

SOUTH AFRICAN ORIENTEERING FEDERATION



High Performance Report – September 2012

This is the second year that the High Performance portfolio has been in existence. The aim of the portfolio has been to continue developing Orienteering in the High Performance sphere in South Africa, improving the athletes, squad systems, the support systems behind them as well as the policy framework and plans for the long term development of High Performance orienteering.

The Long Term Participant Development plan (LTPD) remains central to the development of the HP arena. In 2012 the SAOF officially launched this project and various structures within HP have started falling in line with its guidelines and objectives.

In 2012 the following LTPD initiatives have been followed:

- the 2012 national and provincial calendars were brought further inline with the ideals and objectives of LTPD. The two main provincial championships as well as the national Sprint champs were staged so as to allow our elite athletes to use it effectively within their performance peaking cycles.
- The Youth Squad has been further developed and institutionalized, allowing for a more continuous and fluent line of development for young athletes;
- Further communication of an awareness of LTPD within the national squads.

LTPD remains the guiding philosophy for HP for the foreseeable future. However, there are still notable gaps in HP implementation, most significantly in the lack of proper coaching structures within the HP arena.

Policy and administrative documents within High Performance continued to be developed through the combined input of the HP Manager, the VP Technical and the National Selection Committee.

National Squads

In 2012 the roles and responsibilities of Youth, Junior and Senior national squads were further defined and integrated into High Performance. The Youth Squad in particular showed significant development since it's inception in 2011 and has now become a significant part of the national squad system.

Squad Selections

The Junior, Senior and Youth squads for 2012 were announced by the SAOF Selection Committee in February.

The Squad members were:

Seniors: Michael Crone, Colin Dutkiewicz, Garry Morrison, Martin Kleynhans, Alex Pope, Nicholas Mulder, Jeremy Green, Jessica Lund, Zoe Brentano, Margaret Archibald, Michele Botha.

Juniors: Bradley Lund, Anthony Stott, JP Sissing, Greg Avierinos, Sarah Pope, Salome Van Hoepen, Jessica Hemer, Stephanie Courtnage.

Youth: Roark Robinson, Timothy Chambers, David Avierinos, Dylan Barry, Miguel Robinson, Cian Oldknow, Jessie Oldknow, Christie Courtnage, Sarah Dutkiewicz, Laura Troost.

Colin Dutkiewicz was again appointed as manager of an enlarged Youth Squad / Team, whilst Nicholas Mulder was appointed Junior Squad / Team manager. The position of coach for the Junior Squad was vacant in 2012, as were both positions of manager and coach of the Senior Squad.

WOC / JWOC / Youth Tour Selections

National team selections were brought forward a few weeks from 2012 so as to allow athletes more time to sort out flight ticketing arrangements at cheaper prices. The teams were thus announced in late March and were based on current form from the 2011 SA Champs weekend until the present. This included the Big 5 O-Week in Mpumalanga in January.

The selection committee once again followed a policy that was more exclusive and limiting for Senior teams selection, so as to obtain a higher standard of participation at WOC. Youth and Junior team selection policy remained inclusive, with selectors erring on the side of inclusion and presenting these athletes with an opportunity for experience building.

The Senior Squad members were required to give notice of their interest in competing at WOC 2012 prior to selection. Only Michael Crone, Nicholas Mulder and Jeremy Green made themselves available.

The Junior Team membership was selected first, then followed by requests for confirmation that they would be taking upon the team selection. All athletes confirmed their availability.

All Youth Squad members were automatically invited onto the Youth Tour team.

The final team selections were:

WOC 2011, France: Jeremy Green, Michael Crone, Nicholas Mulder.

JWOC 2011, Poland: Sarah Pope, Salome Van Hoepen, Stephanie Courtnage, Jessica Hemer, Anthony Stott, Bradley Lund.

Nicholas Mulder was appointed as Manager for JWOC 2012, with Margaret Archibald as Assistant. Zoe Brentano also acted as an intern / assistant within the touring management team.

No manager was officially appointed for WOC 2012, instead Nicholas Mulder acting as defacto manager.

Colin Dukiewicz was appointed official tour manager for the Youth Tour, with Ilma Stockton accompanying.

The SAOF Selection Committee was approved the inclusion of all Youth Squad members for inclusion in the Youth Tour, which would cover both the World Masters Champs in Germany and the spectator races associated with JWOC in Slovakia. Further, athletes from the Junior Squad that were not selected for JWOC were invited to join the Youth Tour.

The youth athletes involved in the tour were: Christie Courtnage, Sarah Dutkiewicz, Cian Oldknow, Jessie Oldknow, Timothy Chambers and Dylan Barry.

Additionally, Michael Crone requested permission to compete in World Cup races in Switzerland in June. The Selection Committee approved this selection.

3000m Squad Tests

The squad time trial tests initiated in 2011 were carried through into 2012, with mixed success. Three dates were again chosen in March, May and June to gauge physical ability through the early part of the orienteering season.

The concept was well received in Gauteng and the vast majority of squad members presented times that generally showed some decent improvement through the season. There was no feedback from Cape athletes however, despite notification that attendance in the 3000m trials was now officially an obligation of squad membership. The lack of data for some athletes is problematic and will hamper proper development gauging next season.

The use of the 3000m tests in the selection procedure for teams or alternatively as a funding benchmark remains an option in future years.

Training Camps

Due to calendar constraints, only one date was found suitable for a national training camp in 2012, in April over the Easter long weekend. The venue chosen was the forests around Dullstroom, Belfast and Lydenburg, but unfortunately the timing and distance meant that there were no Cape-based athletes present. The camp took place over 4-days and as usual, attracted a very good level of participation.

Nico Van Hoepen was drafted in at the last moment to assist Nicholas Mulder in organizing the training events. Catering and transport duties were once again graciously effected by Brian and Denise Courtnage.

International Results

The JWOC / WOC and Youth Tours were on the whole extremely successful in 2012, with strong performances from various individuals in all teams.

The Youth Tour to Germany and Slovakia was a great success. In general, the athletes performed well in the first week in Germany, but struggled in the second week in Slovakia with the more complex terrain navigation and with physical fatigue setting in. Notable success was achieved by Christie Courtnage who placed on the podium in her age category in both the German and Slovakian multi-day events. A report by Tour Manager Colin Dutkiewicz has been prepared.

The Junior World Championships in Slovakia also achieved notable successes, in this case with strong results from Bradley Lund, who produced consistently good results in all events, regularly producing new personal bests for the country and only narrowly missing Top 60 results in some cases. There were mixed but promising results from the rest of the team as well, with lots of positive signs during the course of the championships. For the majority of the team, this was their last year as junior athletes. They will now enter the realms of senior competition with a wealth of experience behind them which will surely be a benefit over some of the current senior squad. Bradley Lund and Salome Van Hoepen will still young enough in 2013 to compete in one final JWOC, whilst there are some prospects for a couple of Youth Squad members to be included in a team to JWOC shortly. A separate report on JWOC is also available.

The international season for the Senior team started at the World Cup races in Switzerland in June. Unfortunately, Michael Crone was only able to obtain a starting slot in the Middle distance event and not the Sprint event (the Post Finance Cup, which had fewer start slots) due to the various rules of the World Cup. These rules require that athletes accumulate points during previous rounds of the World Cup (all of which took place in Europe in the preceding months) to qualify. For a South African-based athlete, this is obvious a significant disadvantage and a great pity for an athlete such as Michael, who's sprinting potential is significantly better than his long and middle distance results.

The World Champs produced arguably South Africa's best ever international performance when Michael successfully qualified for the Final in the Sprint Distance. He became the first African ever to do so, comfortably filling 11th spot in his heat, with the top 15 going through to the final. A strong focus on physical speed training and a determined approach to his goal of qualification undoubtedly was his winning formula. Michael's focus had been totally subsumed in the process of qualifying, so that in the final later in the day, Michael found himself ill prepared. He struggled; finishing 43rd of the 45 starters, but the experience of running in the final will probably put him in good stead for future WOC events.

The remaining results at WOC were mixed, with good runs from Nicholas Mulder and Jeremy Green in the Long event, but disastrous runs for all three athletes in the Middle Distance. The poor results in the Middle can be put down to poor preparation in the specific terrain type used in this event, with more time and training required in such navigationally demanding terrain prior to WOC.

The 2012 international season was thus undoubtedly a success for SA Orienteering and has produced some important results that can be seen as stepping stones towards better and more consistent results in international competition. This years results have fitted well into the targets set out in the SAOF's High Performance Strategic Plan 2010-2013.

World Ranking Events

The SAOF hosted two world ranking events in the 2012 season, both during the Big 5 O-week in January in Mpumalanga. The elite categories of this five day event was well attended by good international orienteers and we were thus successful in ensuring that there were sufficient 'ranked' athletes present for the two WREs to be counted as points scoring events. Various South African athletes scored World Ranking points for the first time, with some of our athletes now considered 'Ranked'.

The next WRE in South Africa will be the Middle Distance at the SA Champs in September 2012. This should hopefully ensure the continuity of points for SA athletes and prevent them from lapsing.

HP Budget

The High Performance portfolio was allocated R125'000 in 2012, up from R50'000 in 2011. This increase is thanks to funding provided by the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund. The allocation of the budget was done through various consultations with the Vice-President Technical and members of the Selection committee. Part of the allocated funding has been reserved for use in early 2013 which will hopefully be supplemented by further funding announced in early 2013.

	Grant	Projected 2012	Projected 2013
Training Camps	R 50'000	R 19'673*	R 30'300
Athlete support	R 10'000	R 6'000	R 4'000
Coaching support	R 15'000	R 12'000	R 3'000
International Events	R 50'000	R 41'203*	R 8'800
- WOC		R1'500	
- JWOC		R 10'400	
- Youth		R 6'869	
- Performance targets		R 9'000	
- Team kit		R 13'434*	
Total	R 125'000	R 78'900	R 46'100

* JWOC training camp finances and Trimtex clothing expenses not finalized yet

The contribution by the SAOF does not show the full cost of WOC / JWOC and Youth training camps and tours, with the competitors financially responsible for any difference over the mentioned grants. All funding in this regard is split equally amongst the individual athletes.

For the first time, provisions were also made for performance-based funding. Incentives of R1'500 per target were allocated, with the targets accepted as being those defined in the SAOF's High Performance Strategic Plan 2010-2013. Any qualification for an A-final in JWOC or WOC was deemed a double incentive reward, with a R3'000 allocation.

The following targets were reached:

- Bradley Lund within 125% of winner at JWOC Sprint
- Stephanie Courtnage within 135% of winner at JWOC Sprint
- Bradley Lund within 150% of winner at JWOC Long
- Ladies Relay Team within 175% of winner at JWOC Relay
- Michael Crone Qualification for Final at WOC Sprint

In addition, some athletes narrowly missed out on incentives by finishing just outside the percentage behind the winner. These included:

- Jeremy Green just outside 115% of winner in Sprint qualification
- Nicholas Mulder just outside 135% of winner in Long qualification
- Bradley Lund just outside 130% of winner in Middle qualification

The performance awards were agreed to late in the season and athletes were not aware of these at the time of the championships. Their continued use into 2013 and beyond would act as incentives. However, the main purpose of these rewards is not only to support the best athletes with a limited pool of funding, but rather to set targets that will see South Africa's best performance marks at international competitions improved upon on a more regular basis.

Finally, the JWOC training camp finances have not been finalized as yet as the official team kit order (Trimtex) remains unpaid as the invoiced amount is currently in dispute. This should hopefully be completed shortly.

World Games 2013 Columbia

Since nominating candidates for the 2013 World Games last year, there has been little further discussion on this issue with SASCOC. However, this years performances by some of the nominated squad bode well for SA Orienteering, which will be required to prove to SASCOC early in 2013 that our athletes are at sufficiently improved levels to compete meaningfully in the World Games for inclusion in the SA team. Michael's performance in the Sprint at WOC is a major positive in this regard.

The squad nominated by the national selectors in 2011 was:

Men: Michael Crone, Bradley Lund.

Women: Stephanie Courtnage, Sarah Pope, Salome Van Hoepen.

The World Games will take place in Cali, Columbia at the end of July / early August 2013, two weeks after WOC in Finland.

International Training and Competition 2013

Apart from World Games, the major events in 2013 include JWOC in Czech Republic in July and WOC in Finland, also in July. Both events occur once again more or less at the same time, a major oversight on the international orienteering calendar. A reduced team of 2 – 4 persons is envisaged for JWOC, as many of the current junior squad are in their last year as juniors. For WOC, a team of anywhere between 2 – 5 persons is possible.

A 2013 Youth Tour would be extremely important in continuing to build on the success of previous tours and the continued development of the Youth Squad. Historically, this tour has been built around the World Masters Champs (WMOC) and this is once again possible in 2013, when they take place in northern Italy in August. Additionally, an open 5-day event nearby precedes the WMOC. The Italian National Federation has further extended invitations to various national development squads as they are organizing a junior / youth training camp in the days preceding and during this open event. The arrangement is attractive and very suitable to our objectives and goals, so will be investigated further.

Finally, a proposal has been submitted for funding by the SAOF for an international week-long training camp. The goal of such a camp would be to further develop the international experience of our top and most promising athletes by presenting them with an opportunity to train in complex technical terrain, broadening their experience in an environment where they can focus specifically on the training, rather than reserving their physical strength for upcoming international competitions. If successful, such a camp is envisaged for early 2013 in southern Europe.

HP Policy Update

The policy documents surrounding HP were further evolved in 2013 through the combined input of the HP Manager, VP Technical and the Selection Committee. The majority of these changes were to add clarity to the policies and to streamline and clarify roles and responsibilities of various role players. Further updates will be enacted in late 2012, including reviews of season-to-season documents. There is also a need for more binding documentation for athletes that highlights the roles and responsibilities of athletes, coaches, selectors and administrators for the 2013 season. Input from athletes will also be requested so as to address their own concerns and views within High Performance.

International Orienteering Federation

There are currently a few issues regarding international orienteering that are problematic to the further development of our athletes that the SAOF needs to

highlight with the IOF. These include the qualification method for start slots at some World Cup races, which exclude the possibility of competition for athletes who have not scored well at all preceding races. Given that World Cup races are normally held in Europe, it is problematic for non-European athletes to score well. Additionally, all previous scores are counted towards start slot allocation, meaning that athletes cannot specialize in a single specific discipline, such as the Sprint event.

The IOF is currently in the process of amending the program of WOC. This entails the removal of most qualification events and the introduction of new types of finals. Such changes will probably only be implemented from 2016 onwards. The SAOF needs to observe this closely, particularly with regard to how qualification slots will be determined for these finals. Many current proposals suggest that each country will only receive 1 automatic slot, particularly weaker orienteering nations. Although South Africa might get additional slots through being 'continental champions', it would be in the interest of the SAOF to further support other developing nations by arguing for more additional slots. Having only a single slot limits the number of athletes exposed to international competition and thus acts as a brake for the development of HP orienteering in these countries, particularly those well removed geographically from the rest of the elite orienteering world.

Conclusion

The High Performance portfolio has continued to develop in 2012 after its founding in 2011. The continued success of the Youth and Junior squads has been very promising, showing that we have some good potential developing in line with LTPD.

The highlight of the year has been some solid performances at both JWOC and WOC, notably South Africa's first ever qualification for a Final at WOC. These performances can be seen as solid stepping stones for the SAOF's further ambitions and targets in the next few years.

The HP portfolio needs to continue evolving, streamlining and developing the process to best equip our future and current elite orienteers so that they can excel at the pinnacle of international orienteering.

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14 September 2012

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