

Response from the Australian Rogaining Association (ARA) to the IRF WRC discussion paper (IRF Discussion Paper, Future Direction of WRCs, May2013.pdf)

The ARA agrees with the thrust of the recommendations in the IRF WRC discussion paper, namely:

1. Review the impact of the holding the World Championships every year from 2012-2016. The IRF should make a strategic decision whether WRCs are to be held annually or bi-annually.
2. Adopt a policy to rotate the WRC location through the main rogaining regions of the world.
3. Require WRC hosts to be IRF Members. This will ensure that WRCs are organised in a professional manner with strong communication links back to IRF.
4. Formalised mandatory requirements for WRC bids and standard selection criteria.
5. Fixed timelines for host selection, providing a sufficient time period for each host to prepare, organise and promote their event.

In addition, the ARA feels that the WRC Proposal would benefit from several significant improvements. These are listed below.

PURPOSE OF THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

The most obvious shortcoming is that the purpose of the world championship as defined in IRF official policy is out-of-date and bears little resemblance to the event as it is organised today.

The IRF Strategic Plan 2006 says in relation to world championships:

“The IRF does not expect extra facilities or activities beyond those normal to championship rogaines run by the particular host association. However, this does not exclude any WRC organizers from going a little further. The intent is to bring the staging of the WRC within the grasp of all groups who can demonstrate a history of running a series of successful rogaines and who want to stage the WRC.

The focus of a World Rogaining Championship is on:

- a. Interesting countryside in which to rogain*
- b. Accurate, fair and challenging courses*
- c. Friendly hash house atmosphere*
- d. Excellent administration and presentation of events, and also:*
- e. Wide cross section of participants,*
- f. Elite and other levels of competition.”*

With the establishment of the IRF as a federation in 2010, the old Strategic Plan is overdue for review. The ARA feels strongly about this particularly because ARA was not a participant in the formulation of the IRF Strategic Plan in 2006 or 2000, as was the case for most other members.

It was not that long ago that the IRF was concerned that there would not be enough countries willing to host a world championship. The above wording reflects this, stating that nothing “extra” is required of a WRC. The stated “focus of a world championship” is clearly misplaced, with the reference to elites and competition pushed to the end of the list. It is important that the IRF clarify that the WRC is not simply a fun event conducted at some exotic location. The world championship has become much more competitive and technical standards and competitor expectations have risen.

It would be more correct for the IRF WRC policy to state the following:

- The World Championship is the pinnacle event of rogaining
- The “world” title necessitates a wide cross section of participants in all age and gender classes
- It must attract the qualified elite competitors from all member nations and beyond.
- Demands a consistently high level of technical challenge in all facets of the sport.
- Competitors expect a professional standard of organization of the event and associated activities.

REQUIREMENTS FOR WRC HOSTS

Historically WRCs could be hosted by any group/nation that the IRF considered capable of doing so successfully. This was a very reasonable approach in the formative years of the IRF while there were between zero and two national groups that were IRF Members.

It is generally not common practice for peak sporting bodies to permit major championships to be hosted by non-members. With the establishment of the IRF of currently 8 member national groups, it is now time to mandate that WRCs can only be hosted by IRF member countries.

This approach is necessary to ensure and develop:

- Strong lines of communication between the IRF and the organising body, with clear organisational responsibility and ownership by the host national body.
- The necessary resources and skills are available to ensure that the WRC is of requisite standard, even if key individuals become unavailable
- High technical and organisational standards are maintained
- Strengthen the rogaining presence in the host nation before and particularly after the WRC has been completed.
- To encourage growth in membership of the IRF, leading to a greater pool of expertise within the IRF and its member nations.

This does not necessarily mean that WRCs can only be held in IRF member countries. An existing IRF member could provide the technical and organisational support to a non-member who has a track record and clear capacity in rogaining to conduct a WRC in that country.

FREQUENCY

The IRF’s approach to frequency of the World Championship should be driven by the **Purpose of the World Championship** and the **Requirements for WRC Hosts** stated above.

The ARA believes that the WRC should be a competition of the highest possible technical quality between all of the world’s best rogainers. These goals are best achieved through modernised WRC guidelines to reflect this, mandating that the hosts have a high level of organisation skill and experience, and through a low frequency of WRC events so that competitors can afford the time and cost to attend.

The IRF constitution, created in 2000, states: “The World Rogaining Championships shall be a Rogaine of scheduled 24 hours duration, held no more frequently than once in any calendar year”. It is unfortunate that the ARA and other member nations were not involved in the wording of the constitution. This

clause was cited by the IRF Executive as a basis for the awarding of a World Championship in 2013, even though the IRF had not made a strategic decision for or against annual WRCs.

By the time of the meeting on 25 July it is expected that WRC hosting rights will have been awarded for 2015 and 2016. This will mean that there will be annual WRCs for five years from 2012 to 2016.

In order to effectively understand the impact of annual WRCs it will be necessary to review the entry patterns and rogainer feedback after the WRCs in 2013 and again in 2014:

- Immediately following the 2013 WRC, commence a detailed survey and study of the impact that annual WRCs have had on the pattern of entries and attitude of rogainers towards the WRC. Considerable work has already been undertaken in developing how such a survey and study might be developed and conducted.
- Repeat the process after the 2014 WRC.

The IRF has ample opportunity to review the impact of annual WRCs before considering the award of a WRC in 2017. At this point, the IRF should make a strategic decision whether the World Championship will become an annual event on an ongoing basis.

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Endorsed by ARA Council at the ARA AGM on 21 June 2013

President: David Rowlands

PO Box 682 Templestowe, 3106, Australia

david.rowlands@optusnet.com.au