

Rationale Behind the Robinson/Taylor Motion to the 2000 ARA AGM Regarding the Way Forward for International Rogaining

Whilst rogaining is an Australian developed sport, with the primary centre of activity still being Australia, rogaines have been held outside Australia for over ten years now. Since 1989 an informally developed International Rogaining Federation has undertaken the administration and development of rogaining internationally. Over that time rogaining has developed significantly in a number of countries outside Australia, particularly Canada, United States, New Zealand and Czech Republic.

For the past few years there has been a recognition that for rogaining to truly grow and mature as an international sport there needed to be a formal and democratic international body established to oversee and manage the sport across the world. Several attempts have been made at achieving this, but to date they have always faltered due to a lack of legitimate, democratic, broad based support. In essence, all previous attempts to establish a representative international rogaining body have been the initiatives of small groups of individuals and who have not had support from any legitimate representative body.

In order to achieve a truly representative international rogaining body, it is necessary to formally engage all the key stakeholders who have, or are expected to have, an interest in such a body. It is a reality that rogaining in the United States is organised and managed within the United States Orienteering Federation (USOF), and rogaining in New Zealand within the New Zealand Orienteering Federation (NZOF). The rogainers of these two countries have voted with their feet as to how they wish to be organised at a national level. Thus, both the USOF and the NZOF are key stakeholders in any internationalization process. Most previous attempts at internationalization have essentially ignored these, and other key stakeholders, preferring to focus communications on a small number of individual rogainers from within different countries who are unlikely to have the authority to represent the peak rogaining body of their country and may or may not represent popular opinion within the rogainers of that country.

To further complicate this process, in 1997 the International Orienteering Federation (IOF) unilaterally declared that they were the world peak body for rogaining and in 1999 advised their national member associations (including the USOF and NZOF) that they should not affiliate with any international body other than the IOF in respect of rogaining. This therefore also makes the IOF a key stakeholder in any process of the internationalization of rogaining.

Other key stakeholders include the national peak rogaining bodies in Canada and the Czech Republic. The Czech Association of Rogaining and Mountain Orienteering (CARMO) is recognised as the peak body in that country. In Canada, up until early 2000, the Canadian Orienteering Federation (COF) was the peak body, but showed little enthusiasm or interest. There have been moves to establish a separate Canadian Rogaining Association (CRA) in 2000 but the current progress on this is unknown to the undersigned. There are also a number of other countries where rogaines have been conducted and liability and insurance issues will mean that there will be peak bodies in these countries that have, knowingly or unknowingly, been responsible for rogaining there. They, or at least the rogainers within their ranks, are also stakeholders.

In order to engage these stakeholders in a formal and legitimate way, it is essential that we have a formal and legitimate body adopting formal and legitimate processes. As has been shown in the past individuals without any formal backing, no matter how committed and well intentioned, cannot effectively engage these stakeholders who are, quite obviously, themselves formal, legitimate and democratic bodies. The ARA is a democratic body that is well recognised as the world's dominant rogaining association, and the rogaining world is looking to the ARA to provide the leadership and support to this issue that it needs to progress. Only the ARA is able to provide the formal and legitimate basis that the internationalization process needs if it is to be successful.

The essence of this motion is to create a committee, under the umbrella of the ARA, that is representative of rogaining opinion across Australia and the world, and can use the democratic legitimacy provided by the ARA to formally engage all stakeholders and agree the best way forward for establishing a truly representative international peak rogaining body. This committee will have specific tasks and timetables to adhere to and will have a periodic reporting requirement on progress and expectations to the ARA. No individual or group of individuals, acting autocratically, is able to do this.

It has been suggested that approval of this motion will further delay the process of internationalization by nine months (or some other period). The reality is that approval of this motion will actually speed up the process of internationalization. At the end of June 1999 a much less formal group was effectively at the position that this formal group will be as soon as it is formed. However because of the lack of formal structure, democracy and responsibility within this informal group the progress was able to be halted by individuals concerned about the possible outcomes. Proceeding without a formal democratic base will only allow individuals to continue to thwart the consensus view, where they don't agree with it, and thus ensure that lack of progress continues to be the hallmark of this issue as it has been for the past two years.

It has also been suggested that we should just “adopt an IRF constitution and run with it”. The problem with this approach is that, despite our possible desires to the contrary, Australia and the ARA do not own or control world rogaining. It is owned by the rogainers of the world and controlled by them and, in varying degrees, the various peak bodies of which they are members. Many of these peak bodies were mentioned above. Adopting a constitution that is unacceptable to peak national bodies that represent large numbers of rogainers is of no value. It is also recognised that there is a school of thought that if national orienteering bodies cannot or will not join the international rogaining peak body then separate national rogaining associations should be formed in those countries. That of course is a decision for the rogainers of the countries in question, but the adoption of this motion, and the work of the subsequent committee, will go a long way towards establishing the views of such rogainers and the relative merits of their options.

The key in all of this is to be focused on the process, not on the outcome. It is essential that we get the process right, because if we don't we will never achieve an outcome. There have been a number of individuals who have either been totally focused on the outcome, without appreciating what was required to achieve it, or who have a preconceived view of the outcome they wanted and were thus concerned with any process that may not lead to it.

All rogainers who truly wish to see the rogaining they know effectively internationalized need to be focused on the process and support of this motion will ensure that we have in place a process that will lead to that effective internationalization.

Richard Robinson: 10 June 2000

Should anyone wish to discuss any aspect of the above explanation, or the associated motion, then I would be pleased to have them contact me on the following:

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Note that I will be on leave from 30 June until after the AGM, so the weekend and mobile contacts are the ones to use during that period.