

# **SOUTH AFRICAN ORIENTEERING FEDERATION**

## **HIGH PERFORMANCE STRATEGIC PLAN**

**2010**



**DEVELOPMENT - GROWTH - EXCELLENCE**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

At its 2009 Strategy session, the South African Orienteering Federation (SAOF) adopted a new vision of: Development, Growth, Excellence. The High Performance Strategic Plan (HPSP) deals with the final component of this vision. In particular High Performance refers to elite level performance at junior and senior level in international competition.

Whilst this plan does not focus on SAOF's Development strategies, it is recognised that improvement in high performance can only be achieved by growing and developing the sport of Orienteering in South Africa.

The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Selection Committee under the direction of the Vice-President Technical of the SAOF.

## **2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN**

The objective of the plan is to improve levels of high performance at international level. The SAOF's aspirations in this regard are moderated by the fact that we have a small competitor base, we have limited resources and we are far removed from Europe where most international events are held.

Through the SAOF's commitment to a growth and development strategy we hope to both increase the size of our competitor base and secure consistent levels of increased funding. The SAOF is also acutely aware of the historical imbalances of the past and the need to extend additional effort to previously disadvantaged communities.

Given the context of orienteering in South Africa, our plan is realistic. We cannot hope for the foreseeable future to develop a world champion. However, we are looking to improve substantially compared to our historic levels.

## **3 HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND FUTURE TARGETS**

The small size of orienteering in South Africa means that we are unlikely to be able to chart a steady improvement from our current performance levels to our targeted higher levels. We are likely to see irregular, "spiky" results as outstanding performers develop and retire.

The analysis presented, in what follows, is somewhat simplified as it does not take account of changes in competition format, and technical difficulty of the terrain at the different WOC events.

Separate analyses will be presented for WOC and JWOC and also for men and women in each case.

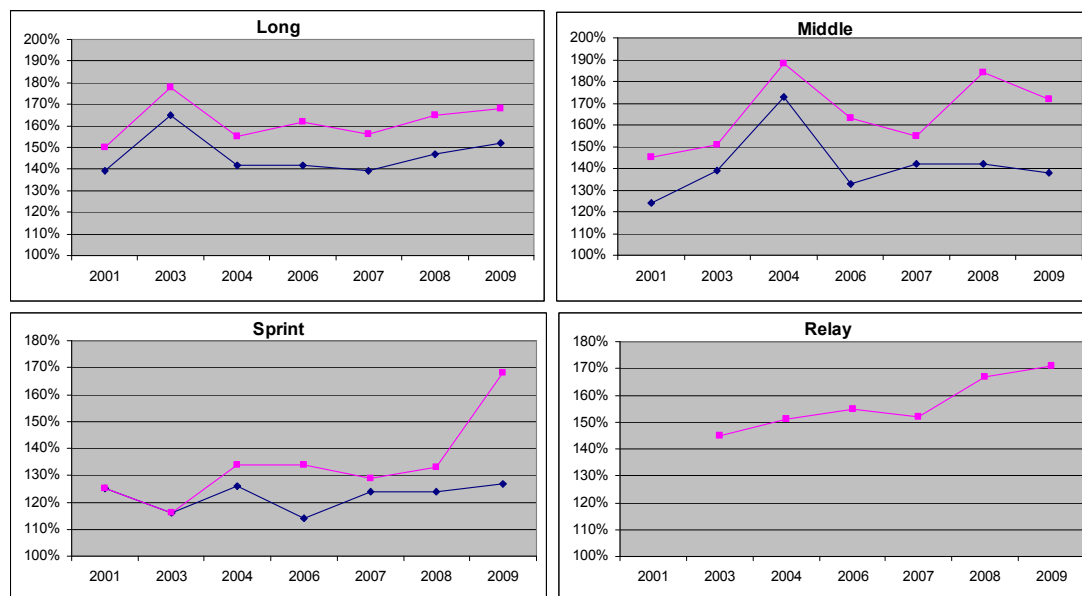
### 3.1 World Championship Performance

#### 3.1.1 Men

The table and figure below summarise South Africa's senior men performances at WOC.

**Table 1:** Summary of Men's WOC performances since 2001

Year	Long		Middle		Sprint		Relay	
	best	average	best	average	best	average	Position	Relative
2001	139%	150%	124%	145%	125%	125%	DSQ	
2003	165%	178%	139%	151%	116%	116%	31st	145.00%
2004	142%	155%	173%	188%	126%	134%	30th	151.00%
2006	142%	162%	133%	163%	114%	134%	35th	155.00%
2007	139%	156%	142%	155%	124%	129%	36th	152.00%
2008	147%	165%	142%	184%	124%	133%	33rd	167.00%
2009	152%	168%	138%	172%	127%	168%	36th	171.00%



**Figure 1:** Historical men's performances at WOC. Squares represent average team performance and diamonds represent best performance in each discipline.

#### 3.1.2 Women

The table below summarises South Africa's senior women performances at WOC.

**Table 2:** Summary of Women's WOC performances since 2001

Year	Long		Middle		Sprint		Relay	
	Best	Average	Best	Average	Best	Average	Position	Relative
2001	240%	240%	217%	217%	149%	149%	--	--
2003	179%	184%	151%	172%	154%	154%	--	--
2006	189%	190%	178%	202%	165%	166%	28th	193%

## 3.2 Junior World Championship Performance

In this analysis only the performances in the heats are summarised. It is assumed that improvement in these performances will automatically yield greater numbers of athletes qualifying for A and B finals.

In the case of the juniors, the Best results are more irregular or “spiky” than the seniors for the simple reason of maturity. In some cases the junior team was relatively young. The better performances generally correlate with an athlete in their final year of JWOC.

### 3.2.1 Men

The table below summarises the performances in the heats of South Africa’s junior men at JWOC. Whilst only in 2008 has an athlete qualified for a B-final, the structure of JWOC having heats and a final in the Middle event is relatively recent. With this in mind it is noted that the performance of some of the earlier athletes is commensurate with this.

**Table 3:** Summary of Men’s JWOC performances since 1996

YEAR	Long		Middle		Sprint		Relay	
	Best	Average	Best	Average	Best	Average	Pos	Relative
1996	144%	195%	157%	192			28	184%
1997	185%	192%						
1998	138%	138%						
2000	189%	189%	137%	137%				
2006	196%	207%	171%	189%	133%	135%		
2008	149%	151%	139%	156%	126%	127%		
2009	205%	205%	180%	180%	140%	140%		

### 3.2.2 Women

The table below summarises the performances in the heats of South Africa’s junior women at JWOC.

**Table 4:** Summary of Women’s JWOC performances since 1996

YEAR	Long		Middle		Sprint		Relay	
	Best	Average	Best	Average	Best	Average	Pos	Relative
1996	251%	251%	197%	197%				
1997	187%	187%						
2000	174%	174%	127%	127%				
2009	210%	269%	147%	184%	129%	147%	33	197%

## 3.3 Realistic Targets

A trend that is clear from a more detailed analysis of the international results, is that athletes typically fare poorly in their first international outing. Subsequent attendances at international level typically yield improved performances.

This is even more true at junior levels, when the athletes improve annually as a result of age and increased experience and can only be expected to give their best performances in their final year.

### 3.3.1 Men WOC

From Table 1 and Figure 1, it can be seen that our performances at WOC have not really improved over the years. If the relay is any indication, our teams have been getting progressively weaker.

On the basis of this performance information it appears that reasonable targets for men participating in WOC are:

Long	– better than 135%
Middle	– better than 130%,
Sprint	– better than 115%
Relay	– better than 145%

These targets are equivalent to or slight improvements on historic bests.

### 3.3.2 Women WOC

Typically, women have not attended WOC as frequently as men. The first, and only time a full women's team was sent to WOC, was in 2006 in Denmark.

On the basis of the performance information in Table 2 it appears that a reasonable target for women participating in WOC is:

All disciplines – better than 150%

These targets are equivalent to or slight improvements on historic bests.

### 3.3.3 Men JWOC

Athletes should be expected to show improved performances until their final year as a junior. Reasonable targets for men participating in their final JWOC are:

Long	– better than 150%
Middle	– better than 130% & Qualification for B-final
Sprint	– better than 125% & Qualification for the final

### 3.3.4 Women JWOC

Athletes should be expected to show improved performances until their final year as a junior. Reasonable targets for women participating in their final JWOC are:

Long	– better than 170%
Middle	– better than 140% & Qualification for B-final
Sprint	– better than 135%
Relay	– better than 175%

### 3.3.5 Other Measures

Other less tangible measures of improvement include recognition of national orienteers and pride in their performance. We would like to see ordinary orienteers take an interest and pride in the performance of the elite orienteers. Currently we are a very small community and so most of our national orienteers are recognisable to the wider orienteering community. However, how many ordinary orienteers take pride in the performance of the elite.

Whilst this is difficult to gauge, a number of measures present themselves including:

- athletes selected to represent South Africa at WOC, jump at the opportunity rather than decline as is currently the case.
- percentage of orienteering club members who follow WOC and JWOC by the internet.

## 4 ACTION PLANS

Whatever action plans we envisage, they have to fit within our budgetary constraints. Not all actions require large sums of money. Much of what we aim to do is to put in place necessary systems and policies. This will create a much more professional environment that is required if we are to have any hope of reaching our High Performance targets expressed in this Plan and to exceed those in the future.

### 4.1 Funding

Whilst our funding situation has improved in recent years with access to National Lottery funding, we have not yet reached the situation where all selected athletes are fully funded to attend WOC or JWOC. This partial funding of athletes probably contributes to the situation in which a number of the top national orienteers have declined the opportunity to attend WOC.

Looking to the future our current strategy seeks to offer as many juniors as possible the opportunity to experience the competitiveness, the camaraderie and the atmosphere of JWOC. Coupled with this is the need to provide increased, high-quality training opportunities to prepare these athletes. This means that some high performance money needs to be earmarked for qualified coaches and management staff.

Whilst initially we would seek to only fund the junior team coach and manager, in time we would hope to be able to offer financial assistance to a senior squad coach.

These objectives all need to be achieved within the constraints imposed by the levels of funding we are able to access through the NLDTF (National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund).

## **4.2 Talent Identification**

The main entry point for new participants into orienteering is through the Gauteng schools league. The SAOF's Development plan deals with ways to expand this league and to also establish similar leagues in other provinces. Other avenues being explored include the Scouting movement. Through these leagues, talented athletes are encouraged to join established clubs and to participate in the regional leagues.

The clubs are encouraged to provide athletes with the coaching required to see them perform well at local events and regional championships. At this point talented individuals will be selected for one of SAOF's National Squads, where they will gain access to greater levels of support and access to improved coaching.

## **4.3 National Squads**

There are strong precedents in other orienteering federations for having a national squad system. This pool of Orienteers will contain the athletes who have been identified as being potential national team members either current or future (2-3 years for Seniors and 3-5 years for Juniors), who can help the SAOF meet its high performance targets. These squads will have access to elite-level coaching, training and competition opportunities.

In the South Africa context, there is the additional imperative to bring PDIs (previously disadvantaged individuals) into the sport and put extra effort into bridging the performance gap. This leads naturally to the establishment of three national squads, namely the Senior Squad, the Junior Squad and the Development Squad.

The criteria for selection into one of the squads are documented in the "National Squads Definitions" document, which forms part of the Selection Policy. As well as the selection criteria, this document details the benefits the athletes can expect once part of the squad, and also the conditions that they will have to fulfil to remain in the squad. Squad composition will be reviewed regularly and people added or removed at the discretion of the SAOF Selection Committee. Member clubs are encouraged to nominate people for inclusion in the Squads.

## 4.4 Selection Policy

Thus far the SAOF has not had a published selection policy. The current Selection Committee, under the direction of the VP Technical is in the process of drafting an official Selection Policy. This aims to provide a fair and transparent process for selection of National Squads and teams to represent South Africa internationally.

The High Performance Strategic Plan will form part of the Selection Policy as this plan documents the SAOF's high performance targets.

## 4.5 National Ranking Scheme

Currently South Africa does not have a national ranking scheme. This can make selection for national teams difficult. Because the two major orienteering centres in South Africa are in the Cape Town and Johannesburg regions, the best orienteers from both regions do not regularly compete against one another.

An advantage of having a national ranking scheme is that it can be used to set objective targets for squad and team selections.

Two possible national ranking schemes will be trialled during the 2010 season. The first will be to use the ranking scheme used on the [attackpoint.org](http://www.attackpoint.org) website. In order to piggyback on the [attackpoint.org](http://www.attackpoint.org) website, we would need to encourage all athletes to register on the website and all organising clubs upload results onto the website. A full description of the ranking scheme can be found at the following link: <http://www.geocities.com/nikdangerdvm/03methods.html>. The national ranking system could use the [attackpoint.org](http://www.attackpoint.org) scores and re-baseline them such that the top national orienteer has a score of 100 points.

Another possibility is to apply the current IOF World Ranking scheme to local events only. This is in line with what a number of other orienteering federations use.

## 4.6 Coaching

The SAOF strongly supports the idea that regular, high-quality coaching is the cornerstone for improving elite performance. Historically we have relied on irregular and infrequent training sessions with international coaches. We have recognised that reliance on overseas coaches is not desirable for the growth of the orienteering in South Africa. Far more coaching is required at all levels if we are going to see improved high performance at international events. However, should the opportunity arise to engage with and learn from international coaches, we will embrace it.

For this reason the SAOF has committed to participate in the SASCOC long-term athlete development (LTAD) initiative. This provides a development pathway for coaches and athletes alike. By our participation in this initiative we are aiming to develop an orienteering-specific coach pathway. Whilst in the short-term we may still need to make use of the services of international coaches, in time we hope to have trained a sufficient number of coaches at the elite level for our National Squad and international team requirements.

We envisage developing a set of courses to train coaches at different levels. This will be accompanied by an accreditation system. We would seek to the coach training expertise of countries such as Britain or Australia, as well as some of the powerhouse orienteering nations.

At the elite level we would expect coaches to have knowledge of sport science in addition to high-level orienteering skills.

#### **4.7 Appointment of National Coaches & Managers**

Previously the SAOF relied on volunteers to fill the position of team manager. In the case of JWOC, this invariably meant that one of the parents took on this role in a partially self-funded capacity\*. This limits this role to those that have the means (time and money), which excludes potential candidates and limits the international experience base.

The better performances at JWOC have correlated well with an intensive coaching build-up. In previous years, if a coach was appointed, this was again on a partially self-funded basis. Improvement in high performance of levels internationally requires a more professional approach from the athletes, but also from the SAOF.

The SAOF aims to set job descriptions and invite applications for these positions. The aim will be to remunerate these positions such that successful candidates should be able to fund their trip with the international team. Initially the focus will be on the junior team, however, in the future it is hoped that this can be extended to the senior team.

Until the number of qualified elite coaches grows in South Africa, the senior squad will be encouraged to assist the national junior coach with the training of the National Junior and Development squads

#### **4.8 Overseas Competition Strategy**

The SAOF is committed to improving our performance at the elite level. It is recognised that in order to improve individual orienteering skills and to improve the standard of orienteering competition in South Africa, Orienteers need to compete in overseas competitions. Orienteers, particularly those in the National Squads, will therefore be encouraged to compete overseas whenever possible.

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\* Historically SAOF has paid the accreditation fees, and accommodation in the case of JWOC.

Participation in JWOC should be a stepping stone to an elite career. We will therefore continue to send senior teams or individuals to WOC. It is important to signal to promising juniors that there is life as an orienteer after leaving the junior ranks.

One thing that the SAOF will no longer do is to strive to send three senior men or women to WOC simply to ensure that we can field a relay team. The deterioration in our men's relay results is evidence that this is not a good strategy.

The SAOF is also in the process of reviewing its overall strategy of sending athletes to WOC only. The static level of performances of the men and the poor level of the women implies that we need to explore alternative strategies.

One possibility that is being explored is to send teams to international events other than only WOC. It will almost certainly be beneficial to send selected athletes to one or more of the training camps in preparation for future WOC events. The rationale being that a better prepared team will stand a better chance of delivering improved performances.

There is no doubt that living and competing in Europe and Scandinavia is hugely beneficial for individual results. Whilst this has to be a personal decision we should offer moral support for those wishing to choose this option. Such individuals would also be encouraged to return to South Africa on an annual basis to compete in one of the championship events.

## **4.9 Orienteering Infrastructure**

Within the Technical portfolio of the SAOF there is an initiative underway to look at improving the competence of event organisers. As with the case of coaching an event adviser pathway is envisaged. This will seek to formalise the qualifications of event organisers with a number of accreditation levels from beginner to IOF-accredited event advisers.

In 2009 South Africa held its first ever World Ranking Events (WRE). The SAOF would like to see this becoming a regular occurrence, with the clubs vying to host South Africa's annual allotment of three WRE's. This will require clubs to extend their planning horizons for major events.

It is recognised that in the future the SAOF may select individuals for WOC who are Sprint discipline specialists. Whilst the traditional disciplines of the Classic and Middle distance events are well catered for at regional and national championship level, there is currently no South African Sprint championship. Clubs and regions are encouraged to explore ways of accommodating such an event at a time that will attract the country's leading Sprint orienteers.

#### **4.10 Communicate Results**

An area that is in need to improvement is our communication of high performance results. At present it has been left up to teams to communicate via blogs, and certain clubs that maintain active websites. Whilst this is to be encouraged, the SAOF aims to improve its communication of elite performance with the wider orienteering community in a way that increases interest and appreciation. The primary channel for this will be a revamped SAOF website.

### **5 CONCLUSIONS**

South Africa's World Championship results have not improved over time. This plan describes how we can do better. Our current focus is on the large group of talented juniors in the National Junior squad. Another focus area is that of policy development, which is aimed at putting our high performance program on a more professional footing. Additional elements include developing capacity in coaching and management to support our objective of improving our performance at elite international level.

A strategic plan looks several years ahead, and will be reviewed annually. We intend to translate this into an annual plan made by November each year which takes account of the resources available. The current annual plan will be reported on at the AGM in September of each year.

## **Glossary**

SAOF	South African Orienteering Federation
SASCOC	South African Sports Confederations and Olympic Committee
SRSA	Sport and Recreation South Africa
LTAD	Long Term Athlete Development
PDI	Previously Disadvantaged Individual
WOC	World Orienteering Championships
JWOC	Junior World Orienteering Championships
IOF	International Orienteering Federation
NLDTF	National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund
WRE	World Ranking Event

## **APPENDIX 4: CONTACT INFORMATION**

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