

SAILING AND GOVERNMENT TEAM-UP IN JOINT INITIATIVES

By: South African Sailing (SAS)

Sailing in the Western Cape is in the process of forging increasingly stronger ties with local governments at a bilateral level. This includes across-the-board initiatives such as club development, programmes and projects, as well as special events – with more hopefully to come.

At a special ceremony held at the Bellville Vellodrome near Cape Town recently, the Minister of Sport for the Western Cape, Dr Ivan Meyer, stressed the importance of sport in society.

During the event Dr Meyer presented three separate categories of financial awards to South African Sailing (SAS) in the Western Cape (WC). These included awards for club development, programmes and projects, and for the Grand Slam dinghy racing initiative.

Also in the context of bilateral activities, SAS (WC) hosted a two-day educational sports seminar for government officials. The objective was to promote a better understanding of the sports code of sailing among sports administrators and officials of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS). A raft of subjects was covered during the seminar as will be seen below...



Saths Moodley, Member of the Futures Committee at RCYC, and General Manager of Royal Cape Yacht Club Marcus Reuter welcomed participants to the event

After the official welcome, Perry Harrison-Hyde, Chairman of SAS WC and SAS National Councillor, presented an introduction and overview of the sport of sailing to the participating officials in the sailing-theme decorated main hall at Royal Cape Yacht Club (RCYC), Cape Town. The presentation focused on diverse subjects related to sailing ranging from keelboats through blue water yachting, the different types of designs of larger and smaller sailing craft, an overview of the "industry of sailing" in the Western Cape – right through to terminology used in sailing.

The next topic on the agenda was the Cape to Rio yacht race which is set to start from Table Bay in January 2014. Vitor Medina, chairman of the organising committee of Cape2Rio

2014 – and recently returned from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was able to give delegates up-to-date first-hand information on the fast approaching event which is of significant interest to the City of Cape Town and its on-going tourism drive.



The Optimist Class represented by Craig Leslie and Andre Wollheim then presented on the All-Africa Optimist dinghy class Championships set to be staged at Club Mykonos near Langebaan in the Western Cape later this year. Entries from many countries of Africa are expected and once again sailing will help reinforce the Western Cape as a popular sporting and tourism destination.



South Africa's record of participating in two recent Olympic Games, namely Beijing during 2008 and London during 2012, was addressed by Penny Alison – a sailing athlete who represented South Africa in Beijing, China, (and who subsequently went on to become the first woman to win the prized Lipton Cup) – and Dave Hudson, manager and coach of **Team Race Ahead** who competed in the recent UK Olympics. Penny's speech gave an illuminating view of exactly what an Olympic campaign involved in terms of effort, focus and commitment.



Penny Alison recounting SA's Beijing 2008 Olympic campaign

Dave Hudson went on to talk about the London Olympics and all the last-minute excitement that this campaign involved. He then gave an inspiring account focusing on the amazing story of the evolution of the sailing career of Asenathi Jim in global record time from being a learner in the Eastern Cape to becoming an Olympic athlete of world repute.



Dave Hudson explaining some of the finer points of Olympic Campaigning to WC Government officials

This aspect of the seminar was of special double importance. It focussed around the fact that Asenathi Jim and Roger Hudson were both honoured during very recent months as being "Team of the Year" by both the Western Province Sports Council as well as by the Department of Cultural Affairs and (DCAS) Sports in the Western Cape.



Some of the sports supported by WC Sports Council and DCAS

This achievement needs to be seen in the context that there are more than sixty sports codes in the Western Cape – and sailing through the successes of Roger and Asenathi came **first** overall as a Team representing the sport code of sailing.



Asenathi and Roger – awarded "Team of the Year" against more than sixty competing sports codes in WC

Andrea Giovannini then went on to address the group of government officials explaining in more detail the merits of sailing as a sport. Government is of the firm belief that sport helps build communities and also has the added benefit of being a highly positive endeavour and force for the good in a country ridden often by violence, gangsterism, drugs and other negative societal influences. Sailing is recognised as a positive contributor to community development – and as a force for the good.

In a recent address to the WC sports administrative community, Dr Ivan Meyer, MEC for DCAS (WC) drew strong attention to the multi-faceted positive influences of sport. He urged sports codes to become strongly focused on achieving future goals – such as participating in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for example. This is exactly what sailing as

a sport is doing. While having a vision is important - a vision without an action plan is most often an illusion.



Andrea Giovannini – a key co-visionary of the increasingly popular Grand Slam Series in the WC

Government officials were then treated to another interesting facet of the sports code of sailing, windsurfing.

Here, SA champion Mitchell (Mitch) Wagstaff, treated attendees to a graphic illumination of windsurfing as a sport and explained further how the Western Cape has become an important destination for the world windsurfing community and how the sport is attracting a large number of enthusiasts to Cape Town and in particular to its beautiful beaches.



Mitch discussing windsurfing and outlining his own campaign to participate in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro

Colin Whitehead, world Hobie Cat champ, then gave a graphic description of the iKaziKati Youth America's campaign which had the officials sitting on the edge of their seats! Backed up by graphic visual video material the officials were treated to compelling insights of what

putting together such a dramatic international campaign entailed. Rare facts about these super-fast adrenalin-firing yachts were shared with one and all.



Colin Whitehead – himself a world champion – discussing the iKaziKati campaign



The South African iKaziKati Americas Cup Youth Team in action in San Francisco, USA

As the event wound towards a close Gerry Norris, sea rescue practitioner and sailor, described to the officials present the very important synergies that exist between the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) and the sailing community in South Africa - and in particular in the Western Cape. Numerous rescues of yachts sailing off Cape waters have and continue to take place. From January to March 2013, as many as twelve yachts sailing offshore have been rescued or assisted to safety along the SA coast. He described in detail some of these dramatic rescues of sailing yachts and vessels along our WC coastline. The sailing community in the WC regularly donates funds generated during yachting events to NSRI so as to help sustain their important rescue activities. Government was urged to support NSRI activities.



This global journeying Belgian yacht was rescued/assisted to safety twice by NSRI while recently rounding the Cape of Storms



The WC government is increasingly concerned about the high number of drownings in Western Cape waters, both inland and at sea. The Water Wise initiative of NSRI plays an important role in teaching young people about how to be safe at, on and near the water. It also focuses on teaching South African youth life preserving first-responder skills such as cardio pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as well as other important rescue techniques.

During the two-day event sailors got the chance to interface closely with officials from government and to explain the important role that sailing plays in South Africa in its multiple facets. The excitement that results from contact with the outside world through events such as the Volvo Ocean Race, the next Olympics where a number of South African yachts and their crews are currently campaigning internationally so as to qualify for 2016 – was particularly stressed.



Graeme Willcox and Andrew Tarboten are (among several others) currently campaigning internationally for the Olympics 2016

The two-day symposium concluded with officials being taken sailing around Table Bay on a modern catamaran where the more practical side of the sport was demonstrated.



Ian and Elske of RCYC took the DCAS out to sea on their beautiful catamaran

At the end of the event RCYC Commodore Dale Kushner delivered a closing address that focused on the importance of sailing to WC citizens – and also the enormously important “industry of sailing” in South Africa – particularly in the Western Cape. Attention was drawn to the importance of RCYC among both local and international communities.

Delegates were awarded attendance certificates by SAS (WC) for successful participation in the event – the first of its kind in the Western Cape. Hopefully other similar such events will follow in the future.



Colin Cedras DCAS co-organiser of the DCAS SAS event together with Ronel Jonathan of the DCAS Vredenburg office



The Mother City



“A joint educational initiative between the Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) and South African Sailing (SAS) with the strong support of the Royal Cape Yacht Club (RCYC)”