



This matter is being dealt with by:
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President Morinari Watanabe
Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique
Avenue de la Gare 12A
Case postale 630
1001 Lausanne
Switzerland

OPEN LETTER

Dear President Morinari Watanabe,

RE: 'Development of a related FIG discipline' based on Parkour/Freerunning

I write from [Parkour UK](http://www.parkour.uk), the [recognised National Governing Body \(NGB\)](#) / National Federation for the [recognised sport](#) of **Parkour/Freerunning** in the United Kingdom (appendix 1 – Letter of recognition from the UK Sports Councils), regarding the encroachment and misappropriation of our sport by Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique (FIG) via '*development of a related FIG discipline*' **based on Parkour/Freerunning**, as detailed in your [press release](#) dated 24th February 2017, Lausanne (Sui), FIG Office.

As the recognised custodians of the recognised sport of Parkour/Freerunning in the UK and to protect and promote the integrity, rights, freedoms and interests of Traceurs/Freerunners (practitioners of our sport), our member organisations & the UK community - as well as by legitimate extension the international Parkour/Freerunning community - we feel that it is both necessary and expedient to provide some much needed clarification on Parkour/Freerunning, such that our sport is neither misappropriated and/or encroached upon by FIG internationally and/or nationally by any FIG member National Federations.

Clarification on Parkour/Freerunning:

What is a 'sport'?:

[The council of Europe definition of sport \(Article 2\)](#): "Sport" means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships **or** obtaining results in competition at all levels.

Note: While Parkour/Freerunning is a sport, it's not merely a sport. It is also an art, discipline and philosophy.

Definition of our sport:

Parkour/Freerunning/Art du Déplacement is the non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement. In practice it focuses on developing the fundamental attributes required for such movement, which include functional strength and fitness, balance, spatial awareness, agility, coordination, precision, control and creative vision.

Parkour/Freerunning/Art du Déplacement is a sport that encourages self-improvement on all levels, revealing one's physical and mental limits while simultaneously offering ways to overcome them. It is a method of training one's body and mind in order to be as completely functional, effective and liberated as possible in any environment.

The sport aims to build confidence, determination, self-discipline and self-reliance, and responsibility for one's actions. It encourages humility, respect for others and for one's environment, self-expression, community spirit, and the importance of play, discovery and safety at all times.

*Note: The description above is to define Parkour/Freerunning as a **sport** and does not fully describe the art/discipline/philosophy of Parkour/Freerunning as a whole.*

Lineage of our sport (summary):

The sport originally termed Art du Déplacement, now also often referred to as Parkour and/or Freerunning, was founded in France in the 1980s by a group of nine young men. The founders are David Belle, Sebastien Foucan, Yann Hnautra, Chau Belle, Laurent Piemontesi, Guylain N'Guba Boyeke, Charles Perriere, Malik Diouf and Williams Belle.

The term 'Parkour' was first introduced by David Belle in 1998 and derives from the French word 'Parcours' meaning 'route' or 'course'

The term 'Freerunning' was the creation of Guillaume Pelletier, a representative of a group of French practitioners involved in the production of a Channel 4 documentary, Jump London, in 2003. The term was used in order to communicate and describe the ethos of this new sport to an English-speaking audience.

The terms are now used interchangeably, but continue to refer to the same original activity founded in France.

Parkour/Freerunning has been practised in the UK since 2001, following a French film by Julien Serri; *Yamakasi – Les Samourais des temps modernes*. (Yamakasi is a Lingala word loosely meaning 'Strong Man, Strong Spirit', and summed up the original and still core aim of Parkour/Freerunning - to be a strong individual: physically, mentally and ethically). Yamakasi featured many of the founders of Parkour/Freerunning, as outlined above. Parkour/Freerunning came to significant prominence in the UK following the [Jump London \(2003\)](#) & [Jump Britain \(2005\)](#) documentaries by Mike Christie which were shown on Channel 4. These were then followed up by [Jump Westminster \(2007\)](#) by Dr Julie Angel, which pushed Parkour/Freerunning into the mainstream consciousness and also led to the establishment of Parkour UK in 2008 as the NGB for Parkour/Freerunning in the UK.

Note: For a more detailed history on Parkour/Freerunning please refer to [Breaking The Jump](#), by Dr Julie Angel.

Uniqueness:

Parkour/Freerunning is a completely separate sport **in its own right. It is not a discipline of any existing sport or activity.**

Parkour UK has demonstrated this and achieved the necessary recognition throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the sport of Parkour/Freerunning & Parkour UK as the NGB/National Federation for the sport via [the robust, independent and transparent recognition process](#) of the UK Sports Councils - UK Sport, Sport England, Sport Wales, [sportscotland](#) & Sport Northern Ireland.

This is also understood, acknowledged and supported at the highest level of sport governance/administration internationally, including but not limited to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and SportAccord. I met with the IOC in July 2014 and also SportAccord in January 2014 along with a Parkour UK Board Member, to discuss Parkour UK, Parkour/Freerunning and its growth and development internationally. Please see appendix 2 - Letter from SportAccord, dated February 2013 confirming that SportAccord "do not recognise a member as governing Parkour/Freerunning/Art du Deplacement and no organisations representing these activities have stated their intention to apply for membership at this time or in the future". This letter formed part of the recognition process in the UK, to achieve recognition for Parkour/Freerunning as a sport and Parkour UK as the recognised NGB.

Being relatively 'new', Parkour/Freerunning is often wrongly confused and/or associated with other existing sports and/or activities.

Parkour/Freerunning is **not** a discipline and/or a derivative of any existing sport or activity and has been independently recognised as a sport **in its own right**, including, but not limited to, the following areas of distinct uniqueness:

- The unique lineage of our sport demonstrates that it is not a discipline of, nor is it linked to or part of an existing sport/activity (*there is no connection and/or lineage to the [sport of Gymnastics](#)*)
- Parkour/Freerunning is primarily a non-competitive sport/activity (see our definition above) unlike most other sports (*which is fundamental to the [sport of Gymnastics](#)*)
- Parkour/Freerunning is primarily an outdoor sport/activity, but is not limited to just the outdoors (*The [sport of Gymnastics](#) is an indoor sport*)
- Parkour/Freerunning is practised in undefined spaces/places, unlike other sports that have a 'field of play', a 'game', a 'place' and/or specified 'apparatus' (*which is fundamental to the [sport of Gymnastics](#)*)
- Parkour/Freerunning has significant and independent cultural status from all other sports/activities that is recognised internationally

- Parkour/Freerunning requires no specified ‘apparatus’ beyond one’s own body and the environment (*The sport of Gymnastics requires specified apparatus, as referred to in FIGs statutes*)
- Parkour/Freerunning involves free movements rather than prescribed movements (*which is fundamental to the sport of Gymnastics*)

Parkour/Freerunning represents the most accessible, transformative sport; open to all with no specific requirement of specialised equipment and/or training/practice areas.

Additionally, Parkour/Freerunning is identified and listed as a sport as part of Sport England’s [Active Lives Survey](#). Participation figures in the [Year 1 Report](#) included data on those (16+) in England that have participated in **Parkour/Freerunning** and [showed that over 96,700*](#) had taken part at least twice in the last 28 days. Almost **twice** the size of Skateboarding, **three** times the size of Judo and almost **four** times the size of Triathlon in the UK. This further demonstrates the distinct and unique status of Parkour/Freerunning as a sport in its own right.

Context - Non-Competitive Sport:

Parkour/Freerunning/Art du Déplacement is **primarily** a non-competitive sport, therefore when practitioners train together there is an atmosphere of healthy, but collaborative competition in the true sense of the word. The word “*competition*” derived from the Latin word “*competere*”, which means “*to strive together*”. This is what our community and practitioners refer to when they train together as a group: *They are striving together to achieve excellence through movement.*

As independently recognised, Parkour/Freerunning **is not** merely or simply “*a non-competitive training methodology*”, as referred to in the FIG Press Release. It is a **recognised sport** in its own distinct and unique right. Parkour/Freerunning has no lineage, nor connection with or to the separate and unrelated sport of **Gymnastics** (as governed by FIG and its member national federations) and/or any other sport.

If any ‘*competition(s) and/or competitive format*’ for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement are to be developed, this should be in accordance with the freely expressed will and desire of the collective international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right **we**, as a sovereign international community, and **not** FIG should freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development.

International Federation:

SportAccord, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) & the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) **do not** recognise any International Federation as governing/representing Parkour, Freerunning and/or Art Du Déplacement.

Our current [Memorandum & Articles of Association](#) (constitution/statutes) states that Parkour UK in Clause 3, our objects are:

3.2 To act as the representative member for the Territory in international affairs and to seek affiliation to and carry out functions delegated to it by an appropriately registered [recognised by [SportAccord](#), [IOC](#) and [WADA](#)] international governing body or federation

Therefore, once formal recognition from [IOC](#), [SportAccord](#) and [WADA](#) is achieved for an International Federation for Parkour/Freerunning, [Parkour UK may](#) apply for membership with the International Federation to fulfil any duties under our Memorandum & Articles of Association 3.2 (as detailed above) and as may be required by a recognised International Federation, subject to approval from our members/community at an Annual General Meeting (AGM)/Congress.

Any International Federation for Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement **must and should be** established by the international Parkour/Freerunning/Art Du Déplacement community, via a process of federating our NGB’s/National Federations – as per established and recognised international norms, on the established right of self-determination and by virtue of that right **we**, **not** FIG as an international community freely determine our sporting, social and cultural development. This is in accordance with our freely expressed will and desire.

Parkour UK, as currently the only NGB/National Federation for Parkour/Freerunning anywhere in the world that has received the necessary independent recognition from the highest sports authorities (the UK Sports Councils – as detailed above) will offer our unique expertise and experience to any other nations, NGB’s/national federations and/or national groups internationally to support them in developing National Federations/NGB’s for their territories.

We do this to ensure we can assist others to protect and promote the integrity of our sport, the rights, freedoms and interests of Traceurs/Freerunners internationally & the international Parkour/Freerunning community.

Encroachment and/or misappropriation by FIG / National Gymnastics Federations

As detailed above and based on the FIG [press release](#) dated 24th February 2017, regarding '*development of a related FIG discipline*' **based on Parkour/Freerunning**, this is a clear encroachment and misappropriation of our sport, which is a completely separate, unrelated and independently recognised sport, by the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique and/or by FIG member National Federations (as detailed in your Press Release).

Such encroachment and misappropriation goes beyond established and recognised ethical, legal and moral limits, as well as being inconsistent with the established [principle of solidarity](#) and including but not limited to;

1. (as highlighted in) Appendix 3 - International Olympic Committee, Olympic Charter - Aug 2016, 5. Fundamental Principles of Olympism;
 - a. *Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations [within the Olympic Movement] **shall have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport**, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that principles of good governance be applied.*
2. (as highlighted in) Appendix 4 - The governance, authority and scope of FIG's statutes;
 - a. Interpretation - Definition of 'Gymnastics', 'Discipline' & the listed definitions of the disciplines of 'Gymnastics' (of which Parkour/Freerunning is **not** part of)
 - b. Article 2.1 Objects
 - c. Article 2.2
 - d. Article 14.4
 - e. Article 18.1
 - f. Article 29.1 (Parkour UK is recognised as being the exclusive authority for Parkour/Freerunning in the UK)
 - g. Article 29.2 – "A Federation shall not intervene or interfere in the affairs of another Federation"
 - h. Article 32
 - i. Article 36.3
 - j. Appendix 3 – Code of Ethics

Additionally, FIG do not have the legitimacy, competence and/or sporting authority to develop '*a related FIG discipline*' **based on Parkour/Freerunning**.

Parkour UK has experienced similar encroachment and misappropriation, beyond ethical, established and recognised norms, of our sport by British Gymnastics, a FIG member NGB/National Federation, via the development of '*Freestyle Gymnastics / FreeG*' – which clearly mimics and imitates **Parkour/Freerunning**. Parkour UK has pro-actively, positively and robustly addressed this with British Gymnastics & the UK Sports Councils since March 2013, to ensure that our sport is not misappropriated and/or encroached upon. As detailed above, Parkour UK has achieved the necessary independent recognition as the NGB/National Federation and independent recognition for Parkour/Freerunning as a sport throughout the UK. This has ensured, with absolute clarification that Parkour/Freerunning **is** a distinct and unique sport in its own right and **not** a discipline of any existing sport/activity. This is fully understood and recognised by British Gymnastics, including their Executive Director – Martin Reddin, who is also a member of the FIG Executive Committee.

Parkour UK and our community are currently unclear as to who provided the '*presentation and research into parcours d'obstacles (obstacle course competitions) and parkour*' to FIG, as detailed in the Press Release. However, it is clear that whoever the individual(s) and/or organisation(s) they **do not** have the expertise, legitimacy and/or authority to represent our sport/activity and/or our community either nationally or internationally. This does raise the question, as to what due-diligence FIG has carried out prior inviting and/or receiving this presentation and to stating its intentions of the '*development of a related FIG discipline*' **based on Parkour/Freerunning**?

Additionally, it is also unclear as to what is the motivation behind FIG intentions relating to the '*development of a related FIG discipline*' **based on Parkour/Freerunning**? However, what is clear your statement in the Press Release states; "*I am delighted with this first meeting, which has been very constructive. We made important decisions concerning the future of Gymnastics, **which correspond with my plans to innovate and broaden the base of the sport***". The intention, relating to the '*development of a related FIG discipline*' based on Parkour/Freerunning **is not** innovation, but is clear encroachment and misappropriation

Summary

In short, Parkour/Freerunning is **not** “Gymnastics”, **nor** are Traceurs/Freerunners “Gymnasts”. We are our own sovereign sport with independently recognised distinct uniqueness and cultural status. We are Parkour/Freerunning, we are Traceurs/Freerunners.

As acknowledged and stated in your press release “*FIG **deeply respects** the development of parkour*”, the evidence base as set out above, the basis of mutual respect, solidarity and in line with established, recognised international sporting norms that the Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique **and** its member National Federations respect and acknowledge Parkour/Freerunning as a sovereign sport with independently recognised distinct uniqueness and cultural status and refrain from any encroachment and/or misappropriation of Parkour/Freerunning.

On this basis, Parkour UK would welcome a meeting with FIG, at the earliest convenience (within 60 days of the date of this letter) ensuring that the meeting is prefaced with an agreed and binding arbitration agreement referring any dispute to the jurisdiction of the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland. The meeting will be to formalise the clarification and understanding via of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to formally acknowledge the recognised sovereignty of Parkour/Freerunning.

If an MoU is not established within a further 60 days of the invited meeting or within such other period as we shall agree in writing, I further propose that any dispute arising from and/or related to the binding arbitration agreement will be submitted exclusively to the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, and resolved definitively in accordance with the Code of sports-related arbitration.

I would welcome a transparent and open dialogue, in the spirit of respect and solidarity in order to amicably resolve the concerns we have outlined above.

If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on any of the above details.

Yours in Sport / Salutations Sportives,


Eugene Minogue
Chief Executive


Stephen Mitchell
Independent Chair

cc: Tribunal Arbitral du Sport (TAS) / Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS)
International Olympic Committee (IOC)
SportAccord
HM Government – Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)
British Olympic Association (BOA)
UK Sport
Sport Resolutions (UK)

Appendix: 1) UK Sports Councils letter of Recognition of Parkour/Freerunning as a sport & Parkour UK as the recognised NGB/national federation for Parkour/Freerunning throughout the UK
2) Letter from Sport Accord, Feb 2013 Lausanne
3) International Olympic Committee, Olympic Charter - Aug 2016
4) Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique, Statutes - Edition 2017