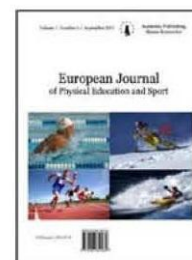


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**Building on Strengths, Trends and Innovation:  
Sochi as a National Centre for Beach Sports**

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**Abstract.** The article represents prospects, trends and innovations in the development of Sochi as a national center of beach sports.

**Keywords:** resort; Sochi-2014; Winter Olympic Games.

**Introduction.** Legacies are usually related to the positive benefits of an event, commonly thought as tangible benefits such as transport infrastructure, new sports venues, urban infrastructure and new jobs. However, the main idea of a legacy is that it should enhance in a long-term the well being or lifestyle of its community in a way that it reflects the values of the local population (Dickinson and Shipway, 2007).

Russia has been strengthening its international position by hosting mega sports events. For the next five years, the Russian Federation will be the central point for many world-renowned mega events. In 2013, Russia started with hosting the World Athletics Championship, the Universiade and World Combat Games. In 2014, the country will be the host to the Sochi Olympics and Paralympics Winter Games and Formula 1 car racing. Following those events, in 2016 the World Hockey Championship will be held there. Then, all will culminate in 2018, when the FIFA World Cup will take place. ("Upcoming Sports Events", 2012).

The Winter Olympic Games 2014 in Sochi has been the main trigger for huge changes and investments in the Krasnodar Region. Apart from the sports venues, which have been built for the games, 30 new four-five star hotels and 53 three-stars hotels have been built in the area (Pomareva, 2013), transport has been considerably improved. As Sochi becomes a focal point of the upcoming Winter Olympics, there has been more international attention directed towards the city and the region.

Nationally, Sochi is well known as a seaside resort and ski destination on the Russian Riviera. Many Russians come to Sochi in summer to bathe in the sea; the black sea is the warmest in Russia and has rather weak tides. The Black Sea coast of the Caucasus has been developed as a national resort. It is known for decades as the Soviet's Union Center for relaxation and rejuvenation (Stivers-Isakova, 2007). The first spas were built in the 1920's, known as sanatoriums. In the 1930's they were all handed over to experts in resort medicine who were given a task to improve people's health. This health tradition has been carefully maintained in Sochi and now, together with the Games it is attracting domestic and foreign investments ("Sochi - to", 2013). This resort infrastructure investments come as

world class five-star hotels, entertainment facilities, transport infrastructure and all the sports venues that will be left as legacy from the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

Sports and health are usually related, so keeping the Sochi's image of health, wellness and sports, this article suggests an innovative sports centre for the Krasnodar region as legacy of the Winter Games.

The mountains and hills are great for hiking in summer; Krasnaya Polyana's climate is unique for its combination of high mountains, pure water and forest air. Sochi is a summer and winter destination, since it has hot summers and mild winters; it only snows up in the mountains and not by the coast. It is possible to swim from April to October and to ski from October to March. This area is well known to Russian skiers. Winter sports are very popular in Russia considering it has a continental climate with long cold winters and brief summers ("Russia Climate", n.d.).

The long winter season in the Russian Federation may suggest that winter sports are the main activities in which Russians can succeed in international competitions. Despite this common belief, other, not so common, summer sports are growing in popularity and Russian national teams are achieving success. Beach sports emerged in Russia, first as a trend sports that were mostly played while vacationing on sandy beaches in another country. Even though, Russia is not famous of having long, warm summers, nor many sandy beaches, the passion for beach sports has been growing and it can be noticed by the success of Russian athletes on the international beach sports arena.

One of the examples is beach soccer. This sport started in Russia with Nikolai Pisarev, a famous player from Spartak Moscow, and the first team participation in the Beach Soccer World Cup in 2007. That year and also in 2008 and 2009 Russia qualified to quarter-finals and finally in 2011, they won their first World Cup title followed by the second one two years later (Mosko, 2013).

Russian beach volleyball is another example of success on sand. It had their first major success in 2007 with Kolodinsky and Barsouk winning a first place in a Grand Slam tournament in Austria and a second place in the World Championship. For the women, only in 2012 Yevgenia Ukolova and Ekaterina Khomyakova won a Grand Slam tournament at Austria's Klagenfurt and qualified for 2012 London Olympics. (Trisvyatsky, 2013). In 2007, a specialized facility for volleyball and sand volley, *Volley-Grad*, has been established in Anapa, also on the Russian Riviera, around 350 km from Sochi.

Beach tennis is a very new but emerging sport in Russia. Under the International Tennis Federation (ITF) direction since 2008 it has many World Championships and has been increasing the number of participants. In 2010 Saint Petersburg held the first Russian beach tennis tournament with more than 60 participants playing three categories, men, women and mixed doubles ("Czech Beach Tennis", 2011).

Saint Petersburg has a great beach sports facility called Dynamit, it is a 4300m<sup>2</sup> sports center with many different activities and a sand area dedicated to beach sports such as beach soccer, beach volleyball, beach tennis, beach rugby and beach handball. It has a 28x37m area for beach soccer, handball and rugby and nine pitches (16x8m) used for volleyball or tennis.

June this year Moscow has officially opened the "Dinamo" beach sports complex, it's a first class facility composed by two beach soccer fields in a 32x42m area, 3 beach volleyball or tennis courts in a 20x30m area and has a capacity for 5000 spectators ("First-class beach sports," 2013). Since 2005 Moscow has been hosting beach soccer Euro Cups, in 2011 they held the European Beach Soccer League's (EBSL) final and in 2012 the European qualifiers for the FIFA World Cup ("Euro Beach Soccer", 2003).

The honorary president of the Russian Volleyball Federation, Valentin Zhukov stated to the press plans to expand beach sports centers in the Republic of Tatarstan as well as regions of Samara and Volgograd. Russia seems interested in expanding these centers in order to develop these disciplines across the country ("First-class beach sports", 2013).

Considering this historical moment in which beach soccer success is at its highest point in Russia and the volleyball federation is highly interested in developing beach volleyball centers there may be opportunity for the Winter Games in Sochi to leave a legacy for the local and tourist population.

We would like to propose to establish Sochi as the National Beach Sports Center by transforming one of the Olympic venues into a high-class indoor beach sports center. This suggestion perfectly fits within one of the roles of National Olympic Committees according to the Olympic Charter: "to promote the fundamental principles and values of Olympism in their countries, in particular, in the fields of sport and education, by promoting Olympic educational programmes in all levels of schools, sports and physical education institutions and universities, as

well as by encouraging the creation of institutions dedicated to Olympic education, such as National Olympic Academies, Olympic Museums and other programmes, including cultural, related to the Olympic Movement” (“Olympic Charter”, 2013).

Similar centres not only for beach sports already exist around the world. In the USA, for example, there is the US Olympic Complex in Colorado Springs; it comprehends swimming, shooting, fencing, gymnastics, judo, taekwondo, weight lifting and wrestling. They also provide housing, dining, recreational facilities and other services (“Colorado Springs“, n.d.). Beijing also has a National Olympic Sports Center that was left as Legacy from the 2008 Olympics Games (Beijing Foreign Affairs Office). There are some specialized sports centers such as the Olympic Center of Szeged, specialized in water sports, mainly kayak-canoe and rowing. It’s perfect sporting conditions suits not only Hungarian athletes but also several foreign teams that go for training there, as well as Paralympic athletes (“Olympic Center of Szeged”, n.d.). Another example is the National Winter Olympic Training Center Raubichi in Belarus, considered on of the best biathlon centers in the world (“Sport in Belarus”).

Sochi has the perfect climate and atmosphere to embrace this idea of having a beach sports center. Most of the coastal cluster’s venues would be appropriate to embrace this idea, the Bolshoy Ice Dome, Shayba Arena, Ice Cube Curling Center and the Iceberg Skating Palace (“Sports Facilities“, 2013). It also has some advantages, the coastal cluster, where the venues are located is only a few minutes walk from the Olympic Village that can be used for Russian and international athletes who come for training, the climate in Sochi permits maybe even 7 months of outdoor practice, giving it also an outdoor option. Apart from that, Sochi is associated with beaches and health.

The center should be able to host variety of beach sports such as beach soccer, beach volleyball, beach tennis as well as less popular beach sports such as rugby and handball. Not only that but with this venue, other less known sports such as footvolley can also start being developed in Russia. This is a Brazilian sport played by many European countries; last Footvolley World Cup in Dubai 2011 Russia was a new competitor. It is likely that with the popularity of beach soccer, footvolley starts to be known and played as they are related and it is a great game to improve football skills. Non-sportive activities can also be done in such complex for all ages like for example sand circuit training. Physical activities performed on sand have some great advantages when compared to other surfaces such as grass for example. The impact is lower, it is less likely for injuries and the energy cost is higher, meaning that calories expenditure is higher (Wortman, n.d.). It is also very good for enhancing aerobic conditioning and proved to positively influence firm-ground performance (Binnie, Dawson, Pinnington, Landers & Peeling, 2013).

The beach center should have at least one beach soccer field and eight 16x8 pitches that can be used either for beach volleyball, beach tennis and footvolley, although this last one is officially played on a 18x9 pitch, most European countries play it on beach volleyball pitches since it’s their only option. It should have men and women dress rooms, a bar or restaurant and proper place for spectators.

The beach center can have many other uses apart from being a high performance-training center. It should also be used as grass root development. Partnerships with local schools and universities should be done and sports classes should be offered for all ages and levels. In Sochi, there are at least three universities including the Russian International Olympic University which is directly associated to sports. Intra- and inter-competitions should be held in the facility for beginners and intermediate levels as well as official international tournaments such as the beach soccer World Cup, beach volleyball Grand Slam or beach tennis European Championship.

The facility can generate revenue with the sports education programs and events as well as it can rent the courts during the free hours and attract paid sponsorship. In addition, additional sponsorship could be added for the naming rights of the facility. Selling naming rights generates significant annual revenue for stadiums, it provides the most cost effective marketing communication in the market place today (Friedman, 1998) and it could also definitely be used for this facility, as one of the uses will be to host sports events. Naming rights are a financial transaction and form of advertising in which a corporation purchases the right to name a facility or event, typically for a defined period of time. For properties like a multi-purpose arena, performing arts venue or an athletic field, the term ranges from three to 20 years. So it is important that this should be done as soon as possible and in a long-term deal. Annual income in this type of investment is between U\$3-7 million per year (Moll, 2013). According to McCarthy and Irwin

(2000) naming rights will be well used in the next millennium due to the high levels of satisfaction expressed by corporate marketing executives who have invested in naming rights.

Having this venue transformed into a beach center will bring big value to the local population because most beach sports with some adaptation can be practiced by all ages, from young kids to elder people. This brings community together; families can be physically active and have their leisure time together. Elder people that are usually lonely will form a different social group together with a healthier life style. Certainly, this is a process since these people are not getting easily engaged, but in the long term, when they start from young ages, they maintain their habit through their lives. This is very common in places where there is a beach culture which is associated with outdoor activity as well as it is common in some winter modalities.

Another important aspect to establishing Russia on the beach sports scene is to strengthen Russia's soft power position by this legacy-driven initiative. Russia has just started to develop new tools of foreign policy and it has been focused more and more on soft power to improve its international position. (Markitan, 2013).

It is understandable that beach sports are not popular in Russia, as they aren't in most cold countries, so this opportunity of opening a National Beach Sports Center would bring colossal advantages to Sochi and Russia. It would be a place to develop beach sports all year round, host beach sports events, and it would offer the local population a greater offer of leisure, sports and physical activity practices for all ages.

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### **Перспективы, тренды и инновации в развитии Сочи как национального центра пляжного спорта**

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**Аннотация.** В докладе рассматриваются перспективы, тренды и инновации в развитии Сочи как национального центра пляжного спорта.

**Ключевые слова:** курорт; Сочи-2014; Зимние Олимпийские Игры.