



Executive Summary

Report from Ubaldo Prucker

4 to 21 July 2014



## **Introduction**

Australian Biathlon (AB) arranged for the visit by IBU Coach, Ubaldo Prucker to overview the sport in Australia and to make recommendations for improvement.

AB was successful in obtaining an IBU subsidy for this project with Coach Prucker visiting from 6 to 20 July 2014. Besides meeting officials, athletes, coaches and supporters he also met with delegates from Australia's peak body in sport, the Australian Sports Commission, Australian Paralympic Committee as well as directors of NSW Biathlon.

Prucker met members and supporters at AB's Victorian Championships held at our range in Whiskey Flat as well as Sydney, Melbourne, Wodonga and was able to participate in coaching and review of Australia's regional partnership with New Zealand Biathlon and the Oceania Championship, the Trans Tasman Challenge held on 12 and 13 July 2014. Refer to Attachment A for Prucker's itinerary.

In addition to the wide access to members, Prucker was also provided with a detailed report prepared and presented by Mr Barry Field, AB's National Coaching Coordinator, audited financial reports supplied at the AGM to members, communications to members including letters from the President, Executive Officer, Team App notifications, information on website and email notifications, as well as ancillary documents.

As is usual with notifications of Australian race events including the Trans Tasman Challenge, members were notified well in advance of the IBU delegate's impending visit.

## **Compliments**

- ***IBU's expectation in encouraging participation***

Prucker complimented AB on its grassroots development informing the IBU's primary objective for development nations is to promote the sport and to build a base of enthusiasts and participants. He shared for all IBU Nation Federations, focus on high performance is always secondary to grassroots development. Prucker emphasized the need for a wide base of participants to secure a firm future and succession of the nation's top athletes as they eventually retire.

*"I believe that the way and the activities taken by the ...AUS Biathlon Federation is heading in the right direction as expected by the IBU, in encouraging development of grassroots participation. The most important activity towards promotion, planning and future projecting is that growth of participation comes first, with high performance second and this will guide ABA in their plans and strategies for both the short and long term."*

- ***Communications***

AB's regular and frequent communications to members via email, team app, website and letters from the President and Executive Officer was reviewed and positively acknowledged.

*"I was pleased to hear that communications were and still are regularly and frequently sent out to members via email as newsletters and since Grant has been President, he writes letters to the members to keep them up to date..."*



- ***IBU Codes***

Prucker confirmed it is the norm for the Nation Federation to take sole control of IBU codes and was made aware of the IBU's recent communication to AB in relation to control of the codes.

- ***Structure and Financials***

AB's organizational structure and audited financial statements distributed to members at the AGM were shared and reviewed with Coach Prucker. He was satisfied that financial information is provided to members.

He commented in relation to demands by state affiliates for funding:

*"Regional development should not expect National funding if it is not coordinated on a National basis. The National Budget is for national activities where all parts are involved."*

- ***Initiatives with Lasers***

While Prucker approved of AB's adaptation of Biathlon with Lasers to accommodate our climate and regulatory environment, he recommends development be coordinated on a National level.

*"AB is making enormous inroads into grassroots development with laser rifles shooting, because it is legally permitted to be used by children under 12; I must say that the inside coordination and cooperation must be on National level."*

- ***Conflict of Interest:***

AB has structured committees to avoid conflict of interest.

*"I fully agree on this!"*



## For Improvement

- **Concept of “Family”**

All within the sport should share the same aims and aspirations.

*“A National Federation is like a Family, running for the same goal, for the same interest and keeping strong relationship within each other.*

*I hope no longer “are” two parties with different view of Biathlon activities in the Federation. The best solution to conduct a Federation’s interest must become open and shared by all members and found as the best solution in united way. It cannot exist that someone or part of the “Group” “declares” himself to be more important, to have the better athletes, the better program, the more “money” on disposal to conduct a more intensive program or decide on “national level” to have a top interested athletes and take own decisions. The interest must be the same for the whole Federation and therefore openly discussed, reviewed and decided not creating necessary conflicts.”*

The Teams need to understand their specific role at National or International levels and at all times decisions should be directed to the Federation for their guidance.

Regions and members would cooperate in joint activities with friendly discussion and planning.

Identify and communicate the clear vision of the final goal.

- **Governance**

Communication should continue to be disseminated by interest categories. Not all information needs to be shared and not every decision has to be “open” and public.

He reiterates that interests of members is paramount and plans and projects must be directed towards common goals.

*“Not every decision, for example taken by Executive Board has to be “open” and visible for everyone.*

*There cannot be conflicts and the interests of members must be protected and directed towards a common goal.”*

- **Financial**

- *Payments to athletes:*

Prucker was surprised that AB directly funds athletes and coaches. He emphasized repeatedly

*“ An athlete should not get money for his performance.”*

*“Youth and Junior class - payments to athletes in these classes should not be considered at all. ”*

The IBU funds Nation Federations so that they are able to plan, schedule, fund and implement participation, training and development programs and not for private objectives. This funding as well as funding from various Federation revenue sources is to be for the disposal of the Federation and not for particular athletes.

- *Budget for implementation of Strategic Plan – see further below.*

- **Parabiathlon**

AB is encouraged to explore the inclusion of parabiathlon in its development program.



- **Camps and Training Opportunities**

Direct funding towards proposals for more participation athletes as well as opportunities for camps and training.

In particular, consider training opportunities in the Australian winter (while it is summer in the Northern Hemisphere) so as to be better prepared for the competition season in Europe from December to March.

Prucker recommends that it is necessary for the Federation to promote participation at a basic level.

*"First of all it is necessary to promote a basic level not on Regional but on National level. What is valid in NSW has to be valid also in VIC. The difference can be in training camps organized only if on Regional budget for regional athletes, but not differently treated if on National Federation's level!"*

*"It is important that all additional activities promote Biathlon, but do not interfere with the preparation, development and selection of elite developing athletes."*

- **Selection**

For qualification/selection purposes, the announcements must be timely and everyone who wishes to be considered must attend. Excuses are not acceptable including being abroad for training.

Prucker was impressed with the improvement in the standard of performance of our Australian athletes over our relatively short period of time in the sport, however, he made the comment that by international standards, all of our current athletes are not elite or high performance athletes. He further comments:

*"A High Performance Group or Team" represents National interests. This can only be decided on national level..."*

- **Growth and participation**

Prucker recommends even more grassroots participation with inter-regional fun competitions. Consider air rifle competitions. Consider opening participation to all members of the public and not limiting invitations to XC skiers.

*"The IBU, expects and encourages development of grassroots participation. It is important that several more competitions with air rifles should be organized, open to everybody also X-C skiers, but not forcing or pushing them to join Biathlon. It must come by motivation and conviction. Sometimes it is better to have less but with high motivation and enthusiasm, than too many, contrasting and not concentrated."*

- **The Australian Biathlon Sport Strategy and Program**

Prucker's comments on his review of the Australian Biathlon Sport Strategy and Program - 2014 to 2026 - and the 2014 Sports Program.

- Requires engagement of all affiliates
- A director to be accountable for the implementation of the strategy
- Prioritizing limited resources: The budget must allow for resourcing of long term plans and projects before the strategy can be commenced. Allow for flexibility to accommodate adaptations and variations to the program. Accordingly a strategy should not, in principle, be detailed.
- Prucker would prefer an emphasis on training activities and planning how they would be managed, organized and fulfilled.
- AB aims for Nation Cup Ranking Mens 27; Womens 29: - To be amended given changes at IBU Congress 2014

- **AB achieves level of international competitiveness**

*"To me this is the most important future vision, much better than be considered a "credible World Class competitor nation"*



- **Director of Sport:**

Prucker recommends an independent paid person accountable at the National level to take control and be responsible for implementing development. Their qualifications should include:

- Technical experience with IBU rules, programs
- Works with athletes during training so knows and understands the progress of their development
- Perhaps a former athlete but suggests not a top one, who is able to have a positive influence on coaches and athletes, understands training, is trustworthy, reliable, has a motivating and encouraging demeanour.
- Should not be a parent or one who has a current relationship with athletes such as coach. At all times this person must be independent and remain unconflicted
- Plans, manages and conducts National activities including development activities as well as camps and leading teams abroad to compete
- The Director of Sport should not be involved in regional activities although may assist in their activities on a basis of parity of time and resources
- This Director would make recommendation to the independent selection committee

- **Regional divide:**

Prucker stressed that national training events are not run on regional frameworks and requires central planning and support from the National Federation. He gave the example of European regional organizations:

*“Should some Clubs, even regional organizations have the interest to train beside the National camps or activities, it is great, fine and perfect, but it has nothing to do with National influence or on “National Budget...”*

*In Europe we have national Federations that have a clear project; Regional Organizations follow their own plan to get better trained in order to get qualified, but on his/her own costs. It is fine for a Regional organization to have a bigger budget and make own or additional abroad training camps; – but not with involvement of National Budget and with no decision on Federation’s level. “*

## Conclusion

- Director of sport – job description, determine who will be assistants
- Athletes should have short as well as long term goals, and a clear understanding of rules of selection to they are able to plan ahead
- Appoint only independent coaches
- The IBU only recognizes one National Federation. It does not recognize regional organizations.
- Share the common goal and all to work towards this.



## Attachment A: Itinerary

### Outbound flight

- 4 to 6 July 2014 – Flights Innsbruck to Sydney

### Sydney

- 6 July 2014, 7 pm - welcome dinner in Sydney, Colebourns and Flanagans
- 7 July 2014
  - 10:30 am, Royal Sydney Golf Club, Rose Bay - Friedl Bartsch
  - 1 pm, Sydney
    - ASC – Andrew Ramsay, Director; Nick Hunter, Winter Sports High Performance Manager
    - APC – Jason Hellwig, CEO
    - NSW Biathlon – Anthony Walker
    - AB – Dr Grant Flanagan
    - AB – Gen Yan-Colebourn
  - 7 pm, Hornsby Range
    - NSW Biathlon – Ian Neuhaus, Director
    - NSW Biathlon – Greg Glanville, parent

### Snow Farm, New Zealand

- 8 July 2014,
  - Flight Sydney to New Zealand
  - 6 pm - AB Treasurer, Emma Flanagan
  - 8:30 pm
    - AB Vice President, John Mahon
    - AB Treasurer, Emma Flanagan
    - AB Coaching Coordinator, Barry Field
- 9 July 2014
  - Shooting training and XC skiing
  - 8 pm – Seminar with AB Team
  - 9:30pm – Meeting with AB and NZ Coaches
- 10 July 2014
  - Shooting training, gym work and XC technique
  - 8 pm – Seminar with AB Team
- 11 July 2014
  - gym, dry shooting, exercises for prone and standing
  - 1:30pm – AB Officials
  - 3 pm – Seminar with AB Team
  - 8 pm – Meeting with AB Team and SWE Group
- 12 July 2014
  - Trans Tasman Championship
  - 4 pm – Seminar for dry shooting, gym work
  - 8:30pm – Meeting with Barry Field, AB National Coaching Coordinator
- 13 July 2014,
  - XC skiing, shooting coaching
  - 1:30pm – Meeting with AB EO John Mahon and Snowfarm official, Karl
  - 8 pm - seminar with ABA team, review of training camp and future programs

### Melbourne

- 14 July 2014 – Flight NZ to Melbourne
- 15 July 2014
  - 9am – visit Melbourne International Shooting Centre
  - 3 pm – AB athletes coaches and novices
  - 8:30 pm – Skype Meeting with Selection Policy Panel – Ian Waller, VP, Dr Lindsay Bridgford, Filip Likar



- 16 July 2014
  - 6:30pm – Melbourne AB members

### Wodonga

- 17 July 2014
  - 2 pm – meet Local Regional TV and press, Bob Cranage, visit local shooting range
  - 4 pm – visit local school using laser rifles
  - 7pm – meeting with Wodonga AB members including Bob Cranage, Cullens, Harmers

### Whiskey Flat/ Dinner Plain, Mt Hotham

- 18 July 2014
  - Assist with Range preparation
- 19 July 2014
  - Victorian Biathlon Championships and conducted ski clinic
  - 4:30pm – meeting
    - NSW Biathlon, Mr Tony Walker
    - ASC, Mr John Boulton
    - AB President, Dr Grant Flanagan
- 20 July 2014 – Transfer

### Return Flight:

- 20, 21 July 2014 - Melbourne to Innsbruck