

Interview



Photo: Facebook

Saira Luumi

Well known in the world of electric wheelchair hockey Saira Luumi is not only an experienced player of Helsinki Outsiders and the national team of Finland, she is also member of the International Committee of Electric Wheelchair Hockey (ICEWH). As the ICEWH event coordinator she is responsible for the preparation and supervision of the local organizing committee. In the interview with EWH2014.com she talks about the position of electric wheelchair hockey in the competition to get a Paralympic status, about the importance of a speed control and about the (very joyful) reason why she won't play in the World Championships 2014.

This interview precedes a series of interviews with international players, coaches and officials, that will be published regularly on www.EWH2014.com.

EWH2014.com: You were present at the presentation of the German Organizing Committee end of March in Munich. Which part of the candidature was the most convincing?

Saira Luumi: The whole nostalgia of Olympic Village was great! It's a historic but still accessible surrounding. And of course the four star hotel for accommodation was impressive.

EWH2014.com: Let's talk about sports. Recently, rumour had it, that using a wildcard the team of Canada will participate in an official world championship for the first time. Can you confirm this and what is the state of affairs?

Saira Luumi: Unfortunately I can't confirm this rumour. We were really hopeful, but the economical affairs are still holding them. We hope, they get at least a budget for participating the last days for the Sports Assembly and feel welcome in the electric wheelchair hockey family. (editorial note: The

Sports Assembly is the big conference of delegates of all EWH nations and takes place every two years. EWH Rules and Regulations are discussed and passed in this board.)

EWH2014.com: It is said that Australia has been at variance with the ICEWH after the WC 2010. The Australians allegedly were on the verge of boycotting the next world championships. Please clear up! Is Australia going to participate in Munich?

Saila Luumi (smiles): Australia is not boycotting the WC2014. They even were the first ones to confirm their slot on the games.

EWH2014.com: At the European Championships 2012 in Finland the speed of the wheelchairs was measured for the first time in ICEWH history. Although some of the athletes obviously ran much too fast, there have been no sanctions. This in turn courted the other players' resentment: Controls only make sense, if contempts against the rules get punished. How does the ICEWH intend to deal with this set of problems?

Saila Luumi: I think the rules must be obeyed. I don't really know what happened in 2012. I was a player and as confused as all the others there. Anyhow, personally I hope that there will be a clear real time speed control in this sport. I want the rules to be for everyone. So we could concentrate on the game more than on the supervision.

EWH2014.com: In 2014, an official ICEWH tournament for the first time takes the classification into account. What is your opinion about this topic and what do you regard as advantages and disadvantages?

Saila Luumi: I believe it will bring lots of new perspectives for the game. I hope the control goes better on this than on the speed. When the classification works, it really makes the sport more equal. It's good for the players who the game is originally made for.

EWH2014.com: EWH is getting more and more popular, new teams get established and new players get recruited, especially in Europe. However, Power Soccer, the second popular sport for athletes in an electric wheelchair, is one step ahead of EWH since it likely will be demonstrated at the Paralympic Games in 2016. What are the middle-term and long-term odds that EWH gets a paralympic status?

Saila Luumi: The International Committee of Electric Wheelchair Hockey is really working hard to get the paralympic status. Unfortunately one or two continents are just not enough. We need the cooperation of the North American teams to make the dream come true. The good news is that we will have the Paralympic recognition this year, so that we are a full IWAS sport.

EWH2014.com: Two short questions finally: Who do you consider to be WC favourite and will we have the pleasure to see you on the field?

Saila Luumi: Of course I'm cheering for my own country FINLAND. Unfortunately I won't be playing but I wish to be present at the WC2014 final days with my family: husband Sampo and a new born baby (he or she will be born in this December/January).

EWH2014.com: Congratulations!

Saila Luumi: Thank you very much!



Saila Luumi in action at the semi finals of the World Championships 2010 (Photo by Wolfram Wroz)