

## Background

Olympin members have been complaining about illegitimate NOC pins for years, but nothing was done about it. After all, they tended to only show up at the Olympics and you either got burned or you avoided the bogus pins. But the development of the Internet and its relatively easy access for a large fraction of humanity has changed this.

When it came time to put together the Olympin's 2012 NOC pin list, Steve Robie did not have to wait for feedback from top collectors. He just looked at eBay where hundreds of pins were for sale every day. But as he started to consult with Don Bigsby and Pete Wade on the NOC pins that were produced for London, he found that a significant number of the pins on eBay were likely unauthorized. In addition, Steve noticed that some dealers were making thousands of dollars selling these pins, something sure to produce more fraudsters if nothing was done.

This prompted Pete to propose to Don the formation of an Olympin committee charged with three tasks:

1. Make the 'fakes' business less attractive to the fraudsters
2. Arm collectors with knowledge and suggestions to protect themselves against unauthorized pins
3. Activate parties outside the collector communities who may be able to fight unauthorized pins

This proposal was accepted by the Olympin Board of Directors and on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013, the Committee on Unauthorized NOC pins began its work with Steve as the Chairman. Pete agreed to help and was joined by Sid Marantz, John Kinnaman, Daniel Beniston and Mohan Banerji. Bud Kling joined the committee some time later.

The first problem to solve was what to do with the information we obtained. After lengthy discussion, it was determined that we put each pin into one of five categories: Legitimate, Likely Legitimate, Questionable, Likely Not Legitimate and Not Legitimate and to be as transparent as possible about how we arrived at each rating.

Meanwhile, we began contacting the NOCs in question regarding the authenticity of their pins. We thought that most NOCs would be too busy to pay any attention to something as trivial as NOC pins. But it turned out that a number of NOCs were quite interested and willing to help stamp out unauthorized pins. To date, NOCs have repudiated 11 of the 34 pins investigated. Three other pins were found illegitimate based on other considerations.

Once we had some information, we had to find a way to distribute it to collectors. Fortunately, Olympin had already worked out a procedure to send mass emails (E-Blasts) to its members. An

introductory E-Blast was sent to members who had indicated an interest in NOC pins with a description of the committee's work and an option to opt out of future E-Blasts if they did not want to receive information from us. Since then, three E-Blasts have been sent to members covering ten illegitimate NOC pins.

Even as we were sending out these E-Blasts, we knew that the E-Blasts would be too slow to keep up with the rapidly changing conditions expected during the upcoming Sochi Olympics. Not only would the number of pins appearing be 10 times greater than we've studied so far, but the information on these pins would be changing possibly minute by minute. We also knew that getting even partial information to collectors during the Games would be critical in reducing the number of illegitimate NOC pins. This is the reason for launching this page on the Olympin site. We hope to provide the latest information about all Sochi NOC pins, not just the illegitimate ones.

As for the future, this will depend on the needs of the collecting community. There are certainly illegitimate Olympic media and sponsor pins so it is possible that another committee will take this template and begin work on these areas as well. Please use the email link if you have suggestions or questions.