

Local Coach Wants Kicking An Olympic Sport

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Coach Gary Zauner, one of the leading football kicking coaches in the United States, has requested the International Olympic Committee to include 'kicking a ball' as an Olympic sport for the 2012 London Olympics.

"The activity of kicking a ball goes back thousands of years,' says Zauner, a Fountain Hills resident, "and almost every country in the world currently has a sport which includes kicking a ball.

The IOC should recognize the global popularity of kicking a ball, and in its purest form, add it as an Olympic sport event.' Zauner, who was a National Football League (NFL) Special Teams coach for over 13 years, coached some of the greatest kickers and punters in NFL history including 17 Pro Bowlers. He is currently a kicking consultant working with some of the NFL's top kickers and punters (for more information please go to www.coachzauner.com). Because of his close connection to football, Zauner says he understands why so many American football fans would like to see football included as an Olympic sport, but that is not what he is requesting of the IOC.

"As someone who has been involved in the art of kicking a football for over 35 years, of course I'd love to see the sport of American football included as an Olympic sport," says Zauner. "However, I realize football will have to become a more international sport like soccer, before that happens." Zauner admits he is not sure how an Olympic event would be built around 'kicking a ball' but says he has a few ideas that could, and should be explored.

"This event could start as an individual event and then be developed into a team competition," he says. 'It could include kicking one type of ball (soccer, football or rugby) or a combination of these balls.'

"Or, perhaps a new 'universal' ball would be designed specifically for this event." Zauner wants to see an Olympic event that highlights the skills related to kicking a ball, such as distance and accuracy. Zauner is awaiting a response from the IOC regarding his suggestion.