

# IFMA

## LOOKING AHEAD

### Annual Report 2021



## CONTENTS

FOREWORDS   PRESIDENT .....	3
LOOKING AHEAD .....	5
THE WORLD GAMES 2022   Birmingham, Alabama, USA .....	5
2022 FISU WORLD UNIVERSITY CUP COMBAT SPORTS   Samsun, Turkey .....	5
IFMA ANTALYA OPEN 2022   Antalya, Turkey .....	6
A SEMBLANCE OF NORMALITY .....	8
RETURN OF COMPETITIONS .....	9
IFMA World Virtual Championships .....	9
IFMA World Championships   Phuket, Thailand .....	9
FUTURE MUAYTHAI .....	10
Continuation of the Youth World Championships .....	10
Qualification events for major competitions .....	10
Establishment of a Muaythai Academy .....	10
Development of anti-doping program .....	11
EXAMINING AND ENHANCING THE MUAYTHAI COMPETITION CALENDAR .....	12
PROTECTING WELL-BEING OF MUAYTHAI ATHLETES .....	13
ATHLETES .....	14
Athlete Career Program .....	14
Athlete Development Program .....	14
Anti-Doping Education .....	14
Code of Ethics .....	15
WOMEN IN MUAYTHAI   GENDER EQUALITY .....	16
IFMA GOVERNANCE .....	17

## FOREWORDS | PRESIDENT

Every year in Muaythai, we look back and reflect on the extraordinary moments of the past 12 months.

However, 2021 was particularly remarkable, not only because it had a semblance of returning to normality after pandemic, but also because of the many challenges that the sport faced.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for Muaythai competitions to take place. It was not until the end of May that the sport was able to resume, with strict safety measures in place.

Despite the challenges, Muaythai athletes were able to participate in various championships, including the IFMA World Championships and Continental Championships. The IFMA Youth World Championships also took place, with many talented young fighters showcasing their skills.

Our youth athletes also had a full calendar of Championships spread across the continents, and there was particular enthusiasm for the IFMA Youth World Championships, which took place in Antalya, Turkey, in

September. Seniors, as well as youth athletes, also had multiple opportunities to capture the much-prized medals on offer at IFMA Championships, all of which made a welcome return to the international calendar in 2021. I invite you to discover more about all the events that took place throughout 2021 in the IFMA World of Sport section.

From a Governance perspective in 2021, the IFMA continued to strengthen its position as an international sports federation, promoting the values of fair play, respect, and sportsmanship. The organization worked closely with its national federations, athletes, and other stakeholders to ensure the development and growth of the sport at all levels.

The year also saw the hosting of the first IFMA Hybrid General Assembly, allowing delegates and stakeholders to participate both in-person and online. The General Assembly was followed by the IFMA Awards Gala, where the achievements of the Muaythai community were celebrated.

In conclusion, 2021 was a challenging year for Muaythai, but it was also a year of triumph and progress. The sport adapted to the unique circumstances and continued to provide fans with memorable moments of joy and

excitement. The collaborative effort of everyone involved in Muaythai made it possible to overcome the challenges and achieve success.

Before you move on to navigate the various sections of this Annual Report, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the IFMA staff, the IFMA Board and Committee members, the Task Forces, the National Federations, the Athletes, the Coaches, the Referees and Judges, the Organizers, and every member of the community that helped get us through. The major achievements and best moments of yet another successful year are, as always, the fruit of a collaborative effort and proof once again that we are always stronger together.

Yours in sport,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tapsuwan', with a large, stylized initial 'T' and a circular flourish at the end.

Dr Sakchye Tapsuwan

IFMA President

## LOOKING AHEAD

### **THE WORLD GAMES 2022 | Birmingham, Alabama, USA**

The World Games is an important multi-sport event that showcases sports and disciplines that are not part of the Olympic Games. Muaythai has been a part of the World Games since 1993, and will be included in the program for the 11th edition of the Games, which will take place in Birmingham, Alabama in 2022.

The Muaythai competition at the World Games 2022 will feature top male and female athletes from around the world, who will compete in different weight categories (Men's 57 kg, 63.5 kg, 67 kg, 71 kg, 81 kg, 91 kg; Women's 48 kg, 51 kg, 54 kg, 57 kg, 60 kg, 63.5 kg). The competition will follow the rules and regulations set by the International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA).

The competition is expected to be highly competitive, with athletes highlighting their skills, strength, and agility as they strive for the gold medal. Muaythai is a sport that requires a combination of physical and mental attributes,

including speed, power, endurance, technique, and strategy.

The inclusion of Muaythai in the World Games program is a recognition of the sport's growing popularity and significance, and is an opportunity for athletes to display their talents on a global stage. It is also an opportunity for fans and spectators to witness the beauty, complexity, and excitement of Muaythai, and to appreciate the cultural richness and diversity that the sport embodies.

### **2022 FISU WORLD UNIVERSITY CUP COMBAT SPORTS | Samsun, Turkey**

The FISU University World Cup Combat Sports is a competition format created to supplement other FISU competitions. The cup embraces a university-versus-university format instead of national delegations and, thus, are game-changers. To represent your 'alma mater' and compete with other students at a global level is a unique experience in the sporting world.

The main goal of the cup is to offer the chance to go global to those who might not otherwise have an opportunity to compete on the international university sports scene. With this event, FISU

seeks to improve the role and significance of university sport for student athletes.

The concept of the University World Cup dates back to 2015. It has paved the way for new sports disciplines, formats and concepts of competitions along with creation of a unique and distinctive way of developing university sport.

As part of the concept, a number of new sports will make their debut in 2022 being combined into a single block. The first FISU University World Cup Combat Sports will see the world's best university athletes battle it out in six sports, namely: Boxing, Karate, Muaythai, Sambo, Wrestling and Wushu.

All these combat sports are now included in FISU's competition programme as part of the World University Games, or University World Cup tournaments.

After resounding success, our newest sports property that pits university versus university is all set for a new discipline's debut. The FISU University World Cup Combat Sports will see the world's best university athletes battle it out in six sports, namely: Boxing, Karate, Muaythai, SAMBO, Wrestling and Wushu.

All the six sports of this unique event have been on the FISU sports programme for several years, as part of the biennial FISU World University Championship events or in some cases, part of the FISU World University Games programme.

### **IFMA ANTALYA OPEN 2022 | Antalya, Turkey**

The IFMA Muaythai Antalya Open Cup 2022 is an upcoming international Muaythai tournament that is set to take place in Antalya, Turkey from November 23 to November 27, 2022.

The tournament will feature various age, weight, and skill categories, which will provide a competitive platform for both established and up-and-coming talents in the sport of Muaythai. Participants will come from a diverse range of countries and will bring with them their own unique fighting styles and techniques, making for an exhilarating display of skill, power, and endurance.

As one of the most prestigious events in the Muaythai calendar, the IFMA Muaythai Antalya Open Cup 2022 offers fighters the opportunity to showcase their abilities and earn international recognition. Points accumulated in this tournament will contribute towards a

fighter's ranking, and could lead to opportunities to participate in the World Muaythai Championships and the World Games.

The IFMA ensures that the tournament is run according to strict rules and regulations, prioritizing the safety and well-being of all participants. The organization has certified judges and referees who are experts in the sport of Muaythai, ensuring that every fight is officiated fairly and accurately.

In addition to being a competitive event for athletes, the IFMA Muaythai Antalya Open Cup 2022 is also a spectacle for fans of the sport. Muaythai is known for its dynamic striking techniques, which include punches, kicks, elbow strikes, and knee strikes, as well as its unique clinching and grappling techniques. This combination of skills and athleticism results in an exciting and captivating display of martial arts.

## **A SEMBLANCE OF NORMALITY**

Following an unprecedented year of disruption in 2020, Muaythai administrators, teams, and officials were also forced to cancel events and tournaments throughout much of the year. Countless opportunities for athletes fell by the wayside, causing considerable uncertainty. However, as global vaccine rollouts took effect, many events were able to resume in 2021.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the sport of Muaythai persevered. Athletes and fans were able to enjoy many global competitions. The success of these events not only provided much-needed entertainment and excitement, but also highlighted the resilience of the Muaythai community in the face of adversity.

While COVID-19 continued to cause unprecedented hardship and harm, the sport of Muaythai proved to be an important tool in the process of healing hearts and minds. Through the continued perseverance and hard work of Muaythai administrators, athletes, and fans, the sport is on its way to returning to normality.

## RETURN OF COMPETITIONS

In 2021, the sport of Muaythai was able to return to a more normal competition calendar after a year of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. With the success of global vaccine rollouts and the implementation of safety protocols, many events and tournaments were able to take place again, providing opportunities for athletes, clubs, and competition organizers to resume their activities. This allowed Muaythai to make a tentative start towards returning to normality in 2021, with numerous global competitions and events being held throughout the year.

### IFMA World Virtual Championships

Due to the pandemic, the IFMA World Championships had to be held virtually in 2020 and 2021. In the virtual championships held in 2021, more than 700 athletes from 118 countries participated in the competition. The events were held starting from July 2021 at the national levels with the final events in November 2021, making this event for the second time had been held completely online.

### IFMA World Championships | Phuket, Thailand

The IFMA World Championships were held in Thailand, Phuket from December 3 to December 12, 2021. The event saw over 900 athletes from 111 countries competing in various weight categories. The championships were a significant milestone for the Muaythai community, as it was the first time in two years that a major in-person event had been held.

## FUTURE MUAYTHAI

In 2021, the International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA) had planned several future developments steps for the sport of Muaythai. These included:

### **Continuation of the Youth World Championships**

The IFMA Youth World Championships were planned to be held in 2021. The event provides a platform for young athletes from around the world to showcase their skills and compete against their peers.

### **Qualification events for major competitions**

Qualification events for the upcoming World Games and the World Combat Games were planned to take place in 2021. These qualifications are crucial for athletes to secure their spots in these major competitions. The 2022 World Games are scheduled to take place in Birmingham, Alabama, USA, and Muaythai is one of the sports on the program.

The World Combat Games is a multi-disciplinary event organized by the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) and features

martial arts and combat sports.

Muaythai is one of the core sports in the event. The 2021 World Combat Games were initially scheduled to take place in Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan, but were postponed to a later date due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Establishment of a Muaythai Academy**

IFMA planned to establish a Muaythai Academy in 2021, which would offer training programs and education for athletes, coaches, and officials. The academy aims to enhance the development of the sport and promote its values and principles.

The establishment of a Muaythai Academy represents an important step in the development of the sport at the international level. By providing a standardized approach to training and education, the academy will help to raise the overall level of Muaythai competition worldwide. This, in turn, will help to enhance the sport's profile and popularity, leading to increased participation, sponsorship, and investment.

One of the key goals of the Muaythai Academy is to promote the sport's cultural and historical significance, emphasizing the values of respect,

discipline, and sportsmanship that are essential to the practice of Muaythai. By providing a comprehensive and structured approach to learning, the academy aims to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of the sport.

Another important objective of the Academy is to enhance the technical skills and knowledge of Muaythai practitioners. The Academy will offer a range of programs and courses, including coaching, judging and refereeing, strength and conditioning, nutrition, and sports psychology. These courses will be designed and delivered by experienced and qualified instructors, using the latest teaching methods and technologies.

### **Development of anti-doping program**

IFMA aimed to further develop its anti-doping program in 2021 to ensure that the sport of Muaythai remains clean and fair. The organization has a zero-tolerance policy towards doping and works closely with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) to promote drug-free sport.

In 2021, IFMA and the Muaythai sport continued to prioritize anti-doping efforts. The organization remained

committed to the principles of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Code and worked to ensure that all athletes competing in Muaythai were held to the highest standards of fairness and integrity.

To that end, IFMA continued to work on the development of its anti-doping program. This included the implementation of a robust testing program, as well as the establishment of a network of trained and accredited doping control officers.

Additionally, IFMA continued to educate athletes and officials about the dangers of doping and the importance of clean competition. The organization worked to provide resources and support to athletes and teams, including information on banned substances and the testing process.

## **EXAMINING AND ENHANCING THE MUAYTHAI COMPETITION CALENDAR**

The evaluation and adjustment of the Muaythai Competition Calendar were crucial components of the discussions, encompassing the men's, women's, and youth divisions.

The IFMA acknowledged that the competitive inequality among regions was becoming more noticeable, and that an increasing number of matches and tournaments were taking place with little significance or public interest. Additionally, a misalignment of the calendar in different parts of the world was causing conflicts and friction.

The primary objective was to evaluate the current status of the Muaythai calendar and explore recommendations for developing a competition schedule that is suitable for contemporary needs. This, in turn, would contribute to enhancing the level of athletes, clubs, and national teams, while presenting opportunities for identifying and cultivating talent in a larger number of nations.

## **PROTECTING WELL-BEING OF MUAYTHAI ATHLETES**

Of primary importance for the sport of Muaythai both now and in the future is protecting athletes' health and well-being. The proposal to overhaul the competition calendar included mandatory rest and preparation periods, reduced travel, and less time away from gyms and families as a result. Among the options explored was condensing the international events, which currently interrupt national and continental competitions and force athletes to travel, often across continents. By having fewer international events, opportunities for athletes to compete on a global stage could be broadened across the entire globe. This could be achieved by reducing the size of qualifying groups, ending meaningless matches, and looking at other methods of qualifying for major tournaments, such as through continental championships or alternative routes as preferred by the relevant confederation.

## ATHLETES

The International Federation of Muaythai Associations places a strong emphasis on athlete education and development, offering various educational programs and initiatives to support athletes in their athletic and personal growth. Some of the athlete educational programs offered by IFMA include:

### **Athlete Career Program**

This program provides education and training to athletes to help them develop skills for a successful career after their athletic career is over. The program covers topics such as career planning, resume writing, job search strategies, and interviewing skills.

### **Athlete Development Program**

This program focuses on the overall development of athletes, including their physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The program provides training on nutrition, injury prevention, mental training, and other areas related to athlete development.

Some key features of the Muaythai Athletes Development Program include:

**Mental Training:** The program offers training and resources to help athletes develop mental skills such as focus, concentration, and visualization. This can help athletes perform at their best under pressure, and can also benefit them in other areas of their lives.

**Nutrition and Fitness:** The program provides resources and guidance on nutrition and fitness, including training plans, meal plans, and advice on injury prevention and recovery.

**Education and Career Planning:** The program offers education and training on career planning and development, including resume writing, job search strategies, and interview skills. This can help athletes prepare for life after their athletic career is over.

### **Anti-Doping Education**

IFMA offers anti-doping education to its athletes to ensure that they understand the rules and regulations related to anti-doping in sports. This includes education on prohibited substances, testing procedures, and the consequences of doping.

**Personal Development:** The program aims to support athletes in their personal growth and development, including developing leadership skills,

building confidence, and promoting positive values and attitudes.

### **Code of Ethics**

IFMA has a Code of Ethics that outlines the ethical principles and values that its members, including athletes, are expected to uphold. The code includes guidelines on fair play, respect for others, and the importance of integrity in sports.

Overall, the athlete educational programs offered by IFMA aim to support athletes in their personal and athletic development, as well as to promote the values of fair play, respect, and integrity in sports.

## **WOMEN IN MUAYTHAI | GENDER EQUALITY**

Gender equality in Muaythai has been an ongoing issue, with efforts being made to promote equal opportunities and recognition for female athletes. Historically, Muaythai has been dominated by male athletes, with limited opportunities and support for female athletes.

In recent years, however, there has been a growing movement to promote gender equality in Muaythai. The International Federation of Muaythai Associations (IFMA) has made a commitment to promoting gender equality through various initiatives, such as the creation of women's divisions in competitions and the establishment of female-specific training programs.

IFMA has also implemented policies to ensure that female athletes are treated fairly and equally, such as ensuring equal pay for male and female athletes and providing the same level of support and resources to female athletes as to male athletes.

In addition, IFMA has been working to increase the visibility and recognition of female athletes in Muaythai, including showcasing their achievements in

competitions and promoting them as role models for younger generations.

Despite these efforts, there is still work to be done to achieve full gender equality in Muaythai. Some challenges that remain include changing cultural attitudes towards female participation in combat sports and providing more opportunities for female athletes to compete at all levels of the sport.

Overall, gender equality in Muaythai is an ongoing process that requires ongoing commitment and effort from all stakeholders, including athletes, coaches, administrators, and fans. Through continued advocacy and action, it is hoped that Muaythai can become a truly equal and inclusive sport for all.

## IFMA GOVERNANCE

### **Doctor Sakchye TAPSUWAN steps down after 18 years Presidency | Charissa TYNAN voted IFMA Director General**

Doctor Sakchye Tapsuwan announced his stepping down as President of IFMA after 18 years of service to the organization during 2021 General Assembly, which was a hybrid event that brought together IFMA members both virtually and live.

Dr. Tapsuwan, who has led the IFMA Family since 2003, is widely regarded as the "Father of the Nak Muay" and has been a driving force in promoting and developing Muaythai worldwide. In his emotional farewell, he thanked everyone for the journey, the friendship, the memories, and especially for standing in solidarity towards unified goals. He acknowledged that it was time for the new generation to take over and continue the work that he and his team had started.

During his tenure, Dr. Tapsuwan oversaw the growth of IFMA and made significant strides in promoting and developing the sport of Muaythai. Under his leadership, IFMA became a

recognized member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and was granted full membership in the International World Games Association (IWGA). His dedication to the sport has earned him widespread recognition and respect in the Muaythai community.

After Dr. Tapsuwan has been approved by the IFMA General to hold the title of IFMA Honorary President, the Secretary General, Stephan Fox, passed on most of his duties to the newly voted Director General, Charissa Tynan, as IFMA prepares to build for and with the next generation at all levels of the pyramid.

Charissa Tynan has been a part of IFMA since 2005 and has been the IFMA Director since 2014. She was unanimously voted and confirmed by the IFMA Executives to assume the position as Director General. With over 16 years of experience in IFMA and a wealth of knowledge and expertise, Ms. Tynan is well-placed to take the organization to new heights. She has been an instrumental figure in IFMA's development, and her election to the role of Director General is a testament to her dedication and hard work.

The transition to a new generation of leadership is an important milestone for IFMA as it seeks to build on its past

successes and continue to grow and develop the sport. With Dr. Tapsuwan's continued support and the leadership of the new team, IFMA is well-positioned to continue its mission of promoting and developing the sport of Muaythai worldwide.

The 2021 IFMA General Assembly marked the end of an era with the departure of Dr. Sakchye Tapsuwan as President. His contributions to the growth and development of Muaythai have been significant, and his departure leaves big shoes to fill. However, the new generation of leadership is poised to continue his work and build on the foundation he has laid.

IFMA thanks Dr. Tapsuwan for his service and wishes him all the best in his new role as Honorary President. At the same time, the Muaythai community celebrates Charissa Tynan's election as Director General and looks forward to the future of the sport under the new leadership.

# **IFMA 2021 Annual Report**

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