


# CLUB BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

A portrait of Sandra Dunne, a woman with blonde hair, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a black lace top. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

## The Power of Personal Connections

SANDRA DUNNE OF GYM PLUS IRELAND BELIEVES THAT  
CUSTOMER SERVICE IS THE KEY TO REBUILDING THE INDUSTRY

**The New Rules  
of Club Safety**

**Why Your Club Needs  
to Build a Community**



**PLUS:**  
The latest on IHRSA's "Active & Safe Commitment"



# Legacy: Giampaolo Duregon

The dean of Italian fitness on strengthening the industry's global alliance.

To celebrate the 40th anniversary of IHRSA this year, each month we'll feature a foundational member of the modern health-club industry who helped make the fitness business what it is today. This month, we visit with **Giampaolo Duregon**, the president of ANIF, IHRSA's official (and only) strategic federation partner in Italy. Based in Rome, ANIF was founded 25 years ago and serves Europe's second-largest fitness market. Duregon, a longtime club owner himself, shared his vision with *CBI*.



Duregon

**CBI:** What makes Italy such a great place for fitness, and how has ANIF helped grow this thriving market?

**GIAMPAOLO DUREGON:** Italy has a long tradition in self-care and active lifestyle. We have about 8,000 fitness clubs. ANIF was founded in 1996 and, since then, has promoted and protected the interests and needs of club operators. We carried out several campaigns with government authorities in securing favorable taxation

and legislation. ANIF organized an annual conference with top speakers (national and international) to improve the management skills of Italian entrepreneurs. In addition, ANIF established REPS Italy (the Italian Register of Exercise Professionals) to promote education for personal trainers, which establishes standards for all of Europe.

**CBI:** ANIF increased the level of support it offered its members in 2020. How were you able to do so?

**GIAMPAOLO DUREGON:** ANIF has connections with government authorities and in past months we have proposed 60 amendments (40 during the spring [of 2020], 20 in autumn). We also cooperated in defining new safety protocols.

**CBI:** What does ANIF have planned for 2021?

**GIAMPAOLO DUREGON:** ANIF is working with the Minister of Sports for sports reform to change the laws and fiscal regulations for fitness companies and associations. It's a crucial change in our industry that we have been working on for 20 years, starting with the contract and payment process of trainers and managing staff. The taxation and legislation of fitness and sports associations and companies definitely need to be reformed. It's important that people realize the high social value our industry offers to the entire population as well as to elite athletes.

**CBI:** What should clubs be doing to welcome consumers back?

**GIAMPAOLO DUREGON:** First of all, club owners need to keep expenses at the lowest level possible and invest in customer relationships, so members feel safe and protected inside clubs. We need to continue to work together with local and national authorities for financial support. Consumers want to exercise but they are afraid of committing to a membership, so clubs should offer short-term payments and have more of an upselling marketing strategy. Consumers are more oriented toward pay-per-use services than they are to commit to annual memberships.

**CBI:** As you reflect on your long career, what motivates you to continue your leadership role in the fitness industry?

**GIAMPAOLO DUREGON:** My personal motivation started when I was a teenager and a member of the Italian national canoe team. I was a very passionate athlete and a dreamer. At 24, I took the challenge of managing a sports club in Rome, and soon afterward opened up my first club with my friend and partner Walter [Casenghi]. Today, we own six clubs. Of course, now I am a different person compared to that young Giampaolo, but I still am a dreamer and very passionate about fitness. I think our industry has potential for a lot of growth by being part of healthcare in every country. My greatest satisfaction is improving the quality of life of our members. That will never change. —

For more on ANIF, visit [anifeurowellness.it](http://anifeurowellness.it).