

Putin Backs Olympic Wrestling

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Wrestling's campaign to stay in the Olympics has won some heavyweight support — from Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Both men called for the International Olympic Committee to reconsider after the executive board dropped the sport last month from the program of the 2020 games. Wrestling is one of Russia's and Iran's strongest Olympic events.

"The removal from the Olympic program of traditional forms of sports, which were its basis from the beginning and were in the program of the Olympic Games even in the time of ancient Greece ... is unjustified," Putin said Wednesday.

Ahmadinejad said he would send a letter to the IOC requesting the decision be reversed.

"Wrestling is compatible with the spirit of the Olympics. The sport combines chivalry, power and speed," he said.

Wrestling's governing body, FILA, will meet in Moscow on May 18 to elect a new president and make rule changes. Wrestling is now competing with seven other sports for a single opening on the 2020 program, to be finalized by the IOC in September.

(AP)

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