



President's Update – May 2021

The first of the Highveld frosts are upon us. My world is turning yellow, red and beige. There is a chill in the wind, and a warm jacket next to the door.

But, the sailing news is very heart-warming!

SASCOC formally announced that Alex and Benji will be sailing in Tokyo! What a pleasure! We are very pleased to have these two young men represent us at the Olympics in the 49er class. And just watch closely – I am (not as cautiously this time) optimistic that the next announcement will include the name of Leo Davis to represent us in the Finn class.

Both teams managed their inclusion via slots reserved for African participants, and (after a great deal of work by others) SASCOC accepted that if both World Sailing and SA Sailing approved, that they would follow suit and approve the selections. This was not always so. Of course, there will be detractors, but the fact that our teams no longer need to carry the huge expense in Rands of building up a world ranking in spaces dominated by far stronger currencies and support structures, makes the Olympics more accessible to our sailors. I am hoping that this will open the door for many more of our young sailors to pursue an Olympic dream. And, yes, a huge responsibility rests on the shoulders of these three young men, to ensure that they perform in such a way as ensure that this doorway to the Olympics stays open.

And, how cool that they will be coached by Asenathi Jim and Greg Davis respectively. Asenathi will have done the full circle from development sailor, through Olympian to coaching his protégés – a great story indeed. Greg will have the chance to round off an illustrious career as an absolute doyen of South African sailing by coaching his own son at the Olympics – a fitting outcome if ever there was one.

While on the subject on achievement on the international stage, we are so excited to see that the Sail Africa “Girls in Sailing” programme has been profiled on the World Sailing social media platforms. Check this out...

https://www.sailing.org/news/91009.php?fbclid=IwAR14ra2aeC2snlXGamd7849DQhC6B97zYTVfysRh24_abtS7986z9FnTTCO#.YLJc-PkzblU



And, just to put their money where their mouth is, Sail Africa had an entry in the Vasco this year, with four of these girls being included in the crew! It is so nice to have Sail Africa as an Associate Organisation when they keep on achieving like this. *[See report in KZN Regional News]*

I was in Mossel Bay last week, and called in on our other Associated Organisation, the Skipper Foundation. Elfie Holden proudly showed me around the premises that they have had to move to, after the debacle that resulted in the lease of the Mossel Bay Yacht and Boat Club being unscrupulously denied to the club. The premises are not ideal, without a slipway, using difficult beach launching and with a road to cross before getting to the beach, but Elfie and her team are undeterred. Each day, no less than 20 boats are launched in her development programme. The Skipper Foundation will never be able to address all the social ills that beset Mossel Bay, but Elfie is not discouraged. She just carries on changing lives and giving hope, one sailor at a time.

Both of these Associated Organisations are so much more than sailing schools – they are holistic development centres that use sailing as the tools for achieving their goals. We, as the sailing community of South Africa, benefit from their existence, and (often undeservedly) from their credentials. Next time you are sitting in a boardroom wondering what to do with your social spend, give some thought to our fine Associate Organisations.

Talking of Mossel Bay, Peter Sherlock and I had occasion to chat to the property manager of Mossel Bay Port this month. Peter has such a good case to make for sailing to be encouraged in the port, that the authorities have agreed to talk to SA Sailing to facilitate a resolution of the impasse that exists after the disaster that was the loss of the club and moorings lease. I am not sure if there is anything to be done about the club, but there is a very good case to be made for sorting out the intricacies around the tenure to the moorings. I sent another mail off this morning, with my optimism at its customary cautious level. Let's see what we can do here.

In the same vein, tenure in East London is in the spotlight. Vernon has started an interaction with ELYC, and we hope to soon be talking to Buffalo Yacht Club and the other players to get our heads around the situation, and to start the search for a long-lasting resolution.

“Why on earth” I hear you ask, “does he raise this even before the process is properly underway?” The answer, I am afraid, is very simple. Access to the water, and tenure to our points of access, are the most critical issues facing sailing today. Without access to the water, we cannot go sailing.

Access is the matter that needs to be addressed now! Every sailor needs to be aware of the tenuous hold that we as a sailing community have on this access. Every sailor needs to be playing a part in ensuring that the access that we have remains in place, as well as finding and establishing new access relationships. I don't need to remind anybody of the fate of Algoa Bay Yacht Club and the Mossel Bay Yacht and Boat Club.

In matters relating to access and tenure, there is no place for petty rivalries and club politics. There is no place for bravado and one-upmanship. When we talk of access and tenure, we need to wear our small shoes, and have a very clear understanding of where we stand in the greater scheme of things, and how we can leverage our strengths to bring value to the bigger picture.

Whether you are a kite boarder or a cruiser, an Olympian or a Wednesday night racer, please take time to understand exactly what your position is regarding access to your water and tenure of your facilities. Take a moment to work out how the combined credentials of SA Sailing can assist in securing tenure and access, then activate SA Sailing and its resources in the interests of your club and future sailors.

While on this subject, I am very pleased to report that SA Sailing had occasion to enter into discussions with the Port of Durban Property Manager, with a view to facilitating an arrangement between the National Port Authority and Island Sailing Club. The intervention seems to have been effective, and it appears that the intervention will result in a lease at a rental that will make it possible for this club to continue operating for the foreseeable future.

What makes these interventions possible? It is not my good looks or amiable personality! What makes these interventions possible is the list of credentials that support the interventions. If ever you or your fellow club members are looking for a value proposition around membership of SA Sailing, these credentials are it. May I quote from a typical letter of introduction used at the start of an intervention with the authorities with whom SA Sailing wishes to interact?

“I would like to establish an opportunity to start a dialogue with you.

Please allow me to present my credentials. South African Sailing is the national body representing Sailing in South Africa. In terms of legislation promulgated in the National Sports and Recreation Act, and sect 8.1.6 of the SASCOC constitution, it is the responsibility of South African Sailing, as the only representative body for the sport of sailing, to represent the interests of all sailors. Likewise, World Sailing only recognises a single federation for each member country.

Nationally, South African Sailing is a member federation in good standing of SASCOC and is recognised by the Department of Sport and Recreation. Internationally, we are affiliated to World Sailing, the global governing body for Sailing, and through them, the International Olympic Committee.

South African Sailing's constituency is effectively the affiliated sailing clubs in the country. These are as diverse in make-up as the disciplines practiced by the sailors. They range from the premier coastal clubs, such as Royal Cape Yacht Club, to clubs on inland government and municipal controlled waters. Total membership, when expressed in people represented by South African Sailing, numbers almost eight thousand.

South African Sailing has an active interest in the needs of a peripheral community to the sailing community, namely the community which makes a living from serving the active sailing community. South African Sailing has approved transformation policies in place and has a number of very effective development programmes operating.

Effectively, South African Sailing is the conduit between the various clubs and disciplines that make up the diverse sport of sailing and the authorities with which they need to interact, be those authorities governmental, provincial or municipal, or international such as World Sailing and the IOC. As an example, South African Sailing is linked to the Department of Transport through its association with SAMSA. South African Sailing is a recognised and active agent of SAMSA, not only being involved in inspections and ability testing and recording, but also in the drafting and implementation of the rules and regulations as pertain to yachts and their operation.

The above establishes our locus standi in this matter, on an official basis. I would far rather present South African Sailing as a partner of the authorities in addressing issues that relate to sailing. South African Sailing seeks to be an integral part of the solution to problems.”

Please spread the word about the power of these credentials, and the value of being associated with these credentials – no matter what discipline of sailing you practise. There is even value in the force that these credentials can bring to bear in preserving the tenure to the club, where you are just a social member, enjoy an occasional meal in the company of sailors and in the presence of pretty boats.

Did you enjoy the Vasco? It was the 50th edition of this Ocean Classic, and a fine event it was. I was very interested in the innovations introduced by the race committee, from a consultative prelude to the publication of the notice of race, to a discretionary start time – to avoid crazy weather systems. I didn't manage to sail, but I was sorely tempted. I sent the following message:

“Firstly, I need to acknowledge the organisers. As is always the case in Sailing in South Africa, events are driven by enthusiastic and dedicated individuals. I was particularly impressed by the inclusive nature of the decision-making process around this race, and the alacrity with which the organisers went to work once the decisions that needed to be made were finalised. The final arrangements are spectacular, and I know that this race is going to set the pace for post-Covid Ocean Races on our coast. To the organisers, we say thank you.

Then, I need to acknowledge the participants. I did the logistical review that all of you did, when we were trying to make up our minds as to whether taking part was feasible or not. I am fully aware of the time, effort and expense that each of you has put into getting to this point, and I know that this point is not the end of the line. I hope that this experience will be worth every minute of your time, and every cent that you have spent. I hope that your race will be memorable.

Off-shore sailing in South Africa is on the brink of big things to come. The launch of the Ocean Sailing Association of Southern Africa, and the revitalisation of the South African Ocean Racing Trust bodes well.

I was at a meeting recently, of some of the veterans of the early steps taken in the fields of development and empowerment. I sat in a group that included Olympians, Ocean Race veterans, top level keel boat crews and national champions. As I sat with these doyens of our sport, I realised just how little recognition some of them had received for their efforts and skills – and at the same time realised the value of having these doyens as part of the leader corps in our sport.

If off-shore sailing is going to grow we need to recognise those who have excelled. Do you remember the images that names like Bruce Dalling, Bertie Reed and John Martin conjured up in your young mind? Do you remember the exploits recorded in previous iterations of this iconic race? The Vasco is arguably the toughest Ocean Race in the world, and we need to recognise the icons of this event.

Steve has in his pocket a SA Sailing gold medal. On it is inscribed simply “25th Vasco”. Nothing more. Just “25th Vasco”. Nothing more needs to be said. Veterans of this race will understand. Veterans of this race will know - nothing more needs to be said.

I would like Richard Crockett to accept this medal as a memento of this, his 25th Vasco, and as a symbol of the esteem in which the sailing community holds him.

Thank you, Richard.”

Apart from the achievement of Richard's 25th Vasco, the race also included a trustee of the newly revitalised South African Ocean Racing Trust, namely Dale Kushner. With the Trust's mandate being to nurture Ocean Racing in South Africa, it was good to see the representation of a trustee in the fleet. This augurs well.

On the way back to Durban, the yacht Majimoto lost her rudder. Barely had the news hit social media, was the news received that a rescue vessel from NSRI Station 7 was on its way to assist. Unfortunately, the conditions (a south-westerly howler against the Agulhas current) made towing the yacht impossible, and the difficult decision was made to abandon her. The crew, however, were safe, and were brought back to East London.

I penned the following inadequate response to the valour of the NSRI crew:

"Dear Cathrine,

In our positions in management of South African Sailing, the one thing we dread, is news of one of a sailing boat in trouble. In this particular instance, it was a vessel that had just competed in a sanctioned event, which had enthralled a huge audience of sailing enthusiasts. While most of this audience was still glued to social media, the news broke that Majimoto had lost its rudder and was taking water.

In no time at all, a report was posted that the NSRI was on the way. The alacrity with which your team responded was incredible. More reports followed – some from the shoreline – and then, news that the crew had been moved onto the NSRI vessel and were out of harm's way.

We commend the wisdom of the difficult decision to abandon Majimoto and rejoice in the safe return of the crew to East London.

South African Sailing would like to express its heartfelt appreciation to the crew on duty at Station 7, who went to the aid of Majimoto off Morgan's Bay and brought the crews safely to your base.

Your efforts and commitment to the safety of our members, and all water users, are always deeply appreciated but more especially on days like the 21st May 2021

To all involved, thank you for your service."

Bear with me if I seem repetitive... Next time you are sitting in a boardroom wondering what to do with your social spend, give some thought to those who put their lives at risk to ensure our safety at sea.

As you are aware, Intasure provides third party cover to all full members of SA Sailing – at no cost to the members. What you may not be aware of, is the fact that SA Sailing benefits from other insurance placed by members with Intasure. This month, SA Sailing received a very tidy sum indeed, from Intasure, in terms of the agreement that has been in existence for the past while. I am going to invite Intasure to give us a breakdown in next month's newsletter, of how the third party cover works, and what other products they offer, that have a benefit component for SA Sailing. In the meantime, if you would like to do business with people that actively and positively support sailing, have a chat to Intasure.

I had another lucky break, followed by the idea that the inclusion of a high-profile regatta for foiling catamarans in our 75th celebrations may enhance the profile of our event and of sailing in South Africa, so I have been hard at work talking to SailGP and local partners to see if this could be possible. To have the SA

Sailing logo included in an event like this would be seriously cool – as would be the positive impact that the event could have on the local economy. Watch this space...

That's what I have been doing for the 75th celebration. May I ask where you are with your plans? We need to make this thing happen with a huge impact!

Stay safe.

Michael.