

Coaches Conference 2023

Report SWITZERLAND

The second presentation at the first day of the 3rd IOCC was held by our neighbouring countries' head coach, Switzerland's Kilian Imhof.

Kilian's presentation dealt with the analysis of the World Orienteering Championships 2023. As a long term goal, this year's WOC has been within the heads of the Swiss teams runners for a long time and the results have shown Switzerland on the very top. The reason for this success will be explained in the presentation.

The Swiss way to WOC 2023 started 2020 and has been structured within the four years with the help of four questions. These acted as guidelines at team events and preparation camps in the respective year:

2020 – Where is the team right now? Where are the opponents? Where can I get support?

2021 – What do I need? What do I need to train? What can help to reach the goals?

2022 – How does the terrain look? How do we solve the challenges provided?

2023 – Who makes the team? Who is competing at WOC?

From vision to success

In the beginning, Kilian presented visions (pictures, paintings, etc.) of the Swiss teams runners from 2020, how WOC 2023 could turn out for them. The comparison of imagined vision from 2020 and performed results from 2023 was in a lot of cases accurate. This highlights a successful WOC for Switzerland.

When presenting the teams calendar of this year's preparation, Kilian explained the thoughts behind it and the audience discussed about the placement of the selection races and the role of competing at 10mila or Jukola (right) before WOC 2023.

The way to WOC Long

All orienteering training camps within the mentioned four years, were meant to deal with the respective question mentioned above. Kilian showed documents, that the athletes were working on at each camp. These mainly contained strategies on how to deal with the terrain (rough/fine orienteering, attackpoint, long/short legs, how many meters of climbing up or down).

Another slide showed the analysis of the official WOC testtraces in Ftan with the help of GPS-tracking. Kilian mentioned an important output: "Good planning excludes bad choices. If a good, one of the equal routes was chosen, then the execution was the main point."

In the next slide the final guess for the WOC long distance course (from the day before the competition) was shown and it was obvious, that the real course would be no surprise for the team. In Kilian's point of view, it is a crucial thing to not be surprised about the course during the race! (Next up was a short input and discussion about the pre-race planning of the long course and comparison between the guesses of team Switzerland, Austria and Finland.)

The way to WOC Middle

Kilian told about the winning plan of Matthias Kyburz and his approach of running like PACMAN, picking feature by feature, seeing only the most important things and therefore concluding his "masterpiece in orienteering". Again, Kilian showed an example of a course guess from the last meeting before the competition.

Process behind the success

To Kilian, it is important to define task and strategy in beforehand by studying the competition or similar terrains. For WOC middle distance, a simple & fast strategy was chosen.

The next step is to work on this concept and develop routines and automatisms during pre-season. The theory must become the athlete's individual concept. It should be kept basic and therefore Matthias Kyburz invented the PACMAN concept.

In the next slides, Matthias' winning plan notes were shown with thoughts about orienteering, physical and mental aspects for the race.

To Kilian, race preparation is about doing the very best with the amount of information you get before. It is not about finding out every little detail, but knowing about the big picture of the race, while still staying open for small changes.

In the audience in the lecture room in Faak am See, a discussion was following: Is it getting fairer or more unfair if as much race information is shared by the organisers as it was at WOC in Switzerland this year? Is it an advantage for bigger nations or not? The general conclusion was that it maybe is easier for smaller nations if there is more information, as the coaches do not need to investigate e.g. the location of the start for their athletes any more.

Some more quotes from the presentation:

How to deal with pressure? Just as a reservoir dam and it's attached hydroelectric power plant: If one deals with the pressure the right way, a lot of energy can be created.

Kilian commenting on a pre WOC activity trip of the Swiss team

It is maybe not easier to win a medal with three individual world champs contenders, but easier to win and get motivated for the relay, if it's the "best" chance to get a medal.

Kilian commenting on the WOC relay

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