

President's Report 2024

Introduction

Twelve months, ten international tours. Olympians, World Champions, World Medalists, 480 novices, and too many domestic events to mention. It was another giddy year within Canoeing South Africa.

Once again, our sport was led by the volunteers. At the clubs, Unions and every single event. My most sincere thank you to every person that has put up their hand.

Our technical committees continue to guide each discipline within the Federation. Date choices and venues for the National competitions, selection documents, selections and many other details all fall in their realm. Thank you, and a special thank you to the Chairs for giving your time and expertise to the sport.

We explored a new approach to social media. Starting with the Olympics in July, and we carried this through to the last international tour, the Canoe Polo World Championships. We achieved a large percentage increase in engagement and followers. This is extremely positive to us on so many fronts. A 34% increase in followers in the 19-25 age group is exciting and we are now looking at creating a strategy to translate these increases to our membership numbers. Following this, we have secured two new commercial partners, and the official launch will be in November 2024. This has direct benefits to you, the member.

Last year, we discussed a possible name change, and this will be happening at international level. Watch this space! We will be relaunching our offerings with the rebrand as well, with some exciting new changes and an overdue freshen up across our website and newsletter. I am fully aware that some people do not enjoy change, however, we are needing to grow. We cannot continue along the same path year after year and expect different outcome. "The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails".

To the Board of Canoeing South Africa, once again thank you for your vibrant inputs and guidance. Not every decision is easy. However, your thoughtful deliberations and debates are always made in the best interests of the membership. Thank you.

Personally, there is one moment in 2024 that I wish I could erase, and that was my learning of the passing of John Oliver. A true legend in our sport, and we will never see another like him. For me, he was a mentor and confidant. I do miss our daily chats and check-ins. The institutional knowledge, the calming voice, the laugh and that twinkle in his eye. Rest well John, you will never be forgotten.

International Competitions:

After an absence of 8 years, we were back. With our biggest team since 2008, we were there in Paris 2024, the Olympic Games. Andy Birkett, Esti Olivier, Hamish Lovemore, Tiffany Koch, supported by Nkosi Mzolo and Janet Simpkins. A meticulously planned event with sold out grandstands and broadcasted globally to millions. Our team shone brightly from the Opening Ceremony to the Closing Ceremony. Thank you to the team at SASCO for their unwavering support throughout the preparation and the Games. A tear was shed sitting quietly in the blazing sun watching our return on the biggest stage. My thoughts drifted to our athletes over the years that were never given the chance to experience the thrill of an Olympic competition. May we continue to rise in our Olympic disciplines. We learnt in 2012, from Bridgitte Hartley, we can move mountains and stand on that podium. Congratulations to our team.

We had athletes compete in the Sprint World Cups in Hungary and Poland, the Junior and U23 Sprint World Championships in Bulgaria, an international regatta in Italy, Marathon World Championships in Croatia, Sprint World Championships in Uzbekistan, Junior Slalom World Championships Slalom, Olympic Hopes Regatta in Hungary, Ocean Racing World Championships in Portugal and the Canoe Polo World Championships in China. This does not happen by chance, and my sincere thanks to the coaches, team leaders, parents, families, internal tour managers, social media team, finance and everyone that contributed.



Congratulations to all our medalists on your achievements:

World Champions:

Georgia Singe
Sam Mocke
Matt Fenn
Kira Bester
Michelle Burn

Silver medalists:

Hamish Lovemore
Georgia Singe
Christie Mackenzie
Saskia Hockly
Uli Hart
Holly Smith
Melanie van Niekerk
Heath Clarke

Bronze Medalists:

Hank McGregor
Uli Hart
Saskia Hockly

We recognize and appreciate all our athletes and their support teams.

Development:

We once again deliver on the Government mandate on transformation. At our Olympic discipline National Championships, more than 50% of the entries are from our development programmes throughout South Africa. Watching our young paddlers compete for National medals, with big smiles amongst fierce rivalries, is so fulfilling. My sincere thanks to the coaches and chaperones that mentor our young athletes daily. To the Department of Sport, Art and Culture and the National Lotteries Commission, this would not happen if it was not for your financial support, you are enhancing the lives of our youth.

A standout from the teams was Sbulelo Ngobese, who was selected to compete at the Olympic Hopes Regatta in Szeged, Hungary. Thank you to the National Lotteries Commission and Icebolethu Foundation for funding his trip.

Once again, my sincere and grateful thanks to Janet Simpkins. Logistical miracle worker, a guiding hand and branding extraordinaire – thank you Janet for your leadership in this field.

Finance and Online:

The team behind the team, the unseen heroines in our sport. Katharine, financial officer and Linda, online support. From membership renewals, race entries, budgets, payments, allocations to problem solving and other challenges. We are so fortunate to entrust these responsibilities to two remarkable women.

Our grant funding relies solely on the management of all these details, not seen by our members at large. Katharine Atkinson and Linda Ulrich, my humble gratitude to you both.

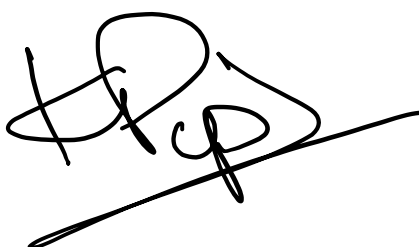
Secretary General:

The daily responsibilities of the National Federation are in his hands. The central heartbeat that keeps it alive. It can be a higher heart rate when dealing with the fundamentals, the complaints and yes, sometimes even compliments. Our voice to the Department, NLC, SAMSA and SASCOC, and the scribe of the newsletter that slides into your inboxes. Colin, it is not for the faint-hearted to head up a National Federation. The daily challenges and never ending to-do-lists can be overwhelming. Your sense of humour is often required when despondency sets in. Thank you for your leadership and guidance to the Board.

General:

Certainly, a year to remember on all fronts. I have experienced extreme lows and emotional highs the past 12 months. I never stopped learning from all the challenges. I am extremely excited for the upcoming changes and cannot wait for the rollouts to begin over the coming months.

Thank you for entrusting me once again in leading the Federation. As always, onwards and upwards.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H. P.' or similar, written over a horizontal line.

In loving memory of John Oliver (21 January 1950 – 5 April 2024). Never forgotten.

