SURVIVAL AND REBIRTH IN OLYMPIC GOVERNANCE

A Case Study in Organizational Turnaround and Modernization (2013-2014)

Briefing

How an existential threat from the International Olympic Committee forced the total structural evolution of the world's oldest competitive sport.



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EVENT FACT PATTERN

THE ACTION

The IOC Executive Board recommends excluding wrestling from the 25 core sports for the 2020 Olympic Games.

THE SCOPE

Wrestling is relegated to a provisional shortlist, forced to campaign against squash and a combined baseball/softball bid for a single remaining slot.

THE METRIC

The IOC's internal evaluation across 39 distinct criteria exposed critical vulnerabilities in international wrestling's governance, presentation, and equity.

February 12, 2013:
The Existential Threat



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Diagnosing the Organizational Failure of FILA



Governance Stagnation

- Zero athletes on decision-making bodies.
- No dedicated women’s commission.
- No ethics rules established for technical officials.
- No medical official on the executive board.



Structural Inequity

- A severe gender imbalance in Olympic participation.
- Women’s freestyle allocated only four weight classes compared to fourteen for men.



Product Degradation

- Constant, opaque rule changes.
- Sport format excessively complicated for global audiences.
- Diminished media value and television broadcast appeal.

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The Leadership Pivot and the Crisis Cabinet

The Collapse

February 16, 2013 – Phuket, Thailand

Facing intense pressure and a divided confidence vote among Eastern delegates, incumbent President Raphaël Raphaël Martinetti is forced to resign, ending an era characterized by diplomatic isolation and non-Olympic associated styles bloat.



The Tactical Response

May 18, 2013 – Moscow, Russia



At an Extraordinary Congress, Nenad Lalović is elected President.

The strategy shifts instantly from internal bureaucracy to high-level IOC diplomacy, engaging PR firms like Weber Shandwick, and assembling a diverse presentation team of Olympic champions to rebuild institutional trust.

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The Mathematics of Passivity in the FILA Era

Step 1: The Period Reset

Matches featured three distinct 2-minute periods. Points reset to zero at the end of each period.

A wrestler could score 10 points in period one, lose periods two and three by a score of 1-0, and lose the entire match.

Step 2: The Ball Draw

Because the 2-minute format rewarded extreme stalling, periods frequently ended in 0-0 ties.

Step 3: Institutionalized Luck

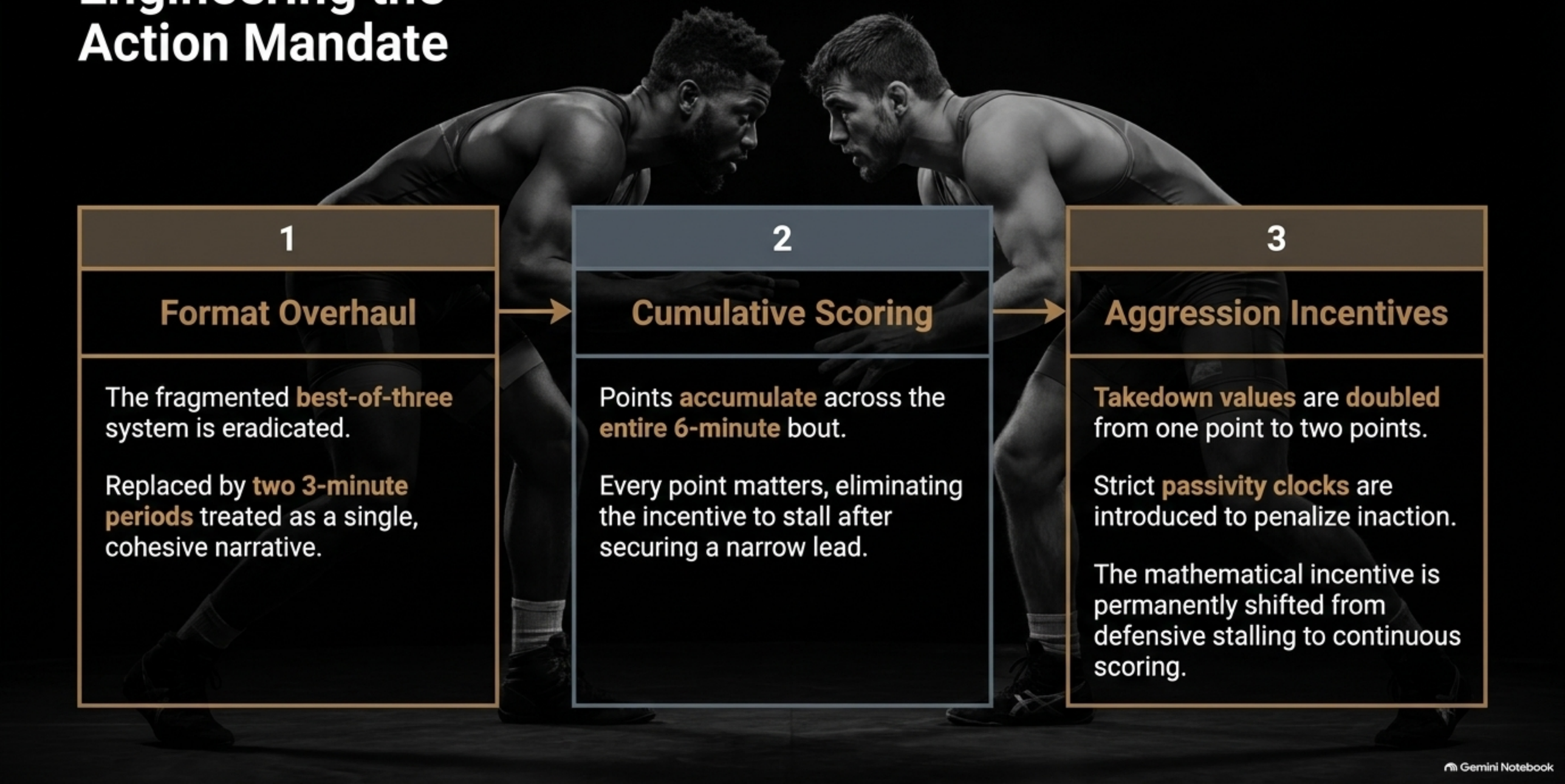
Officials resolved these 0-0 ties by drawing a colored ball from a bag to award an advantageous leg clinch.

Olympic medals were decided by literal luck of the draw rather than athletic supremacy.



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Engineering the Action Mandate



1

Format Overhaul

The fragmented **best-of-three** system is eradicated.

Replaced by **two 3-minute periods** treated as a single, cohesive narrative.

2

Cumulative Scoring

Points **accumulate** across the **entire 6-minute** bout.

Every point matters, eliminating the incentive to stall after securing a narrow lead.

3

Aggression Incentives

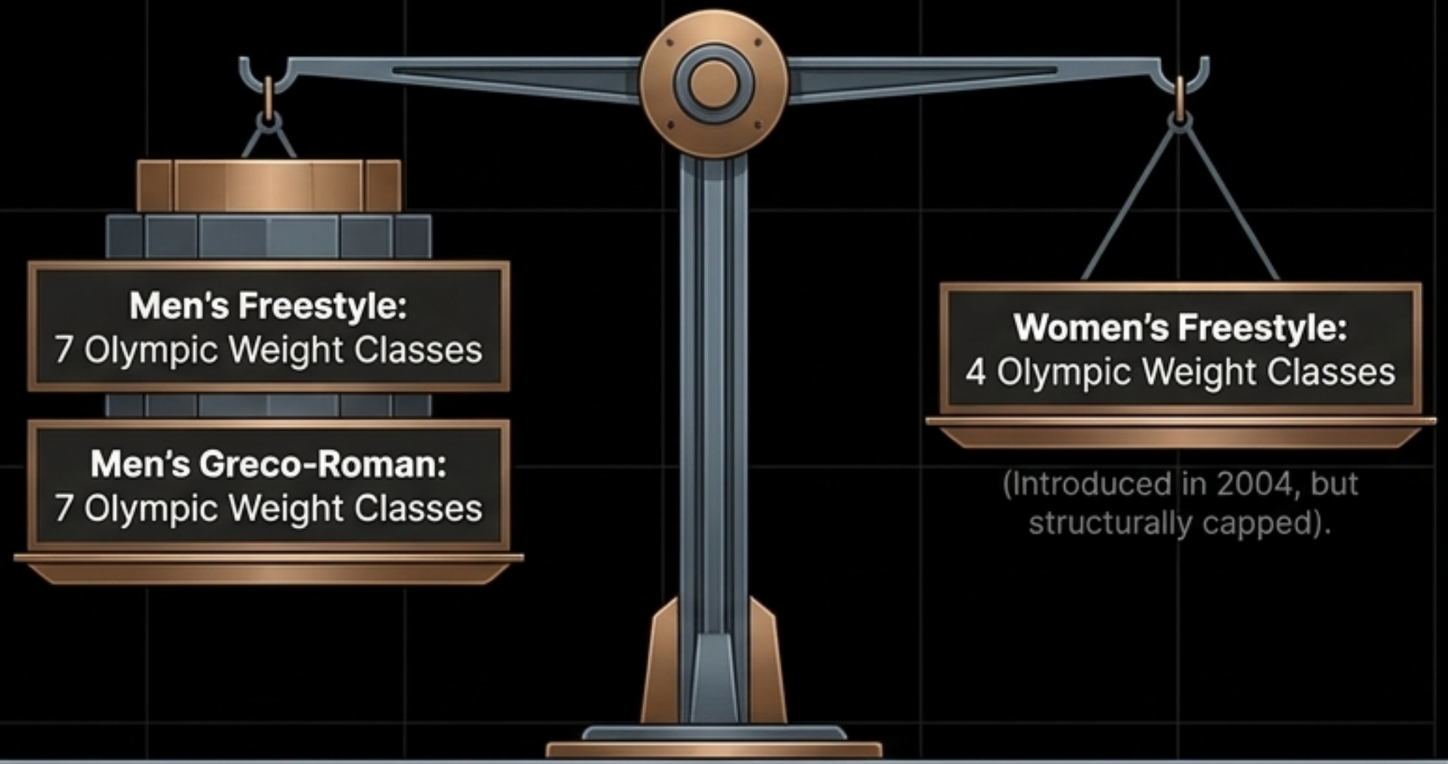
Takedown values are **doubled** from one point to two points.

Strict **passivity clocks** are introduced to penalize inaction.

The mathematical incentive is permanently shifted from defensive stalling to continuous scoring.

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Quantifying the Structural Equity Deficit



The Strategic Vulnerability

Women constituted less than 23% of the Olympic medals awarded in the sport. The IOC explicitly cited this lack of gender parity as a primary indicator of organizational stagnation and failure to align with modern Olympic values.



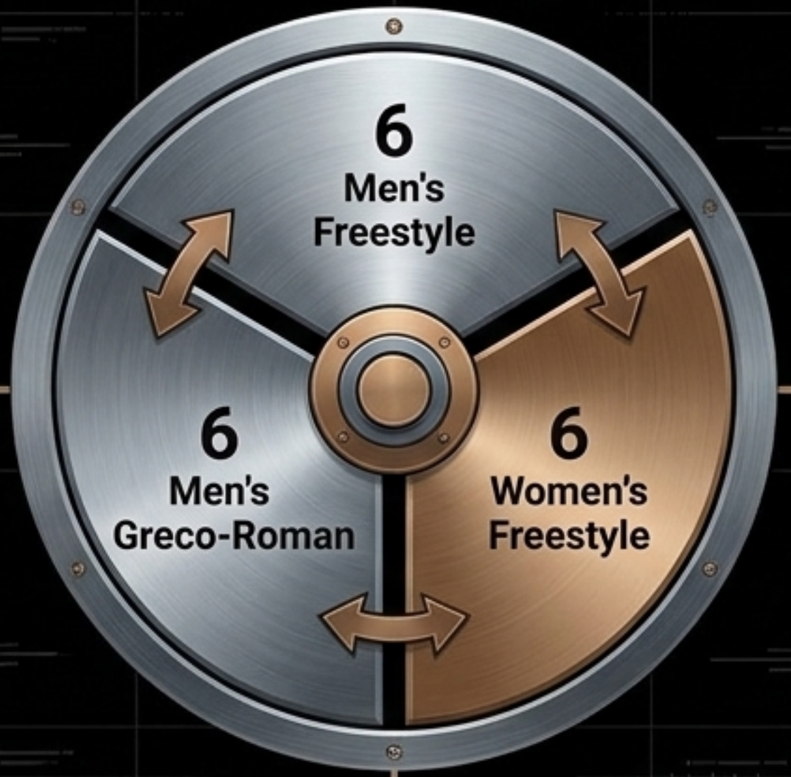
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Achieving Parity Through the 6-6-6 Paradigm

The Sacrifice

One men's weight class is stripped from both Freestyle and Greco-Roman, reducing them from 7 to 6.





The Expansion

Women's Freestyle is elevated from 4 to 6 weight classes.



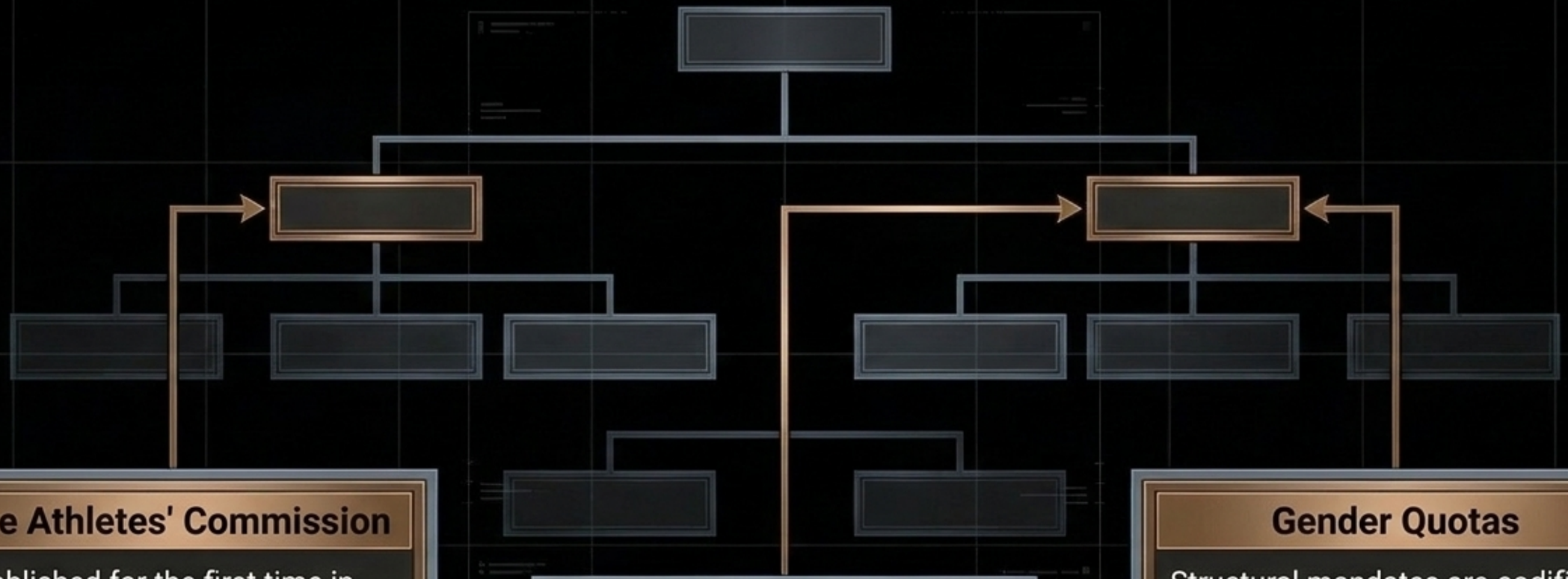
The Result

A perfect 6-6-6 distribution. Women's wrestling is no longer a secondary addition; it is established as a full, equal pillar of the international federation, directly satisfying the IOC's gender equality mandate for Rio 2016.



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Institutionalizing the Athlete Voice



The Athletes' Commission

Established for the first time in the federation's history. Olympic champion Carol Huynh is installed as the inaugural chair, creating a direct pipeline between active competitors and executive leadership.

Executive Representation

The constitution is rewritten to mandate that the Athletes' Commission Chair sits directly on the governing Bureau.

Gender Quotas

Structural mandates are codified requiring specific quotas for requiring specific quotas for female representation on the Bureau and across all Continental Councils, dismantling the all-male oversight monopoly.

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Separating Powers to Restore Integrity

The Legacy System

Political Bureau & Referee Selection

The Legacy Vulnerability

Prior to 2013, high-profile officiating scandals highlighted a system where political Bureau executives directly controlled referee assignments, creating massive conflicts of interest.

The Modern Architecture

A Bureau Governance

B Independent Officiating

The Structural Fix

Oversight of technical officials is permanently decoupled from political Bureau control. Standardized video challenge systems are implemented.

The Result

A modernized, transparent officiating pipeline that removes the perception of systemic bias and aligns with IOC ethics requirements.

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September 8, 2013: The Buenos Aires Mandate



The Verdict

The IOC membership votes to restore wrestling to the 2020 and 2024 Olympic programs.

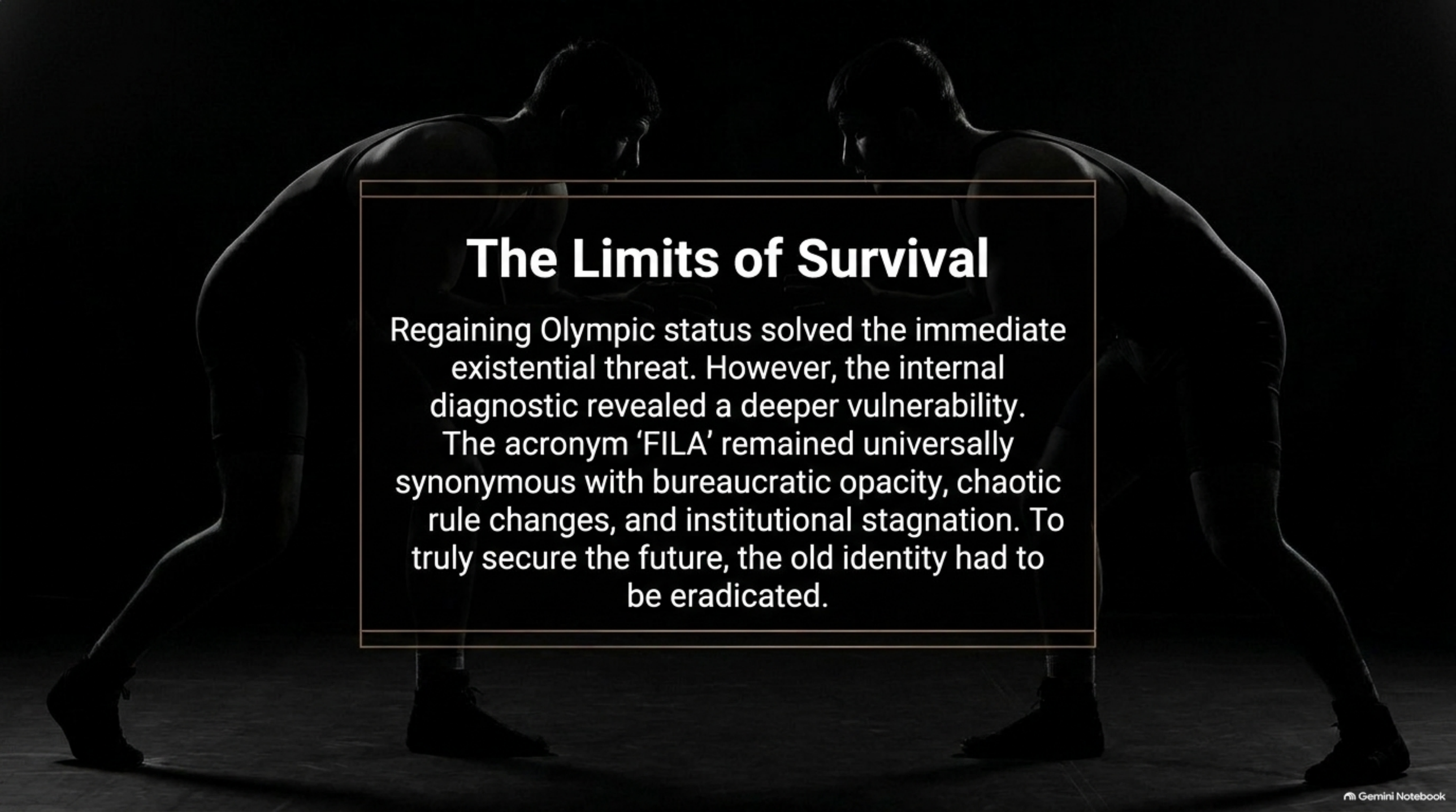
The Margins

Wrestling secures 49 first-ballot votes, decisively defeating competing bids.

The IOC Rationale

The IOC publicly cites the rapid overhaul of rules, the elevation of women in decision-making, and the expansion of female competitive opportunities as the primary drivers of the sport's reinstatement.

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The Limits of Survival

Regaining Olympic status solved the immediate existential threat. However, the internal diagnostic revealed a deeper vulnerability. The acronym ‘FILA’ remained universally synonymous with bureaucratic opacity, chaotic rule changes, and institutional stagnation. To truly secure the future, the old identity had to be eradicated.

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The Tashkent Congress: A Global Rebranding Strategy



The Death of the Acronym

The French **'Fédération Internationale des Luttes Associées'** is formally retired. It suffered from regional bias and constant global confusion with a sportswear company of the same name.

The Birth of a Global Identity

In collaboration with branding agency Olive Grove, **'United World Wrestling'** is unanimously adopted.

The Linguistic Shift

Moving from a French acronym to a universally accessible **English identity** signals a shift from a European administrative body to an inclusive, modern, global sports brand.

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The Paradigm Shift: A Diagnostic Comparison

	FILA: Pre-2013	UWW: Post-2014
Rules & Format	Best-of-three periods, 0-0 ball draws, reset scoring.	**Cumulative scoring**, 6-minute continuous narrative, passivity penalties.
Gender Equity	7-7-4 weight class imbalance; male-dominated Bureau.	**6-6-6 Olympic parity**; mandated female Bureau representation.
Athlete Voice	Zero constitutional representation for active athletes.	**Dedicated Athletes' Commission** with an executive Bureau seat.
Brand Identity	Opaque French acronym, fragmented global presence.	Unified **English** brand, globally optimized for digital media and broadcast.

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True Institutional Survival Requires Evolution



The Modern Mission

To lead the growth of Wrestling, competitive and recreational, around the world… to be globally recognized as an inspiring, innovative, and leading Olympic federation.

The Final Dossier Insight

The 2013 IOC crisis was not a tragedy; it was the ultimate catalyst. United World Wrestling secured its Olympic future not through political lobbying alone, but by ruthlessly modernizing its product, institutionalizing athlete voices, and establishing gender equity as a non-negotiable foundational pillar.

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