

SAOF Technical Portfolio Report February 2012

SAOF Executive Meeting

4 February 2012

Responsibilities

Starting this new year on the SAOF committee I will first summarise again the responsibilities of Technical portfolio:

These responsibilities are to develop and enforce structures for meeting the aims of the SAOF, in particular with respect to:

- (i) Promote the interests of orienteering and orienteers, and uphold the rules relative to the amateur status and the eligibility of orienteers to compete under the rules of the SAOF and the IOF.
- (ii) Commission and supervise annual national and provincial championships and IOF sanctioned events.
- (iii) Attend to the selection of orienteers who are to represent the federation.
- (iv) To provide official records of performance (currently managed by VP Marketing).
- (v) Manage all structures put in place to encourage the pursuit of High Performance Orienteering.

Assessment

In the time since the SAOF AGM in September focus has been on writing up a 'Willing Ready and Able' document for the South African Coaching Framework and on reviewing national squads definitions and selection policy and documents.

Nicholas Mulder has been re-appointed as high-performance manager, and the selection committee is currently finalising national squads for 2012. The squad selection process has been delayed by a slow revision of the selection documents, However, this

revision was necessary as there was some ambiguity in the documents and discussion was needed over points raised last season about participation in training camps and late additions to squads. The new selection documents are clearer, and there should be less ambiguity over the requirements, expectations and privileges attached to each squad. The documents will be updated on the website by the time squads are announced. Fitness tests will again be required for squad members throughout the year and a minimum fitness requirement is likely to be introduced for 2013 squad selection.

In early December a document was submitted to SASCO on the willingness and ability of the SAOF to participate in the new South African Coaching Framework. The document recognises that orienteering is a small sport highly reliant on a small number of volunteers, and which currently does not have coaching framework, or indeed any accredited coaches. Therefore, although the SAOF is willing to commit to create and launch a coaching framework, the current ability of orienteering coaching in South Africa is low to mediocre. However, there are several ad-hoc but very experienced coaches in the country, and there is a hope that a coaching framework can be launched successfully. Orienteering has an advantage in that by starting from scratch now, it is easy to align the orienteering coaching framework with the new national framework. Coaching should be a major focus for the federation in 2012 and onward.

The National Championships for 2011 have been commissioned to the AR Club, and IOF have approved World Ranking Event (WRE) status for the middle distance event. A 5-day international event, the Big-5, was organised jointly by the Gauteng clubs in January, and was a great success with much positive feedback from both local and international participants. Importantly, several SA athletes achieved a world ranking in these events, and there should therefore be enough ranked orienteers at the SA Championships for points to be awarded there as well. The Big-5 was also important in that it showed that a high quality international event can be organised locally in South Africa.

A call was made for applications for funds for strategic maps. Based on applications received, Nicholas Mulder has been awarded funds to map further areas around Lydenburg for Gauteng Orienteering Championships 2012 and National squad training camps, and a new area near Polokwane for the South African Orienteering Championships 2012.

A response was also written to the International Orienteering Federation's call for comments on a proposal for the future of the World Orienteering Championships. The SAOF made the point that WOC must be accessible to small federations located far from most World Ranking Events, likely WOC venues and with limited funding. WOC should therefore have a qualifying system where it is possible for SA athletes to compete in several events, and without a requirement of a large squad for participation

and qualifying. The SAOF did therefore not support a proposed pre-qualifying scheme for the Long distance event. The IOF has withdrawn its proposal based on lack of support. The nordic countries have proposed an alternative plan, with alternating forest and sprint championships. The SAOF would be in favour of the nordic proposal as it would lead to a more accessible format.

Aims for 2012

High-Performance

As reflected in the High Performance Plan, and in response to SASCOC comments, focus must be on performance in international events. In line with the Long Term Participant Development Plan (LTPD), the squad definitions and selection policies for 2012 are set to be inclusive for the youth squad, begin to be competitive for the junior squad, and require proven high performance at senior level. There is a need to change the mindset of athletes from one where squad selection is expected to one where selection is a privilege to be earned. With 3000 m test results from 2011 progress can now be monitored closer, and with 2011 and 2012 results, a minimum fitness requirement should be planned for 2013 and discussed this year. Depending on funding, training camps should be planned, and teams selected for WOC and JWOC. A youth tour should be organised as in 2011, to introduce promising young orienteers to international orienteering. The youth tour should be to an event where there is little pressure, and focus is on learning, gaining experience and mostly on having fun. This would align with LTPD, and turn the focus on preparing young orienteers for future high performance on the international stage.

Development of Materials

In view of the aim to grow orienteering in several provinces, and the clear need to start more clubs, there is a need to develop material for a professional *Resource Pack* to be given to people interested in starting Orienteering in new areas. A number of people have generated such material for various Club initiatives. So the aim will be to consolidate this into an official SAOF branded resource pack that can be used in the implementation of the Federation's *Expansion Plan*. An additional aim is to continue with the development of the level structure, course material for each level and associated accreditation mechanisms for each of the Technical Areas.

This was raised last year and the year before and needs to be addressed with some urgency. Lisa de Speville has, in her position as Project Manager, created some of this material in the last few months.

Map Making

As part of the expansion plan, several new maps are needed. As found by Lisa, there are various 'bare-bones' possibilities, and hand drawn maps seem to work well for schools. This is because the making of the map can be built into the teaching of orienteering, with learners making their own maps of their school. Although this may take some pressure off the making of school maps, such maps are still needed to put school's leagues in place and need to be commissioned and completed.

Similarly, orienteering requires forest maps as well as school maps, and to grow the sport there needs to be maps that new clubs can use to get going. Therefore there should be a focus on growing both the number of maps and the number of mappers – i.e. maps should be commissioned and promising mappers should be involved in the mapping process so that skills are transferred from our few experienced mappers to other experienced orienteers willing to learn. This is included in Nicholas Mulder's contract for strategic mapping and someone must be identified as promising and paired up with Nic to learn something from the process of mapping the new areas.

Coaching Framework

We need to put in place a coaching framework, outlining how we will train coaches at all levels. The framework needs to be in agreement with the new national standards. The Level 1 Teachers coaching course has now been held in several locations and is gaining momentum. This course needs to keep being held, but the next levels must also be designed and implemented. The current draft Coaching Framework outlines the content and purpose of the levels above the level 1 course, but the detail needs work. Help from overseas, where such courses are already designed should be solicited.

Having created the WRA document, the current state of coaching has been outlined, and some goals have been set. The goals are measurable, and achievable, and the effort should therefore be focused on achieving these goals.

Future South African Orienteering Championships

As suggested at the AGM, a draft roster for SAOC organisation should be made and circulated to the clubs for comment. This will allow clubs to plan SAOC well in advance, and divide the work relatively evenly between clubs.