

“I am truly overwhelmed by the shining light of Schwarzenegger”

219.000 spectators in one single building complex –Arnold´s Sport Festival in Columbus, Ohio beats all records. Ewald Roth, Head of the Karate World Championships´ organizing commission (taking place in Linz from October 25th to 30th) is right in the middle to present Arnold Schwarzenegger an invitation for the first Karate-WC on Austrian ground ever. Here you can read his impression after returning to Upper Austria.

Ewald, first things first, did you succeed in bringing Schwarzenegger to Linz?

“His secretary is checking the dates; that´s a major step. Arnold is highly interested as we are including persons with disabilities – mental or physical – completely into the main competitions of the World Championships. As an ambassador for the Special Olympics that´s exactly Arnold´s stance, too.”

Is it realistic that Schwarzenegger might come to Linz?

“The Special Winter Olympics are taking place in Schladming, Styria, just a couple of months after our WC. We can provide an ideal platform to promote this event as well. He was curious if this will really be the first Karate-WC in Austria, and he took a full seven minutes to meet with me. That doesn´t sound like much, but usually he was surrounded by 50 to 100 camera crews and thus has no time for discussions. After our little conversation he said “Servus” (which is something like a really nice way to say good-bye in Austria) and even invited me to the closing banquet. Now we really do hope that he finds some space between his appointments.”

How was it possible to meet Arnold on such a special occasion?

“I had huge help in the preparation, otherwise there is no way to reach Arnold at all. It was mainly via the US Karate Federation. Ashley Hill is going to compete in the 61 kg category in Linz. She is a professional model and was working for Arnold. Her dad, Tokey Hill, was the United States´ first World Champion. He won the open category in 1980 in Kumite and is now a friend of Arnold. That is how this little audience was possible.”

The Arnold´s Sports Festival, what is it all about?

“It is a gigantic sport and fitness fair with 1,200 exhibitors. Their fees finance the competitions in 70 different disciplines, from bodybuilding to martial arts to horse riding – it is very diverse. The festival takes place not only in Ohio, but also in Brazil, Australia, Hong Kong and Barcelona. It is, therefore, bigger than the Olympic Games. Arnold became Bodybuilding World Champion in 1970 in Columbus. That is also why the festival´s headquarters is located there. This year he was eye witness to the setting of the new world record in deadlifting, at 466 kg!”

What impression did you get from Arnold Schwarzenegger?

“He is a shining light. Everyone says that he could become the next president of the US, if he would be allowed to stand for election. But he is also restless: these events are just a small part of his activities. He has his own weekly TV-show “The Apprentice”, he is campaigning for the governor of Ohio, he is on many committees, working on a film project and still somehow able to find time for his parasports – fantastic. I´ve seen the positive attitude also on the reactions at Facebook. There was only positive feedback. Arnold moves the people!”

Back to the Karate World Championships: What´s up next?

“On Friday we have a promotion show at the Fit and Fun-fair in Ried, Upper Austria. Then we go directly to the World Cup opening in Slovenia. I hope for a medal by European champion Bettina Plank, but also the other team members should deliver a strong performance in Lasko, Slovenia, after the training camp in Opatija, Croatia. The next goal to be reached is the European Championship in Montpellier, France, before heading on to the World Championships at home.”

All pictures free of charge, Karate-WM 2016

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