

Putin Says Dropping Wrestling From Olympics Unjustified

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin said wrestling should not be excluded from the Olympics, suggesting that its ancient roots made it an integral part of the program.

Last month, the executive board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) made a surprise recommendation to drop wrestling from the Olympic program in 2020, leaving wrestling to fight with seven other sports for one spot when the board meets in May.

"The removal of traditional sports that have been central from the beginning and were in the program of the Olympic Games in the times of Ancient Greece ... is unjustified," Putin said Wednesday, in comments carried by Interfax.

Putin spoke at a meeting with members of the Russian and international sambo federation. He expressed hope that that sport, which was invented in the Soviet era and has roots in judo and wrestling, would someday be on the Olympic program.

"That would be fair and justified," Putin said.

Wrestling, which featured in the first modern Olympics in 1896 and every games since apart from 1900, must beat off competition from softball, karate, squash, roller sports, sport climbing, wakeboarding and wushu.

The IOC recommendation has outraged the wrestling community throughout the world, prompting two former champions including Russia's Sagid Murtazaliyev to return their Olympic gold medals to the IOC in protest.

The world wrestling federation (FILA) will hold an extraordinary congress in Moscow in May, days before the IOC executive board meets to determine which of the eight sports will go forward to a vote at a full IOC session in September.

The IOC executive board meeting will be held in St. Petersburg, Putin's hometown. Putin successfully pitched the Russian resort of Sochi as host city of the 2014 Winter Games.

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