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SOFTBALL PRESIDENT LAUDS SOCHI'S FLAME PLANS

PLANT CITY, FLORIDA (USA) -- Recent media reports have revealed plans by the Sochi2014 Winter Olympics organizing committee to send the Olympic Flame into space in the lead-up to the Games. International Softball Federation President Don Porter reacted to the news with compliments for this initiative.

"While it is typically our policy not to comment on Olympic host cities or bid cities, this occasion merits an exception. We had sent a softball into space back in 1989, so the plans disclosed by Sochi2014 brought back memories," the ISF president explained. "This goes above and beyond the traditional torch relay and I'm sure the organizers will see it through. Our member softball federation in Russia has always been ambitious with their projects, such as our Eastern European Regional Training Center in their country, so it's not entirely a surprise that the nation will have another sporting achievement to take pride in on top of hosting the Winter Games."

Mr. Porter's historic reference centers around space shuttle mission STS-34. Under the leadership of Don Williams, the October 18, 1989, mission included a softball that now sits on display in the ISF's world headquarters. (Captain Williams had personally returned the softball to Mr. Porter on March 2, 1990.) Alongside the ball in the Plant City, Florida, offices are a patch containing the names of the crew members (McCulley, Baker, Lucid, and Chang-Diaz) as well as an 8x10 color photo of the crew, with signatures and "To: Don Porter, from the crew of STS-34."

The ISF president noted that the world governing body still has its sights set on establishing the ISF Hall of Fame & Museum at its world headquarters complex, "For mementos such as these, not to mention, of course, recognizing all those that have been elected to the ISF Hall of Fame over the years.

"It's important to preserve memories, and I commend the Sochi2014 organizers for their unique plans to create new memories."

About the International Softball Federation

The ISF is the world governing body of the sport as recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and SportAccord (formerly the General Association of International Sports Federations). Softball (women's fast pitch) made its Olympic debut at the 1996 Games in Atlanta. There are 127 affiliated countries in the ISF and millions of participants in the sport worldwide. The sport is contested in more than a dozen multi-sport Games. Learn additional details about the Federation at www.ISFsoftball.org.

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