

# Coaches Conference 2023

## Report NORWAY

The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Orienteering Coaches Conference was opened by **Janne Salmi**, national team manager of the **Norwegian Orienteering Federation**. In his presentation he shared his views on the future development of (elite) orienteering, the structure and budget of the Norwegian national team and how they support the athletes' daily training. He gave some insights into the performance diagnostics used, their way to deal with gender-specific questions and the strengths and challenges of Norwegian orienteering. Finally, he pointed out some recommendations for orienteering in Austria.

Contrary to other speakers on the conference he expects not more specialisation towards forest or sprint disciplines as today and less nations sharing the top positions **in the future**. Also, the hosting of high level events will be reserved to the big nations due to the high expenses – which might be a conflict with IOF's plan to establish more World Cup rounds per year.

In Norway, it is up to the clubs to develop the youth athletes up to 17/18 years. **National team structures** start at junior age, followed by a „next generation“ team (U25) and finally the A team. All three squads should comprise five to six males and females from next year – currently the junior and A team are much bigger while the next generation team has only five members.

Due to that decentralised system at younger ages it is essential to have good local structures and skilled coaches in the clubs. Junior training camps are open for everyone and attract up to 150 youngsters from outside the team! National team athletes get **support** by national team coaches in their daily training, but it is more about following their training, giving some advice and challenging them to think differently than making training plans as most athletes are very experienced and self-dependent and it is recognized that there are many different ways to succeed.

In terms of **performance diagnostics**, tools such as treadmill tests or 3.000 m are not so much applied, but what they regularly do is lactate testing, often on training camps (for example to prevent overtraining at high altitude in Switzerland). During winter training, Norwegians train a lot on the treadmill (and indoor track) and repeated standard trainings serve as a very good feedback on their physical development – even better than some fancy test every couple of months.

**Gender-specific questions** are a big topic in Norwegian sports, as 90% of the medals are taken by men, in orienteering it is two thirds. There has been a project to involve more females by offering training camps for girls only and attracting female coaches. At national team selections they try to acknowledge the fact that it is harder for girls to invest everything into sports and to constantly produce good results due to different development curves. To reduce drop-outs they plan to adapt the age limit of the next generation team for women as it often takes longer for them to get back to national team level (while men develop quite continuously). These facts should also be kept in mind in discussions among coaches and athletes!

Many of the **strengths** of Norwegian orienteering are also **challenges**, such as the success culture and long tradition of outdoor sports. It is only gold medals that count and even a top orienteer like Kasper Fosser is quite invisible because there are so many successful athletes from other sports. There is a long tradition of training a lot and the this mindset of „the more, the better“ is a strength of the Norwegians on the one hand, but on the other hand also a risk. Norway has plenty of tough and challenging forests (though less variety than for example Sweden), but not so many good locations for sprint orienteering and up to five months of snow in some regions.

Finally the **recommendations for Austria** were to look at the neighbour countries Switzerland and Czech Republic. It would be essential to get more kids involved in to orienteering, otherwise there will be only one top runner every ten years. Also hosting a major event could help. The recent successes of Jannis Bonek can be a motivating example what is possible and his story should be told to young athletes.