



President's Update – June 2021



We have sneaked past the solstice and are sliding down to summer. I am not much of a winter boy, I am afraid. I am of a sunny skies and Chevrolet generation.

But the sailing news is still very heart-warming!

As per my not-so-cautiously optimistic wish, SASCOC formally announced that Leo will be sailing in

Tokyo! What a pleasure! I am sure that Leo and Greg will do us proud. More on the Olympics closer to the time. In the meantime, please give these young men and Greg your support. Nothing will do them more good than a wave of positivity between now and the opening ceremony.

As I am typing this, our team of future Olympians are taking part in the Optimist Worlds at Lake Garda. It looks like we will have one competitor in the Gold fleet, and one in the Silver fleet. Watch the press for more results as the event progresses.

There is good news all around me right now, but quite honestly, the biggest issue on my mind at the moment is access to water, and tenure to facilities. My home club is in the process of negotiating a lease renewal with the department of water affairs – and is on thin ice, following a valuation of the property on a “commercial basis”. An additional valuation is being sought, and a different value proposition is being prepared for presentation to the Department.

Both East London clubs, the Sail PE marina, the Mossel Bay Marina, the two major clubs in Durban and Zululand Yacht Club are all in the throes of trying to sort out tenure. I am calling a meeting of all the interested parties, to try and formulate a uniform strategy that can be presented to our allies in the various authorities that view us in a favourable light. This is not an easy task, nor one to be taken lightly. If you have anything positive to add to the debate, or if you would like to be of assistance, please give me a call.

The only way we are going to achieve a positive outcome here, is by way of a unity of purpose. We need the authorities to see our value proposition as being a new and vibrant force in our ports and coastal regions. They need to see our value in the fields of tourism and development – to say nothing of the direct economic advantage to local communities. What we do not need them to see us as, is a bunch of grumpy old white renegades, wanting to protect their historic place in the sun. Please remember this in any interaction you may have with any authorities that could impact on your sailing.

For myself (while on the subject of dealing with the authorities...) I had occasion to upgrade my sailing qualifications this month. In my advancing years, this was something I undertook with some trepidation. But it did give me a chance to have a closer look at the Inland and Offshore component of South African Sailing and reflect on this component of our relationship with the authorities.

The Inland and Offshore Standing Committee and the team around them, is surely the most underrated asset in SA Sailing. I was struck again, in the process of renewing my qualifications, by the pleasure of us being able to be self-regulating, and the value that this brings to our sailing community. I applaud the vision of that group of men who undertook to position SA Sailing in such a way that we became an agency of SAMSA. By positioning us in this space, we have become self-regulating in most matters relating to qualifications and certification.

This relationship alone, will be a big part of the value proposition that we will be using in our negotiations in the coming weeks, as will be the relationship that we have built up with SASCOC and the Department of Sport.

Our good relationship with SASCOC and the Department of Sport has been helped by the statistics that we manage to generate in the fields of development integration. And while we present well statistically, when it comes to inclusion, a walk around most clubs will indicate that our statistics are a little misleading. We have not yet got our heads around the more intimate issues. While most of our house is in order, as far as integration is concerned, we do not yet know how to be the people that other people want to mix with. Even if race is completely removed from the equation, inclusivity is something that we need to grapple with and understand.

To address this head on, Lindani headed up an initiative to arrange a number of diversity workshops throughout the country. The vast majority of these workshops had very positive outcomes. Happily, there was no backlash to integration at all. An area that I noticed that needed some thought was our propensity to judge our inclusivity based on our standards, and on our performance, without reference to the emotional situation of others. My hope is that the workshops were attended by enough influential sailors, to start a groundswell of sentiment that will bring about the small and subtle attitude changes which are all we need to move from our strong statistical position into a situation where our inclusivity secures the future of sailing in this country.

The key, (pardon the repetition), is that for sailing to grow, we need to be the people that other people want to be with.

Lindani has been a busy councillor. He and Lucy put a great deal of effort into our Sailing Development plan. A preview is available on the SA Sailing website under "Governance". I think that you will find this revision to be refreshing, in the sense that while still addressing racial issues, it also addresses non-racial backlogs, like our

historic failure to accommodate the cruising component of our sailing community, as well as the challenges faced in the efforts to include the various board sports in our community.

What becomes evident when reading the document, is that implementation cannot be achieved by a national federation on its own. It is going to require individual actions by sailors at all levels. We cannot quietly sit and watch development happen. Each of us is going to need to take a hand in the process. Hopefully, the development policy will give some structure to our individual efforts.

What is very important, however, is that we report on what we are doing. Not for the statistical value – but so that successes and failures can be used by other individuals, clubs and classes in their efforts.

As I type this, I am aware of a little niggle in one shoulder that reminds me that I have been privileged to have had my second shot of the Covid vaccine. With the pandemic raging in Gauteng as it is, Gill and I are trying to remain cloistered on our little plot until restrictions ease.

Covid has been a serious challenge for all communities in South Africa – not least, the sailing community. As I type this, Lucy is wading through the different interpretations of the different authorities as relates to the latest lockdown restrictions. Our relationship with the Department of Sport made it possible for us to have access to some sailing during the last lockdown, and we hope that we will achieve this again.

The most important people in your personal efforts to get back on the water, will be the authority that polices activity on your waters. I expect that making contact with them would be the first step in establishing the way forward. Once you have heard their particular interpretation, you can decide on a strategy. If SA Sailing can assist, please contact us. We make no promises, but we will do our best.

There are still a lot of people in our sailing community struggling with Covid, and some have sadly succumbed. Please spare a thought for those who are ill, and for the loved ones of those who lost the battle. This is serious business, and I appeal to all of you to look after yourselves, and especially to take care of those around you by pedantically practising the necessary protocols.

Stay safe.

Michael.