

PRESIDENT and CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2016/17

In the year under review, South African Sailing (SA Sailing) made great strides in the execution of its five-point strategy.

1. Professionalise the Management

For the first time in its history, SA Sailing appointed a full time Chief Executive Officer. This was a key objective in the strategy, unveiled and road showed in 2015, and a game changer for yachting in this country. A handful of visionary sailors have very generously committed to funding the position for an initial period.

We have been fortunate to be able to appoint Greg Smith who joins us with a considerable track record in corporate leadership. He has worked in a variety of retail positions including two roles as CEO, has an MBA from the University of Cape Town, and has brought disciplined, structured thinking to our work processes and human resource practices. Foremost, the organization is being enabled to focus on its core constituency – the South African sailor.

In the short few months since joining in November last year, Greg has on a wide front stepped up to resolve a number of flashpoints in the sailing community, base lined our day to day work practices, critically analysed our decision-making processes, bolstered and supported both our full-time employees and part time volunteers who achieve heroic outcomes and led the process of developing an updated Constitution.

An updated Constitution is a critical step to changing sailing in South Africa. The current Constitution, adopted by all clubs in 1998, has served us well. It brought two important governance bodies- the Cruising Association of South Africa and South African Yacht Racing – together into one body, South African Sailing. This was propitious. Not long after Parliament legislated that all sporting activities, whether competitive or RECREATIONAL, had to take place under a single national federation and be affiliated to the South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC).

The proposed Constitution which will be put to a special EGM later this year has four important evolutionary steps.

Firstly, it positions sailing at the heart of the current national imperative – TRANSFORMATION. It is a national imperative not because the politicians say so. It is crucial because every thinking South African realises that if we do not build strong, mutually respectful relationships across the many divides in our society, we will end up as a failed state. Our beloved pastime, yachting, is uniquely positioned to make a telling contribution. As we all know, people put on a boat with a common purpose be it racing or cruising, find each other.

Secondly, the amended Constitution recognises our legal obligations laid out in the Sports and Recreation Act of 1988, as amended, and a number of other important Acts of Parliament including those that deal with safety and the environment and the requirement for sailing clubs to be a member of SA Sailing

Thirdly, it provides an enhanced framework of governance to facilitate fund raising on a significant scale. Without a full time CEO and other professional staff it is not possible to approach the corporate sector, family foundations and high net worth individuals to partner the sport with

substantial financial and/or contributions in kind. Organizationally the governance structure will provide for a national Council and a full time Executive team overseeing an entity for sailing development and other entities with a specific focus on, say, Olympic Sailing or even the Volvo Ocean Race. The Constitutional changes will also provide for Section 18(a) tax deductibility for donors where applicable.

Fourthly, the democracy of the governance structure will be improved. In addition to more clearly defining the election of the Regional Councillors processes for adding or deleting regions will be covered. Recognition will be given to clubs with more paid up members having more of a say. The previously co-opted discipline Councillors will in future have a clearly defined path to being elected to Council. And the registered, paid up sailors who actually sail in that discipline will enjoy the right of voting those representatives into office.

Race management is an area of fundamental contribution from the national body. In the past year five trainee National Judges attended the SA Sailing Judges seminar and passed the exam. Pleasingly three of the five are women. In addition, the Appeals Committee was re-constituted. We thank Dave Hudson for stepping up to chair the Appeals Committee and for the energised contribution already made. The challenge now is to invest in the development of the next generation of Race Officers.

2. Access to Water

This remains a critical issue for most of our coastal clubs. SA Sailing is working alongside the executive leadership of these clubs to ensure their futures. The national federation has also taken a stance on issues such as the pumping of raw sewerage into the Vaaldam, fish farm proposals for Langebaan lagoon and the denial of access to cruising boats to the Kraalbaai waters in Langebaan.

Whilst inevitably yacht clubs will have to face up to paying more commercial rentals, by being agents for transformation and providing access to broader communities to recreational, educational and work opportunities the clubs should enjoy security of tenure at sustainable rates.

3. Growing the Base

The number of sailors accessing the sport has been boosted considerably through the appointment of dedicated training co-ordinators in each region. During the year a SA Sailing / Lotto initiative run in conjunction with yacht clubs around the country resulted in 817 new sailors being introduced to the sport of sailing. Sixty-three per cent of these new sailors were black. A total of 53 people have attended various levels of instructor's courses and 46 individuals have completed safety boat courses.

An exciting challenge is to make sailing a school sport. The construction of beautifully modified 420's and the launch of four fleets of seven boats a piece in each of the four main sailing regions is a giant step in this direction.

Following a national launch in September this year, sailing leagues and knock out competitions will be organized not only for schools and universities but for inter club team racing as well. The latter will bring sailors from different classes into competition with each other who might otherwise never have competed. It also provides an opportunity for young people to sail together on a rewarding two-man boat. Novices paired with experienced sailors will have the opportunity to learn quickly from people of their own age and be excited about the sport. It is much more fun being taught by a peer rather than someone a generation older especially when it involves someone from the opposite sex.

4. Transformation

It is not possible to record all the inspiring stories of Transformation in the sport over the past year such is the progress on this front. Herewith just two accounts to encourage all to make their contribution.

Sail Africa in Durban operates under the inspirational leadership of Jackie Barnard. After many years of hard work and successfully introducing many previously disadvantaged young people to sailing, Sail Africa won the highly prestigious Jack Cheetham award. This is the first time in its long history of recognizing heroes in the field of transformation in sport that sailing has been singled out. Not resting on their laurels, Sail Africa has now instituted a national competition for disadvantaged sailors. This has not only brought sailors together from across the country, it has re-invigorated the yachties who helped with boats and organization in their love for the sport.

Race Ahead, in conjunction with SA Sailing as one of its anchor benefactors and other private sector parties, once again played a pivotal role this year. Following a credible 20th place at the Rio Olympics, Roger Hudson and Asenathi Jim regrouped early in the new quadrennial selflessly giving of their talents and expertise. Asenathi competed in the Laser Radial Nationals and African Championships with the express purpose of raising the standard of our youth squad. What better way to learn than go head to head with a double Olympian?

At the time of writing, Asenathi and Sibuzatu, fresh from their podium finish at this year's pre-worlds regatta, have paired up with two 16-year-old white girls at the 420 European Championships. They will respectively skipper and crew on two different boats with the girls as a way of transferring their skills and knowledge.

We are certainly reaching a level of maturity when the next cycle is for the now advantaged sailors to be tutoring the aspirant, competitively minded next generation all under the watchful eye and innovative leadership of Roger Hudson.

5. Pinnacle Achievement

At the apex of the five tier SA Sailing Strategy is top level achievement in the sport.

Once again South African sailors have excelled in the international arena. Whilst by no means an exhaustive list some notable achievements.

Keelboats

1. James Blakemore and his South African team on board the Swan 53, Music winning the Rolex Swan Cup Grand Prix and achieving another win in the Les Voiles de St Tropez, in the IRC Group B.
2. Lord Irvine Laidlaw with a number of South Africans in his various crews, on his brand new Swan 115 won Class A at the Bermuda Superyacht regatta as part of the America's Cup sailing programme and took line honours, was the class winner and second overall in the Cowes Round the Island Race skippering his Reichel & Pugh 82 with 1,300 boats competing and won Class 1 in the Panerai Cowes Classic event again in another new boat.
3. The Cape to Rio race attracted 23 entries. Hotly contested at the front of the fleet two international boats- Black Pearl and Runaway- came first and second with Cape Town's own Lion of Africa Vulcan in third place setting a new South African record for the crossing. Line honours went to Runaway.

Olympic Classes

1. Three sailors were included in the South African Rio Olympic squad, a 50 per cent increase over 2012. Asenathi Jim and Roger Hudson for the second time and Stefano Marcia for the first joined that elite sliver of the human race who are competitive enough to participate at the Olympics. Only 0,0001 per cent of the world's population get to participate every four years.

Other Dinghy One design classes

1. A South African team of Tammy Holden, Sanmarie Fourie, Benji Daniel, Chad Stevenson, Michaela Robinson, James Hellstrom, Douglas White, Jared Oosthuizen with Manager Rudolph Holm and Coach Taariq Jacobs competed at the 2016 ISAF Youth Sailing World Championships in New Zealand. Since 1972, the second ever Youth Worlds, South Africa has consistently sent young South Africans to these championships. Our best ever result was when Gareth Blankenberg won Gold in 1998.
2. Bruce Keen finished second and Andrew Tarboton third in the Musto Skiff World Championships.
3. Mossel Bay Yacht and Boat Club hosted a very successful Fireball World Championship during December 2016 with Georgiou Divaris and Ferdinand Holm finishing top South Africans in fourth place.
4. Hot off the press last week Benji Daniels and Alex Burger took Bronze in the American National Championships, the pre-regatta to this year's Worlds. This is South Africa's first ever podium finish at a World level in this class, a feeder to the Olympic 49er class. We wish them every success at the World Championships.

Kites

The South African Kiteboarding Association (SAKA) has had three Kiteboarders campaign on the international 2016/17 circuit namely Oswald Smith, Aron Rosslee and Jason van der Spuy, of whom two are juniors. Rut Gouws and Teje Groenewoud also participated in the European Championships. All of this is part of a huge focus on the Youth Olympic Games scheduled to take place in Argentina next year where Kiteboarding will be a part of an Olympic event for the first time.

Multihulls

Blain Dodds won Bronze at the Hobie 14 2017 Open Worlds and he and Charles Gerard took silver in the Hobie 2017 Wild Cat Worlds. In the Hobie 14 Open Worlds Nicholas Ryall, a youth sailor, had a very impressive 12th.

6. Sportsmanship

In preparation for the 2016 Lipton Cup, class rule infringements dating back to 2010 came to light. The affected boat had gone on to win the Lipton Cup in 2011 and 2013. A great deal has been said and written about the incident, much of it ill informed. What is clear is that the transgression would have remained hidden but for the two sailors involved making an immediate and complete disclosure as soon as they understood they had previously broken the class rules. The SA Sailing investigators found that they had not consciously broken the rules. In the light of these facts it was concluded that their offer to withdraw from the 2011 and 2013 events and relinquish their titles was appropriate. This outcome was endorsed by two America's Cup judges. In a gesture of sportsmanship one of the sailors attended a prize giving ceremony to recognise the sailors who should have been awarded the 2011 and 2013 titles to congratulate them on their victory. It is very easy to destroy human capital. It is much more challenging to nurture and develop it. To be clear – where the Racing Rules are transgressed deliberately and where there is obfuscation to hide such transgressions, the full force and sanction of Rule 69 will be applied. But where circumstances and behaviour are such that there is a complete, timely disclosure with contrition and the conclusion is that a lesson has been learnt, judgement will be exercised with discretion. Should anyone have a skeleton in the cupboard they should reflect on the positive example that has been set and approach the sailing authorities mindful of the mind set of the National body in dealing with these issues. It behoves us all to back our sport. Malicious gossip undermines yachting. It saps the enthusiasm and goodwill of those who volunteer to do the work necessary for us all as sailors to be out enjoying ourselves on the water. Not only will it drive good people away it will prevent others joining in whether as future sailors, administrators, race officials or financial partners. Should anyone have a concern they should approach the administrative bodies, be they class or SA Sailing, confident that their matter will be treated seriously. But it is essential that there be a fact based account. We should play the game, not the player!

7. Future Challenges

The major challenge facing the sport is funding. Without money, none of our ambitious plans will come to anything.

Our traditional funders, such as LOTTO, SASCOC and the Department of Sport and Recreation, are under considerable financial pressure. The emphasis will have to move to establishing partnerships with the private sector, be it with large corporations, family foundations and/or high net worth individuals. For this constituency to engage with us they will want to know we are a vibrant, healthy community. Their yardstick of our potential as a market will first and foremost be measured by our numbers. What is our membership?

There are probably in excess of 10 000 people accessing the water in some form of wind driven activity in the country. Of these, an estimated 8 000 are members of yacht clubs. The paid-up SA Sailing membership base last year was 4 900.

Stripped of LOTTO funding, grant money and donations, the regular annual income is derived from two sources, membership subscriptions and activities undertaken as an agent for the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA). This income amounts to R2.6 million, 60 per cent of which comes from Subscriptions. The overhead costs are R1.9 million not counting the CEO's salary which, for an initial period, is being funded by a handful of benefactors.

This results in two observations:-

1. We will not grow our sport off such a small base.
2. Corporate sponsors and donors hate funding overheads. They want to see their contributions reporting fully to the project they are backing. They have a legitimate expectation that the yachting fraternity should be paying its way. It must be a target to have our regular income cover our full time professional management. To do that we need to collect on subscriptions. Apart from the legal requirement to belong to a national federation, whether a competitive or recreational sailor, a larger membership will offer a marketing opportunity with attendant membership benefits. In other countries, the national federations have secured very attractive insurance deals or discounts on motor cars, for example, for their members. For all these reasons growing the membership base of SA Sailing AND collecting the annual subscriptions from yacht club members will be a high priority next year.

8. Conclusion

There is much work to be done. Council is very appreciative of all the hard work of so many volunteers in the sport and our permanent staff in the organization. We acknowledge and thank Runa van Rooyen in particular who leaves us after 10 years of service. They should all be proud of their many successes over the past year and they, and others who still need to join in, should be encouraged by their progress. Our sincere appreciation goes to all of them and to our fellow Councillors for their loyalty and support.

Philip Baum

President

Peter Hall

Chairman