

Comment

The Right Choice

Gerd Butzeck is running for the office of President of the international handball federation IHF. The news, which spread at breakneck speed in April of this year and at the time astonished numerous experts, is no longer a surprise today. Those involved have become accustomed to the idea that, for the first time, the International Handball Federation could be led by a German. In the long history since its founding in 1946 there have been only five presidents: two Swedes (Görka Björk, 1946 to 1950, and Paul Hjööberg, 1971 to 1984), as well as a Swiss (Hans Baumann, 1950 to 1971) and an Austrian (Erwin Lanc, 1984 to 2000). Since the turn of the millennium, the Egyptian Hassan Moustafa has stood as the most powerful man in international handball at the head of the IHF.

If German handball — and with it the German Handball Federation — follows its self-perception and its decidedly powerful position as the world's largest handball federation by membership, then it is actually only logical that a German becomes president of the IHF. But it will take great diplomatic skill to unite the handball world behind oneself when a new president is elected at the IHF Congress in Egypt in December. Like in numerous other international federations, the rule also applies in the IHF: One Nation, One Vote. Each nation among the 201 IHF members has one vote and thus the same voting weight as its competitors — regardless of whether 750,000 handball players are organized in the respective federation as in Germany, or 75 as on Mauritius.

After 25 years under the indeed successful leadership of the Egyptian Hassan Moustafa, it is time for a change. Gerd Butzeck, who speaks seven languages and is excellently connected internationally, stands for this change. With him at the top, handball could take the right steps into a successful future — and also score points in competition with “hipper” sports such as basketball or American Football.

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