

Training of further SAOF Level 1 Coaches



The long weekend of 9 to 11 August 2019 saw the third delivery of SAOF Orienteering Coach Assistant training course.

The Coach Assistant is the first designation within the SA Coaching Framework (SACF), often referred to as a Level 1 coach by many sporting federations. The delivery of this program was the product of the commitment of the SAOF management committee in 2011 to develop a formal coaching structure aligned with the SACF.

The Gauteng weekend consisted of three days of training, with a fourth day (the following weekend) being used for the assessment process. The first day was mainly spent indoors, covering key theoretical aspects. Here the SACF lays the perfect structure for the required training. Whilst the candidate coach assistants (attendees) all had experience in completing orienteering courses they were looking to learn how to deliver coaching into the school environment. The day delivered key messages regarding the ethics of a coach and how orienteering skill acquisition links into the Long Term Athlete Development Model.

For day 2 and 3 the main emphasis was on the practical aspects of coach delivery. The attendees moved outdoors where they were required to plan, prepare, deliver and evaluate several coaching sessions. Through this process they were able to acquire the skills of **how to coach**, as well as looking at **what to coach**. The O in the Box resource was used as an important base for the first coaching session, as it provides coaches an easy to use pre-planned coaching sessions.



Thereafter the attendees (working in pairs and with the aid of coaching cards) created their own sessions to teach a specific skill within the orienteering Step System up to an 'orange course level'. The Step System is a skills progression system which is perfectly aligned to the orienteering event structure. This allows all participants to be able to do events that are appropriate and challenging to their own skills set, whether at a beginner or advanced level.

Attendees took it in turns to be coaches and athletes and grew in both capacities as the weekend progressed. One attendee commented, "I also enjoyed the opportunity to learn orienteering skills from top orienteers who were taking the course."

As the attendees were themselves already competent to do a 'light green course' (a requirement for attending the course) they commented that it was quite a mind shift to pretend to be teaching school kids at an orange course level when the participants are actually

competent adult orienteers. By the end of the three days the attendees had both the theoretical knowledge behind sound sports coaching practices as well as practical experience of guiding athletes on how to acquire the basic skills of orienteering.

In order to provide suitable maps for the attendees to work with made use of two areas, one outside the Greenside Scout hall and the other outside the Delta Park scout hall. Both maps (kindly updated by Paul Wimberley) proved to be a useful base to let the attendees creative juices flow as they put together interesting sessions. It seemed like their fellow attendees forget that they were attending a course and thoroughly enjoyed doing the sessions. When asked what made the session fun (which is one of the coaching skills), one candidate replied, “because its orienteering!”



The last day was an intensive one of assessment. Attendees had to deliver a final practical session and complete a knowledge questionnaire. The candidates continued to deliver fun and interesting coaching sessions in their final assessment. There is no doubt that the schools they intend to coach in will be similarly entertained and we wish them all the best in their future coaching endeavors. After the weekend the attendees had the following to say:



“The training course was highly informative and fun and I would recommend it to anyone who wants to coach. I had a fantastic time.”

“This was an excellent course which was well put together and well-presented. There was plenty of very useful content, and there were also fun activities which really helped me gain confidence. After the three days I

feel ready to engage my learners in learning the skills of orienteering in an entertaining and interesting way.”

“I particularly enjoyed the stress-free times when somebody else was giving their practice session and I was assigned as the 'rowdy inattentive scholar'. I think I fit that role well! It was great not only getting to know the coaching content but also getting to know some fellow orienteers a little better as well. Getting to hear why they wanted to do the coaching course and what their aspirations were made me feel like a kindred spirit.”

“I found the course to be incredible beneficial for what learners need at a school level, and as a coach as the course breaks each of the orienteering elements down into manageable focus points.”