

VOLLEY FEDERATIONS DEFIANT BUT DARE NOT SPEAK OUT



Students from the Danish School of Journalism decided to ask national volleyball federations why they do not publicly support Mario Goijman's fight.

An anonymous survey conducted by The Conference Pulse showed that eight out of ten national federations are unhappy with the leadership of FIVB President Rubén Acosta

by Asbjørn With Christensen

Following Mario Goijman's damning presentation, The Conference Pulse took a straw poll of the presidents of ten national volleyball federations in three continents, asking for their views on the leadership of FIVB President Rubén Acosta.

When we initially posed our questions, we were met with strikingly similar responses – no one was willing to provide anything other than a non-committal statement referring to Goijman's allegations.

Off the record, however, it was a different story. When guaranteed strict anonymity, two out of ten presidents still refused to comment, but the rest were willing to give frank opinions on the current FIVB leadership.

The king sticks on his throne

"Mr. Acosta is the leader of a kingdom and the owner of a major company (FIVB), and that is the way things are" stated one national federation president.

"I would prefer a much more open and democratic leadership in the FIVB, but it takes a lot of votes at the congress to throw the king off his throne. It is simply not realistic."

"For a long time there has been mumblings in the world of volleyball that Mr. Acosta puts money into his own pockets," another admitted.

"But the consensus among the members of the FIVB is that there is nothing we can do about it. Sport and sports politics at this level is very big business. It is very dangerous to do something about it, so we don't".

Everyone fears expulsion

All eight presidents expressed concerns that if they spoke out, the same fate could befall them as that suffered by Mario Goijman and the Argentinean Volleyball Federation – namely, expulsion from the FIVB and international competition.

FIVB rules give President Acosta the discretion to expel any person or federation that – in his judgement – discredits the sport. And, according to several of those contacted, Mr. Acosta is accountable to nobody when making such decisions – even if the official rules state otherwise.

"The changes he (Mr. Acosta) has made to the FIVB Constitution, including the Code of Conduct, result in an extremely undemocratic process within the FIVB," said a national president. "Nobody dares to say anything, and Mr. Acosta can continue to do whatever he wants".

Although the FIVB claims that the Code of Conduct was adopted at a FIVB Congress after a democratic vote, our anonymous sources

disagreed. "There was a vote, but it was a public vote, and Mr. Acosta could keep an eye on who voted for him and who voted against," stated another president.

"This effectively hindered any organized resistance, since everyone was too afraid and intimidated to openly vote against Mr. Acosta."

Although volleyball's national presidents currently prefer to keep their heads down, our straw poll suggested that the strength of feeling against the current regime means that a coordinated international effort could ultimately lead to changes at the top.

The Conference Pulse

This is an edited version of an article that first appeared on the website, www.djh.dk/conferencepulse, 11 November 2005

24 students from the Danish School of Journalism provided live multimedia coverage throughout the conference on their website, the Conference Pulse.

Visit the Conference Pulse at www.djh.dk/conferencepulse



Mario Gojman finally got something to show for his fight for justice - the Play the Game award which in part consisted of an original piece of art donated by artist Torben Ulrich.

REWARD TO TIRELESS FIGHTER FOR JUSTICE

Mario Gojman second recipient of the Play the Game Award

by Marcus Hoy

"Mario Gojman has a vision of sport we all care deeply about. He is a man of principles and ethics, and lives the values of democracy he speaks about. With great courage, he has consistently and precisely chronicled the mountain of theft and corruption in the FIVB under (Ruben) Acosta's reign."

So stated previous recipient Laura Robinson when presenting the 2005 Play the Game Award to the former president of the former Argentine Volleyball Federation - a man whose courage and commitment in bringing to light the moral decay in International Volleyball's governing body made him a highly popular winner.

Upon receiving the award, Mario Gojman stated, "To me this is a significant recognition of what I am trying to do. Many times I have felt alone but here I have met people who share my visions of honesty and transparency in sport. Play the Game is an organisation I am very happy to receive recognition from."

Mario Gojman vowed to continue his fight for justice, which in practical terms includes the

removal from office of FIVB President Acosta. In addition to continuing the court cases which he funds out of his own pocket, Mario Gojman stated that he also intends to renew his rallying call to the 'silent majority' of national volleyball federations that are keen to see changes at the top.

Referring to a survey carried out by the 'Conference Pulse' website in which eight out of 10 national volleyball federations said that they wanted to get rid of Acosta, Gojman stated "We cannot do anything alone - but if we stand up together we will have a chance."

Laura Robinson, a Canadian freelance journalist who had previously been honoured for her damning exposé of a culture of sexual abuse in Canadian junior ice hockey, handed over the award at the closing ceremony of the Play the Game conference in front of delegates from 43 countries.

Mario Gojman will present the next award at the 2007 Play the Game conference, which is already in the planning stage.

What is the Play the Game Award?

The Play the Game Award is presented to an individual or a group of persons who have, professionally or as volunteers, made an outstanding effort to strengthen the basic ethical values of sport and to realise one or more of the following aims:

- to encourage democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in sport
- to create awareness of the role of sport in society at a local, national and international level
- to draw a many-sided picture of sport
- to support the right of the individual to choose and influence his or her daily sporting activities

The award is presented to persons who have shown remarkable personal courage and commitment to creating a better sports community, for instance by uncovering corruption, doping or other malpractices in sport, or by inspiring more joyful and healthy sports practices for people in general.

The award consists of a piece of art and a speaker's invitation, including travel, room and board, for the next Play the Game conference.