



## **SOUTH AFRICAN ORIENTEERING FEDERATION: ADMIN REPORT**

When I took on the role as VP Admin for the SAOF last year, I expected it to be an opportunity to further grow the sport into a tool to further education and nature awareness throughout South Africa, specifically schools. What we as a committee encountered, however, was apathy, at best, and blatant destructive mudslinging at worst. We tried to become more efficient and instead were shot down.

When I agreed to represent Orienteering in South Africa, I agreed to represent the sport. A sport that:

- ▶ Fits in with Life Skills lesson plans (and is currently in the Curriculum)
- ▶ Is well suited to assist in Geography lesson plans
- ▶ Increases contact with Nature (can be fit into Science and Biology Learning)
- ▶ Improves critical thinking
- ▶ Can be adapted into excellent team-building exercises
- ▶ Is family-friendly, gender, race and age neutral and available to all levels of fitness

(adapted from a PenOC letterhead to schools in the Western Cape)

With the phenomenal potential that Orienteering has to contribute to the vision that SRSAs has - to use sport to educate and empower children, to keep them off the streets and out of jail – I was convinced that all this country needs to invest in, is Orienteering and Soccer. We have achieved SO MUCH as a team. In terms of Development and Technical progress, we have drafts of all the documents that we need to train and develop people. We have managed to make contact with the Department of Education in several provinces. The most difficult parts were done! It was with intense frustration that the SAOF committee had to look at these plans of expansion, these dreams of development, technical prowess and pursuing excellence at international standards, and then face up that we just did not have the rest of the O community to draw upon.

When I agreed to represent Orienteering, it was also an agreement to represent the Orienteering athletes in South Africa. It is here that I am most painfully disappointed. I am not proud to represent the O community. I am not proud to say that we lead, not 100 passionate individuals, but a few hundred people who do not contribute, but throw childish tantrums about petty politics, who have historic upsets about things only the oldest members care to remember, who get gravely upset when they are not funded to the ends of the earth without contributing to earn it. I am not proud to represent a community who are overpoweringly white in a country with less than 10% white people. I am not proud to admit that my people have NO intention to change that statistic. I feel embarrassed that this community DOES NOT EVEN FEEL THE NEED to improve a sport in which their children could excel at internationally, while at the same time improving their thinking skills and ability to function independently.

We had a vision to have National implementation in order to achieve National colours in this sport, for our immediate community members and their children. It was a

win-win situation. Instead, we were crippled by petty concerns, jealously guarded. There was no contribution by the community at large, and no understanding – perhaps that is our error, that we could not communicate our dreams.

In an effort to change that, we tried to have a strategy meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 2010. It was well advertised, we lay our cards on the table, said it loud and clear: WE NEED YOUR HELP. There were, from a community of 372 people, 13 people attending. That is 3.5 % attendance.

As an exercise, a future scenario was presented at this meeting, about what Orienteering in 2030 would look like without intervention (bottom left), and with various types of intervention: on the axes of national implementation (y-axis) and developing the standards to be considered a federated sport by SRSA – a distinction currently in jeopardy (x-axis):



It is with much sadness that I realize that we do not have the strength to push the dregs in the bottom left corner to where we would like to go: top right, upwards and onwards. I have been seriously overcommitted this year because there was nobody else to take up the baton (or the emit, or the punch, or the control flag), and it saddens me that a lot of our effort towards Orienteering in 2010 has either fallen on arid soil, or has been inadvertently undone by knee-jerk emotional retaliations. The SAOF represents Orienteering in South Africa. It represents the sport and its people. Without you, we are nothing. We cannot do this alone. Look at this logo and ask what you want it to become. It's in your hands now.

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Bernelle Verster  
23 September 2010  
Outgoing VP Admin