

IFMA EVENT REPORT

IFMA World Championship 2014



LANGKAWI 2014
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
IFMA MUAYTHAI

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Langkawi Island, one of the most beautiful and legendary islands in the world stole all the limelight when they host the International Federation of Muaythai Amateur (IFMA) Muaythai World Championship 2014 from the 1st to 10th May 2014. This long-awaited biennial championship was organized by the IFMA, Muaythai Association of Malaysia (MMA), Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), Lembaga Pembangunan Langkawi (LADA), Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Tourism and Culture and Malaysia Airlines (MAS). Having been previously organized in Saint Petersburg, Russia in 2012, and Tashkent, Uzbekistan in 2010, this is the first time the event was held in this country. The timing of it could not get any better with Visit Malaysia Year 2014 in the fifth month since its launching. Besides the main competition, IFMA organizes workshops on topics such as fair play and sport's integrity. Moreover, programs on athletes' career, as well as the impact of Muay Thai sport and IFMA sustainability were organized as well.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF MUAYTHAI AMATEUR (IFMA)

The International Federation of Muaythai Amateur ("IFMA") started as a small federation with several enthusiastic countries more than two decades ago. It was officially inaugurated in 1993. After the passage of the first half of its life and at the dawn of an exciting new century, IFMA has grown to 128 member countries worldwide with 5 continental federations, all existing under a single, unified regulatory body. In 1998, IFMA was formally recognized by the Olympic Council of Asia. Currently, IFMA bears the responsibility and duty of being the sole world recognized international amateur Muaythai federation, promoting the sport and art of Muaythai around the globe.

OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this report is to present the findings for the observation that was carried out from May 2nd to May 9th. To be specific, this observation report is prepared to achieve the following objectives:

- ✓ Determining the total number of attendees during the seven-day event
- ✓ Collecting survey questionnaire through personal interview
- ✓ Observing the event facilities, arrangement and competition.

METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the aforementioned objectives, three different methodologies were employed to best suit every objective. Prior to the first day of the competition, the researcher has conducted a site visit to locate the best place to perform headcount. From the observation at the event location, there was only one entrance to enter the main event area which is next to the One Hotel Helang Langkawi. Therefore, throughout the seven days of the event, one enumerator was located at the main entrance to perform the head count. The enumerator carried two hand-tally counters, counting local attendees and international attendees respectively. The duty roster has been assigned to each enumerator in which every enumerator (eight in total) has to work for one hour per day from 2.00pm until 10.00pm throughout the event days. Every enumerator needs to summarize the headcount at the end of their shift for record keeping purposes.

For the second objective, the on-site data collection was conducted to probe the information regarding the demographic profile of the attendees, motivation to attend the event, travelling information, number of days spent in Langkawi and Malaysia, total expenditures (during and after the event), rating towards the event, and intention to revisit the event. A total of eight research assistants was deployed to collect 1,000 questionnaires throughout the competition days. The research assistant worked from 2.00pm until 10.00 and was assigned to interview a minimum of 18 respondents every day. As a result, 144 survey questionnaires were collected per day that equivalent to 1,008 in total collected throughout seven days.

For the last objective, a team of researchers that comprised of two teams (two personnel for each team) worked on-site to measure the overall effectiveness of the event organization. The first team worked for the first four days to observe the event launching and the preliminary round of the competition while the second team worked for the last four days to observe the event closing and the final round of the event. There are two key observation points that need to be observed, namely competition and facilities.

2014 IFMA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

In this 2014 edition, the total amount of participating countries as announced during the official launching was 120 however the final numbers were reduced to 101 countries. Apart from that, a total of 2,381 athletes competed in 148 categories as listed below:

Table 1
2014 IFMA World Championship Categories

Senior Male AyB, Junior 17 & Junior Under 17	Female Senior, Junior 17 & Junior Under 17
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pin weight from 42 not over 45 kg Light flyweight from 45 not over 48 kg Flyweight from 48 not over 51 kg Bantamweight from 51 not over 54 kg Featherweight from 54 not over 57 kg Lightweight from 57 not over 60 kg Light welterweight from 60 not over 63.5 kg Welterweight from 63.5 not over 67 kg Light middleweight from 67 not over 71 kg Middleweight from 71 not over 75 kg Light heavyweight from 75 not over 81 kg Cruiserweight from 81 not over 86 kg Heavyweight from 86 not over 91 kg Super heavyweight over 91 kg 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pin weight from 42 not over 45 kg Light flyweight from 45 not over 48 kg Flyweight from 48 not over 51 kg Bantamweight from 51 not over 54 kg Featherweight from 54 not over 57 kg Lightweight from 57 not over 60 kg Light welterweight from 60 not over 63.5 kg Welterweight from 63.5 not over 67 kg Light middleweight from 67 not over 71 kg Middleweight from 71 not over 75 kg Light heavyweight from 75 not over 81 kg
Cadet Boys (12 – 14 years)	Cadet Girls (12 – 14 years)
30-33 -36 -39 -42 -45 -48 -51 -54 -57 -60 -63.5 -67 -71 -71kg	30-33 -36 -39 -42 -45 -48 -51 -54 -57 -60 -63.5 +63.5kg
Kids Boys (10-11 years)	Kids Girls (10-11 years)
-27-30 -33 -36 -39 -42 -45 -48 -51 -54 -57 +57kg	-27-30 -33 -36 -39 -42 -45 -48 -51 -54 +54kg
Tykes Boys (10-11 years)	Tykes Girls (10-11 years)
21-24 -27 -30 -33 -36 -39 -42 +42kg	21-24 -27 -30 -33 -36 -39 -42 +42kg

On top of that, there were also officials, coaches and masters at the event. Worth mentioning here that, IFMA organized its annual general meeting and executive board meeting, workshops on Muaythai issues such as sustainability program, air play and sport's integrity in conjunction with the main competition program during this 10-day championship.

Table 2
Proportion of Local Attendees vs. Foreign Attendees

	Total	Percentage
Local Attendees	18,412	68%
Foreign Attendees	8,626	32%
TOTAL	27,038	100%

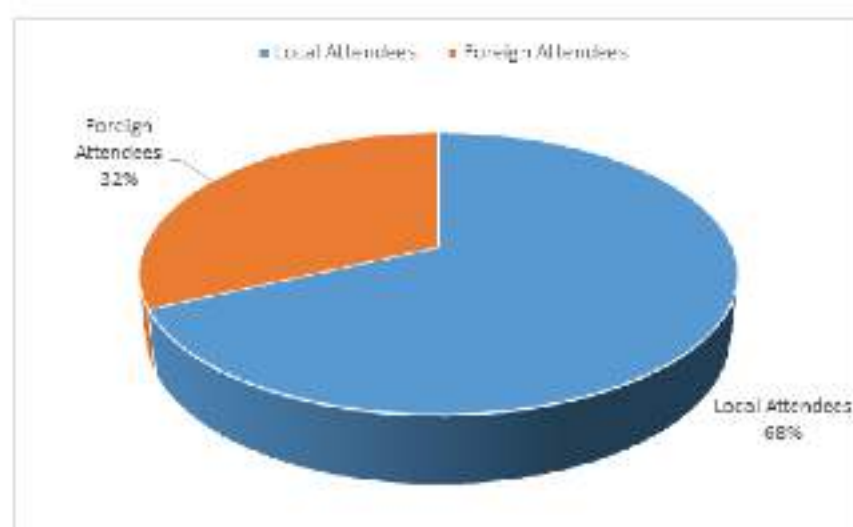


Figure 1
Proportion Local Attendees Vs Foreign Attendees

Overall the total attendees for the 2014 IFMA World Championships totalled 27,038 attendees including both foreign and local attendees. Figure 1 shows that local attendees outnumbered foreign attendees by 36%; foreign attendees accounted for 32% (8,626 persons) of the total number of attendees whilst local attendees accounted for 68% (18,412 persons) of the total number of attendees.

Based on observations, the proportion of local attendees over Interstate attendees was approximately 80:20, therefore it can be suggested that the number of local attendees was in the region of 14,730 persons whereas interstate attendees numbered around 3,682 persons.

VENUE

Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre (MIEC) was chosen as the venue of the championship, which was a clear cut decision, located only within walking distance from the Langkawi Airport. In fact, the official hotel for the championship, One Hotel Langkawi is located strategically between the airport and MIEC. However, the hotel obviously cannot make a cut in the list of the best hotels in Langkawi but for athletes who were concerned about the efforts, time and hassle; this hotel could be their best bet. In terms of service, facilities and building itself, the hotel was not really up to the international standard. There were athletes who stayed at other hotels around Langkawi during the tournament, but the reasons were varied. The fact that the championship was held in the beautiful island with a lot of attractive tourism spot could be one of the most popular reasons among the athletes.

From the observation, there were no food stalls near to the event area and this has prompted the visitors walk to the airport from MIEC to buy some foods and drinks. It was only on the second day that a stall was opened just outside the MIEC to cater the food and beverages for athletes and attendees. On the third day onwards, two additional stalls were opened. The choice was limited however, with only mini pizza, fruits, spaghetti, cake and junk foods available for athletes and visitors. Nonetheless, the organizer has prepared dinner for delegates in a buffet style inside the hall. The caterers provided three buffet lines and two beverage stations apart from 660-seat capacity for the athletes and delegates. The dinner was scheduled from 6.30 pm until 8.00 pm and was running smoothly with no significant congestion in the buffet line. Athletes and delegates had to present daily coupon to the staff before permitted to enter the dining area.

In terms of allocation of secretariat rooms and facilities, the organizer allocated a holding room for VIP, hospitality center, media, internet café, official's technical, reception, secretariat office, Committee office, Antidoping Malaysia, and commission meeting. There was also dining hall that served daily dinner for VIP, officials, and sponsors. This area was secured by two security personnel and access is restricted only for certain passes. On top of this the organizer also provided a counter for facilitating the VIP, committee members, officials and media that related to logistics and registration.

DESIGN AND LAYOUT



There are three main halls at MIEC that labeled as Hall A, Hall B and Hall C. Among the facilities at Hall A is dining area and exhibition booth. Hall B is the main competition venue while Hall C is used for athlete's training, rest, registration and changing room. The main entrance to the venue is located at Hall A. For exhibition booth, there were six active exhibitors that among others Bio Matics (supplement), Pro Mtg (Muaythai equipments), Tropical Charter (Travel Agency), Ayer Hangan Village and Spa (massage), Wesing (Official IFMA equipment), Amanda Coffee Painting (paint), Gerteknik Travel and Tours (Travel Agency), Lada Eco-Tourism (Travel Agency), Langkawi Geopark (Tourism product) and a booth selling beverages and junk foods. Apart from that, there was a small inflatable playground provided for the kids with a rate of RM5 per 20-minute session.



MIEC has the ability to accommodate the huge number of attendees even with big structures like 4,140-seat retractable stage seating and three rings in the main area. The organizer sets up the entrance to the competition area in between two sections of stage seating. The small section of stage seating can accommodate 1/3 of the larger section of the stage seating. There is one big screen at the other end of the hall just behind the Ring C. The main event (senior male class) is staged at the middle ring (Ring B) which is best viewed from the VIP seating area.

Other than that, parking was not an issue for this event. There are ample designated parking spaces surrounded MIEC that is able to accommodate up to 300 cars. The VIP parking bay is located in the specific area (at the VIP entrance) that can accommodate 40 cars. There was no congestion occur inside the event area given that the organizer allows only one entrance and exit gate. On top of that, two security personnel were stationed at the entrance gate to facilitate the entry to MIEC. The motorcycle parking area is located just after the entrance gate in which it can hold up to 100 motorcycles. Buses transporting athletes and delegates were seen waiting just outside the main entrance to the hall. All in all, basic facilities for hosting an event such as toilet, prayer room, air and ventilation were well placed. Toilets are located in every corner of the hall in which one specific toilet is designed for athletes. Furthermore, one prayer room is allocated near the entrance area.



From observation, the promotional campaign is done with minimal effort with a few banners and buntings spotted in hot spots like the airport, the jetty and roundabout. From personal interaction, local people stated that they only spotted the buntings a few nights before the event started. Buntings could only be seen at the roadside from the roundabout (near the airport) leading to the MIEC until the junction near the police training center. Organizer located several volunteers at the airport to assist athletes and delegates, especially for transportation and registration. Other than that, the organizer allocated one booth at the One Hotel Kelang for similar purposes.

With regards to sponsorship, the main sponsors for this event were Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB), Langkawi Development Agency (LADA), Malaysia Airlines System (MAS), and Wasing. The sponsorship logos were displayed at the entrance of the VIP and in the main hall. Since this event was important for 2014 Visit Malaysia Year calendar, the logo can be spotted everywhere in the event area and even at every corner of the rings.

In terms of press coverage, several mainstream media provides information of the result involving Malaysian athletes and press release from Minister of Youth and Sport. The organizer did promote the event in

the local newspaper, however for this type of event; the information should reach the target audience among Muaythai enthusiasts, sports lovers, or visitors who happened to be at Langkawi during the event time. It can clearly be seen during the first four days of the event that the ratio of athletes and delegates to attendees was 80:20. Nevertheless the number of attendees started to pick up for the final three days with the ratio of 60:40. Therefore, it can be pointed out that athletes and delegates made up the largest crowd during the tournament.

On top of that, several major websites supported this event such as Visit Malaysia Year 2014 and Malaysia Major Event. All information regarding the event could be obtained from the official IFMA2014 Langkawi website. From official Facebook page (IFMA – International Federation of Muaythai Amateur), there were approximately 163,000 likes for this page. On top of that, for the Malaysian chapter, its official Facebook page (IFMA Muaythai World Championship 2014) has managed to attract over 7,000 like. Up-to-date information was found on this social networking website that comprised of tentative of fights, results and information about IFMA.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

The total of attendance for this event is 16,745 attendees throughout seven days with an average of 2,392 attendees per day. Therefore, based on the standard practice (1:100), the number of security personnel needed for this event is 23 per day. From observation, there were approximately 30 security personnel that comprised of 20 RELA members and 10 policemen deployed during the event. On top of that, from the 200 volunteers working for this event, 30 of them were assigned for crowd control purpose.

In terms of safety, each ring was attended by two medical staffs that will be around throughout the event. Other than those, two ambulances accompanied by two paramedics were deployed during the event. There was one treatment center equipped with a basic treatment kit allocated in the event area for basic body and facial injury. A team of paramedics (approximately 5) was stationed at the on-site treatment center to attend the athletes' medical needs especially right after their fight.



MERCHANDISE AND SOUVENIR

Regarding the availability of the merchandise and souvenirs offered during the event, it is observed that only three booths were well patronized by the athletes, delegates and attendees namely Pro Mtg, Wesing and Bio Matics. Among the items sought after were Muaythai gears, shirts, Muaythai pants, key chains, and medicated oil. The prices of merchandise were ridiculously high for the first four days. The average price of the shirts was RM80 for the first day, however majority of the vendors had reduced the price to RM50 on the second day. The fighting gears were priced at RM100 – RM150 for gloves, shin protection, and head gear. Accessories, apparels and shorts were sold between RM30 - RM100. The expensive item sold was a punching bag with the price of RM300 onwards. The bargain items were the key chain (RM8) and shirts (RM15).



COMPETITION



Talking about the event, everything started on the 1st May 2014 but quite a large number of athletes, 500 to 600 of them were already in Langkawi according to the MMA President, Datuk Muhammad Shahnaz Azmi (quoted from Bernama). At 10 am on the first day, a seminar for nominating referees and judges was held to brief all of them about the championship probably on the guidelines and the program as a whole. The seminar was ended at 4 pm based on the itinerary given by the organizer. Nothing much happened on the first day, especially for the athletes who were supposed to be at the venue for the weigh-in and medical check as well as for registration later that day around 8.30 pm. There was also a team manager meeting conducted around the hour.

ACCREDITATION / REGISTRATION

Things started to get lively on the second day where all athletes flocked in the venue for registration/check-in, weigh-in and medical check prior to the fight on the 3rd May 2014. The official itinerary says that the process starts at 7.00 am until 9.00 am but it is observed that the registration counter received the most attention among athletes throughout the day. Athletes from over 100 countries swarmed the venue with hundreds of volunteers wearing red shirts representing the organizer could be seen everywhere helping those athletes. It is interesting to see athletes who came in groups, wearing their countries' official jackets, sweaters or windbreakers walking around the venue showing their spirit of the event. Based on the jackets, it was found that Sweden, Turkey and New Zealand have the highest number of representatives or muay thai athletes in this event. The draw of the preliminary stage was out at 12.00 pm onwards, which was anxiously awaited by all fighters.

At this point, it is very important to report on the exact layout of the venue to pinpoint the location of every functional area or rooms for the event. There were two main entrances at the MIEC but the first door located near the entrance gate and facing the official hotel, served as the main entrance for athletes as well as the visitors. The entrance at the other side of MIEC on the other hand was meant for VVIPs of the event, conveniently leading to the VVIPs dining area and main stage. As mentioned earlier, the first door which can be seen from the MIEC gate was the main entrance for the visitors and athletes. Right after the entrance, a number of booths could be seen on the left of the lobby or the entrance hall selling muaythai-related gears and supplements, tourism-related products and massage service. On the right side of the lobby was the dining area for all athletes, well blocked by a line of barricades by the organizer. The observation of the booth area is discussed comprehensively in the other part of this observation report (report on facilities).

It was the area right at the end of the booth section received the most attention from the athletes where the registration or accreditation was conducted. The accreditation counter for registration, which was opened at 9.30 am has been setup in the L-shape layout with barricades placed around it for a queue management purpose. It was good for managing the queue, but the number of athletes crowding the place brought a headache for the volunteers working at this counter.

The number of processes for registration; photo taking, tagging and other registration requirement have congested the line. The organizer did provide a few chairs outside the barricades, but it did not help solving the problem. Many athletes were forced to sit on the floor while waiting for their turns which was not a good sighting considering the scale of the event in the first place. Moreover, it is very disappointing to see the signage provided by the organizer for this international event. It was embarrassing when most of them were printed or even written in A4 papers and glued to the walls and tables. With the 'international' status, using this kind of signage was not invited at all. The organizer really should have done better on this issue for the championship. Due to the large number of the athletes checking-in, weigh-in of the athletes has been split up into two sessions to avoid heavy traffic, one session on the night (8.00 pm to 11.00pm) and another one in the next day's morning (7.00 am to 10.00 am, 3rd May 2014). As mentioned earlier, the draws of the championship were available in the press conference room from 12.00 pm onwards.

The main door to the championship hall is right next to the hotel information counter, not far from the registration/accreditation area. A totally different atmosphere was felt in the hall where all the fights and performances took place. Again, it is also important to highlight on the layout of the hall for this report. On the right side of the hall were seminar rooms used for weigh-in, medical check-up and treatment. There were weighing scales placed outside and inside the weigh-in room. The championship press conference on the other hand was held in the other room next to the weigh-in/medical treatment room which can accommodate up to 500 people at one time. There was a stage set up in front hundreds of seats in the room for the press conference. In fact, the draw of the championship was also placed in this room. The manner of the draw being presented on the wall was a disappointment too, where the fonts were too small pushing everybody to get extremely close to the wall in order to read it. It might not be the biggest issue of the event, but it would definitely affect athletes' overall experience and opinion towards the championship. There is an adage says "small details can win you a match".



OPENING CEREMONY

On the other side of the hall were two staged-seats for spectators and athletes. One of them; the bigger one was facing the VVIPs stage and another one facing the performance stage for the opening ceremony later that day. It seemed that the preparation for the event was a little bit chaotic, approaching the officiating ceremony with technicians, organizers and volunteers working their socks off for the show. Almost all the seats were occupied by the athletes half an hour before the ceremony with very little showing from local attendees. The performance stage was located at the other end of the hall, very close to the athletes' preparation area. The opening ceremony was started around 5.30 pm and as expected, the organizer and the host highlight the uniqueness of Malaysia through colorful cultural dances and performances before wowing the crowd with the drama, romance and action of Muaythai performed by lean and chiseled semi-naked professional muaythai fighters from Thailand. The performance was enhanced by its theatrical story line based on the history of Muaythai itself and the crowds were enthralled with the stunts and fights especially the sword fighting scenes.

One of the issues regarding the opening ceremony was the crowd control of the organizer as there were no barricades placed in front of the performance stage. This is a critical issue pertaining to the safety and security of the crowds who went extremely close to the stage to watch the show, standing and stepping on the electrical cables and wires which could be a major cause of the disasters. It was also found that spectators facing the VVIPs stage had to stretch their necks to watch the show with the presence of a giant pillar blocking their view to the stage. Nonetheless, it is an unavoidable problem given that the arrangement of the seating has been made specifically to watch the fights in the rings which would be placed later on at the center of the stadium-like layout; surrounded by the spectators staged-seating and VVIPs stage.

Yang Berbahagia Tan Sri Khalid Ramli, the CEO of LADA then welcomed all the athletes, officials and representatives from more than 100 countries and declared the opening ceremony afterward. Athlete's oath was then led by Valentina Shevchenko from Peru while Eric Ekambi Kingue delivered the official's oath representing the technical officials of the championship. All athletes, officials and VVIPs were then scheduled to be at the eagle square for the welcoming dinner later in the evening at 6.00 pm. The dinner started a bit late as it is observed that the opening ceremony it ended almost at 7.15 pm. No other activities were scheduled after the dinner.



The day all athletes and visitors were waiting for, finally came on Saturday, 3rd May 2014. The first fight (preliminary bouts) was scheduled at 2.00 pm. The timing was perfect for the fighters are physically and mentally prepared for their bouts, after having their breakfast and lunch hours before their fights. The organizer used the time and opportunity in the morning to conduct a youth and sport forum in the morning at the same room used for the press conference the day before. The forum presented the ideas on the development of muaythai in general and also highlighted the issue of the illegal fight and gambling. The topic discussed was undoubtedly good, but it was sad to see that majority of the audience was the championship volunteers who did not even bother to listen to things presented in the forum. A briefing session for referees and judges was also carried out concurrently with the forum.

Meanwhile, at the other side of the hall, technical crews, volunteers and organizers were sweating to prepare the fighting rings and everything for the 2.00 pm bouts. Only two rings (Ring A and Ring B) were available for the first day of the fighting competition. According to one of the personnel representing the organizer, there were problems in getting the rings, but the person was reluctant to disclose the information. Nonetheless, the rings provided for the fight were nicely installed complete with all the accessories required, namely the floor mat, ringside covered ropes and ringside corner cushions with the IFMA logo. Tables were placed on every side of the ring for judges to have a clear view of the actions in the ring. There were also lines of chairs arranged facing both rings for the officials, judges and marshals of the tournament. It was

identified that all the above-mentioned personnel were seated based on their turns of officiating and judging the bouts throughout the day.



At the back of the hall was the main preparation area for competing athletes surrounded by yellow barricades. Nothing was provided there except few plastic chairs and changing rooms for the athletes, which was divided based on the color of gears athletes would be wearing; Red and blue. Talking about the fighting gears, a counter was specifically setup at the entrance of the athlete preparation area. A number of volunteers were placed at the counter to help the athletes to get all the fighting gears consist of headgear, mouth guard, shin pads, and gloves provided by Wesing, the official fighting gears for this championship. The counter, however was horribly setup by the organizer by using naked buffet tables without any table cloths or covers. Similar to the registration counter, the signage of the counter was made by cheap A4 paper which was unacceptable for an international event. Apart from the designated preparation area, competing athletes were also seen camping, preparing and warming up for the fight in front of the seminar, weigh-in/medical room, right behind the spectators' staged-seats. It is also saddening to see some of the athletes slept on the floor while waiting for their bouts. This critical issue needs to be addressed by the organizer because such treatment will invite negative feedbacks from the athletes thus hinder our chances to host the event in the future.

FIRST BOUT: SARAMA AND RAM MUAY

The first bout which was scheduled at 2.00 pm only started twenty minutes late, but the crowds were unfazed by the delay. They went frantic when the first bout was announced and the hall became even livelier when the "Sarama", the rhythmic music usually accompanies muaythai fight, was played for the pre-fight ritual, the "Ram Muay". The Sarama was performed by a group of four people, each playing either one of two kinds of oboe or java pipe, a pair of Thai drums and cymbals. Two groups of musicians were assigned on the first fight day for each ring (Ring A and Ring B). It was noticed that the tempo of Sarama was influenced by the mood of the fight where it started slowly and steadily for the Ram Muay before it went frenetic as the fight commenced. The music without a doubt created the mystical atmosphere in the hall, urging all the fighters to show the true spirit of muaythai during the matches.

Once jumped into the ring, both fighters in the ring would put on their Mong Kon, the rope headgear to perform their Ram Muay or the pre-match ritual. They would walk around the ring counterclockwise, touching the rope and performed a prayer in each cushion corner. It is believed that performing the Ram Muay will help the fighter to gain their concentration as well as showing their gratitude to their opponents, parents, ancestors and teachers. There were fighters, especially from Thailand who ended their rituals by stamping their authority three times in the opponents' corner symbolically killing them with a bow and arrow. Some people believed that the fighter with the best Ram Muay interpretation and the arts will win the match. When both fighters were done with the ritual, they would take off their Mong Kon, replacing them with the official headgears.





The headgears, along with the mouth guard, gloves and shin pads were compulsory for every fighter for safety reasons. The referee were then signaled to start the bout; three (3) rounds of three (3) minutes each for both male and female competitors. A full one (1) minute of rest was given between the rounds. The first bell would signal the start of the fight while the other one tell the fighters to stop fighting for 1 minute rest. The team coaches/partners of both fighters used the rest period to motivate and offer some advice to the fighters who sat on a small stool at the cushioned corner of the ringside. Nevertheless, for the first day of the fight, the organizer provided the big plastic chair for the fighter which was very unusual for muaythai or any boxing competitions.

Due to the nature of Muaythai, the fight can be very grueling and aggressive, thus the role of the referee here is very much needed. They would stop the fight for a while whenever they sense any foul play or dangerous situation for both fighters. There was a doctor at each ring provided by the organizer. The most noticeable danger during the fight was when both fighters rumbled closer to the ringside ropes. There were quite a number of incidents where fighters almost fell down from the ring due to the condition of the rope and each time they were saved by the referees. It is known that referees should maintain the control of the fight and it is also their responsibility to prevent a weak fighter from receiving undue and unnecessary punishments (IFMA guidelines). There were a few incidents on the first day involving Malaysian female boxer whom were declared unfit to continue the fight by the referee. Some of the athletes were unfortunate during the match where they have to receive further treatment at the hospital after being injured badly in the ring.

The final bell at the end of the third round wrapped up the match. Both fighters would take off their fighting gears with the help from their coaches. Several volunteers were asked to collect all the gears but it was not the nicest view seeing them collecting the gears in a paper box. They were then given their country's flag, giving a lap of honor to the spectators before going back to the center of the ring while waiting for the results. A volunteer was assigned to collect all the marks from the judges at every side of the ring for final calculations. The referee meanwhile, would not raise the winner's hand until the announcement being made by the announcer who also sat at the side of the ring.

The atmosphere of the championship was unbelievable with spectators and athletes filled up all the seats provided by the organizer. The music, the lighting, the crowd and of course the action-packed fight kept the spectators at the edge of their seats. Country flags were waved everywhere around the hall. Spectators and athletes from different countries have their own unique ways and chants to motivate their representatives, especially the New Zealand team, who grabbed the headlines with their infamous Haka, a fierce display of the war dance from their seats.

The organizer rang some changes on the second day of the match obviously. Another ring was added at the other end of the hall for junior competition. Barricades were also placed around the perimeter boards, fencing the official areas of the match. It was a wise move from the organizer as the crowds flow was better than what it was on the first day. However, the traffic was a bit congested given that there was only one way to the stand/seats. It is also observed that another camera-TV crane was brought in near the Ring A on the third fight day. Paper boxes used to collect the fighting gears from the fighters were also replaced by nice baskets on the second day. Small stools and special mat were also provided at the ringside cushioned corner during the rest between rounds in the fight.

WINNER

Among the notable winner in this edition of IFMA World Championship is Andrei Kulebin from Belarus who wins the 67 kg category. He also receives the best male boxer award in this tournament. This is not really surprising considering his huge experience in professional Muaythai competition across the world. The best female boxer award goes to Susan Karinki [Sweden] who wins the 48 kg category. For Malaysia team, the greatest achievement was recorded by Mohd Lokman Akimi Mat Roji who won the Senior Male B (48 – 51 kg) category. And lastly, Thailand is the best team in this IFMA edition after came short in the previous two editions. Other than that, the winner of senior competition is as follows:

Senior Male A	Senior Female
45 kg – Zhmakov Vladislav (Russia)	45 kg – Saekao Monruedee (Thailand)
48 kg – Phonkrarhok Arnon (Thailand)	48 kg – Susa Karinki (Sweden)
51 kg – Charoenroy Kittiphong (Thailand)	51 kg – Ly Bui Yen (Vietnam)
54 kg – Woncsa Preecha (Thailand)	54 kg – Ovestena Kiznerova (Russia)
57 kg – Sapmanee Ruthaiphon (Thailand)	57 kg – Wihant Am'ma Miss (Thailand)
60 kg – Thoetkiat Suwat (Thailand)	60 kg – Shevchenko Valentina (Peru)
63.5 kg – Varats Dzmitry (Belarus)	63.5 kg – Shevchenko Antonima (Peru)
67 kg – Andrei Kulebin (Belarus)	67 kg – Andries Kelsey (Canada)
71 kg – Clompan Saranon (Thailand)	71 kg – Clew Stephanie (Australia)
75 kg – Ramriangrobponc Somehai (Thailand)	75 kg – Tidblad Isa (Sweden)
81 kg – Valent Dmitry (Belarus)	
86 kg – Remyha Yaroslav (Ukraine)	
91 kg – Ilancharonak Dzianis (Belarus)	
+91 kg – Kudzin Aliaksei (Belarus)	

ATHLETES' ACTIVITY

The athletes are the centre of any IFMA event and special care was given to all the needs of the athletes.

1. First, quick accreditation and transfer from airport to hotel.
2. Immediate access to rooms especially for athletes who had long haul flights.
3. Speed medical check up and weigh in.
4. Food tailored to the athletes' needs.
5. Above standard training facilities
6. Daily survey on athletes' feedback on the event from 12 – 15 countries.

Losing is part of the competition as this is a Round Robin system. Special activities have been arranged for athletes who have lost in the 1st quarter of the competition. Participation in training activities or beach activities or social activities.

Culture Exchange

Culture exchange was encouraged at the venues, so different initiatives with some were organized by the LOC, some were organized by IFMA Athlete Commission, and some were organized by the local community.

Welcome dinner was arranged so teams could mingle and a goodbye party had no seating arrangements, under the model "We are One". IFMA would like to thank the LOC for giving the needs of the IFMA's athlete special thoughts and we have no doubt that all athletes enjoyed the IFMA World Championship 2014 Malaysia Experience.

MEETINGS

A total of 32 meetings and conferences took place during the IFMA World Championship 2014. The main forum was the 1 day congress on youth and sport organized by IFMA and the Malaysian Youth Ministry. Speakers have been invited from around the world from UN Women, International World Games Association, Malaysian government, IFMA, Ethic Commission and others. Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar, the Minister of Youth and Sports also took place in this forum. The meeting room was filled to capacity and the forum was informative and evident on IFMA's deep youth development strategy.

IFMA AGM

The IFMA annual congress took place with a total of 109 countries present. The congress was shared by IFMA President, Dr. Sakchye Tapsuwan, IFMA General Secretary, Mr. Stephan Fox, IFMA Sports Director, Ms. Charissa Tynan and President of Malaysian Muaythai Association, Dato Shahnaz Azmi. The 6 hours meeting was very informative with many presentations by future host cities and reports from continental federations and IFMA commissions.

IFMA Executive Board Meeting

IFMA held their Executive Board Meeting during the event with 32 executive board members present discussing future activities of IFMA. Beside this there was a heavy meeting schedule from continental federation meeting with FAMA to the Asian Federation and their general assembly. All IFMA commissions, Ethics, Youth, Female, Legal, Medical and many others also have been part of the meeting agenda. A 3 day technical seminar was held for all participated referees and judges and a 3 day education seminar was held for coaches.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The IFMA Royal World Cup 2014 was a successful event, showcasing Malaysia as one of Asia's most beautiful tourist destination and choosing the island of Langkawi was a fantastic choice by the Malaysian government and the National Muaythai Federation. Langkawi was easy to access with a short flight from Kuala Lumpur and the transfer from the international flights had been perfectly organized by the LOC with 3 reception desks between arriving airports and domestic airport Langkawi. Hotels had been well chosen within 10 minutes from the venue and using the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) proved also to be a good choice as the facility could host all activities from competition to meetings, lunch and dinner. The idea of establishing a kids club and kids play center was also well received. Opening ceremony included traditional culture aspects from Malaysia and the art of Muaythai. The welcome party hosted by Langkawi tourism was well received. Event identity was perfectly displayed with the 5 pillars, Respect, Honor, Tradition, Excellence and Fair play well placed at airport, stadium, and hotel and around the island. Opening, closing and everyday 3 hours broadcasting was done at highest quality. We had a total of 36 hours live television.

Medical have been perfectly organized with doctors on standby all 24 hours. Ambulance and hospitals within 10 minutes. In and out of competition testing had been done according to IFMA's request. Catering was done for all needs including Western, Islamic and local requirements. Event promotion was very successful with full seats and very effective social media. Technical handbook was done by IFMA and master program was done according to IFMA's standard. 188 Media passes were issued. VIP program was well received by the over 200 VIP guests. Training area was praised by the athletes. The media room was well equipped. The volunteers were skilful, well prepared and with multi language abilities. Sustainability was important and sustainability report will be published separately.

In conclusion IFMA must thank the Malaysian government, Malaysia major events, the Langkawi government and the National Muaythai Association from Thailand for delivering a World class event incorporating the beautiful environment of Langkawi to the satisfaction of more than 100 visiting countries.

Thank you Malaysia.