



SOUTH AFRICAN ORIENTEERING FEDERATION

President's Report 2010

Our stated vision is Development, Growth, Excellence. The 2009/2010 year has been a failure and without very real and tangible effort by all members of the SAOF we cannot expect to see us ever achieving our vision. My aim as President has been to activate the clubs to achieve this vision. The committee has spent many hours and lots of money hosting seminars to share information, but the clubs remain in a slumber from which the SAOF executive seems unable to awaken them.

The first challenge to me as President is the most bizarre and frustrating one. There appears to be an "us-and-them" mentality amongst the clubs where the SAOF is seen as this separate entity that is to be challenged by the clubs. It is a ridiculous notion and needs to be done away with. The clubs form the SAOF, the SAOF is not a separate entity that does things independently of the clubs. We have held two seminars and we made this clear and we have persistently asked for your input in all things that we seek to achieve. The SAOF executive is not a leadership group that tells people what to do; we are simply a go-between for the federation of orienteering athletes and the government. We do what the AGM and the constitution tells us to do. When we tell you that we need to establish clubs in three more provinces, it is not because I had a dream one night and divined this crazy notion, it is an instruction from government. The members are responsible for achieving this. We owe a lot to the NLDTF for paying for great maps, paying for teams to travel the world to build their skills, for emit equipment, for club equipment. Each and every single orienteer benefits from the money that we get from the NLDTF, but only a tiny percentage are willing to give of their free time to meet the criteria that the SAOF must meet before the NLDTF will give us more money, which will again be plowed back into the sport. We rely on volunteers, and the clubs cannot even muster enough members to fill the executive committee! From the President's seat it does appear as though the members simply do not care about what happens to orienteering.

The first World Ranking Event WRE was a big success but the impression given is that it is too much work and therefore there was no WRE held in 2010. This is a massive step backwards, as the clubs have refused to use this tool to improve event standards for the benefit of elite and recreational orienteers alike. I know that the work involved in presenting a WRE is more than what is done for our regular events, but surely in order to achieve our vision, we as athletes should demand that the clubs take this burden on and ensure that our events achieve a level of excellence in line with international requirements. If we do not present World Ranking Events we will not be able to host major international events. The WRE is a first step in preparing ourselves to host a Junior World Champs, Masters World Champs or even a World Orienteering Champs. At the current rate we will not be able to even

host a Masters World Champs before 2020. The SAOF will support the clubs as much as possible, but the clubs have to exhibit a willingness to take on these challenges.

Here is how it should work. The clubs must hold meetings to discuss how to grow their numbers and how to improve their events. The clubs must then prepare a plan and bring it to us. We will then take that plan and see if we can get the funding and resources the clubs need to achieve their goals from all the various contacts that the SAOF has built up. I have heard of many initiatives to introduce more people to orienteering, but this simply does not translate into improved membership statistics. The fact is that government's engine is fueled by membership statistics. They don't care if you participate in a science week or held a schools league series, they only care that the clubs grow in numbers and that the sport increases its geographical footprint year on year. We have consolidated our positions of strength for 25 years in Gauteng and the Western Cape, it is time for the members to establish clubs in other provinces. Is orienteering truly an inclusive sport if it is only practiced in two provinces? Are you really an SA champion if some of the country's best runners are excluded simply because none of us have bothered to start a club in their regions? If you cannot see the value in growing the sport in other provinces then you are truly blind.

Communication has been a tremendous challenge. We have established a Wiki site where we can have lively debates on issues affecting orienteering. Only a handful of the usual suspects participate. This reflects a callous attitude and loudly pronounces that nobody cares about this sport. The outgoing SAOF committee are all full time employees, some with children, and some not, but we are all extremely busy individuals. If you are not giving your time to orienteering, then what are you giving your time to? Should you not be an active citizen willing to play a role in your community to improve the lives of those around you?

We have held seminars where we explain the SRSA and SASCOC requirements and we have asked over and over that the clubs lend us assistance in rolling out various growth and development projects. This has not happened and in the meantime the four committee members are constantly under fire from members and government alike. The problem is that once we have held a conference explaining to the club chairpersons what we need; it appears as though there is no follow up meeting with the club members. I'm not talking about a committee meeting; I am talking about a discussion with all members. You constantly say that no-one wants to do anything, but have you tried asking people to step up and to do something for the sport?

At the SASCOC president's meeting a microphone was shoved into my hand and Gideon Sam asked me directly, do we have a club in the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, KZN, Free State? I had to say no. Then he asked me, what we are doing about it. The answer was that we are "talking about it". Richard has made massive strides since then, but at that time, we were still talking about it. The time for talk is over, we must take action and we need you to deliver our expansion plan, we need you to offer whatever assistance you can. If you are rich and busy, we need money, if you are poor and looking for work, we need your time, if you know how to draw up business plans, then help us draw

up plans to get money from Corporate SA. We need to start taking action and we need to rather try and fail, than simply fail.

At the next SASCOC meeting Mr. Sam against asked me what we had done. The answer was the same. We have asked clubs to help us with expansion. No response. We have asked the clubs to help us with putting up permanent courses. No response. Yet, the clubs membership numbers dwindle and they don't understand why! SASCOC introduced me to the Sport Trust guys and they have extended an offer of assistance. They can provide television coverage of special development events. Cricket South Africa said that if we draw up a proper proposal they may allow us to use the facilities they have built all throughout the country to establish clubs. It's not really useful, but the SAOF has access to resources to help spread the sport, what we need is volunteers to go there and help establish it.

We were audited by SASCOC on whether we meet the requirements for being a national federation and whether we know what those are. We passed the audit and at the next SASCOC AGM we were congratulated for our good work on the LTAD and that is greatly thanks to Garry who has done a massive amount of work on the LTAD document. The SASCOC SAOF relationship started out shaky, but through hard work we seem to have pulled it together, for now.

The bad news is that we **WILL**, according to the Sports and Recreation Act amendment, be required to have sustainable clubs in 5 provinces. The amendment Act has not been passed yet, but it will be done soon. We have 1 year to establish clubs in 3 more provinces or else we will lose our recognition. The consequences are far reaching and although the impact may only be felt at Elite level at first, eventually it will have a negative impact on all participants. There is even a proposal that if a sport is not recognised the provincial bodies can stop events from occurring. This is not a reality yet, but do we really want to wait until it is before we do something about it? Orienteering is being treated like an elitist and exclusive sport by our own members, when in fact it is one of the few sports that can be given to every person in South Africa. With a simple map of a school, ten flags and punches and stop watch you can present an orienteering event. The competitors need nothing more than a map. If it's that simple, why is it that we don't have more members? Is it not a reflection on a mind set that is attuned to keeping the sport exclusive? We must all investigate our excuses for not taking the sport to more communities and decide whether it is because there are real barriers to entry or whether we are creating barriers to entry. We have one year to get clubs in 3 more provinces.

Sports and Recreation South Africa, SRSA, invited us to their AGM for the first time. It was a real eye opener. Government has access to money and they will give it to any federation that can achieve their goal of getting the nation to play. We can on a theoretical level do it, but we have zero structure to do it. We only have one schools league in the whole country. There are 29 000 schools and they want us to be able to offer to each and every school the opportunity to play orienteering. They will be happy if we can get it into 6000 high schools and if we do, then we will get enough money to employ people permanently. Until we can get orienteering established with clubs structures in all nine provinces don't ask what the government can do for us. We have a lot

of work to do and there are many rewards for doing the work. Can we have volunteers?

Our relations with SRSA and SASCOC were difficult at times during the year, but I have managed to keep the relationship going and besides the fact that we need to get three more provinces, these bodies are quite happy with our administration and paper work. We will be asked hard questions about transformation when we start to grow, but we are in the fortunate position that we can target transformation in the new areas.

We did not get the last NLDTF grant because the financials were not audited. Since then the audit requirements have changed and on the basis of the new requirements the grant would have been approved, but to a large extent we are grateful that the grant was not given as we applied for R1 500 000-00 in total and we battled to spend R510 000-00!

I attended the IOF president's conference in Trondheim Norway. It was an exhausting trip of 4 days, as I flew in solely for the conference. The cheapest tickets saw me sitting in Amsterdam for 9 hours and I only got to sleep in my hotel in Trondheim for a total of 6 hours out of the two nights that I was there. The IOF conference was interesting with numerous weird and wild proposals coming from various Mediterranean countries. The Scandinavians bulldozed a vote on a mass start event at WOC and we may see a mass start event as early as 2013. The interesting thing is that the IOF is under the same pressure from the IOC, as we are from SASCOC to ensure that they increase their membership numbers and to ensure that there are more countries participating in WOC. They have now changed the criteria for membership and all countries wanting to be members will have six years to establish sufficient structures to hold a national championship. This does not impact on us, unless we lose recognition. The IOF is also under pressure to increase participation at WOC and hence they are looking at introducing events that will attract more countries. The purists are having fits, but the IOF seems to believe that they must do what they can to make it possible for more countries to attend WOC in order to get closer to their Olympic dream. I spoke often during the meeting and attracted positive comment for my input.

I was approached by an IOF member and he offered to send us a senior mapper to host an advanced mapping course in South Africa, mostly at their cost. This could fit in well with our plans to get a mapping committee up and running and may assist our established mappers to take that step up to make more and better maps.

At the conference, I spoke with the BOF President and she advised that she would be happy to give us their coaching material at no cost as well as their assessment system. This solves a big problem for us as we were given a coaching audit and we failed miserably. SASCOC demands more coaches and we must deliver. SRSA have a NQF course for basic athletics coaching, which will give members a diploma in coaching and we need to think about incorporating this course presented by THETA (the sports industry seta) into our national coaching framework.

I was also unofficially advised that we will be allowed to send a team to the World games in Columbia, based upon continental representation. This was a crucial first step in formulating our new high performance strategy. I was also

approached by Jean Kelly, the manager of the 2013 Columbia World Games team and we have been invited to meet with her to discuss the possible support by SASCOG of our athletes during the next few years to get them ready for this prestigious event. The 2013 world games is our High Performance focus and we will be doing everything in our power to get our athletes ready. This means that we need 4 people or less, to achieve a top 8 position at international level within the next 2 years in the sprint discipline, but we believe it may be possible and we will be providing as much of the required support to achieve it, as we can.

Locally our clubs are shrinking in size and affiliation fees are apparently a contentious issue. Since the last spike in objection to the affiliation fees, which was around July 2010, I have kept a running record of how much time I spend on SAOF matters, since then I have spent about 96 hours on SAOF emails, telephone calls, conferences, meetings and drawing up documents. In my business that amounts to R48 000-00. By the way, that is 8 hours a week, which is about how much I try to train, at R500-00 per hour. I believe that the executive members spend about the same amount of time on the SAOF and that basically comes to about 400 hours since July 2010 to date in the administration of the sport. I think it's only fair if we request that each club member, whether a serious athlete or a recreational runner, contributes R20 per year to help us cover some of the admin expenses. As a federation we need to become self sustaining and that means our funding must come from sponsors and from members through affiliations and events. That is our goal and if members object to paying a paltry R20 per annum for administration, we will never get there. Personally, it is a slap in the face of every committee member, each and everyone has worked unbelievably hard for the members in 2010, when members object to paying R20 and ask "what does the SAOF do for us?" If you want to know what the SAOF does for you, then come and sit on this committee.

This has been a long rant, and it might appear as though the year was a total waste, but it was not. We failed in many key aspects and the main one being that the clubs are ignoring this committee and their duties to the sport, but the committee has worked hard and has achieved success in numerous areas. Each executive member will report on their successes and I think I am the only one that has focused on the failures, but the message that you should all take away from this report is that things must change, we must all change our way of thinking about orienteering and we must all start working together or we will, and I do not exaggerate, lose the right to participate in orienteering events. If you do care about the sport, then stick your hand up and offer what ever you can so that we can achieve our vision;

Development Growth excellence

Eugene Botha
SAOF President
22/09/2009