

Doha congratulate London on "fair fight" after losing 2017 World Championships bid

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By Andrew Warshaw in Doha



November 12 - Doha's vanquished 2017 World Athletics Championships bid team congratulated London for a fair fight today as the tiny Gulf state moved into the next phase of its campaign to be a major player on the global sporting stage.

Twenty-four hours after being beaten 16-10 by its only rival at the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) vote in Monaco, Doha officials put on a respectful brave face as they acknowledged defeat in the drive to stage the world's third biggest sports event.

In stark contrast to the bitterness and back-biting launched in Qatar's direction following its landslide 2022 World Cup victory 11 months ago, its 2017 team e put together a carefully worded statement that made it clear there were no hard feelings despite a concerted effort to add the Championships to the country's growing portfolio of events.

"The competition was carried out in a civilized and competitive spirit, a friendly atmosphere and a great desire by both bids to serve the sport of athletics across the world," the statement said.

"In such international arenas, competition for World Championships of this calibre are always strong.

"The Doha 2017 team respects the IAAF decision, and knows that they will continue developing athletics around the world.

"Athletics is a strong part of the Olympic Movement and Qatar looks forward to continuing its work on expanding Athletics for future generations.

"Doha's 2017 Bid team is proud to receive such great appreciation and respect from all.

"It was a comprehensive bid that tackled all gaps and provided creative solutions for a strong world championships and a strong future for Athletics.

"Qatar hereby extends thanks and appreciation to all IAAF Executive Council members."

Within hours of the vote in Monaco, Doha, which hosts the Arab Games shortly and is also bidding for the 2020 Olympics, turned its attention to the four-day Aspire4Sport conference, which began here yesterday and showcases the region's sporting achievements and aspirations.

A number of high-profile speakers are attending, from Qatar dignitaries such as their Olympic Committee general secretary Sheikh Saoud bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani (pictured above with London Mayor Boris Johnson) to established sporting superstars like Italian football icon Fabio Cannavaro and American tennis star Venus Williams.