



**SOUTH AFRICAN BIATHLON ASSOCIATION  
SUID-AFRIKAANSE TWEKAMP VERENIGING**

18 Benade Street, STRAND, 7140, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 082 409 8820: e-mail: [Blackie.Swart@westerncape.gov.za](mailto:Blackie.Swart@westerncape.gov.za)

*'A truly South African family sport.'*

**SUID AFRIKAANSE TWEKAMP: PRESIDENT SE JAARVERSLAG –  
AANGEBIED BY DIE ALGEMENE JAARVERGADERING  
GEHOU OP 25 JULIE 2020 OP DIE 'ZOOM' VIRTUELE PLATFORM**

Dear Biathlon National Executive and Provincial Delegates:

Allow me to present my **2020 Annual Presidential Report of the South African Biathlon Association at the Annual General Meeting of this Association.**

This should have coincided with the 45<sup>th</sup> South African Biathlon Championships which was planned to be hosted in Oudtshoorn on 20 and 21 March 2020.

Thus, a very strange but special **'first' – a virtual SA Biathlon AGM!** At least we can all meet and discuss matters of importance, even though we are currently sitting anywhere between Cape Town and Polokwane. And without almost any financial outlay, with most people available, even those who usually cannot attend the SA Championships. This not only opens this meeting, but also possibilities for quick and urgent meetings at any time and open communication on any matter of importance that will crop up. Although it is four months later, at least we can now finish our business and constitute our annual mandatory meeting.

Everybody is talking about the **'New Normal'**, but if we can just get to our normal activities again! The old will also do. We all long for **some social interaction and some action on the sports fields again.** But it still seems a long way off. Some of us returned to office and some still work from home. We are also aware of many that suffered financially and emotionally.

On Sunday evening, **15 March 2020**, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a **National State of Disaster in South Africa** over the coronavirus / Covid-19 outbreak and announced the continent's most drastic measures yet to curb its spread. Amongst others, schools were closed and public gatherings of more than 100 people banned.

The SA Biathlon Executive were left with no alternative to inform all provinces, parents and athletes that the **2020 Sportsmans Warehouse South African Biathlon Championships scheduled for 20 – 21 March 2020 in Oudtshoorn had**

**to be cancelled.** Communication between committee members as well as in depth discussions with the main sponsors started on Friday 13 March when the extend of the pandemic became obvious and possible implications for sporting and other meetings became evident. Eden Biathlon was also in contact with Ms Anroux Marais, the Western Cape Minister of Culture and Sport. The decision, however, left the Biathlon family in South Africa saddened - athletes, parents and committee members have put in so much hard work to perform and organise the best SA Biathlon Championships.

We had requests for a **postponement rather than a cancellation.** Since then, the fight against this invisible enemy has intensified but is still not over. We have had 120 days of the National State of Disaster and South Africa is currently still in Level 3. **Sporting activities have still not resumed** – only certain professional athletes can train and no matches or meetings are staged. School sport is not allowed and the president announce two days ago that schools will immediately break for a holiday of four weeks (Grade 12 only one week) to curb the current spike in certain provinces. Postponement will just create new expectations and possible fresh disappointment. Under the circumstances, it was thus the best possible decision to cancel and this was supported by most members.

To offset the negative implications, also for Oudtshoorn which experienced the additional massive blow of the KKNK and the SA Level 3 Swimming Championships being cancelled, the SA Manco deliberated and, with the agreement of Eden and Griekwas, decided that the **2021 SA Biathlon Championships will be hosted by Eden Biathlon in Oudtshoorn.** The current planning is for **on 2 and 3 April 2021** – which will coincide with the KKNK. This will be some consolation for Oudtshoorn and the Local Organising Committee. They just need to extend their planning! It will not be easy though, but they have a solid team that will be able to pick up the loose strings again and forge a spectacular event! The **2022 SA Championships will then be held in Kimberley,** hosted by the Griekwas Biathlon Committee. Thank you to Deon who kindly agreed and to Stephanie, Dave and the Eden LOC who are prepared to extend their tenure. This might also help with some of the challenges that some provinces and parents apparently experience with cancellation of accommodation. Some establishments repaid deposits or payments (in full or partly), but others indicated that they cannot do so. In most of the latter cases, they indicated that they may provide vouchers that can be redeemed at a later stage. Hence, it can be used for the 2021 SA Championships in Oudtshoorn. This will also be a very positive gesture towards the town and community to help them to recur losses. We can then also finalise our opening of the Biathlon Museum at the Highgate Ostrich Farm. We

are sure that the community and our sponsors will be supportive of our decision.

One of the most sensitive and complex issues that we had to deal with, was the **finances**. A lot of expenses had to be incurred by the host province as well as the SA body, which cannot be recovered. Entry fees for cancelled sport events are usually forfeited. The Eden LOC and the SA Manco audited the income and expenditure and determined the refund which included the cost of extra function tickets bought by parents. All the service providers have been paid and all expenses have been deducted. We are still busy negotiating with the sponsors – any relief from them will be carried over to the 2021 SA Championships. Hence, **70% of the R450 entry fee was repaid to athletes who paid (R315) and the additional Prize Giving / Dinner tickets was refunded in full (R220)**. All the competition shirts and special 'Under Armour' shirts ordered and paid for, were couriered to all provinces. Our sincere appreciation to Eden who finalised this amicably.

I know nothing can make up for the disappointment that our athletes experienced. Please keep this in mind and think of ways to **recognize those biathletes who were selected and who excelled at your provincial and interprovincial meetings and trials**. I know that each province has specific criteria for the awarding of colours. As the cancellation was due to a worldwide disaster and pandemic outside our ambit or control, please consider awarding colours to the biathletes selected for your team and inform their schools accordingly. This might soften the blow and motivate them to work harder for the 2021 season and SA Championships in Oudtshoorn!

We never would have thought this, but we are **STILL on Level 3 lockdown**. I provided the documents as provided by the Ministry: Sport, Arts and Culture in a newsletter and the media releases of Athletics South Africa and the information letter from Swimming South Africa.

The list of non-contact sporting codes that applied for participation is very short. There is also a completely different approach from **athletics and swimming**. It is stated that a '*staggered opening of professional non-contact sport and opening of facilities to professional athletes for training*' will be followed, as announced by the Minister of Sport on 30 May 2020 for the Risk Adjustment Strategy of Level 3 under the National Disaster Act. We do not know what the strategy will be under Level 2 and level 1. It depends when the pandemic will peak in South Africa (and it seems as it is a bit earlier in the Western Cape). In other countries they had secondary outbreaks but contained it in the 'hot spot pockets' with different levels.

My feeling is that we – as Biathlon – are **not yet close to competition level**. For **training**, the athletes must train – run and swim – at school or club level. If you read the SSA letter – ‘STEPS TO GET COMPLIANT TO START SWIMMING TRAINING / START LTS CLASSES’ – it explains the process starting from club level. The club / school must be registered as well as the swimmer (with SSA). It seems as if Public Swimming Pools and pools at Gyms are not open yet. So, most of the training will be at school pools. The best option – according to me – is for our **swimmers and runners to train at school or club level** – where the protocols are in place and compliance confirmed. We will have to ‘piggy-back’ on swimming and running for training purposes. To operate, they should have an appointed compliance officer who will confirm all safety and attendance protocols. My contact with sport administrators indicated that the likelihood of any athletics meetings this year is not likely at all.

When we **get to competition level**, we will have to submit our own plans and protocols. When planning for the new season, I propose that Provinces look at different scenarios – starting 1 October or 1 November or **1 January**. It might mean that we miss out on our usual (very successful) early season programme and Interprovincial Meetings in the fourth term. Not by choice – it all depends on the Covid-19 National (or local!) level of lockdown and the accompanied Regulations from the Ministry. It is also a reality for the future: Covid-19 or new viruses will be with us – until we have a vaccine. Thus, running and swimming training at school or club level – our athletes anyway train mostly in those groups and not as a separate Biathlon entity. If meetings are held (when we may), it will also be linked to swimming and athletics events – we will not be able to resume before these codes do. **These Biathlon meetings will have to be held at compliant venues** – thus following their approval. It might be a good idea to identify compliant and approved swimming and running venues for possible league meetings and stick to those for this year. I hope that we will be able to compete from Level 1, but if the Minister says no, we cannot.... At this stage, all school sport has been cancelled and most of our participants are school athletes.

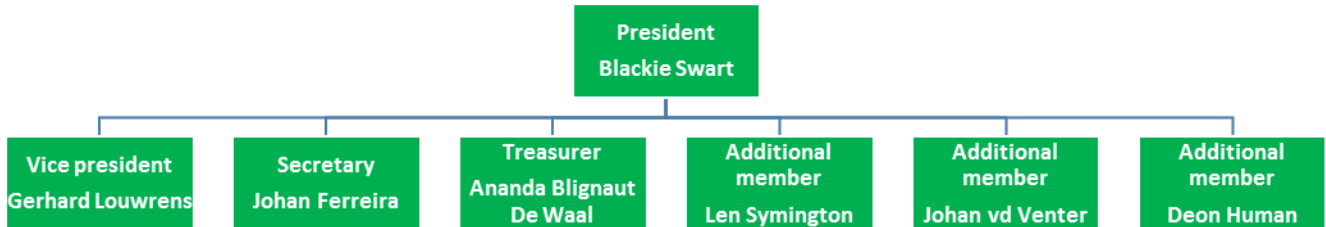
We will have to be **innovative as part of the ‘New Normal’**. Only those businesses, activities and people that can change and adapt will stay relevant and will grow. We need to grab this opportunity and come up with new ideas to promote and develop our sport, and at the same time to not lose our established and loyal participants and supporters. I mentioned in a letter the possibility for **schools to have internal competitions – possibly as a ‘house / colour’ sport**. I think school sport will first return in house and not immediately competitive or as inter school competitions. This will also

strengthen our Schools Competition. I also mentioned the possibility of **virtual competitions** – you might have seen the very successful Virtual Tour de France (where South Africans excelled!). Almost a ‘Zoom’ championship! In Biathle, many years ago, there was a ‘Worlds’ competition where **all athletes participated on the same day** and the running and swimming times were submitted and winners crowned. We can live stream the awards function – universities have already done it with their Graduation Ceremonies. We must think of other innovative ways to stimulate children and adults to get involved and participate, to get the competitive juices active again.

In the meantime, provinces must **start planning for competitions in this new environment**. You will have to appoint a compliance officer if training will be conducted and for possible meetings. Once clarity is received on the processes to apply for activities, participation and meetings, we will guide provinces in the procedure. I personally think that athletes and schools or clubs will have the biggest responsibility to ensure compliance for readiness and participation. We hope that it will not need a big financial outlay – especially in the tough financial climate we currently experience. Extra safety measures will become part of our daily lives – sanitise, washing hands and social distancing. Yes, we must minimise attendance at our championships and even at the prize-giving function. Maybe we will have to live stream everything! But, whatever it takes, **we must be ready and open for change and innovation**. I know that Dave will also ensure that our SA Championships will be 100% compliant with whatever protocols are needed, but your input and suggestions will be appreciated.

Part of our deliberations today will include **changes to our Constitution and By-Laws**. Exco spent dedicated time over two days during the annual strategic planning meeting on 8 and 9 June in Paarl. We will discuss and ask for approval of these proposals at this meeting. There are specific aspects relating to our organisation that we would like to confirm and enhance. I will leave the detail for the discussions. We looked again at the possibility of working closer with Modern Pentathlon. We even contemplated a change of name to “Modern Biathlon”. Currently, it seems as if there are challenges with SA Pentathlon and it is not appropriate yet to look at a closer relationship. We also tried to contact the British School of Biathlon but without any success. The current world-wide pandemic will make any international participation very difficult, but we still strive to offer international opportunities for our biathletes.

Our new Biathlon **computer programme** was to be tested at the SA Championships. The additional time allowed for further refinements and it will be tested with statistical and historical data. We will avail it soon to all provinces.



**I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Exco for their support and work during this year.** Most of them are also active in their provincial executives and carry a heavy load – all for love and charity! A specific word of appreciation to **Johan van de Venter** who decided to retire from active administration on provincial and national level. Johan has been a very active member for many years and we pay tribute for his input at Gauteng North – 24 years on the management committee – as well as six years on the National Exco. He started participating for Eastern Province as student on senior level and achieved a bronze medal at the 1985 SA Championships! We wish him and Mia well with their future endeavours.

**Biathlon is still a truly South African family sport.** I want to challenge all our provinces, administrators, supporters and athletes to all work together to expand and improve our sport. Thank you to all for your input and for joining this special virtual meeting. I am looking forward to the deliberations.

Baie dankie

**Blackie Swart**  
**President: SA Tweekamp**  
**25 July 2020**



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