



International Rogaining Federation

Informal meeting – 17 August 2017 at the World Rogaining Champs, Latvia

People present

Richard Robinson (IRF President)
Lauri Leppik (IRF Vice-President)
David Baldwin (Australia)
Julie Quinn (Australia)
Tim Farrant (New Zealand)
Miroslav Seidl (Czech Republic)
Gavin Wyatt-Mair (USA)
Martins Vimba (Latvia)
Volodymyr Lipka (Ukraine)
Sergey Yashchenko (Russia)
Jordi Armengul Martiner (Spain)

The meeting was opened at 2:10 pm by Richard Robinson. He reminded people this meeting was an informal discussion and a forum where requests or issues could be raised for the attention of the International Rogaining Federation (IRF).

1. Introductions

Richard Robinson: Richard has been the current IRF president for about 4.5 years. The maximum term of office is 6 years so an item on the agenda to discuss is succession planning. He has rogained since 1992 and this event will be his 14th World Rogaine Champs and 62nd 24 hr event that he has competed in. He was the event director for the 2016 WRC in Australia.

Julie Quinn: Julie is the president of the local rogaining association in Australia. She has rogained since 1997 and has both competed in and organised many rogaine events since that time. She was part of the organising team for the 2016 WRC.

David Baldwin: David is an Australian Rogaining Association representative on the IRF. He has rogained since 1996 and has both competed in and organised

many rogaine events since that time. He was a course setter and map maker for the 2016 WRC.

Martins Vimba: Martins has 12-15 years of rogaining experience and also lots of orienteering experience. He is also the CEO of two companies so has significant management experience. Martins is the event director for the 2017 WRC. In Latvia rogaining is popular, especially the 4 to 6 hr events. Latvia holds many events and the larger events attract 1000+ people.

Gavin Wyatt-Mair: Gavin is attending the 2017 WRC to learn from the Latvians about organising the WRC event in anticipation of the 2020 WRC in the USA. The 2020 WRC will be hosted by the Bay Area Orienteering Club in California. The WRC will be held in the Sierra Nevada mountains in an area of high alpine forest (the altitude will be a challenge for competitors – 6,000 – 9,000 ft), about 350 km from San Francisco. The intention is for a 2-week series of events leading up to the WRC including the US Orienteering Champs (weekend before) and Californian Orienteering Champs (2 weekends before). They are also hoping to get permission to hold a sprint orienteering event in Disneyland. Gavin estimates they will need 80-100 volunteers and has got many of these committed already.

Lauri Lepik: Lauri has been the Vice-President of the IRF for 4.5 years. He was the event director for the WRC in 2008 in Estonia and is the event advisor for the 2017 WRC in Latvia. He has been involved in rogaining since 2000 and has competed in about 25 24hr rogaines.

Miroslav Seidl: Miroslav has been rogaining since 1997. He was the event organiser for the WRC in 2012 in the Czech Republic. Czech also hosted the WRC in 2002. Czech Republic typically hosts one 24 hr event and several smaller events each year.

Tim Farrant: Tim is the current New Zealand Rogaining Association President. This year is his sixth WRC and has competed in 24 24 hr events.

Volodymyr Lipka: The Ukraine has had rogaining developed for a long time under their orienteering federation. Volodymyr is the event coordinator for the European Rogaining Champs in 2018 in Ukraine. A key role at that event will be to ensure fair play is maintained. Ukraine has national championships in rogaining over 24, 12, 6 and 3hr-night events. There is also a rogaining cup that is competed for over a number of events. To prepare youth, there are additional categories in Ukraine for <18 and <20 years. Ukraine is keen to see annual WRC.

Jordi Armengul Martiner: Jordi is a member of the organising team for the WRC in 2019 in the Pyrenees, Spain. He indicated it would provide both a technical and physical challenge for competitors. The course will be around 1600 m in altitude.

2. WRC 2017 in Latvia

Martins Vimba provided a summary of event organisation details about the WRC 2017 event.

The area was selected about 4-5 years ago and reserved for the WRC. The area has not been used for orienteering for about 20-30 years, although it will be used in 2018 for the world orienteering champs. The Orienteering club in Rēzekne has helped with the WRC and there has been good support from the local municipalities. There were some issues with the first vetter and mapper for the WRC not being able to complete the job and Martins had to get other people. Lauri Leppik has been helpful with good advice. The organising team was spread across Latvia so there were many Skype calls as part of the event organising.

A challenge was working with the Latvian nature coordination agency. They normally don't like orienteering events because of the impact caused and there are some EU regulations about erosion around re-entrants etc. However, early communications with the agency helped resolve the problems. The WRC could not have been held in June because of bird nesting (especially the spotted eagle and black stork) but the nesting is complete by late August, the time of the event.

A second challenge was to find a flat meadow where the Hash House could be based. Having a site with no permanent infrastructure also provided challenges for the organising committee. Martins said that somewhere with permanent infrastructure would have been easier to organise but that would have compromised the rogaining. There was a risk of problems at the Hash House if there was lots of rain.

There has been a high level of media interest in Latvia including radio interviews and television of the start. Social media channels have been watching the event and it is estimated this may be the largest event in Latvia this week. They have 980 followers.

Martins has been pleased with the event organising team. He said there have been some volunteers who were not main organiser of rogaines who now have the experience and will make good leaders for the sport. They had about 50 volunteers and had outsourced many of the large tasks to professional organisations including catering, results (partially outsourced), tents, showers, toilets, electricity.

The water drops comprised many 5L plastic containers. There were technical problems with large containers such as taps being left on and water quality. The 5 L bottles are convenient for delivery and for competitors to handle. They have 7.5 tonnes of water available and have regular checking of water drops. Two water drops on the course are local wells.

3. Worldwide communication

Richard requested a discussion about how can we communicate better between rogaining organisations world wide to help the sport grow? Part of this could be how to improve the website.

Richard noted the IRF website was out of date.

Julie mentioned the Italians had said they would like to see a calendar with all local events listed so that people could find regional events to travel to.

Lauri said that in addition to the group of people who are seeking information on other events to attend there was a second group of people who only attend local events. Ideally local rogaining organisations should supply event information to the IRF for inclusion on the website but this often does not happen. It requires a person to chase up the information. He noted this is essentially a part-time position if it is to be effectively done.

Lauri said the technical side of the website update could be outsourced to bring it up to date.

Tim thought the people best placed to manage events on the website would be situated in Europe because of the close distance for travel to events in other countries.

The Russian rogaining website was highlighted as an excellent site. It is run by a roganer in Moscow and includes interviews.

Gavin suggested the problem of the website could be divided into two parts: the technical elements, and the content. The Bay Area Orienteering Club (Gavin's local club) use a "wiki" format to organise the site with 20-30 people who edit and add content to the website. It still requires a person to moderate.

It would be valuable to have the website in more than one language. Russian was proposed as a possible second language.

David said he manages the Australian Rogaining Association website, his local association website and the IRF website when needed. He has attempted to delegate the content management but this has not worked. David indicated he would be prepared to help upgrade the IRF website but would also be happy if a completely new website was created. With respect to the "Wiki" format of having many editors, David mentioned spam could be a problem if the website editing is too open. Obviously too restrictive is also a challenge.

Jan Tojnar has a repository for WRC results that is separate from the IRF website.

A second item of discussion is about the reliance of volunteers to run the IRF and whether there is there a better way.

The IRF has discussed the option of getting a part-time administrator. The IRF would need to decide what the position would be and develop a job description. There is also a consideration of what the IRF can afford. Gavin mentioned USA Orienteering tried having an administration person for five years but this role was not successful in growing the sport. Lauri said that Estonia has a paid position that works well.

Richard agreed to take the ideas from the discussion to the IRF. He will be seeking ideas about a person from Europe to potentially fill a role.

A discussion on promoting the sport of rogaining followed.

Tim was keen to learn how the European's promoted rogaining after New Zealand struggled to attract a good number of participants to their Australasian Champs in 2017.

Lauri said that in Europe in general the longer, 24hr, events do not attract high number of people. A high number of competitors would be 200 – 250 people. However, it is easy to promote shorter events and it is easy to attract ~1000 people. He suggested the jump from long orienteering events to a 24 hr event is too much.

Miroslav and Jan Tojnar are the only people who manage the Czech Republic's website. They find their longer events are in competition with other long-distance events (e.g. ultra running, mountain orienteering). The Czech champs only have 150-200 people.

Richard mentioned in Australia there is a lower level of cross-over of orienteering and rogaining people than is the case in Europe. David said some Australian states are trying an alternative promotion to less competitive teams, along the lines of a weekend of camping with two 6-hour walks.

Tim said there is growing participation in rogaining from New Zealand orienteers.

4. Oversight of regional championships

Lauri described the process of deciding hosts for the European Rogaining Champs. There is a call for bids and there is a vote by European IRF Member. Unlike the WRC the call has a more open approach with the call going out to any country that organises rogaines (the country does not need to be an IRF member). Normally decisions are made two years in advance and is competitive with 3-4 bids. 2018 will be in the Ukraine and a decision has not yet been made for 2019.

While there have been both successful events and those where there were problems, the European countries do not want to become too bureaucratic with having formal agreements.

The 2017 ERC in Italy was discussed. The bid was good but there were some problems with the administration of the event. The decision to award the event to Italy was a risk taken by European IRF Council members to promote the sport. The area (San Gimignano, Tuscany) and map were excellent. There was a risk with using a different start area (the start was in the square of San Gimignano) meant that delays caused the start to be 10 minutes late. It was noted this was an idea that was promoted by local officials but did not work well. The event organisers had been provided with a short-list of expectations, but poor communication meant that the European IRF Council members could not confirm organisational details. Competitors were disappointed with not receiving medals for winning. Finally, the results were not provided in accordance with the Rules.

Lauri outlined two options for future events: (i) restrict event hosting to IRF Members, and (ii) have host agreements and an IRF advisor for each event.

Richard provided his opinion that allowing non-members to host events is good for the sport, but may need a higher level of IRF oversight. This in turn may require a higher IRF levy on the ERC to fund.

David noted that if an IRF advisor is used it would be helpful if they spoke the language of the hosting country.

The European IRF Council members raised the practical problem of the IRF finances being located in Australia. It would be easier for them to have a bank account in an European country. This would allow easy transfers to European countries and it would be much easier to collect the European IRF levy. Richard advised that he saw merit in the IRF having an EUR dominated bank account in Europe in addition to the AUD one in Australia. He also requested that European IRF Council members discuss how they would prefer to address the issue of control of the ERC and develop a proposal for the IRF Council.

5. IRF Succession planning

The IRF Executive comprises of four voting members: President, Vice-president, Treasurer and Secretary; and four non-voting members. Members in the voting positions are only allowed to hold the position for two 3-year terms (i.e. 6 years) in a single role. Hence, the President and Vice-presidents will need to stand down in early 2019. Richard has indicated he will not stay on the IRF Council. It was noted that Sergey, Jan Tojnar, Rod Phillips and Robin Gardner have all been on the IRF Council for some time. Richard has a concern that the Executive has been too Australian centric and would like to see a greater level of involvement from the voting membership, but recognises the expertise that exists in Australia

and Australia has the highest number of rogainers of any country by a large margin. The succession of the IRF Council members is an impending problem, and it is fundamental for the sport to have good IRF management.

6. IRF Legal jurisdiction

Currently, for historical reasons, the legal jurisdiction for the IRF resides in the State of Victoria in Australia. Currently, the legal requirements need a person on the IRF Executive who is a resident of Victoria and there are annual reports that need to be submitted. The IRF does not have contracts or financial transactions that are caught by the Victorian legislation. Richard requested discussion about whether this was the best model to be using.

The International Orienteering Federation moves its legal jurisdiction to the country where the secretariat resides. It was felt this was a complicated model.

Two questions were raised: does it matter where the legal jurisdiction resides, and, if it does, what is an ideal place? All IRF Members are encouraged to provide feedback on this.

7. Other business

2020 WRC United States of America

Gavin posed several questions to the meeting related to the WRC in 2020. He indicated there were likely to be further requests to the IRF for advice and help. Questions can be sent to the IRF via the USA members Bud or Heidi.

Gavin asked whether there was any way to plan for natural hazards including wild fires and earthquakes as these are concerns for the organising committee. It was noted that a wild fire in August was unlikely to eventuate. The meeting did not have a solution but noted there were these risks, similar to the risk of rain at the WRC2016 which would have lead to a cancellation of the event.

Gavin said the area had been mapped with LIDAR except one corner that they are hoping to have flown. They have a good mapper – Bill Cusworth.

The Bay Area Orienteering Club has requested a schedule of payments to assist with the large financial challenges associated with hosting the WRC. Richard will provide Gavin with the spending profile from the WRC2016 as a model.

Gavin asked about numbers of competitors. Richard suggested putting a restriction on numbers, partially to entice competitors to enter early. The actual number should be either that determined by the regulators or what the infrastructure, volunteers or terrain can handle.

Gavin asked about the process for getting visas for competitors. Richard advised that he should look up local legislation and put the relevant information on the

website. Competitors needing visas will need an official letter on IRF letterhead. He recommended a 24 hr turn-around on requests for letters. Richard noted that for WRC2016 he also checked entries and emailed individual competitors from relevant countries to check whether they needed a letter to assist with their visa application process. He recommended that Gavin assign a single and highly committed and motivated volunteer to this role. The failure to manage this task was one of the key failings of the 2017 ERC team.

Frequency of WRC

There is a motion currently before the IRF Council about whether to retain the current policy of calling for nominations each year or move to a two-year cycle. A vote will be called for on this in the next four weeks. It was noted that David Rowlands has formulated an argument for a move to a two-year cycle. Lauri will formulate the argument for retaining the current one-year process so that both sides of the argument are laid out.

Richard requested that after this vote, regardless of what the decision is, that the IRF Council waits at least 5 years before revisiting the issue to allow the agreed regime time to work. It has been five years since it was last considered.

The current policy was re-iterated: there is an annual call for bids. If bids exist and are suitable they may be awarded. There is a rotational policy that gives first preference to a region but the WRC can be awarded to anywhere that has a suitable bid.

Should the decision be to move to a two-year cycle, there was discussion about options for events in the alternate years. Ideas included a 12 hr event or world cup style events.

Richard thanked everyone for coming and for the excellent discussion. The meeting closed at 16:50.