



What were they thinking?

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40 years ago in 1968, the FIBA Congress was held during the Mexico City Olympic Games.

On October 21st, at that meeting, item “e” on the Agenda was the topic “Formation of a new Zone for Oceania.”

Two Oceania Federations (Australia and New Zealand) were on hand to witness the discussion on this point.

Mr Alistair Ramsay spoke in favour of the motion noting that a previous attempt in Tokyo in 1964 had been unsuccessful. Lance Cross from New Zealand supported the motion citing the need for a continental organisation to help basketball in the region flourish. Five federations in the region belonged to FIBA at this time.

Several other speakers supported Mr Ramsay’s motion and because there was no dissent the President approved the formation of the FIBA Zone Commission of FIBA.

So began the formal history of FIBA Oceania or as it was known until 2002 the *Oceania Basketball Confederation*.

But what else was FIBA thinking about in 1968?

It is interesting to look back at the report of the meeting to see what were the interests and concerns of FIBA at a time when it numbered 127 member federations.

Membership:

At the Congress, the affiliation of the New Hebrides Amateur Basketball Federation (now Vanuatu Basketball Federation) was approved. At the same time, Malaysia, Afghanistan and Norway among others had their affiliation confirmed.

At the very time Ramsay and Cross were urging the establishment of an Oceania Zone as a Commission of FIBA, what is now a single zone called FIBA Americas, was then represented by 3 separate Zone Commissions for North America, Central America and South America. This reflected the strength of basketball in the region at the time compared with other parts of the world.

Mini Basketball:

The Secretary General’s report notes that through the creation of Mini Basketball over a million new players have been attracted to our game. The Congress endorsed some action which had taken place over the last few years by establishing a Mini Basketball Commission.

Fans:

The report from Europe noted that the final of the European Club Championships (to use today’s language) was played before a crowd of 65,000.

Height of Players:

What was then known as the Commission on Girls Basketball (now replaced by the Women’s Commission) discussed the inclusion of women’s basketball in the Olympic Games. They also introduced for discussion a proposal to limit the height of players to 195 cms (so as not to discourage normal sized players), but after considerable discussion the idea was dropped.

A little later in the meeting, reporting on Junior Basketball it was noted that the average height of players at the European Junior Championships was 189.2 cms (about 6 ft 2 in).

During the report on competitions it was reported that 5 countries took part in an experimental competition in Spain for players under 180 cms in height. It was judged a great success.

Olympic Games:

The men’s Olympic competition in those days consisted of 16 teams and in a mirror of what awaits us this year, three teams gained a berth at the Munich 1972 Games as a result of a FIBA Pre-

Olympic Tournament. These 1972 Olympic Games were the first at which there was a guaranteed spot for an Oceania qualifier. Ramsay's efforts over many years had finally come to fruition.

Finances:

The membership fee for federations was raised from \$25 to \$50 USD. FIBA's total budget in that year was \$46,250 USD.

Development:

The Congress approved the formation of a *Commission on Technical Aid* to provide resources and experts to assist in the development of the game in emerging federations.

FIBA Headquarters:

It was resolved to progress the establishment of a permanent headquarters for FIBA in a building it would own and control. Interestingly, in 2008 this is a project still waiting to be realised.

USA Basketball:

A whole page in the meeting report was devoted to dealing with the basketball situation in the USA where no single body represented at that time, all of the major basketball parties in the country. The Congress set in place some steps, which ultimately resulted in the formation of Basketball USA incorporating the professional and amateur elements of the game.

Statutes:

The Secretary General recommended the amendment to the Statutes to confirm that FIBA does not tolerate any form of discrimination, racial, religious, political or otherwise.

The Congress discussed and re-affirmed its commitment to Art. 36 – a guarantee that basketball would remain an amateur sport within the FIBA family.

Help us celebrate 40 years of FIBA Oceania by making 2008 a year to strengthen basketball in every federation across the zone.

Steve Smith
Secretary General