games as the "one quadrennial event" as they had been previously.

We would hope that Antwerp politicians and organizers would be cognizant of the sentiments of the community and recognize the inadvisability of something as counterproductive as attempting a WOG, which would be more expensive than a EuroGames both for participants and for operators, and would fester a wound rather than fill a need.

We are not involved with the ins-and-outs of either GLISA or the European Gay & Lesbian Sports Federation, so we do not know if it is possible for Antwerp to stage a EuroGames in 2013 or if you would desire to do so. We do know that we have every reason to believe a EuroGames event in 2013 would be a success and a welcome return to the normalcy we enjoyed before 2006.

We hope this clarifies our position and the reasons for it. Best of luck and we hope to see you this year in Cologne.

On behalf of WWB,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Brigham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Roger" being more prominent than the last name "Brigham".

Roger Brigham

Chair, Wrestlers WithOut Borders