The ISAF Conference is almost upon us so I thought I'd take this opportunity just to repeat the principle reasons why MNAs and Council members should vote for windsurfing and in particular the RS:X Class

Here are 5 good reasons why you should vote to include windsurfing in the Olympic sailing programme for Rio 2016

1. Windsurfing is a sport for all

More than 60 countries in 6 continents have RS:X Fleets. In fact 54 took part in the 2012 Olympic Sailing Qualifications Series making the men's and women's events the second most popular after Laser.

Countries like Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Guatemala, Iran, Jamaica, Oman, Peru and the Philippines now have windsurfing development programs. Windsurfing attracts emerging and small nations and was instrumental in drawing Asian sailing in to the Olympic Regatta in force after Lee Lai Shan [HKG] won her gold medal in 1996.

The RS:X is a tightly controlled one design which is the least costly of all sailing disciplines both in terms of initial purchase price and more importantly in terms of campaign costs. Small teams can carry their equipment as excess baggage on flights then load it on top of a hire car to reach the regatta venue… No Containers, No trailers and No complicated logistics.

Being a one-design class, MNAs know that everyone is racing on the exact same equipment. They can invest in windsurfing development programmes with confidence starting with the Bic Techno 293 is the chosen equipment for 2 events in the Youth Olympic Games and then move to the RS:X at Youth and Olympic level.

Talented athletes can win no matter where they come from. Finland does not have a long and illustrious history of Olympic windsurfing medals and yet one determined and well coaches athlete, Tuuli Petaya, won silver in Weymouth just a few months ago

Windsurfing is true to Olympic ideals. It is the most athletic tactical sailing event in the Games which is also dynamic, colourful and exciting for spectators and media alike. The RS:X World

Championship attracted more than 94,000 unique visitors to its 2012 World Championship website

On the other hand...

Kitesurfing proposes a box rule for the Olympics, meaning more cost, more testing and more advantage to the rich nations. Equipment selection will determine competitiveness

The likely kitesurfing equipment setup will cost around double that of RS:X.

Small and emerging nations will be greatly disadvantaged, making the race for gold all about who has the most money to invest in equipment and not about the athlete as required by the ISAF Regulations

Investment in testing and selecting equipment will be huge both in terms of time and money. [There are 19 kite brands] It may even be prohibitive for some.

2. Consistent Pathway With Youth Appeal

Windsurfing has a well established and extremely well organised competition structure through the one-design RS:X and Techno 293 for juniors. Youth and junior competitors change equipment only once from starting to race on the Techno to competing in the Olympic fleet on the RS:X. Used equipment is still competitive encouraging new talent to start racing at national level and internationally at junior and youth level.

On the other hand...

Kitesurfing has no established youth racing program for junior/youths and is not part of the MNA structure internationally. Only 14 Youth Boys and 5 Youth Girls took part in the 2012 Kite Course Racing World Championships

3. Women’s participation

The RS:X women’s fleet is strong with participants coming from 5 continents and 40 countries. 80 women took part in the 2012 RS:X World Championships and 102 U17 Girls raced in the 2012 Techno Worlds in Medemblik, Holland

On the other hand

Only 43 women took part in the OPEN 2012 Kite Racing World Championship with only ONE coming from Asia, ONE from South America and NONE from Africa. There are no junior Kite racing competitions set up at the moment.

4. Performance over a wide wind range

Olympics are not always held in windy places, as witnessed in Quindao, China. RS:X is proven

to perform in 3 to over 30 knots using only 1 rig, 1 board and 1 fin. It is simple and cost effective

On the other hand

For the same wind range, a kitesurfer would need 3 kites, 1 board and at least 1 set of fins. Despite previous assurances kites are unable to race a tactical course in windspeeds below 7-8 knots average. The minimum wind speed for relaunching a kite unaided from the sea is 10knots.

5. Race Management

Windsurf racing can be held close to the shore with minimal infrastructure and can be launched from anywhere. Boards can leave confined spaces unaided. Marina's and crowded harbours do not present a problem. When other Olympic classes go out to race so does the RS:X fleet.

On the other hand

Kitesurfing requires plenty of open space away from natutal obstacles that could pose a danger to the participants. Spectators and the media have to be kept well back to avoid the inherent dangers involved in having a large object moving at speed towards the ground.

Leaving the shore in offshore winds is problematic without support boats to ferry participants out to the area of steady breeze.

This then means that kite requires additional infrastructure and logistics at ISAF Sailing World Cup events and the Olympic regatta which may prove expensive. Races cannot safely be held close to the shore making it difficult to make them attractive to live and TV audiences.

SO

It's time to take action. It's time to contact your national sailing authority and their delegates to the ISAF Conference and impress upon them the need to vote to re-open the discussion on the windsurfing/kiteboarding issue so that the full facts can be laid upon the table and an open debate on the merits of both disciplines can take place

DOWNLOAD: This is Windsurfing