WORLD GAMES KAOHSIUNG 2009 BEACH HANDBALL TOURNAMENT
JJ Rowland¹, Alex Gehrer², George S. Bebetos³
¹WG09 BH Tournament Media Official, ²WG09 BH Tournament Marketing Official, ³WG09 BH Tournament Event Management Official

The World Games in Kaohsiung

The sporting spotlight was on Kaohsiung, Chinese Taipei in July as 4,800 of the world’s elite athletes descended on the Taiwanese island to compete in a diverse range of sports including rugby sevens, billiards, squash, tchoukball, body building, karate and parachuting in the eighth edition of the World Games. The largest multi-sport international sports event for non-Olympic sports, the World Games takes place every four years, one year after the Olympic Games. The 2009 Games, the largest sporting event ever to have taken place in Chinese Taipei, featured 35 sporting disciplines over 11 days.

Beach Handball in the World Games 2009

The World Games offer an important platform for the International Federation to show-case the sport on the international stage as well as to the International Olympic Committee. Beach Handball was back on the program as an invitational sports after two previous appearances; in Duisburg, Germany in 2005 and Akita, Japan in 2001. The three day competition, played on 18, 19 and 20 July, attracted 16 men’s and women’s international beach teams and was played on two specially built beach courts in the beautiful resort of Sizihwan Bay.

For the International Handball Federation and in particular the Beach Handball Working Group this was a chance to present the young event of Beach Handball on an international stage, not only to the International World Games Association as the sport bids for permanent World Games status but also to the International Olympic Committee.

Playing in front of a sold-out, loud and enthusiastic local crowd, it was the Italians, who once again proved that they are the best on the beach. Having already won the women’s European title just a few weeks before in Norway, the Italians once again dominated and beat Croatia in a tense final shoot-out to add the World Games title.

The men’s competition went to the 2006 world champions, Brazil, who made easy work of a Hungarian team they had beaten previously in the preliminary round.

Final ranking - WOMEN
1. Italy
2. Croatia
3. Brazil
4. FYRO Macedonia
5. Chinese Taipei
6. Ukraine
7. Japan
8. Thailand
Final ranking - MEN
1. Brazil
2. Hungary
3. Croatia
4. Oman
5. Chinese Taipei
6. Pakistan
7. Turkey
8. Thailand

Best player awards

WOMEN
Left wing - Snezjana Botica (CRO)
Right wing - Cinthia de Medeiros (BRA)
Pivot - Elena Barani (ITA)
Specialist - Mirjeta Baramojska (MKD)
Goalkeeper - Ya Wei Chang (TPE)
Top scorer - Carolina Balsanti (ITA)

MEN
Left wing - Hui-Hsiung Wang (TPE)
Right wing - Jefte Saraiva (BRA)
Pivot - Balazs Babicz (HUN)
Specialist - Hrvoje Horvat (CRO)
Goalkeeper - Tahir Ali (PAK)
Top scorer - Mujdat Ozcan (TUR)

Tickets sold-out

With all the tickets for the three-day Beach Handball competition sold, the world’s Beach Handball elite received a warm welcome in the Sizihwan Bay beach arena.

Marketing and promotion

The focus of the Beach Handball Working Group’s efforts in the long build up to the 2009 World Games had been on the sport’s image and marketing. Beach Handball itself has values attractive to sponsors and the public: Fair Play, spectacular shots and good-looking players.

Signs of these developments could be seen around the beach arena in Kaohsiung: The official ball for the event from IHF’s official supplier, Rasan, had been produced in Chinese Taipei’s official colors, red for the women’s competition and blue for the men. There was also a new look for the players, a change which was agreed at the IHF Congress in Cairo in June 2009. Colors are light, bright and summery; men wear vest tops and shorts, women sports tops and bikini bottoms.
New regulations meant a change for the goalkeeper or specialist player, gone are the transparent bibs, to be replaced with a new rule that sees players simply wearing a different colored kit to the rest of their team mates – all to improve the image of the game to TV and spectators.

Creating the right look

Special attention had been paid to the Beach Handball arena itself. Working with the World Games organizer the location in Sizihwan Bay was carefully selected right next to the beach, provided with the best quality sand specially imported from Vietnam.

There was also another first at the 2009 World Games – Beach Handball at night under floodlights.

Another innovation in Kaohsiung was the introduction of new scoreboards for the tournament. In order to provide the spectators with the best possible experience and be able to follow the score as easily as possible, especially during the shoot-outs, the World Games organizers were asked to provide two very large full-color LCD scoreboards.

“Beach Handball is fantastic!”

The China Post, one of Chinese Taipei’s largest selling newspapers carried a full front page spread on the sport under the headline “Beach Handball is fantastic”.

Exciting action, pumping music, a sold-out arena and the success of the Chinese Taipei men’s team in winning their opening match of the championship had caught the imagination of the nation. The team’s success is nothing short of astounding when someone considers that this was their first ever competitive international Beach Handball match.

The people in Taiwan have been really excited because they had never had such a large event in the country before. With a lot of investment by the government in facilities and sport, handball had been given a really boost.

The International World Games Association was also impressed with the sport. Members of the IWGA executive committee welcomed to the Beach Handball event by the Competition Management. They have been impressed with what they had seen, some experiencing the game for the first time, and had made positive comments not only about how attractive the sport is but also about the arena set-up and the use of music and dancers around the matches.

There has been a positive reaction too to the suggestion that Beach Handball becomes a permanent feature in the World Games program after three times as an invitational sport.
New rules and new look for the referees

The official Beach Handball Rules of the Game are set to change in March 2010 following a unanimous vote at the last IHF Congress in Cairo in June 2009. Rule changes mean a new rule book and a chance to update its content.

Since the rule book was last produced back in August 2005, beach referees have had a make-over. The old striped long-sleeved official referee shirts had been replaced by the new sleeveless vests in summer colours on display at the World Games.

Refereeing at World Games

A little bit of history was be made this evening in the Sizihwan Bay Beach Handball Arena.

For the first time a female pair of referees took control of a men’s final in a major beach handball championship.

The referees, Polish couple, Johanna Brehmer and Agnieszka Skowronek, were nominated by the IHF competition management to officiate the final of the World Games between Hungary and Brazil.

Looking forward to World Games 2013

16 teams have been in Chinese Taipei playing in the World Games, the largest multi-sport event for non-Olympic sports held every four years. This is handball’s third appearance in the Games. The next step for is to become a permanent sport within the World Games program.

The World Games will be back in 2013 in a Cali, Colombia the 2009 Games. The IHF would like to extend the Beach Handball event by one day to include an additional day, a rest day for players and an extra insurance policy should bad weather hits.