

## 40 years ago...

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On October 21<sup>st</sup> 1968 Alistair (Al) Ramsay stood before the Congress of FIBA in Mexico City and called for the recognition of a fifth FIBA Zone, that of Oceania. His motion was carried by acclamation and today marks the 40 year anniversary of the formation of FIBA Oceania.

Back in 1968 there were only five federations (Australia, New Zealand, Tahiti, Papua New Guinea & Vanuatu) from the region which was to become the Oceania Zone within the FIBA family but 40 years later that number has increased to 21 member federations.

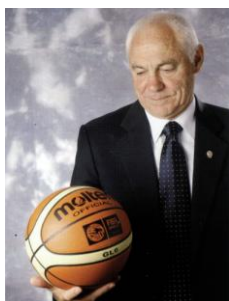
There are some echoes of FIBA itself in the 1968 formation of the Oceania zone. Last year, FIBA celebrated its 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and when the organisation was formed in Geneva in 1932 there were only 6 foundation members. Now there are federations in 213 countries around the world.

The recognition of the Oceania Zone (then known as the Oceania Basketball Confederation) paved the way for the participation by Pacific teams in FIBA World Championships and Olympic Games, and in 1972 Australia directly qualified via a Continental Championship for the Munich Olympics.

Speaking recently from his home in Coffs Harbour, Australia, Al Ramsay commented;

*"Lots of things have changed in 40 years. Back then Australia and the Oceania Zone was a relative unknown. Today the Australian Opals are Women's World Champions and representatives from the region make a significant contribution to World Basketball. All of the work for basketball was done on a voluntary basis 40 years ago and it was even necessary for me to meet my own travel costs to attend international meetings and events. Today we have a permanent office with fulltime staff and things are run very efficiently. Nobody could have imagined in 1968 that 40 years later, an Australian [Bob Elphinton World President of FIBA] would head our organisation. I am very proud of the role I played in establishing the Oceania Zone."*

## President sends birthday wishes...



FIBA President Bob Elphinton has offered his congratulations to FIBA Oceania in reaching the 40 year milestone.

"On the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the formation of FIBA Oceania, as the fifth Zone of FIBA, I send you and the 21 Member Federations my congratulations for this milestone and for the contribution FIBA Oceania has made to World Basketball during that period.

I am sure that Al Ramsay, the "father of Pacific basketball", when he proposed such a body be accepted at the 1968 FIBA Congress in Mexico, could not have envisaged Australia winning World Championships in Women, Junior Men and Women, the NZ Men gaining a 4th place in a World Championship and that Fiji would qualify to play in a FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament!!

Or that the Zone would grow from the initial five federations to twenty one today.

I am proud to have continued the wonderful work of Al Ramsay, in a small way, through my Presidency of FIBA Oceania 2002-2006, and in becoming the first FIBA President from the Oceania Zone.

I wish the players and officials of FIBA Oceania every success in the next 10 years.

*Bob Elphinston*  
FIBA President

### It all began with Australia...



When Al Ramsay stepped to the lectern in Mexico City on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1968 (in those days the FIBA Congress was held during the Olympic Games, today they are held every four years during the Men's World Championship) he did so as the volunteer Secretary General of the Oceania Basketball Confederation. He was at the same time the voluntary Secretary of the Australian Basketball Union.

Australia was the first federation in the region to become a member of FIBA. It did so in 1947 when then Treasurer Ron Luke lunched with FIBA Secretary General R William Jones in Geneva, Switzerland and paid the membership fee on the spot there and then. It took another 4 years before New Zealand became the second Oceania member of FIBA in 1951.

It has been said that a factor in the favourable consideration of the 1968 motion to form an Oceania Zone was the impression left by the hosting of the 1956 Olympic basketball competition when the games were staged in Melbourne Australia.

It's now a matter of history that Australia staged a successful second Olympic Basketball competition when the 2000 Games were staged in Sydney, and this event has left an equally favourable impression with those who took part. It is a great tribute to those who staged such a successful competition, that many elements of the competition presentation and staging at the Athens and Beijing Olympics have been adopted from the Sydney experience.

Australia has also hosted two World Championships on behalf of FIBA. In 1994 the Women's World Championships came "down under" and the fourth place finish by the Opals began a rise to the top which has seen them finish in the top four in every World Championship and Olympic Games since then. In 2006 they claimed the ultimate prize, the FIBA World Championship in Brazil.

In 1997 Australia hosted the World Championship for U-23 Men and during that tournament also claimed a World Championship.

In 2009 New Zealand will stage its first FIBA World Championship when they play host to the U-19 Men's World Championships. It is to be hoped that the event will have a similar effect in boosting the international standing of New Zealand as previous events have had for Australia.

#### Founder suggests it's time for change...



In working for the establishment of the Oceania Zone of FIBA, founding Secretary General Al Ramsay was keen to ensure a direct pathway to FIBA World Championships and Olympic Games for teams from the region.

Australia and New Zealand have been the direct beneficiaries of this system but earlier this year Fiji was able to send its national women's team to the FIBA Olympic Qualifying Tournament for Women in Spain as a result of the Oceania qualification system.

Ramsay now feels that the future of the top Oceania teams lies with Asia. In a recent statement he commented:

*"Basketball in Australia reached great heights in public appeal some years ago but it is now obvious that a new approach is needed to recapture public interest. Australia and New Zealand can learn from football where Australia now plays in major competitions with Asia and the attendance at games and TV coverage is astoundingly great.*

*I believe that the time is well overdue to engage in competition with our Asian neighbours whether with club or national teams. At the recent Beijing Olympics, every seat for every game was sold out. Basketball is a massive sport in many Asian countries such as China, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines.*

*I am sure games against Asian countries will capture the imagination of the Australian Basketball Public."*

#### 40 "movers and shapers" to mark our birthday

FIBA Oceania has today called on its 21 member federations to put forward the names of people from their country who have been instrumental in shaping basketball in its first 40 years.

It is planned at the four-yearly Congress next year in Saipan (Northern Marianas Islands) to name the 40 men and women who have "moved and shaped" basketball from its early days to the present and to recognise their contribution with a commemorative plaque.

FIBA Oceania Secretary General Steve Smith said "In every country in the region from Australia to Vanuatu, the growth of basketball has relied on the efforts of volunteer coaches, referees, administrators and players. We would not have been able to make the progress that we have without the effort of these volunteers. On the occasion of our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday it's appropriate that we recognise the efforts of those who have helped to build our platform for the future."

Oceania Member Federations of FIBA and date of joining.

	<i>Federation.</i>	<i>Joined FIBA in</i>
1	Australia	1947
2	New Zealand	1951
3	Tahiti	1960
4	Papua New Guinea	1963
5	Vanuatu	1966
6	Guam	1974
7	New Caledonia	1974
8	American Samoa	1976
9	Fiji	1979
10	Northern Marianas Islands	1981
11	Samoa	1982
12	Cook Islands	1985
13	Federated States of Micronesia	1986
14	Solomon Islands	1987
15	Kiribati	1987
16	Marshall Islands	1987
17	Nauru	1987
18	Tonga	1987
19	Tuvalu	1987
20	Palau	1988
21	Norfolk Island	1988

**About FIBA**



FIBA ([www.fiba.com](http://www.fiba.com)), the world governing body for basketball, is an independent association formed by 213 National Federations of basketball throughout the world. It is recognised as the sole competent authority in basketball by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Its main upcoming events are the 2009 FIBA Zone Continental Championships and the 2010 FIBA World Championships for Men and

Women, to take place in Turkey and in the Czech Republic respectively.

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