SUSTAINABLE TROPHIES
The world faces significant challenges across a wide spectrum of economic, social and environmental matters. The Olympic Movement has both an opportunity and a duty to actively contribute to the global sustainability debate in line with its vision of “building a better world through sport”. With this in mind, and in response to Olympic Agenda 2020, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) launched the International Federation (IF) Sustainability Project in 2016 to obtain an overview of IFs’ sustainability initiatives – identifying common topics, challenges and good practices while also sharing information among the IFs. One outcome of the project was a series of case studies illustrating how IFs are actively contributing towards a more sustainable world. As part of the IOC’s objective to “profile the role of the Olympic Movement in sustainability through the aggregation of information and collective reporting”, it was agreed that the identification and sharing of information contribute to the holistic integration of sustainability and should be continued.

These case studies, which now also showcase the best practices of National Olympic Committees (NOCs), form part of a strategic support system made available to the Olympic Movement through the IOC Sustainability Strategy. Each case study is aligned with one or more of the IOC’s five sustainability focus areas: infrastructure & natural sites; sourcing & resource management; mobility; workforce; and climate. They are also aligned with one or more of the United Nations (UN) framework of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which provide a common framework for organisations to explain how they plan to contribute to sustainable development and tackle the key global sustainability challenges. This framework is pivotal for the Olympic Movement – in September 2015, the UN General Assembly confirmed the important role that sport can play in supporting the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs.
The growing global awareness of the environmental impact of human activities is increasingly driving the sports world to seek sustainable solutions. One key area where the sports industry can make a meaningful impact is in producing medals and trophies for competitions. The production of physical medals and trophies involves various materials, including metals, plastics and wood, plus transportation, contributing to carbon emissions and environmental degradation.

In response to these challenges, digital trophies have emerged as a promising and environmentally friendly alternative to reward athletes for their achievements. The World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC), in collaboration with Legend, the WBSC’s awards partner, has taken a progressive step by embracing digital trophies, technically “non-fungible token” (NFT) trophies, and acknowledging them as a sustainable alternative to physical medals.

An NFT is a unique digital identifier recorded on a blockchain, certifying ownership and authenticity. NFTs can represent various digital or real-world items, including art, music and even digital files of unique creations.

The term “non-fungible” means that each NFT is one of a kind and cannot be replicated or replaced. As part of its sustainability strategy, the WBSC initiated the practice of awarding digital trophies to its champions, starting from 2022. This began during the 1st Baseball5 World Cup held in Mexico City and the inaugural Virtual Cup in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

According to the 2030 Calculator (a product carbon footprint calculator), the carbon footprint to produce a gold medal is 708.18kg CO2e, while the carbon footprint for a silver or bronze medal is 469.42kg CO2e. In contrast, the carbon footprint of a digital medal is only 0.4g CO2e.

It has been estimated that the WBSC delivers between 90 and 100 prizes, including medals and trophies, for each individual event.
**OBJECTIVES**

- Reduce the carbon footprint associated with traditional physical medals and trophies, aligning with global sustainability efforts.
- Embrace innovative solutions like NFT-based digital trophies, setting a trend for sustainable practices in the sports industry.
- Encourage other sporting federations and clubs to switch to Sustainable trophies.

**BENEFITS**

- Reduce carbon emissions and environmental degradation caused by the production and transportation of physical medals and trophies.
- Establish a sustainable approach to awards in sports, setting a precedent for future generations to follow in the pursuit of environmental responsibility and promoting digital and futuristic trends.
- Shift towards rewarding athletes in a way that is eco-friendly and reduce overall emissions at the same time.

Through the use of digitally developed trophies, medals, and awards, the total carbon footprint would decrease significantly, from 4,000 t CO2e to a mere 0.5 t CO2e. By adopting sustainable and innovative solutions such as digital trophies, the WBSC can reduce its carbon footprint and contribute to a more environmentally responsible future.

The WBSC is committed to expanding baseball/softball around the world and connecting with new fans worldwide, particularly the younger generation. Our digital project plays a crucial role in achieving this goal, bringing further innovation to our sport while also aligning our organisation with global sustainability efforts to reduce carbon emissions and environmental degradation caused by the production and transport of traditional medals and trophies. Using NFT-based digital trophies mean the athletes receive their awards while reducing the impact on the environmental in the process. We know that this is important to many of our athletes.”

RICCARDO FRACCARI, PRESIDENT, WBSC

The sports industry has the potential to lead the way towards a better, greener future for generations to come. The WBSC is committed to escalating the production of virtual trophies and NFT prizes in the coming years, with the vision of entirely replacing physical awards in the future.