

IOF Senior Vice President Åke Jacobson:

Time to implement the strategic decisions

The 3 August 2001 was a significant date in relation to the future international elite orienteering events programme. The decisions taken by the Extraordinary IOF General Assembly held in Tampere, Finland, put an end to a development process spanning five years of intensive and broad policy discussions. Now the time has come to implement the decisions.

“In recent years Council has been very active in trying to reform the elite events programme. It all started some five years ago, when the member federations attending the 1996 General Assembly put pressure on Council to work much harder in order to get orienteering into the programme of the Olympic Summer Games. The first few steps were taken within the Olympic project and the more concrete development began after the Presidents’ Conference in Scotland in 1999. Since then we have step by step developed the concept, which we today recognise as the Elite Events Programme (EEP). We do strongly believe in this concept. Without putting this concept into practice we won’t have much possibilities to attract public interest, sponsors or IOC officials”, says the Senior Vice President Åke Jacobson.

Clearly defined tasks to ensure results

“At the Extraordinary General Assembly held on 3 August this year, the national federations gave Council its blessing for a new route choice. For quite a number of members it was a decision taken on faith in Council rather than on the basis of mere conviction. In this situation the responsibility to deliver the desired result rests heavily on our shoulders. It is important



The 2001 World Championships introduced a new era for orienteering. The sport reached a whole new level of spectator-friendliness thanks to the tracking system, the extensive TV coverage, and the large screen in the finish area.

In this issue: “Time to implement the strategic decisions”, says Åke Jacobson; Yearly World Championships and World Cup in Foot Orienteering; New structure for foot orienteering; “The mission of the new Elite Events Group” - an interview with Björn Persson; The new discipline formats at 2003 World Orienteering Championships.

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believe that this can best be ensured by not making the implementation agenda too comprehensive. In other words, we believe that we should work in small groups having clearly defined tasks as this will allow us to focus on a few main issues”, Åke Jacobson continues.

“This was the reason for Council to revisit the structure of the foot orienteering discipline and to form the two new groups, the Elite Events Group (EEG) and the Foot Orienteering Committee (FOC). The division of the activities into two lots, one containing the senior activities, and the other one junior and masters activities, was carefully considered”, says Jacobson. “We do not believe in dividing up the responsibility for different aspects of the same event between several groups. We are convinced that a holistic approach is the only route to ensuring an overall successful event in terms of location, appearance and attractiveness for everybody involved, including the media, sponsors, and other external partners. Therefore, the decision to divide tasks based on events became quite natural.”

Effective utilisation of scarce resources

“All tasks have to be handled with the same degree of seriousness. In relation to foot orienteering, senior activities have been high up on the political agenda for quite some time now. In addition to the implementation of the General Assembly decisions in relation to the future senior elite events programme, it is now also the time to focus on the other categories. How we manage to develop masters and junior activities and the very important question of regionalisation is crucial for the future development of orienteering. In a situation with scarce resources it is extremely important that those available are utilised in the most effective way”, states Åke Jacobson. “The division of tasks between the two groups does not imply that there should be any watertight bulkheads between the FOC and the EEG, nor between these and other IOF groups. Quite the contrary.”

Council - the “Company Board” - has begun to put the new route choice decisions into practice by reviewing the structure and appointing the individuals needed in order to reach the desired goal. The first important results, i.e. the regionalisation, the regional events structure and the qualification model for WOC participation, are to be delivered to the national federations in just a few months time.



Grant Bluett's gold medal at the World Games was the peak of a great season for Australian elite orienteering.

Yearly World Championships and World Cup in Foot Orienteering

From 2004 onwards World Championships (WOC) and World Cup in foot orienteering will be organised every year. That was the most significant decision taken by the Extraordinary IOF General Assembly (EGA) held in conjunction with the 2001 World Orienteering Championships in Finland. The intention behind the change of the elite events programme is to raise the visibility of orienteering and to provide the IOF with the tools needed in order to achieve additional media attention and find external resources for the sport.

Decision 1:

WOCs and World Cups in foot-orienteering shall be run in the following four discipline formats: sprint, middle, long and relay.

Format Characteristics

Sprint An individual competition, short in time, based on high speed running in any environment.

Middle An individual competition with the highest possible level of technical orienteering (based on the characteristics of today's “short distance”).

Long A very physically demanding in-

dividual event with “classic-style” course planning, open to new competition models to meet the criteria of a limited event time-window.

Relay A three-leg relay event, separate for men and women.”

Decision 2:

World Cup in foot orienteering shall be run annually. WOC will count as a World Cup round.

Decision 3:

The new calendar of World Events will be introduced as follows:

1. The WOC and World Cup will be run annually from the year 2004 onwards.
2. The Extraordinary General Assembly mandates the Council to appoint the organiser of WOC 2004.”

Council had also proposed to the EGA a qualification system for the WOC but decided to withdraw the proposal because of the complexity of this issue. Council will look further into the qualification issue and come back with a proposal for the 2002 General Assembly to decide on.

New structure for foot orienteering:

Two separate groups and a clear division of responsibilities

With a view to securing the implementation of the Extraordinary General Assembly decisions in relation to the elite events programme and in order to use the scarce resources in the best possible way, the IOF Council has decided on a new structure for the foot orienteering discipline.

Instead of one committee being responsible for all of the foot orienteering activities, Council has chosen to split up the work between two separate groups, both having a clearly defined work remit. The Elite Events Group (EEG) is responsible for World Orienteering Championships, World Cup and World Games, whilst the Foot Orienteering Committee (FOC) is responsible for the development in relation to Junior World Orienteering Championships, World Masters Orienteering Championships, World Ranking Events, the world ranking list, and regional events.

Council has appointed Björn Persson (SWE) chairman, and Laszlo Deseö (HUN), Ove Gasbjerg (DEN), Leho Haldna (EST),

and Marcel Schiess (SUI) members of the EEG. One additional member representing a non-European member federation still remains to be appointed. The EEG has the same status as a discipline committee and is subordinate to Council. At the political level, the three Vice Presidents, i.e. Åke Jacobson, Hugh Cameron, and Edmond Szechenyi, have been appointed to lead this work.

The remit of the EEG includes development and implementation of event concepts, and the appointment of senior event advisers. Some of the initial tasks of the group are:

- * Event programmes, including the integration of the IOF Congress in the WOC
- * To elaborate the discipline format definitions (winning times, etc.)
- * Qualification rules
- * Maximum number of runners per nation
- * Development of event guidelines
- * Proposing an IOF - organiser contract

structure

So far, Council has appointed Øivind Holt (NOR), Alexey Kuzmine (RUS), and David May (GBR) members of the FOC. Additional members, including a chairman, will shortly be appointed. At the political level, within Council, Thomas Brogli and Jan-Erik Krusberg have been appointed liaison persons for FOC.

Some of the initial tasks of the committee are the development of event guidelines and proposing an IOF - organiser contract structure. The remit of FOC includes:

- * Development of event concepts
- * Implementation of such concepts
- * The appointment of event advisers - making provision for the expertise required
- * The development of foot orienteering forms
- * The training of senior event advisers
- * Responsibility for the marathon orienteering working group

Implementation of the new World Championships programme at the 2003 WOC in Switzerland

Ever since the 2003 World Orienteering Championships (WOC) was awarded to Switzerland in 1998, the Swiss Orienteering Federation has played an active role in the development of new media and spectator friendly event formats. Following the decisions taken by the Extraordinary General Assembly, the WOC 2003 organiser has asked the IOF for permission to implement as many aspects as possible of the new discipline formats and the WOC programme.

The IOF has agreed that the new discipline formats, namely Sprint, Middle, Long and Relay be introduced at the 2003 WOC. Equally, all qualification races will be organised prior to, but in conjunction with, the WOC.

The description of the events

SPRINT DISTANCE

The Sprint is a final only. The composition of the final start field in each class shall be the following:

- * Each IOF member federation is entitled to one national slot
- * The 15 best nations calculated by aggregate in the three last 2002 World Cup sprint events (events 6, 13 and 15 respectively) are awarded a second national slot
- * The reigning World Champion is awarded a personal slot

- * The maximum number of participants from one nation is 2. An exception can occur for the nation having the reigning World Champion

MIDDLE DISTANCE

The winning times in the qualification shall be 25 minutes for both men and women.

The winning times in the final shall be 35 minutes for both men and women.

The start field of the MIDDLE DISTANCE final is determined by a qualification race. The composition of the qualification start field shall be the following:

- * Each IOF member federation is entitled to enter three runners in each class (men and women)
- * The reigning World Champion is awarded a personal slot
- * There shall be three qualification heats.

The composition of the final field shall be



the following:

- * From each qualification heat the best 17 runners are qualified for the final. Start order in the final is determined by the result list from the qualification, according to the Rules.

LONG DISTANCE

The winning times in the qualification shall be according to the Rules, meaning 60 minutes for men and 45 minutes for women.

The winning times in the final shall be according to the Rules, that is 90 minutes for men and 70 minutes for women.

The start interval in the final shall be 2 minutes for both men and women. In the course planning methods shall be applied to prevent following and to break up eventual pairs.

The start field of the LONG DISTANCE final is determined by a qualification race. The composition of the qualification start field shall be the following:

- * Each IOF member federation is entitled to enter three runners in each class (men and women)
- * The reigning World Champion is awarded a personal slot
- * There shall be three qualification heats

The composition of the final field shall be the following:

- * From each qualification heat the best 17 runners are qualified for the final. Start order in the final is determined by the result list from the qualification, according to the Rules.

RELAY

The relay shall consist of three legs for men and women. The total winning time shall be 120 minutes for both men and women. The winning time/course length may vary between the legs.

The mission of the new Elite Events Group: To ensure the quality of world level events



In addition to the World Orienteering Championships and the World Cup, the Elite Events Group is also responsible for the development of orienteering in relation to the World Games. Orienteering made its World Games debut in August this year. The Lithuanian team won a silver medal in the mixed relay event, just 26 seconds after Norway.

In recent years, the international orienteering family has made a number of strategic decisions in relation to the elite events programme. The process started already in 1996, and it was concluded in early August 2001, when the Extraordinary IOF General Assembly delegates decided to introduce yearly World Orienteering Championships and World Cup in foot orienteering from 2004 onwards. This development phase spanning five years of discussions, consultation and decision-making came to an end, and now it's time to put the decisions into practice.

To ensure the implementation, the IOF Council recently decided on the formation of the Elite Events Group (EEG), and appointed Björn Persson chairman of this group. The EEG has already prepared a statement of direction, explaining the guiding ideas and policies for its future work. "The EEG is subordinate to Council, and

we are responsible for the further development and the quality of the World Orienteering Championships and the World Cup in foot orienteering. Our work will be guided by the documents "IOF Elite events – a concept for development", the "Leibnitz Convention" and by the Extraordinary IOF General Assembly decisions taken in 2001. We will also be using the Final Report of the Elite Events Programme (EEP) project group in our work", says Björn Persson.

Raising the profile a major task

"One of the major tasks of the EEG is to assist in raising the profile of orienteering. One way of doing this is to take a more active role in securing the standard of the out-of-forest arrangements at top level events."

"An IOF appointed Senior Event Adviser will be responsible for assuring the qual-

ity of the event as a whole, but will mainly be focussing on the out-of-forest arrangements such as the event arena, media issues, facilities for the athletes, ceremonies, spectator arrangements, etc. The technical in-forest part of the event will be overseen by the National Controller, who will be focussing entirely on the quality of the maps, courses, start and finish procedures, and timekeeping. This new division of responsibilities is aimed at emphasising the IOF's intention to optimise its resources, and to work together with the organiser to secure the quality of our world level events", Björn Persson explains.

Media - the carrier of our message

"No sport can raise its profile without having a working relationship with media. Media is the carrier of our message to the world, inside and outside orienteering, and we must assist in packaging this message", states Björn Persson.

"Within the EEG, a Media Group will be formed and given the task to ensure that media representatives are given the best possible treatment and working conditions at our World Championships and World Cup events. Equally, the group will take an active part in making sure that our world level events are appropriately covered in the media and that material is made available for those countries not having any media representatives on site."

"The specialists on the Media Group will be advising event organisers, but they will also be actively developing the media aspects of IOF top level events, e.g. in relation to TV production, the establishment of a network of media-responsible persons within the IOF member federations, and the development of webcasting. The group will also be providing background material for pre- and post-coverage of the events", Björn Persson continues.

Focus on the arena

"In the last few years the 'arena concept' has been introduced also to orienteering. The event centre is the orienteering arena and the competition environment - forest or built-up areas - is part of our arena. The spectators and the TV viewers must be put in focus when designing the event so that it is exciting and easily understandable for

them. The arena will naturally be having an influence on the course planning - however without sacrificing fairness or the essentials of the different formats of orienteering. The EEG will form an Arena Group to be responsible for the development and establishment of this concept, and the group will also have the task to assist and advise the organisers in arena related matters. We intend to engage arena experts such as experienced speakers, media and PR professionals, and designers representing established arena sports, in this work."

Unique and exciting competition formats

"We must remember that the discipline and competitions formats are an important factor when aiming for a higher profile of the sport. I would like to stress that the EEG's intention is to offer three clearly distinguished formats, each of them being appreciated for its unique qualities and presenting a special challenge and demands for the athlete. We will also protect the unique values of the established formats while actively developing younger ones. To preserve the values of the long distance as our most physically demanding event and an ultimate challenge for the strongest, the EEG will emphasise the requirements on maps and courses", Björn Persson declares.

"We will be putting focus on the middle distance as a technically challenging event, presenting the most intricate orienteering problems in a format perfectly suitable for direct TV broadcast and spectator appreciation. And we will continue to develop the sprint as our high-speed, short-in-time event. The nature of the sprint presents special development challenges related to fairness aspects, maps, competition environment etc. While working towards establishing the sprint as a fully accepted world level format, we will allow ourselves to experiment in order to find a format that can be practised in environments not suitable for traditional forest orienteering."

Broad participation one of the targets

At the World Championships, World Cup and World Games level, the event is organised for much wider target groups than at the national or local level. The athletes are naturally put in focus in all sports

events, but at the world level other target groups such as spectators, media and TV viewers come into play.

"The EEG will aim at optimising the benefits for all groups involved in the world level events. We want to make sure that our championships and our season programme is designed to attract broad participation from as many nations as possible. Equally, we want to secure a geographically balanced distribution of events. In relation to the World Championships we will be aiming for a formula combining broad participation with prime quality starting fields. We intend to protect the built-in media status of the WOC titles. The qualification methods must be developed to ensure exciting finals, giving all nations an equal chance to qualify and producing the best starting field under the given conditions. We regard broad participation as one of the quality factors in relation to the starting field", Persson declares.

"Olympic Village" a future goal

In all activities, finance is one of the decisive factors. It is important and acceptable for the organiser to make a profit out of a large undertaking such as organising a WOC. At the same time the participation cost should be kept at a level making it possible for all nations to participate in our world events. How can these two goals be achieved?

"One of our goals in this respect will be the "Olympic Village" concept where all teams are offered the same standard accommodation and facilities. The subsidisation possibly needed in this area is meant to be balanced with increased income from sponsors and other external partners. To reach this goal, we will develop the media side so that it can raise the attractiveness of sponsoring our events, including TV appearance and a PR oriented arena design. Also for the IOF it is important that our world events can generate income. Part of the IOF annual budget is based on fees for the organising and sponsorship rights related to the events. In future, the IOF will reinvest a fair part of this income in semi-professional resources to further develop and raise the quality of our prime events and to assist and advise organisers", Björn Persson concludes.

Good Wishes for the New Orienteering Year 2002!