



ISAF Approved Training Centre - Audit Report

Dinghy Academy Valencia

Introduction

Following an application from the Dinghy Academy Valencia for recognition as an ISAF Approved Training Centre, a formal audit was carried out by an ISAF Nominated Expert on July 30 2014.

The audit included a review of the management and facilities at the Dinghy Academy, which is located within the Real Club Náutico in Valencia. The visit included interviews with several athletes participating in existing training programmes and observation of a training session afloat.

The Audit visit was hosted by Luca Devoti, who is the majority shareholder in the business as well as Head Coach.

1 Training Centre Organisation and Management

1.1 Time Centre Has Been Operating

The Dinghy Academy Valencia has been in existence for two years. The Head Coach has extensive personal experience of campaigning at Olympic level as well as having previously coached a number of athletes from different countries.

1.2 Management Structure

The Academy is a small but growing business with three full time employees. Consequently, the management structure is very simple with the Head Coach also acting as the Director. Administrative tasks are conducted by the wife of the Head Coach.

1.3 Centre Funding

Apart from an initial investment to establish the Academy, all current income results directly from fees charged to participants on the training programmes. Individual athletes arrange their own funding with most receiving support from their MNAs. The Dinghy Academy, support through corporate sources, has also supported some candidates who have asked for financial assistance.

1.4 Time for Which Lead Person has been in Post

The Head Coach has been in post since the Dinghy Academy programmes began.

1.5 Job Title of Lead Person

The Lead Person is the Head Coach

1.6 Criteria for Selection of Lead Person

As the Academy is essentially a single person operation, there is no job description or person specification for the Head Coach. The nature of the business is such that this is acceptable.

1.7 Length of Service of Predecessor

There was no predecessor.

1.8 Lead Person Reporting

The Dinghy Academy is a business with only two shareholders. The Head Coach reports directly to his business partner. The size of the operation is such that this is achieved on an ad hoc basis rather than through a formal structure.

1.9 People Reporting to the Lead Person

Everyone who is involved in delivering sessions either afloat or ashore reports to the Head Coach. At the time of the audit, there was one other coach delivering training to athletes in Lasers.

A gymnasium training session was observed during the audit, run by a volunteer supporter who is a professor in the Department of Science for Physical Activity and Sport at the University of Valencia.

1.10 Recruitment of Programme Delivery Staff

Since its inception, the Academy has only recruited one coach apart from the Head Coach. That person was recruited by word of mouth recommendation to coach athletes in the Laser class. In addition to his personal sailing skills, by which he became national champion and twelfth in the European Championships, he was the Technical Manager of Physical and Sporting Activities at Centro Y. Es Salinas de Myonmar. He also has experience of working with the Irish and Egyptian Associations to improve their athletes.

The Head Coach is aware that if the capacity of the Dinghy Academy grows, despite his extensive knowledge and range of contacts within the sport, he may have to consider a more formal approach to the recruitment of staff.

1.11 Monitoring and Evaluating Effectiveness

The Dinghy Academy actively supports athletes at World Class events and therefore maintains contact beyond the activities at Valencia. Consequently, the Head Coach receives direct feedback from the athletes and is able to both assess the effectiveness of the training and use the process of review to modify the approach to and methods of training if necessary.

1.12 Impact of National Legislation and Regulations

Spanish law requires formal registration of any business activity which includes the work of the Dinghy Academy. Compliance with the law includes a formal registration of the business, compliance with health and safety regulations and the provision of appropriate insurance indemnities. The Dinghy Academy has met all of the requirements and has documentation to demonstrate compliance in accordance with

normal local practices. In addition, the Real Club Náutico in Valencia, as the owner of the site, has responsibility for meeting similar standards.

Operation of powerboats with outboard engines over forty horsepower requires formal licensing of the operator and the carriage of a specified scale of equipment. All of the operators of powerboats are appropriately qualified and the boats are equipped to the specified standard.

2 Programme Design

2.1 Overall Responsibility

The Head Coach has overall responsibility for programme design. Although he is perfectly capable of fulfilling this task, he consults specialists including the physical trainer and home nation coaches when planning training activities for participants on programmes.

2.2 Individual Training Needs Analysis

During their first week at the Academy, athletes are closely observed in order to assess their ability and initial training needs. The observation includes the use of on board video, which aides post activity review.

As training progresses, the athletes are encouraged to maintain their own training logs. These are then used to both identify progress and highlight areas for further development. During discussions with a number of athletes, the standard of maintenance of personal training records appears to vary a great deal.

The Head Coach has a good rapport with all of the athletes and by way of both group discussion and individual reviews is able to vary training plans to meet the needs of the individual.

2.3 Available Resources

The Academy has a good range of boats and equipment that are suitable for the training activities. Access to the physical and recreational facilities of Real Club Náutico is included in the Academy's lease agreement.

There are comprehensive workshop facilities that allow for boat hull repairs and rig tuning to be carried out with the later being critical for the Finn class. There is a North Sails sail loft on site with whom the Academy has a strong relationship. This allows for sail modifications to be made to reflect changes to mast profiles and gives the athletes a more in depth understanding of their rig performance and requirements.

The physical training is conducted in a well equipped gymnasium and supervised by the University Professor. Regular physiological monitoring, including blood sampling is carried out. Occasional workshops and lectures are arranged covering a variety of subjects including rules and on water judging and the implications of drug misuse.

2.4 Recruitment and Monitoring of Technical Staff

As the Academy only has four people on the delivery team, the Head Coach has been able to recruit appropriate staff through his personal contacts. Monitoring of their performance is achieved by a combination of direct observation, review of individual athlete development and feedback from the athletes.

The working relationship and open communication between all of the staff and the athletes was evident throughout the audit visit.

2.5 Allocation of Coaches to Athletes

The current level of activity does not require specific allocation of coaches to certain athletes during the training activities at the Academy. When participating at regattas, where additional coaches are required, the preference of the athletes is taken into consideration. This includes matching the coaches' style and profile to that of the individual athlete. Such additional coaches are drawn from participant MNAs whenever possible or are selected for their proven skills and experience in providing on water support at major events.

2.6 Provision for Coach Development

The current scale of the operation does not support coach development as a specific training activity. However, the technical delivery staff all receive feedback from MNAs and athletes that allows them to use a reflective process to review and develop their approach to coaching.

2.7 Review and Modification of Training Programmes

The Head Coach produces the overall training programme, which are structured to support progressive development leading towards participation in specific events. The programmes are structured to avoid overtraining and take into consideration the profile of the individual athletes. Progress towards targets is monitored together with the mental and physical condition of the athletes. During the audit, a number of occasions when athletes have been unable to sustain the level of activity and the associated modification of training programmes were discussed. It was evident that the technical staff are very aware of the needs and limitations of the individual athletes and modify their programmes to suit.

3 Programme Management

3.1 Monitoring Programme Delivery

Delivery of the programme is directly monitored by the Head Coach, with both a Finn and a Laser fleet observed training during the audit. The Head Coach was able to observe the Laser activity whilst coaching the Finns. Communication between the two coaches before and after the training was easily achieved.

The Academy uses a nominated athlete as the 'Captain' of each fleet. The Captain is used as a point of reference and a means by which the temperament of the athletes can be reported to the technical staff.

The easy and open rapport between all of the technical staff and the athletes allowed candid feedback to be given in both directions. A post training review is carried out after every session and includes both personal observations and video.

In the event of particularly demanding conditions, practical training may be shortened, as was the case during the audit when a small number of less experienced athletes were starting to show signs of fatigue and were released from the training session.

3.2 Available Resources

The Real Club Náutico site provides a wide range of facilities, all of which are accessible to the Academy. The main base provides a combination of administrative facilities, a briefing area as well as catering and domestic facilities, with a number of athletes living in the building. Additional accommodation is arranged in the local area as and when required.

The dinghy park, launching facilities and wash down area are of high standard, with adequate showers, toilets and dry training areas available if required.

Comprehensive workshop and storage areas are also available.

3.3 Powered Safety and Coach Boats

The Academy operates two Rigid Inflatable Boats (RIBs) that are appropriate for use with Finn and Laser class dinghies and has access to further similar craft if required. All powerboats are maintained in accordance with local regulations with the threat of a significant fine if a spot check is carried out by the Guardia Civil and identifies any shortfall.

During the audit, the coach covering the Laser fleet was observed to be driving without having the kill cord properly attached to him. This was brought to the attention of the Head Coach and rectified immediately.

3.4 Suitability of Training Area

The training area is a superb location adjacent to the entrance to the marina. There is no other regular traffic in the area.

Records show that the weather factor is exceptional with the predominant weather providing a strong sea breeze every afternoon. The associated sea state provides a perfect replica of a good regatta course and is therefore an ideal training ground.

3.5 Matching Programmes to Individual Athlete Requirements

The technical staff discusses the profile and training requirements of each individual athlete. In discussion with the athletes, individual targets are set. The athletes are encouraged to maintain their own training log and use that as a guide to their performance against the targets. Reviews of each training session together with personal training logs provide the basis for modification to training programmes if necessary.

It was noted during the audit that not all of the athletes have the discipline to maintain their logs. However all of those interviewed confirmed that their progress was well monitored by the Head Coach, who in turn had a comprehensive knowledge about every athlete.

3.6 Training Records

Apart from the personal training logs available to the athletes and a personal diary maintained by the Head Coach, there are no formal records maintained by the Academy. However, the Head Coach has a very comprehensive recall of the development of the individual athletes that is supported by their performance in major competitions.

3.7 Emergency Procedures

As a tenant of Real Club Náutico, the Academy is both required to follow and supported by their emergency procedures. Comprehensive First Aid facilities are available on site with further professional medical care readily accessible.

3.8 Equipment Maintenance

The available workshops are adequate to facilitate repairs to boats and associated equipment. Such activity is considered to be a valuable part of the training in order to widen the athlete's knowledge.

Tuning of Finn masts by way of modifying mast sections is a common activity together with changes to sail profiles to match.

4 Programme Review and Development

4.1 Review of Training Programmes

Although there is no formal periodic review of the training programmes, there is a process of continual review by assessment of individual athletes' progress towards targets. This is seen as a reasonable approach in the context of the different periods of time that athletes spend at the Dinghy Academy and the time for which each one has been training.

Individual reports to the candidates' MNAs, copied to the athletes, provide a form of review and subsequent training plans represent development.

4.2 Validation of Performance Reviews

The most evident external validation of performance reviews is by way of the results achieved by the athletes at major competitions. Feedback from MNAs and national coaches provides an additional source. Representatives of MNAs are actively encouraged to visit the Academy.

4.3 Use of Reviews to Improve Performance

The Academy carries out monthly and quarterly reviews of business performance. These are compared with the overall business plan and include assessment of the training programmes and their progress towards targets.

Any variance is considered by the permanent staff and remedial action taken as necessary.

5 Miscellaneous

5.1 Promotion of Training Activities

The Dinghy Academy has an informative web site www.dinghyacademy.com that accurately describes what it is able to offer. The Head Coach has many personal contacts within a number of MNAs and is able to use those as a network to further extend information regarding the Dinghy Academy.

5.2 Support to Potential Users

The Dinghy Academy will provide whatever support is reasonable and feasible to potential users. A number of athletes have attended for a short period in order to gain an insight into their potential with many of those returning for longer periods of training.

Use of own boats is preferred but in the case of those for whom this is not feasible, the Dinghy Academy is able to provide high quality boats.

There is a variety of accommodation arranged by the Academy.

When attending regattas, the Academy provides significant logistical support as well as the normal on-water coaching.

5.3 Social and Pastoral Support

The Head Coach has an acute awareness of the need to cater for the social and pastoral needs of the athletes. While there is naturally a requirement for the individual athletes to take responsibility for their private lives, the Head Coach takes an interest in their general well being and offers advice and support whenever necessary.

Recommendations

Although the Dinghy Academy has only been operating for two years, the depth of experience and skills upon which it is able to draw give it a credible profile as a training provider. Consequently, it is recommended that the Dinghy Academy in Valencia should be awarded ISAF Approved Training Centre status.

During the audit the aspiration to increase the capacity of the Academy was discussed. If this becomes a reality then it is recommended that the Academy considers expanding its activities to include more structured Coach Development programmes.

Similarly, if the capacity increases significantly, the Academy should consider implementing a more formal and centralised method of recording training and individual athlete development.

The Head Coach should ensure that all powerboat drivers are made aware that they will always be subject to scrutiny with regard following best practice guidelines and should therefore use all of the recommended powerboat safety equipment appropriately at all times.

Acknowledgements

The support and hospitality of Luca Devoti and all of the staff of the Dinghy Academy throughout the audit was exemplary. Their enthusiasm for the holistic development of sailors was infectious and evidenced by the attitude of all of those participants in receipt of their training.

Andy Jeffrey
Nominated Expert
International Sailing Federation (ISAF)

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