

INTERNATIONAL BLIND GOLF ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2023

This report was written only one year after the last Biennial Meeting. Despite this being a very short period since the presentation of the last Chairman's Report to the IBGA Membership, much has been achieved in this limited time.

Firstly, I am pleased to say that the Board has worked very well together as a unit for almost all this time. The Board has a good balance between new members and those with much experience of serving on the Board. I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the Board members for their commitment to serve the IBGA as volunteers.

To past Chairman, Andrea Calcaterra (a Board member since 2010) for his unwavering commitment to the long-term development of the association and sound advice on all matters; to Graham Coulton (a Board member since 2014) for his meticulous handling of our finances for another term in his role as Vice-chairman Finance; to Gerry Nelson (a Board member since 2016) for his dedication and work in Canada. To the Board members who joined last year, Mario Tobia for taking on the crucial role of Vice-chairman Admin and the commitment needed to ensure the smooth running of the IBGA and to Karin Becker for her incredible drive and enthusiasm to grow blind golf in new parts of the globe as well as for her specific commitment to grow women in golf. Our Board was strengthened by the addition of John Eakin as a co-opted director, without whom we would not have been able to make the strides we have towards implementing a move to the World Handicap System (WHS). Last, but by no means least, my sincere appreciation goes to John White (who has been a Board member since 2008), not only for his primary role in representing Dr Handa on the IBGA Board but also for his tremendous assistance in administering our finances and for his wise and considered advice on important matters. Without this incredible team of individuals the IBGA could not have made the strides we did in the last year.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, with very few blind golf events taking place during 2020 & 2021, since March 2022 we have seen a return to a more normal set of events as players become more prepared to travel. From March 2022 we have sponsored Open events in South Africa, USA, Spain, Scotland, Canada and Australia. We also sponsored the 5th ISPS Handa Vision Cup which took place in September 2022 at TPC Sawgrass, Florida, USA. Congratulations to the organisers of all of these events for providing so many opportunities for blind golf around the world and to the North American Vision Cup team for their first victory in that event.

In terms of event organising, I must give praise to my colleagues in the South African Blind Golf Association. Due to the intervention of COVID-19, the IBGA World Championships has had to be postponed several times and so it is in effect the fourth World Championships they have had to organise since SABGA was approved as the host of the next World Championships following the 2018 Biennial Meeting. The stamina shown to see this through has been incredible. A special note of thanks here goes to Ernst Conradie who has led the tournament team for the duration and to the tremendous support of our sponsors

whose undying faith will hopefully lead to a spectacular event – the first ever on the continent of Africa.

The last year has seen growth in the number of full Members of the IBGA. The Dominican Republic, Sweden and Argentina are the new members, with some others also showing interest. Thanks to Andrea Calcaterra, Karin Becker and Alejandro de Miguel who were instrumental in initiating the recent additions. Growth within countries has also been assisted through IBGA marketing grants for various initiatives. Despite not receiving new marketing support in the past year, our accumulated marketing funds were drawn upon.

Another significant achievement in the past year has been the work done towards our incorporation of the WHS into our events. This has involved much discussions with handicapping authorities, the rewriting of the handicap policy and the redevelopment of the IBGA handicap website. The tireless efforts of John Eakin were instrumental in this success and we look forward to the continued movement of Members to the system.

We have also been represented by John on the IGF Golfers with Disability Committee. One of the outputs from the IGF has been a bid (albeit unsuccessful this time) for golf for the disabled to participate in the Paralympics. This has been one of Dr Handa's long-standing goals.

A disappointing trend, which will need to be dealt with firmly going forward, is that some Members are failing to meet their obligations under the terms of event sponsorship. Members applying for sponsorship must ensure they understand what they are committing to and make sure they deliver (both during and after the event) in a timely fashion. Failure to do so can only hurt our association.

Based on a few individuals attempting to undermine the IBGA, it has become necessary to consider implementing a robust disciplinary system to deal with instances of misconduct. Recent events have been very unpleasant for all concerned, including intimidatory tactics towards the Board of Directors from a Member association. The proposed disciplinary process (to be tabled at the Biennial Meeting) should result in more efficient resolution to any such incidents which may arise in the future. The disappointing matter of a Board Director who had not adhered to the self-imposed code of conduct agreed to by all Directors at the start of the current term of office will also be discussed at this year's Biennial Meeting.

On behalf of the IBGA and all of our blind golfers, I would like to thank Dr Handa for his ongoing, and extremely generous, support of the IBGA. Without such a generous supporter our golfing lives over the past 25 years would have been much less fulfilling.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to the IBGA Membership for the continued faith shown in me as a Director and to my fellow Directors for electing me as Chairman for the past year. With all Members working for the benefit of the IBGA the future is bright.

Garrett Slattery

March 2023