

# Coaches Conference 2023

## WRAP-UP-TALK AND DISCUSSION

Presenter Günter Kradischnig and the coaches Tom Bray, Charly Boichut, Daniel Fehervari and Kilian Imhof were in place at the conference room in BSFZ Faak am See, Austria.

Firstly, some prepared questions will be asked, then open questions/discussions afterwards.

### **Q1: During the last days of presentations, what similarities and differences have you worked out?**

Daniel: Different size of budget, however the coaches often still have very much to do with managing, staying in contact with the athletes and so on. Difference in employed stuff is big.

Tom: Location is a difference, especially for GB, where you always need to take the plane to get to other countries and TC/competitions. But anyway all countries need to travel and that's always a challenge.

Kilian: It's a lot of enthusiasm inside the orienteering community and an open culture. We are not working against each other, and that's great! Structures and budget are different. Surprised about the similarities with the challenge of bringing a "medium successful" runner to the very top.

Charly: As coaches, we are all working a lot. Top performance is a mathematic formula with the factors of budget, human resources, willingness ... It's not a surprise that the most motivated countries are on top. WOC preparation is more or less the same in all nations; every nation knows the recipe on the technical site, so it's more about what you do and that you really do it.

**Question from Daniel to the audience:** What is the hardest part of the national team coaches' work?

Flo: As a coach you want to help the athletes in their sportive development but you need to do a lot of managing around, and that's work without helping the athletes.

Dani: Had the feeling that the coaches actually want to work more on the athletes. Challenge is also, that the travel days are that many and the social live (family, ...) at home is a problem.

Andi: Time schedule and communication with the athletes

Mathias: Selections is a problem, as you work very closely with the athletes, try to develop them, but then also need to tell, that they weren't good enough.

Tom: Tells about that GB tried to have the coaches outside the selection panel, but they will go back to the previous mode again, as the coach knows the athletes and their performance the best.

### **Q2: How important would it be for orienteering to be in the Olympics?**

Charly: Could give visibility and funding, but he cannot imagine being there, as we are far away as a sport and very small. Maybe we have a slight chance, but we need to solve fair play things first. It's about the information we get before (example from WOC23) and how it could be possible that all teams know the same in beforehand. In the Olympics there are even more people that know about the venue and so on, so it's very difficult.

Günter: But bob sliding is very small too and additionally very expensive.

Charly: More history behind the bob things. However, if we really have a chance, then we maybe need to change the formats to a very small format, e.g. a small labyrinth O in a stadium.

Kilian: It is still IOFs goal to get part of the games. However, this goal is far away still. Thinks O could be fitting, if we want to have it there. We could manage that in a kind of sprint. In Switzerland this topic was discussed a lot, but still not sure if we want to have it. In SUI we still get money if we are not an Olympic sport, so SUI is lucky, but GBR for example doesn't get money because it's not an Olympic sport. Kilian thinks O is still a good sport without the Olympics and we can develop outside as well. For sure it depends also on the development of the OG.

Daniel: On the one hand in Hungary OG is most important in sports and you get a lot of money if you win. On the other hand, O is a fair play sport. We don't use doping and don't cheat, so it should stay like that.

Tom: Not sure, that OG-sports get more money. If they are not successful, they also don't get money. Orienteering core is orienteering family and the OG would be good for visibility. Of course, it is worth to strive for the OG, but we should focus on developing our sport anyway, e.g. with as much juniors as in Hungary for example. Success inspires juniors the most, also a WOC medal is enough and it is very positive for the sport to have top level success.

Erik S: OG would be a good thing to raise awareness and a chance, as we are a sport that is actually cool to do for a lot of people.

### **Q3: How important are the international results in junior and youth age for the elite sport?**

Daniel: A lot of coaches in Hungary think that youth shouldn't do intervals, just have fun. Other coaches only want the kids to have success. Thinks the golden path would be in between. In his view, if you are not able to do proper training in the youth/junior ages, you will not be able to do that in the elite age.

Kilian: It is important to have a good base in the juniors, but SUI doesn't have any medal goals at JWOC (although medals are allowed ;-). The education in these years is the important thing, to build up step by step and have goals also in the earlier ages. Kilian is wondering about the Hungarian federation's prize money for results at junior/youth age.

Charly: Theoretically it's not important to get results, but to aim for quite good results. It's not the result that counts, but it's important to build the strategy, the routine, the targets, and the preparation. However, if JWOC results are not good enough, it's not allowed to skip courses at university etc., so it's important to stay in this recognition system.

Tom: Some years ago, all the founding was about Top-20 results at JWOC. There is a strong correlation between JWOC and WOC results. One/two athletes per year make the step towards the adults' category and those have been good at JWOC as well. Its different philosophies: now the system is more inclusive: more people in the sport, we raise the bottom, but also the top gets a bit worse than before, but more runners stay in the sport after junior age. As a coach it's important to set proper individual goals in the junior age, compete against themselves!

Kilian: One time in SUI in a regional squad was doing everything very professional, but when the athletes reached 20 years they somehow reached the ceiling. Socialising as a group is more important as a junior, so the kids can identify with the sport.

Josef Neumann (GER, online): As the national level in Germany is so low, JWOC and EYOC is very important to get high quality competitions. The medals of Colin and Amseln are very individual, so there sadly is no system behind that and it's not that the federation is focusing on the results in the juniors more than in the seniors. More and more competitions on international elite level are hard for GER, as there is not B team. GER tries to get the best out of every athlete they have.

Kilian: Tells about an athlete, that got 4<sup>th</sup> a few times, no medal, but that's good, cause he stays hungry and will win medals later, the best thing would be if it happens the first time on the adults level.

Axel: It's an important psychical aspect if you get a Top-10 or Top-20 placement at JWOC. This can help to keep the motivation for the hard times that come when young athletes enter the elite category.

Günter: There are statistics made by NLZ Steiermark, that you need to be somewhere as a junior to get into the Top-50/Top-20 as a senior.

#### **Q4: Special support for 20–24-year-old athletes on the way to the top?**

Charly: U-23 group. Those athletes are given more time to develop and they do not have to fear to be thrown out of the team. Maybe a WC-ranking for U-23 could be rewarding for young athletes. Also WUOC is a good step for young athletes. it's about the mind-set to keep focused on the long term.

Tom: Development squad -24 is big and it's not that GBR believes that all of them become top-level athletes. The broad approach is good for the team, the discussions and spirit. WUOC is great; U23 champs in the year between would be interesting. When U-24 athletes are competing at WC, there is no pressure for a good result.

Kilian: It is an individual thing but the team needs to give the right structures. The Swiss will change the system next year. The best make it right away, some take longer, some will never make it, but all of these team members are important to the team. It will soon be an U-25 group in Switzerland, as 3 years are not enough for the development. This group is not in the team and has not the same program. B-competitions would be great, Eurometing was like that, but now it's more a preparation for WOC and that's not good as elite has enough competitions anyway.

Daniel: Most important is the coaches' work. Set goals together, so that the steps are not too big from year to year.

Tom: B team or late developers need some kind of national team structure. Open trainings camps are important.

Mathias: Remark that Jukola and 10mila could be goals in between JWOC and first successes as a senior.

#### **Q5: Orienteering beside competition does not really exist. In Sweden there is the hittaut-project as a leisure sport part. How do you deal with that aspect in your country?**

Charly: Permanent controls are only successful in touristic areas (ski slopes) in France, but its only once per year for the participants in holidays, so no success for the federation.

Tom: Vast amount of money go to Development. There are permanent courses in Britain, most try just once and don't stick. There is a great entry barrier.

Kilian: sCOOL project is very important, evening training/competitions very close to the people in the cities as a link in between newcomers and club level.

**Free questions / discussion:**

Tom: Have some other guys thought about going into the extreme sport direction to attract people to orienteering?

Kilian: There was the so-called Alplitude project in Switzerland, fun but not many new orienteers.

Pau Llorens (ESP, online): When do you plan the season?

Kilian: I do it now, when meeting the colleagues.

Charly: I do it quite early also, during September, at the last WC share with other nations. Then discussion with the athletes, finalise it in the end of October

Daniel: Start in beginning of august, end of October final version.

Tom: This year we did it until January, that was far too late (working athletes, ...). This year, until end of September, discuss with the athletes during September.

GER: Rough plan now, final until the autumn.

/MP