

Putin Boosts Wrestling's Olympic Bid

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Wrestling has been added to the shortlist for the sole remaining place at the 2020 Olympics after receiving the support of President Vladimir Putin at the IOC conference in St. Petersburg.

The sport was cut from the 2020 program in February by the International Olympic Committee in a controversial decision that sparked public protests and even hunger strikes from some of the sport's most ardent supporters.

However, wrestling's chances got a shot in the arm from Putin, who attended the Wednesday's conference and put in a good word for the sport.

Russian Wrestling Federation president Mikhail Mamiashvili thanked Putin, "who supported us completely."

The IOC's full congress will choose either wrestling, squash and baseball in Buenos Aires in September.

"I wish the three shortlisted sports the best of luck in the run-up to the vote in September and would like to thank the other sports for their hard work and dedication," IOC president Jacques Rogge said.

The similar sports of baseball and softball, last seen at the 2008 Olympics, are being presented as a joint bid.

Five candidate disciplines failed to make the shortlist — karate, roller sports, climbing, wakeboarding and wushu.

Wrestling, which has been on the Olympic program in various forms since 1904, has struggled in recent years with low spectator interest and allegations of corrupt judging at major events, including at the Olympics.

Earlier this month, wrestling's world governing body FILA voted to introduce changes to the rules partly aimed at making the sport more viewer-friendly.

"While our place in the Olympic Games is still not guaranteed, this decision recognizes the great lengths to which we are going to reform our sport and address the IOC's concerns," FILA president Nenad Lalovic said.

The Moscow Times contributed to this report.

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