Mind Sports –
Current Status and Future Prospect
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Outline

• What are Mind Sports?
• Major Mind Sport Events in Recent Years
• Mind Sports – the Educational Initiatives
• Mental Health Benefit of Mind Sports
• Future Prospects and Tasks
• Conclusion
What are Mind Sports? (1)

• The term “mind sport” is a modern term started in UK – the “Mind Sport Olympiad” has been held in UK since 1997. It includes many board and card games previously considered “leisure games”.

• The General Association of International Sport Federation (GAISF) evolved into SportAccord and includes mind sports.

• SportAccord defines SPORT as an activity that:
  - Includes the element of competition;
  - Does not include any element of “luck” built into the competition;
  - Does not pose undue risk to the health of safety of its participants;
  - Is not harmful to any living creature;
  - Does not rely on equipment provided by a single manufacturer.
What are Mind Sports? (2)

• SportAccord classifies sports into 5 categories:
  – Physical sports
  – Mind sports
  – Motorized sports
  – Synchronized sports
  – Animal-assisted sports

• A common theme of sports is “play to win” – compete with high concentration, fighting spirit, quick reflection, and strong will. It must contain elements of fair play, discipline, rules, moral code, training, and performance.

• Mind sports are then defined within these criteria.
The International Mind Sports Association (IMSA)

- Founded in 2005, IMSA exists in the setting of SportAccord.
- Founding members of IMSA include Bridge (WBF), Chess (FIDE), Draughts (FMJD), Go (IGF).
- There are two observers – Xiangqi (WXF) and Duplicate Poker (IFP). *(Post Hoc: WXF became a member in 2014)*
- IMSA was formed to promote Olympic-styled events for all mind sports.
Admission Criteria into IMSA

• The sport must be free from the element of luck.
• The sport must be universal – must not be dependent on a specific culture.
• The sport must be wide spread – played over several continents (>4) and in many countries (>70).
• The federation representing that sport must be admitted into SportAccord prior to IMSA.

– These are very restrictive and exclusive criteria!
IMSA-organized Events Since 2005

- **WMSG-I**: Beijing, 2008.
- **WMSG-II**: Lille, France, 2012.
- **SAWMG-1 through 4**: Beijing, 2011 to 2014.
- Part of **Asian Games-2010**: Guangzhou, 2010.
- Part of **Asian Indoors and Martial Games-2013**: Incheon, South Korea, 2013.

- Additionally, there are several regional and national mind sport events.
World Mind Sport Games, WMSG-I

• Held in Beijing, China in October 2008; sharing the infrastructures and organization of the Summer Olympics.

• Participated by >2,700 athletes from 140 countries, 800 staff, and >300 reporters from 109 countries.

• 105 medals were awarded in five sports – bridge, chess, draughts, go, and xiangqi.

• *This was the event that defined “mind sport games”.*
Civilization Varied, Wisdom Unbounded

October 3rd to 15th 2008
Beijing, China
WMSG-II

• Held at the Grand Palais of Lille, France, in August 2012, in close proximity to the London Summer Olympics.
• Participated by ~2,000 athletes from 120 countries and an additional ~500 support staff.
• 105 medals were awarded in five sports – bridge, chess, draughts, go, and xiangqi.

• Established the quadrennial tradition of WMSG.
2nd WORLD MIND SPORTS GAMES

Lille 2012
SA World Mind Games: SAWMG-1 through -4

- Held at the Beijing International Convention Centre, this event is commercially sponsored.
- ~150 top athletes from five sports compete for substantial cash prizes.
- In parallel, worldwide online tournaments are held in three sports, participated by tens of thousands.

- Represents a new commercial sponsorship format for mind sports; establishes a new precedent in bridge and draught of playing for prizes.
The 2010 Asian Game

• Three sports, Chess, Go, Xiangqi, were featured competition items in the Asian Games. Mind sport events were held at Guangzhou Qiyuan.

• 10 countries/regions participated in Go competitions, including three medal items. (Chess had 25 countries.)

• First time mind sports joined regular Olympic sports.
The 2013 Asian Indoors and Martial Arts Games

- Chess and Go were featured in the event held at Incheon, South Korea.
- It was the third time Chess was included in this event, but it was a debut for Go.

- *Long-term association is promised.*
Mind Sports Demonstrations

*Mind Sport International Festivals*: started in Prague and Las Vegas in 2012, now Marbella, Cardiff, LA, and Vienna, twelve festivals are planned in the near future.

*Mind Sport Partners Festival*: November 2011 at the London Eye, including the first *Nations’ Cup* Duplicate Poker Championship.
The Educational Initiatives

• Just as competition events have blossomed, there have been many new educational initiatives aimed at popularizing mind sports and realizing their health and educational benefits.

• The focus has been diverse: university research, instructional courses, online education; school curricula and after-school programs; education pedagogy and technology, etc.
Examples of Educational Initiatives (1)

- A number of universities worldwide now offer courses on Go and the culture behind the game.
- Myongji University offers a degree in Go.
- The Thai University-Industry Coop Program for Go offers employment guarantees for strong Go players.
- Serious research is being engaged by many groups in artificial intelligence for Go.
- There is a large-scale program to explore using new technologies in mind sport education (the Mind Research Network – MRN, led by Berkman Center of Harvard University).
Examples of Educational Initiatives (2)

• The FIDE Latin-America program that includes large-scale equipment donation and teacher training.
• The FMJD Africa program for afterschool, including equipment donation and tournament sponsorship.
• The IGF South America program, including designing teaching materials in Spanish and training Spanish-speaking Go teachers.
Examples of Educational Initiatives (3)

• Implementing mind sports into school curricula – Beijing, China.
• “LA’s Best” – an afterschool program for the City of Los Angeles that aims at promoting intelligence development. Go and chess are included.
• Jamaica (NY) school program using iPad’s to train students in chess and draughts.
• “Cambridge initiative” – using MIT Media Lab experts and mind sport masters to design a program that implements mind sports in the Cambridge school district.
• Afterschool programs organized by the Confucius Institute.
Example (4) – the edX program

- Organized by 29 universities (including MIT, Harvard, Berkeley, Caltech, Tsinghua, Beida, Ecole, Münich, etc).
- Using technology provided by many tech labs, led by MIT Media Lab, to create new educational tools.
- “Create better solutions” for the campus and the world.
- Mind sports are included, starting with the chessX program created by Mind Research Network (MRN).

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Health Benefit of Mind Sports

• Many anecdotal evidence points to the benefit of mind sports in the reduction of mind aging.
• First concrete evidence was in 2003: Swedish researchers linked leisure games with improvement in cognitive functions.
• More recent research using better methodology points to direct link of mind sports (game-play) with delaying the onset of dementia and with better cognition.
• Last month, a new research (published in *Nature*) showed just 12 hours of game-playing over a month markedly improved memory for driving and sign-recognition!
• *Promoting mind sports among the elderly is a social responsibility!*
Conclusion

• Since the start of organized mind sports, the competition aspect has enjoyed an auspicious start.

• The future key is on reaping the educational benefit for the young and the health benefit for the old.

• Topics to explore include:
  – Developing the commercial value of broadcasting
  – Setting standard rating system – a “reward system”
  – An International Mind Sport Day (or Go Day)?