

IRF Strategic Plan Report to IRF

August 2014

The IRF's existing strategy, entitled **IRF Strategic Plan 2006**, was prepared in the period June 2005-March 2006 by Neil and Rod Phillips, with input from IRF representatives. Since that time, the IRF has reorganised from a collection of individuals into a formal federation of national rogaining bodies and the IRF welcomed in a large number of members including Australia, Russia, Ukraine, USA and Spain.

At the Rogaining Forum on 25 July 2013, representatives discussed what they would like to see in a strategic plan update and by what process the IRF might achieve a new plan. IRF Promotion and Development Officer Alan Mansfield presented a discussion paper on 5 July 2013 towards a new strategic plan, outlining various discussion points and calling for input from interested rogainers.

This included some important questions and challenges for the sport such as:

- What are the key issues facing rogaining and the IRF at the moment and over the next five years?
- What must or should the IRF be doing in five to ten years' time?

A draft plan was produced in March 2014. This was essentially a minor revision of the 2006 plan with amendments and updates and improved layout. The 2006 plan has proven adequate and appeared to require modest change, which is a testament to the work done in 2005-2006.

The draft plan generated discussion within the Executive in May before distribution to IRF Members on 23 June 2014 by the IRF Secretary. From there, discussion seemed to heat up and broaden significantly. Comment has already been received from IRF Members in Estonia, Australia, Czech Republic, USA and New Zealand. The current strategic plan is: **Strategic Plan Rogaining August 2014.pdf**.

Although the Executive has stated a desire to vote on the plan in September, there appears to be scope to enhance the plan with a number of current challenges. Some of the key challenges facing the sport are outlined below to stimulate further discussion. Members are encouraged to discuss these points and others with their membership and provide feedback.

6 Challenges

6.1 Orienteering

Four (out of a total of nine) member associations of the IRF are simultaneously member associations of the International Orienteering Federation (IOF).

The IOF General Assembly held on 10 July 2014 in Italy discussed whether rogaining should become an IOF governed discipline. The proposal was presented to the IOF General Assembly by the Russian Orienteering Federation which is not an IRF Member. However, the proposal was not supported by the IRF Council.

The background is that the IOF in August 1999, declared rogaining and mountain marathons to be a type of orienteering called Marathon Orienteering. "The IOF ... resolved that rogaining is a form of orienteering practised in some countries and that the IOF will not recognise another international sports federation whose objective is either solely or primarily the practice of a form of orienteering". An IOF

Working Group examined harmonisation of event formats between mountain marathons and rogaining, which was seen by rogaining to be a threat to its nature and traditions. The IOF failed to articulate any benefits of its move and hence little progress was made.

6.1.1 Actions/Issues for Discussion

- Rogaining continues to wish to work closely with orienteering, but the independence is a reality. This position has been communicated for over 20 years and appears to be generally understood by most IOF members.
- The IRF should make contact with the relevant persons in the IOF in an attempt to find a common solution to issues and concerns.

6.2 Event Types

Rogaining is defined as “long distance cross country navigation”. There are overlaps with score orienteering events which typically may be 1 to 3 hours in length. Short 3 hour “after work” events in New Zealand are called rogaines, while the “Maxi 3 Hour” score event in Victoria Australia is orienteering.

Shorter events, school and metrogaine events provide a more accessible form of rogaining which increase rogaining’s reach. However such events can dilute the pure definition of a traditional rogaine as a 24 hour night and day event.

The rules of rogaining (B9) mandate travel entirely on foot. But rogaining is practiced as many variants such as: cycle, canoe and ski. The City Safari in New Zealand is a 3 or 6 hour rogaine which allows travel by both foot and public transport!

6.2.1 Actions/Issues for Discussion

- Should the minimum length of a rogaine be strictly defined?
- Should the sport of rogaining regulate non-foot rogaines by setting rules for them? Should such events be promoted and include them in official calendars?

6.3 Technology

The rules of rogaining (B7) mandate the use of analogue compasses and disallow GPS navigation, altimeters, or computers for course planning. However such modern technology as GPS is well established for navigation in everyday life and through miniaturisation has become increasingly difficult to control in rogaining competition.

In May 2014 the City Safari in Wellington New Zealand provided publicly available real time tracking of competitors and live score updates to competitor’s phones every 30 minutes. Such events are a forum for experimentation.

GPS has real benefits for the sport in post-event performance and route choice analysis. GPS tracking has very significant promotional potential to engage people not competing and to communicate the sport’s skills and tactics via live websites.

Rogaining as a sport cannot resist technology development which is inevitable. The integrity of the sport can be maintained, provided that no team whilst competing is able to access the GPS information.

The rules also state (B12) that a team shall not accept assistance from, nor collaborate with, other people.

Mobile phones are a valuable emergency communication device. But the widespread use of mobile phones is a threat to the competition through communication with outside sources beyond the control of the event administration. This could create a situation where the winning team is the one with the best support crew analysing what other teams are doing in real time to work out the best routes and advise their team accordingly.

Light portable cameras are also widely used on rogaines, but these may include phone or GPS capability. There are plenty of affordable cameras that have neither, so anyone who wishes to take a camera on course can be compliant with the rules.

6.3.1 Actions/Issues for Discussion

- Updates the Rules and Technical Regulations to clearly allow, but regulate the use of GPS trackers and mobile phones at championship rogaines. Such devices shall be sealed in tamper-proof packaging such that they are never accessible by competitors during the event.
- Consider a Code of Conduct for participants and event organisers, describing acceptable practice.
- Monitor competitor practices and new technology developments closely.

6.4 Professionalization

Rogaining associations are defined as not-for-profit entities. But the Strategic Plan talks about “manage resources professionally” and “professionally run events with top quality courses and organization”. This means rogaining becoming more professional in terms of organisation, sophistication and formalisation.

Rogaine events attract an audience from the sport of adventure racing, where events are commonly organised by professional or for-profit groups. Rogaines are now run by some commercial groups in North Queensland, New Zealand, USA and other places. Rogaine events and administration commonly pay for some volunteer expenses, but not time. Though, championship maps may be produced commercially by experienced rogainers.

A small minority of rogaining world championship competitors could be regarded as full time or professional competitors.

6.4.1 Actions/Issues for Discussion

- Articulate how to maintain rogaining’s value proposition as a pure amateur sport, whilst increasing the sophistication of its organisation.
- Professionalization has potential to corrode the volunteering that has been core to the success of the sport. What is best practice?
- Championship events sometimes provide sponsor products as prizes. Should rogaining more aggressively use prizes to attract the best competitors?

David Rowlands

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