



For the Game. For the World.

**TO THE MEMBERS OF FIFA**

Circular no. 1153

**URGENT**Zurich, 23 July 2008  
mav**Release of Players for the Men's Olympic Football Tournament Beijing 2008**Dear Sir or Madam, *dear friends*

We refer to the above-mentioned issue, which has apparently led to a certain amount of confusion as to whether players have to be released for the Men's Olympic Football Tournament Beijing 2008.

In order to clarify this uncertainty, we would like to inform you as follows:

At the FIFA Congress in 1988, it was decided that the Olympic Football Tournament would be open to players up to the age of 23. This gave the confederations the opportunity to have another competition in addition to the existing U-17 and U-19 competitions. This new competition could then serve as a qualifying tournament for the Olympic Football Tournament.

In 1994, the FIFA Congress decided that each team participating in the Men's Olympic Football Tournament would have the right to select three players over the age of 23.

Regarding the release of players under the age of 23, the football family has always agreed that these players shall be released for the Men's Olympic Football Tournament. This principle has always been accepted in the past and never called into question.

In this respect, please note that according to article 1 paragraph 2 of Annexe 1 of the Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players, the release of players for international duties is mandatory for matches on dates listed in the coordinated international match calendar.



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However, the Men's Olympic Football Tournament Beijing 2008 was deliberately not officially included in the coordinated international match calendar. This is based on the fact that the introduction of the Men's Olympic Football Tournament would not be congruent with the said calendar. Due to its unique character, the Men's Olympic Football Tournament has always been intentionally treated differently. However, this does not mean that there is no release obligation for the relevant clubs.

In view of the importance of the Men's Olympic Football Tournament for the entire sporting movement in general and football in particular, and given the specific nature of the event, as well as on the basis of customary law, the release of players below the age of 23 has therefore always been mandatory for all clubs. The same principle shall apply for Beijing 2008.

In fact, it would appear to be against the spirit of the Olympic regulations to hinder players under the age of 23, who are actually the core of the squads participating in the Men's Olympic Football Tournament, to take part in the final phase of the event.

For the avoidance of doubt, please be informed that the release of players over the age of 23 (i.e. the three out-of-quota players who are eligible for the final phase of the Men's Olympic Football Tournament) is not compulsory, but, as always, we appeal for solidarity within the football family.

We thank you for your kind attention to the above and for informing your clubs accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Joseph S. Blatter

cc: FIFA Executive Committee  
Confederations  
Players' Status Committee  
IOC