



Nyon, Switzerland, 16 May 2024

World Players Association announces new leadership, new affiliates and a plan to increase player power globally

- The Executive Committee accepted a plan to support the scale and growth of the organisation and expand its capacity to strengthen player rights globally
- World Players welcomed the Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA) and EuroLeague Players Association (ELPA) as new affiliates
- The Executive Committee appointed new board members and confirmed Matthew Graham as the Head of UNI World Players.

Leaders of the World Players Association, a sector of UNI Global Union which represents more than 20 million workers worldwide, agreed key decisions to scale and grow the organisation last month at the Scottsdale, Arizona, offices of the Major League Baseball Players Association (MLBPA), citing the pivotal moment in the global sport industry for athletes taking more risks to claim power and rights to shape their careers, lives and financial futures.

Scale and growth

The Executive Committee approved a strategic framework to enhance the organization's ambitious mission to lead a diverse, multi-sport federation of player unions to collectively improve player rights and representation globally. It will look to gradually expand capacity in new areas such as commercialization and player association innovation through the phased development of a new entity, which will be designed to complement its ongoing and continuing work through UNI Global Union.

Tony Clark, President of World Players and Executive Director of the MLBPA - who had a multi-sport career as a collegiate basketball player and as a Major League baseball player for 15 years emphasized the critical juncture of opportunities and momentum for player rights and representation globally, especially in women's sport, and the need to build the power of the player association movement through World Players. Clark said:

"The MLBPA has examples of inflection points from our own 58-year history in which a group of players rallied together to change the tide for every player that came after them. But this doesn't happen by magic nor without struggle. If players aren't supported by their unions to seize their chance at change they want to see, the nearest term opportunity may be lost. This is a real moment to empower and support the next generation of players - along with their unions of all shapes and sizes and stages of development - to take their shot at organizing and creating a formal seat at the bargaining table."

New affiliations

The Executive Committee approved the affiliations of the **EuroLeague Players Association (ELPA)** and the **Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA)**, a further sign that the organization is keen to grow, convene and unify player associations worldwide.

Changes to the Ex Co

The Executive Committee welcomed the appointment of **Camila Garcia, Global Board Member of FIFPRO (the global union for professional footballers)**, as First Vice President, replacing outgoing member Jonas Baer-Hoffman, and **Lloyd Howell, Jr., Executive Director of the National Football League Players Associations (NFLPA)**, as the replacement for outgoing member DeMaurice Smith. Processes have been established to onboard additional members, including filling vacancies needed to satisfy World Players' gender equality criteria.

New leadership

The Executive Committee appointed **Matthew Graham** as **Head of UNI World Players** to lead the organization's ongoing work.

Graham is a Switzerland-based, Australian labour lawyer, who was the interim Executive Director of World Players since May 2023, having previously been its Director of Legal & Player Relations. Since joining World Players in November 2017, Matthew has played a key role in achieving important reforms to the World Anti-Doping Code; securing acknowledgement that athlete rights are worker rights at the International Labour Organization (ILO); and played a leading role in the player association response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He has significantly expanded best practice sharing between affiliates in key areas such as organizing and bargaining, commercialization and innovation, and women's sport.

Speaking on Graham's appointment, **Garcia** said, "*Matt's stewardship over the past years was just what the organization needed to come together with a unifying process and vision to take new chances. During this period, the Executive Committee has been impressed by Matt's ability to stay focused on the big picture to secure important breakthroughs on embedding player rights in global sport's commitments, while also ensuring affiliates and staff had unwavering support for the practical steps of laying the foundations for the next phase of our movement.*"

Graham said, "*It is my immense privilege to have the Executive Committee's confidence to lead World Players. The demands of player association work and the challenges facing the entire global sport industry are only intensifying and demand a unified and coordinated response. At the same time, there are pockets of abuse and inequity in the global sport industry where player rights are not respected which must be addressed through harnessing the collective power of the player association movement. I look forward to working with our affiliates and likeminded allies to achieve these common goals and build a better future for players worldwide.*"

Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union, said, "*We welcome the appointment of Matt as Head of UNI World Players and congratulate him on his great leadership over the past year. Players are part of a wave of organizing across the world, and*

now is the perfect time for players to unite, organize and collectively bargain for a voice on the job, decent working conditions and fair pay.”

Additional leadership positions are contemplated as the organisation looks to expand its capacity and the contemplated new entity is developed.

Worker solidarity

The Executive Committee, also had the pleasure to be addressed by **Liz Shuler, President of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations)**. President Shuler stressed the crucial need for solidarity between player unions and the wider trade union movement. She hailed the work of the AFL-CIO's Sports Council and the efforts to improve pay and conditions for players left behind, from the global women's game to American college sports and beyond. Citing the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, **Shuler** said, *"Together we want to leverage this mega-sporting event, and the ones that come after it, to create a lasting positive impact for the workers in the affected cities and sectors."*

World Players Executive Committee membership:

- **Tony Clark** (USA), Executive Director of the Major League Baseball Players Association –MLBPA, (President)
- **Camila Garcia** (Chile), FIFPRO Global Board Member (First Vice President)
- **Omar Hassanein** (Ireland), the Chief Executive Officer of International Rugby Players (Vice President)
- **Lloyd Howell, Jr.** (USA), Executive Director of the National Football League Players Association – NFLPA
- **TBD** (USA), National Basketball Players Association – NBPA
- **Terri Jackson** (USA), Executive Director of the Women's National Basketball Players Association – WNBPA
- **Paul Marsh** (Australia), Board member of the Australian Athletes Alliance – AAA, and CEO of the AFL Players Association
- **Tom Moffat** (Australia), Chief Executive of the Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA)
- **Stefano Sartori** (Italy), Associazione Italiana Calciatori (AIC)
- **Dejan Stefanovic** (Slovenia), FIFPRO Global Board Member
- **Paulina Tomczyk** (Spain), General Secretary of European Athletes & Players Association (formerly EU Athletes)
- **Marty Walsh** (USA), Executive Director of the National Hockey League Player Association – NHLPA
- **Takuya Yamazaki** (Japan), Legal Counsel and Board Member of the Japanese Professional Baseball Players Association - JPBPA; and
- **Christy Hoffman** (Switzerland), General Secretary of the UNI Global Union (Ex Officio)

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*The **World Players Association**, part of UNI Global Union, is the exclusive global voice of organized players and athletes across professional sport. It brings together 85,000 players through nearly 140 player associations in almost 70 countries. Its role is to ensure that the voice of organized players is heard at the highest levels in the decision-making of international sport.*