

# Investigation on the Development of National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly

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**ABSTRACT.** *In order to better promote the scientific development of the National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly and make positive contributions to the sports work for the elderly and the cause of national fitness, this paper introduces the formation background of the National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly by conducting documentation and logical analysis, and analyzes the operation of the convention from the following aspects: competition rules, project settings, host cities, time arrangement and funding sources. On this basis, this paper summarizes the main experience gained since the organization of the National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly. Specifically, more and more attention has been paid to it and it has been included in the development plan of government departments. Its key nodes are deeply integrated with the important nodes of the country, which strengthens the significance and influence of the National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly. The process of the convention involves many parties, which initially reflects the working pattern of the "big sports for the elderly". In addition, the aim of the convention is thoroughly achieved and the competition is in good order. The form of the Convention tends to be stable, and the reform of the Convention continues to advance. Based on the analysis, this paper puts forward the following development prospects: The operation of the event should be further standardized to enhance the brand and connotation of the event; participation should be further enhanced to promote the in-depth integration of the National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly and the National Game; propaganda should be strengthened to expand its social influence; financing channels should be expanded to explore social capital channels, etc.*

**KEYWORDS:** *The National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly, Development Experience, Development Prospects*

## 1. Introduction

The National Sports & Fitness Convention for the Elderly (hereinafter referred to as the Convention for the Elderly) is a comprehensive national sports event

advocated by the State Council, sponsored by the General Administration of Sports, the Office of the National Committee on Ageing, the Chinese Sports Association for the Elderly and organized by the local sports administrative department or the Sports Association for the Elderly, with the purpose of giving full play to the positive role of sports in enriching the physical fitness life of the elderly, building a harmonious society and promoting the construction of healthy China, which started in 2009 and is held every four years. Up to now, it has been successfully held for three times. The Convention for the Elderly is a concrete manifestation of the national strategic policy of "carrying out the nationwide fitness activities extensively and accelerating the construction of a strong sports country", concerning the well-being of the people, thus having important social significance. In addition, in this study, the background of its formation and operation are analyzed in depth, the experience and rules are summarized, and the development prospects are put forward.

## **2. The Formation Background of the Convention for the Elderly**

China has entered an aging society in 1999. At present, China's population aging is in the stage of rapid development. By the end of 2018, China's population aged 60 and over was 249.49 million, accounting for 17.9% of the total population, of which 166.58 million people aged 65 and above, accounting for 11.9% of the total population [1]. The forecast data of the national strategy research on population ageing show that the degree of population ageing in China will continue to deepen, reaching a peak of about 35% by the middle of this century, and then will be maintained at about 1/3 of the total population by the end of this century, which will show the following characteristics: The first is the large absolute size. In 2013, the number of elderly people over 60 years old in China has exceeded 200 million. The second is the rapid development. The speed of population aging in China is much faster than that in Britain, France and other Western countries. The 3rd is the remarkable phenomenon of getting old before getting rich. And the fourth is the large fluctuation range. Three fertility peaks in the early 50 years of the founding of the People's Republic will bring three growth peaks of the elderly population in the first half of this century. The number and proportion of elderly population growth fluctuates dramatically, with the range exceeding 50%. Population aging will have a significant impact on China's economic and social development and other aspects. In terms of its influence on the economic development, firstly, significant changes have taken place in the pattern of labor supply and the population of working age has gradually decreased; secondly, significant changes have taken place in the cost of economic operation, and the proportion of social expenses for pension, medical care, care, welfare and facilities has gradually increased; and 3rdly, significant changes have taken place in the structure of consumer demand, and the consumer market, mainly composed of the elderly population, will continue to expand. These three aspects will result in a series of risks, including the decline of economic growth potential, imbalance between real economy and capital economy, and instability of financial system. In terms of social development: Firstly, it can weaken the function of family support for the elderly, change the structure and scale of family, increase the burden of family support for the elderly, and intensify family inter-generational

contradictions, externalizing the risk of family support for the elderly into social risk. Secondly, it can aggravate social inter-generational contradictions, induce inter-generational benefit distribution, inter-generational values and inter-generational cultural conflicts, thus weakening the basis of social integration and development. Thirdly, it can increase the difficulty of social governance.

Physical fitness is a convenient, economic and effective way to actively respond to the aging of the population, and is also an ideal way for the elderly to maintain health and delay aging. The work of sports for the elderly is an important part of the cause of the elderly and the cause of sports in China. Under the new situation, the fundamental task of sports for the elderly is to enhance their physical fitness, improve their health level and enrich their spiritual and cultural life. Since the reform and opening-up, great achievements have been made in the work of sports for the elderly in our country, the policy of sports for the elderly has been improved day by day, and the network of sports organizations for the elderly has basically formed, the construction of sports venues for the elderly has been accelerated. In addition, physical fitness activities for the elderly have been extensively carried out, sports propaganda and education for the elderly have been steadily intensified, training of the backbone of sports for the elderly has achieved remarkable results, and funds for the development of sports for the elderly have continued to increase. All these achievements have laid a solid foundation for the holding of the Convention for the Elderly. Based on this, the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for the Development of China's Aging Career promulgated in 2006 clearly put forward the idea of "organizing a performance of literature and art for the elderly, an exhibition of talent for the elderly and a sports fitness meeting for the elderly in a planned way", and the first Convention for the Elderly was held in 2009. From that time on, Both the 12th Five-Year Plan of 2011 and the 13th Five-Year Plan of 2016 clearly put forward that the 2nd Convention of 2013 and the 3rd Convention of 2017 should be held well.

### **3. Basic Situation of the Convention for the Elderly**

#### ***3.1 Overview of the Convention for the Elderly***

In 2009, China held the first Convention for the Elderly. Since then, it is held every four years and has been held three times (Table 1). The First Convention for the Elderly was opened on August 8, 2009 in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, and was closed on October 26 in Tonglu, Zhejiang Province. There were 10 events in the competition, including table tennis, fitness qigong, tennis, softball, goal ball, chess, balloon volleyball, Taijiquan (sword), yangko and fit ball, which were held in 10 different cities, and one city host one event. The Second Convention for the Elderly was opened in Beijing on August 8, 2013 and ended in Shenzhen on October 13. Compared with the first Convention, it added two new events, fishing and billiards, totaling 12 events, held in 12 cities respectively, with 6,850 participants. The 3rd Convention for the Elderly was opened on July 2, 2017 in Tianjin simultaneously with the 13th National Games, and was closed on October 28

in Xingyi, Guizhou Province, in which twelve projects were set up and held in 13 cities. Among all the events, goal-ball was held in Jiujiang City, Jiangxi Province and Muling City, Heilongjiang Province. The Convention for the Elderly is co-sponsored by the General Administration of Sports, the Office of the National Committee on Ageing and the Sports Association for the Elderly of China. It is specifically organized by the sports administrative departments of some provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions or by the Sports Association for the Elderly. After three years of exploration and operation, the aim of the competition is defined as "five priorities", namely, participation, health, happiness, communication and safety.

*Table 1 Overview of the Three Sessions of the Conventions for the Elderly*

Session	Time	Opening time and place	Closing time and place	Events and Venues of the convention	Number of participants
1st	2009	August 8 2009 Zhengzhou, Henan Province	October 26 2009 Tonglu, Zhejiang Province	Ten items. Softball (Kunming), yangko (Zhengzhou), Table Tennis (Fuzhou), Fitness Qigong (Qinhuangdao), Chess (Qinhuangdao), Tennis (Fuxin), Gateball (Anyang), Gas volleyball (Weihai), Taijiquan (Sword), fit ball (Tonglu)	5700
2nd	2013	August 8 2013 Beijing	October 13 2013 Shenzhen, Guangdong	Ten items. Gateball (Langfang), Table Tennis (Beijing), Softball (Harbin), Gas Volleyball (Xiamen), Tennis (Chengdu), Taijiquan (Sword) (Baoji), Fishing (Luxi), fit ball (Jiaozuo), Chess (Anyang), Fitness Qigong (Weihai), Billiards (Shanghai), yangko (Shenzhen)	6850
3rd	2017	July 2, 2017 Tianjin	October 28 2013 Xingyi, Guizhou	Ten items. Gateball (Jiujiang, Muling), Table Tennis (Luzhou), soft ball (Wuyuan), Gas Volleyball (Nanning), Tennis (Kunming), Taijiquan (Sword) (Jiaozuo), Fishing (Changsha), fit ball (Kuitun), Chess (Jincheng), Fitness Qigong (Chizhou), Yangko (Zaozhuang), Walking with a Cane (Xingyi)	8000

### **3.2 Competition Rules**

The competition rules of the Conventions for the Elderly are divided into General Rules and Individual Specific Rules, are jointly formulated by the three sponsors, and the Chinese Association of Sports for the Elderly is responsible for it.

The basic principles and general requirements of it are made in terms of participating units, meeting items, time and place, qualifications, incentives, registration, insurance and funds. Under the technical guidance and assistance of the relevant project management center of the State General Administration of Sports, the Chinese Sports Association for Senior Citizens, taking into account the characteristics of the elderly, and referring to the relevant policies and regulations of the State General Administration of Sports, carries out technical calibration and specific norms for each project regulation.

### ***3.3 Project Settings***

Three principles should be followed in project settings. The first one is the high penetration rate. We should not only ensure the participation rate, so that more elderly people can participate in it, and make it have a broader impact, but also ensure the level of the event, so that the elderly can participate happily to maximize the competitiveness of sports events. The second is the security. Due to the limitation of physical characteristics and age characteristics of the elderly, all sports should ensure that there is no direct physical confrontation. The 3rd is on site conditions. It is necessary to ensure the requirements of the venue and ensure the hardware facilities of the venue. According to the above three principles, in 2007, Chinese Sports Association for Senior Citizens conducted a survey and statistics on the project development in 31 provinces, municipalities directly under the Central Government, autonomous regions and some cities. The results showed that there are 13 main fitness programs for the elderly, including softball, gas volleyball, fit ball, Taijiquan (sword), tennis, fishing, gateball, table tennis, yangko, fitness qigong, chess, billiards and bocce [2]. The Conventions for the Elderly chooses a certain number of items from the above 13 items as the formal items according to the actual situation, and generally chooses 10-12 items from the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly.

### ***3.4 Host City***

The selection of the venues for the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly is basically based on the principle of decentralization, which shows a distinct feature of "multiple places for one convention". A total of 34 competitions in the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly were held in more than 30 cities, among which, only Anyang in Henan, Qinhuangdao in Hebei and Weihai in Shandong Province held two competitions [3]. The main reasons for adopting this approach are as follows: Firstly, the investment of sports funds for the elderly is limited, and it is difficult for the host city to withstand large-scale sports events. The adoption of project decentralization can effectively alleviate the enormous pressure of accommodation, transportation and other aspects of the host site, and reduce the expenditure, difficulty and risk of sports events. Secondly, the project is scattered in many cities, which can also improve the influence of Conventions for the Elderly in a wider range. The determination of the host city of the competition is usually

submitted by the bidding city one year before the event in accordance with the bidding principles and requirements of the Chinese Sports Association for Senior Citizens which makes final decisions on the basis of the development of urban projects, sports facilities, transportation and accommodation, as well as overall planning of sports events of the bidding cities.

### ***3.5 Schedule***

The competition time of each event is submitted at the same time when the bidding materials are submitted in each city. According to the objective conditions of the project, the Chinese Sports Association for Senior Citizens will make a final decision on the overall arrangement of the events. From the past three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly, we can see that the time span of the Convention is relatively long, generally in about three months. Considering the physical condition of the elderly, each event is set up with loose cycle with usually around five days. Sports for the elderly is an important part of mass sports, because the elderly are an important group of the national fitness crowd. In order to promote more elderly people to participate in the national fitness, the opening time of the first two sessions of the Conventions for the Elderly was all held on August 8 of that year, that is, on the day of National Fitness Day. The opening ceremony of the 3rd Convention for the Elderly was deeply integrated with the 13th National Games of China. On July 2, 2017, the final of the 13th National Games Mass Competition and the opening ceremony of the 3rd Convention for the Elderly were held in Tianjin People's Stadium, which truly reflected the sharing of national fitness among the whole population. This kind of combination is not only the combination of competition forms, but also the affirmation of the role and value of the Convention for the Elderly.

### ***3.6 Source of Funding***

There are two main sources of the funding. The first source is from the three sponsors, among which, as a functional department under the State Council (which proposed the Convention for the Elderly), the General Administration of Sports of the State will give a certain amount of operating funds before hosting the convention, considering the scale of the congress. In addition, the office of the National Commission on Ageing, as one of the main bodies of the work of the cause of ageing, will also bear part of the cost of each convention. China Sports Association for the Elderly is only responsible for the specific implementation of the convention, and does not bear specific funds. The second source is the government of the host city. In order to ensure the normal operation of the event, the government of the host city will approve a certain amount of special funds for the event. In addition, in terms of the financing of social funds, there is little support from social funds due to the non-profit and influence of the Convention for the Elderly itself.

#### **4. Experiences from the Convention for the Elderly**

##### ***4.1 More and More Attention has been Attached to it and it has been Included in the Development Plan of Government Departments.***

The three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly all have been highly valued by the State General Administration of Sports, the National Committee on Ageing and the Chinese Association of Sports for the Elderly, among which, the General Administration of Sports is the highest administrative department in China for the management and development of sports., the National Committee on Aging is the deliberative and coordinating body of the State Council in charge of the work of the elderly, and the Chinese Association of Sports for the Elderly is a pivotal group sports organization in the member organizations of the National Sports Federation of China. Under the circumstances of separating management from administration and separating government affairs in the reform of the whole government's work management mechanism, the three state-owned sponsors still continue to sponsor the national sports fitness activities for the elderly under the general policy of the downward movement of the level of sponsorship of the General Administration of Sports, which reflects the great importance and support of the General Administration of Sports and the National Committee on Aging for the sports fitness activities for the elderly. At present, the Convention for the Elderly has become the only comprehensive national sports event sponsored by the General Administration of Sports in addition to the National Games. In the 11th Five-Year Plan for the Development of China's Aging Cause, the National Committee on Aging clearly put forward the idea of "organizing art shows, talent shows and sports fitness games for the elderly in a planned way". In the "12th Five-Year Plan" and "13th Five-Year Plan", it regarded the successful organization of the 2nd and 3rd session of the Convention for the Elderly as one of the main tasks in the development planning cycle, which highlights the importance attached to the Convention for the Elderly by it. In addition, from the perspective of the Chinese Association of Sports for the Elderly, in each organization year of the Convention for the Elderly, the Chinese Association of Sports for the Elderly always regards the success of the Convention for the Elderly as one of its most important work in that year.

##### ***4.2 The Deep Integration of Key Nodes and Important National Nodes Strengthens the Significance and Influence of the Convention for the Elderly***

The opening time of the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly all chose the most important nodes of national fitness activities, highlighting the significance and far-reaching impact of the Convention for the Elderly. The first two sessions of the Convention for the Elderly were opened on the opening day of National Fitness Day, in particular, the opening time of the first session was the first National Fitness Day in China, during which a series of mass sports activities were held all over the country. The opening of the Convention for the Elderly, as one of the series of thematic activities, successfully pushed the atmosphere to a climax. The

3rd session of the Convention for the Elderly and the finals of the mass competition of the 13th National Games were opened simultaneously at the same stage, realizing for the first time the substantial integration with the National Games. This unique organic combination truly reflects the sharing of the whole population of national fitness, greatly mobilizes the enthusiasm of the elderly to participate in national fitness and promote the implementation of the healthy China strategy, demonstrates the rich spiritual and cultural life of the elderly, and promotes the further development of the national sports work for the elderly, which is of great significance. In addition, the closing ceremonies of the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly were all organized on the Chongyang Festival, which is not only an important traditional festival in China, but also an important node set up to deal with the aging society in China, with self-evident significance and great impacts.

#### ***4.3 Multi-participation in the Process of the Competition Reflects the Working Pattern of the "Big Sports for the Elderly"***

In the *Opinions on Further Strengthening the Sports Work for the Elderly in the New Situation* issued by 12 ministries and commissions such as the State General Administration of Sports in 2015, it was emphasized that a "party-government-led, department-responsible, association-organized, social-supported, grass-roots-oriented, all-round" work pattern of sports for the elderly should be established effectively to form a joint force for the development of sports work for the elderly. Competition activities of various provincial organizations participating in various events and the organizational status of the cities hosting the events have initially shown the working pattern of "big body" with Extensive participation.

#### ***4.4 The Aim of the Competition is Further Implemented, and the Activities are organized in Order***

Firstly, the purpose of the competition is basically fixed, and has been better implemented and carried out in depth. The purpose of the 1st session of the Convention for the Elderly was that "the most important thing is to participate, to be healthy, to be happy and to communication". On this basis, the second competition added "safety first, minimize championship". The 3rd session of the Convention for the Elderly effectively combined the operation and experience of the first two sessions, and finally fixed its purpose as "five emphases", i.e. participation, health, happiness, communication and security, among which, participation is the attitude, health and happiness are the purpose, communication is the means and security is the guarantee. "Five emphases" have been deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of the people and has become the actual action of the vast number of participants and exchangers. Secondly, the competitions were in good order. In terms of the organization of the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly, it was becoming more and more standardized, the operation was becoming more and more rigorous,

and the work of the judgment was solemn, warm and impartial, without process complaints, competition disputes, and safety incidents [4].

#### ***4.5 The Form of the Competition tends to be Stable, and the Reform of the Convention for the Elderly Continues to Advance***

Firstly, On the basis of promoting the popularization of fitness programs, promoting the broad participation of the masses, and focusing on serving the elderly, the events of the Convention for the Elderly are set up with appropriate fine-tuning combined with the actual operation. Ten events were set up in the first session of the Convention for the Elderly. In the second session of the Convention for the Elderly, billiards and fishing were added to 12 events on the basis of the previous one. In the 3rd session of the Convention for the Elderly, billiards were changed to walking with a stick in combination with the situation of the previous two sessions, but the total number of the events was still 12. The event settings change steadily in the course of exploration, which not only ensures the orderly development of the Convention for the Elderly, but also promotes the sustainable development of the event. Secondly, the multi-site sharing of the events ensures that the Convention for the Elderly can continue to be carried out efficiently, alleviating the pressures of hosting cities. This form of "one event, hosted in multi-cities" not only makes full use of the venues and facilities, urban resources, but also effectively reduces the cost of hosting cities and the risk of hosting the tournament. At the same time, the Convention for the Elderly pays more attention to the grassroots level, thus presuming the broad participation of the elderly groups in the largest range. Most of the host cities for the Convention for the Elderly are prefectural and county-level cities, showing the development of grass-roots sports for the elderly and promoting the exchange of sports for the elderly. In addition, the delegates are selected extensively before the formation of teams, which fully mobilizes the enthusiasm of the majority of the elderly at the grass-roots level. 3rdly, the process of the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly is combined to constantly enrich the details of the Convention for the Elderly, which is mainly manifested in the following aspects: Firstly, on the basis of organizing teams in provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, the Convention for the Elderly encourages the sports associations of the industry and the central government to form teams, further expanding the scope of participation and enhancing the social impact of the Convention for the Elderly; secondly, according to the characteristics of the events, the participating age should be relaxed appropriately, especially in the events of walking with sticks, softball, and fit ball; 3rdly, according to the characteristics of the events, two teams are allowed to participate in individual event, and minor items are added to increase opportunities for participants to take part in more activities; fourthly, the measures for examining the qualifications of participants and the measures for punishing violations are adjusted appropriately and objectively; fifthly, in terms of the reward methods, besides continuing to minimize the championship and implement the winner's award and the and excellent award, more emphasis has been placed on the procedure of strictly selecting the moral fashion award and the

best organization award to advocate and encourage the Convention for the Elderly to show the elderly fitness style and moral model.

## **5. Development Prospects of the Convention for the Elderly**

### ***5.1 The Operation of the Event should be Further Standardize to Enhance the Brand and Connotation of the Event***

Organizationally, the human resources reserve of the event should be expanded in an orderly manner to ensure the various professionals necessary for the event to be carried out. At present, the specific organizational work of the Convention for the Elderly is undertaken by the Chinese Sports Association for Senior Citizens whose personnel composition is limited. Although it can guarantee the basic operation of the event, it still lacks a large number of professional and technical personnel in such aspects as the opening of the event market, the formulation of event rules, and the safety guarantee of the event. In the bidding process, the requirements for the bidding conditions are too broad and general, and a series of standardized conditions have not yet been formed, and even the necessary bidding inspection is lacking. Therefore, it is necessary to supplement and gradually improve the bidding rules to ensure the high quality and high-standard development of the event; and as for the setting of the events, it is not rigorous to set up only from the three aspects of popularity, safety and site conditions. On the basis of the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly, the characteristics of national and folk events can be further improved. In addition, some modern popular competitive sports events can be appropriately added to enrich the event selection and event culture of the Convention for the Elderly in the light of the development of the World Senior Games [5], to gradually standardize the operation of the event, improve the quality of the event, and expand its social impact.

### ***5.2 The Participation should be Further Enhance to Promote the Deep Integration of the Convention for the Elderly and the National Games***

The improvement of participation can effectively stimulate the enthusiasm of participation in sports for the elderly, promote the vigorous development of sports for the elderly, and help to form a healthy, lively and uplifting sports culture atmosphere [6]. Over 20550 people participated in the three sessions of the Convention for the Elderly. As a national activity on sports and fitness, compared with the 249 million elderly population in China, it still has much room for improvement in participation. In addition, in order to comprehensively and thoroughly implement the national strategy of national fitness for all, 19 new mass events were added for the first time since the 13th National Games, most of which are popular fitness projects for the elderly. The 3rd session of the Convention for the Elderly and the finals of the mass competition of the 13th National Games were opened simultaneously on the same stage. For the first time, the Convention for the Elderly and the National Games were merged, which not only embodies the age-

cycle population of the National Games, but also embodies the concept of "the National Games for the benefit of the people and the sharing of the whole people". Moreover, this integration can also expand the impact of the Convention for the Elderly and promote its healthy and sustainable development. At the same time, the simultaneous opening of the two on the same stage is only the beginning, and deep integration is the key. In the future, we need to further integrate the goals, forms and resources of the Convention for the Elderly and the National Games, and adhere to the original intention of hosting the Convention for the Elderly and make it an important part of the National Games, to fully demonstrate the unique features of sports for the elderly in China, so as to make sports for the elderly receive greater social attention, enable social forces to participate in and support the Convention for the Elderly, and promote the coordinated development of the culture and industry of sports for the elderly [5].

### ***5.3 Propaganda should be strengthened to expand the Social Influence of the Convention for the Elderly***

Propaganda and media coverage are effective means to publicize the Convention for the Elderly in an all-round way and to create a good atmosphere for the elderly to actively participate in scientific fitness. Therefore, we should comprehensively strengthen and correctly guide propaganda, highlight the social function of the Convention for the Elderly, so that the Convention for the Elderly can better become a ceremony to display the health and beauty of the elderly and to carry forward the Chinese dream. At the same time, it can also become a symbol and tool for displaying healthy China and displaying the demeanor of the elderly. Therefore, first of all, we should give full play to the resource advantages of the three sponsors and expand the scope of media coverage. Secondly, we should enrich the content of the report. In addition to the regular event news report, we can add the typical cases of people who get physical and mental health through scientific fitness, as well as the common scientific fitness knowledge which is easy to grasp. Thirdly, we should enrich the means of reporting, increase the number of We-chat Subscription, as well as the forms and means of TV special reports and radio special reports suitable for the elderly.

### ***5.4 The Financing Channel should be expanded to explore the Channel of Social Funds Infusion***

Because of the limitation of the influence of the Convention for the Elderly, it still has a single source of funds. With the national fitness strategy rising to national strategy and the implementation of national strategy of healthy China, as an effective means to deal with the increasingly severe aging society, the role of sports for the elderly is becoming more and more obvious, and its impact is also growing. Under such a situation, the Convention for the Elderly needs to integrate into the related industries of the elderly actively, suit the remedy to the case, seek social support and open up financing channels. In addition, we should continue to obtain

policy support from the Party and government organs by striving for inclined policies to reduce and exempt the expenses related to the competitions, and striving to expand financial funds and enrich our own strength.

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