



Its time to speak out

First of all let me talk to you about the success of the Oceania Weightlifting Federation with regards to doping. This year the continent of Oceania is celebrating its fifteen years of no doping violations. The only continent in the world of weightlifting which has had fifteen years of clean athletes. No other continents in the world in weightlifting can boast of such an achievement. An achievement which is not well known or perhaps it is an achievement which has been ignored.

15 years of NO doping in the Oceania Weightlifting Federation



Our lifters throughout the Oceania region are continually tested. Some of the top lifters are tested at least once a month if not more. This achievement could not have been achieved without the continual vigilance of coaches and federations in the region.

It is time also to speak out on what has been reported in the last 24 hours in relation to the 2024 Paris Olympic Qualification, where the 'inside the games' stated that this qualifying system which the IWF has implemented and the IOC agreed to, is that Oceania will lose out with the Paris 2024 Qualifying system.

How wrong this statement is in relation to Oceania.

To me the Olympic Games is the ultimate in sport. And quality is what the world expects. Yes we only have 120 lifters in Paris. That is 60 men and 60 women and for the first time the Oceania region will have eight to ten lifters ranking in the top 10 and some of them will be on the podium in Paris. Never before has this happened.

We could finish up with almost 10% of qualified lifters competing in Paris. Qualified on their own merit. And I am not afraid to give you some of the names who will be Paris competing for medals. No longer will we wait for the IWF and the IOC to give us tripartite invitations or qualifying through a continental stream. The time is over for this. We now have quality lifters who will be qualifying on their own merit.



Don Opeloge -Samoa



Morea Baru -PNG



Feagaiga Stowers - Samoa



Jack Opeloge- Samoa



Dika Toua - PNG



Eileen Cikamatana- Australia



Kiana Elliott-Australia



David Liti- New Zealand



John Tafi - Samoa

I can tell you we will win medals at the Paris Olympic Games.

- Morea Baru from PNG came 5th at the Rio Olympics with 294kg total. That total would have won a medal in Tokyo, but unfortunately he was sent down to the Institute Gym only two months before the Olympics due to the coronavirus. You don't win medals with two months training. For Rio, he trained two full years, non stop. If he continues this type of training, he will be a medal winner in Paris.
- Eileen Cikamatana from Australia will be a medal winner at the Paris Olympics.
- David Liti from New Zealand, if he continues the way he has so far, he will be another possible medal at the Paris Olympics.
- Then of course let's not forget the Samoans. Feagaiga Stowers, Don Opeloge, Jack Opeloge, John Tafi. These athletes are not going to Paris just to lift. I know that Jerry Wallwork, President of Samoa Weightlifting and the coach of these lifters wants results – nothing less.

So how is Oceania actually going to lose out, with the 2024 Paris qualifying system. We should congratulate the IWF for finally putting quality over quantity.

For so many years, we have had quantity. In Oceania, we all knew sooner or later that this quantity which Oceania has been working on for years would finally produce the quality.

- And finally, let's talk about one particular athlete, if she continues to train the way that she is training, could be the first athlete in the world to compete at six Olympic Games. Not invited but qualified on her own merit.

But also let's remember, the Oceania region has quite a few others, who within two years providing they are supported by their National Federations and National Olympic Committees, could very well qualify on their own merit too.

In Rio we had 6% of Oceania lifters out of 260 lifters. In Paris we could very well reach 10% out of 120 lifters.

Therefore Oceania is not being left behind. Just pay attention to the results of the Oceania lifters at the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and you will get a good idea as to the direction we are headed.

Paris will be my 11th Olympic Games. I was lucky enough in my first Olympic Games in Los Angeles, to coach the Australian team when Dean Lukin and Robert Kabbas won gold and silver respectively. I was at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, where I saw Stefan Botev win bronze for Australia. And I was in Beijing in 2008 when Jerry Wallwork invited me to be with him during the brilliant performance of Ele Opeloge from Samoa, who finished up later winning the silver medal. The journey has been long for Oceania lifters to win medals, but I know that 2024 Paris Olympics, Oceania lifters will showcase their QUALITY.

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OWF General Secretary

