



ISAF Approved Training Centre - Audit Report

Watersportverbond International Sailing Centre, Medemblik

Introduction

Following an application from the Netherlands Watersportverbond for recognition of the International Sailing Centre Medemblik (ISCM) venue as an ISAF Approved Training Centre, an audit was carried out on 22 and 23 November 2014.

The audit included a review of the management and facilities at the Medemblik venue, observation of training sessions, both ashore and afloat and discussions with core staff who are responsible for programme design and delivery.

The Audit visit was hosted by Christoffel van Hees, Co-ordinator of Sport and Recreation for the Watersportverbond. In addition, Carlijn Botterweg, manager of the International Sailing Centre Medemblik, Sietse-Jan Sietzema, the Head Trainer, and Mark Schuurman, National Laser Coach all contributed to the process and provided valuable information regarding the operation of the venue.

1 Training Centre Organisation and Management

1.1 Time Centre Has Been Operating

The ISCM venue was purpose built and opened on 22 May 1999 as a joint venture between a number of organisations. The Medemblik Council and the Watersportverbond are the principal stakeholders.

Since its inception, the ISCM has frequently hosted several major international regattas and used as one of the primary bases for training Dutch athletes in preparation for World class competition including the Olympic Games.

1.2 Management Structure

The Centre is owned by a Foundation that is constituted from Medemblik Council and the Watersportverbond. The ISCM is jointly funded by the two organisations through the Foundation. The ISMC Manager reports, through a designated Member, to the Board of the Watersportverbond, whilst operating under the guidance of the Racing and Recreation Manager of the Watersportverbond.

1.3 Centre Funding

The ISCM is funded as a part of the Watersportverbond. However, the activities of the ISCM generate a regular income from regattas and training events and consequently it is not simply a cost to the organisation. A substantial amount of income is by way of commercial sponsorship, which in turn is attracted both directly by the Centre and by the influence and reputation of the Watersportverbond.

There is no indication that the operation of the ISCM is in question or that funding is likely to be missing in the future, with plans well advanced for the ISCM to build an accommodation facility within the next two years. Applications have been submitted and a substantial amount of funding is already in place.

1.4 Time for Which Lead Person in Post

The Head Trainer who is employed by the Watersportverbond has been in post for the last two years as the National Laser Coach.

The ISCM Manager has been in post for over four years.

1.5 Job Title of Lead Person

The person with responsibility for the training activities in the context of an ISAF Approved Training Centre is Sietse-Jan Sietzema. His title is 'Head Trainer'.

Carlijn Botterweg is the ISCM Manager and carries responsibility for the preparation and availability of all of the Centre's resources.

1.6 Criteria for Selection of Lead Person

The Head Trainer was selected for the position because of his background as a qualified physical trainer, experience as the project leader for the successful Netherlands team at the Youth Olympic Games and current activities at international Laser class clinics. In addition to holding a sports university degree, Sietse-Jan retains a good level of current practice and personal experience through his additional work as a fitness trainer in a fitness institute.

1.7 Length of Service of Predecessor

There was no predecessor for the position of Head Trainer.

The previous ISCM Manager was in post for approximately six years.

1.8 Lead Person Reporting

The Head Trainer reports his activities directly to the Racing and Recreation Manager of the Watersportverbond.

1.9 People Reporting to the Lead Person

Everyone who is involved in delivering sessions either afloat or ashore will report to the Head Coach for activities related to ISAF Approved Training Centre programmes.

1.10 Recruitment of Programme Delivery Staff

The Head Trainer is aware of the requirement to recruit appropriately experienced staff for the delivery of all aspects of programme delivery. In the context of the performance training that currently takes place for the Watersportverbond, all of the staff either delivering elements of training or providing background advice are selected for their proven knowledge ability and experience.

1.11 Monitoring and Evaluating Effectiveness

The Watersportverbond has extensive experience of supporting Dutch athletes at World class events, which naturally includes monitoring and evaluation of performance. Consequently the ISCM will be able to draw on that experience and use a similar method for determining the effectiveness of their programmes.

The monitoring currently in place includes monthly reports of activity and quarterly reports of financial performance to the Watersportverbond Board.

1.12 Impact of National Legislation and Regulations

The Watersportverbond complies with all relevant legislation and regulations. As ISAF Approved Training Centre activities would be conducted in the same manner as those of the Watersportverbond there are no perceived difficulties.

2 Programme Design

2.1 Overall Responsibility

The Head Trainer will have overall responsibility for programme design. He has access to relevant specialists, with whom links are currently established.

2.2 Individual Training Needs Analysis

The current method of determining individual athlete's initial training needs is by scrutiny of both their CV and competition history. A similar method could be used for foreign athletes joining the ISCM especially if accompanied by a formal introduction and verification from the parent MNA.

2.3 Available Resources

The ISCM has an impressive range of craft, equipment, resources and facilities all of which are well suited to the training activities. The ISCM is capable of supporting training in all Olympic and Paralympic classes.

There are comprehensive workshop facilities on site that allow hull repairs, rig tuning and general maintenance to be carried out. Additional resources, including a sail-maker, are readily available in the nearby town.

Physical training is conducted both outside and in a well equipped gymnasium. Sessions observed during the audit were well structured and supervised by appropriately trained and qualified staff. There is an established dialogue with a range of universities and other sporting federations that supports the correct physical development of athletes. Physical development is monitored as part of the current programmes.

2.4 Recruitment and Monitoring of Technical Staff

The ISCM utilises well established links between the Watersportverbond and a wide range of technical advisers. As these have evolved from the experience of developing the Netherlands Sailing Team, it is concluded that they are fully conversant with the origin of queries and the environment in which their advice will be applied.

2.5 Allocation of Coaches to Athletes

Allocation of coaches to athletes is currently achieved by discussion within the coaching team. Factors considered are a combination of the training needs and preferences of the athletes.

2.6 Provision for Coach Development

Regular forums are held and post session discussions provide immediate feedback whenever possible.

Although there is no current explicit coach development programme, the involvement of foreign coaches and the potential to both share knowledge and learn from experience was discussed and seen as a significant development opportunity.

2.7 Review and Modification of Training Programmes

The Watersportverbond uses a web based record system that allows each individual athlete to store their personal information and record their activities. The system has controlled access that protects confidentiality but allows the athlete to share their personal record with their coach. The system is used with varying degrees of reporting by the athletes. When used effectively, the recording system allows a coach to tailor training elements to the progress and needs of the individual athlete.

3 Programme Management

3.1 Monitoring Programme Delivery

The Head Trainer will be responsible for monitoring programme delivery once the ISCM receives ISAF Approved Training Centre accreditation.

3.2 Available Resources

The ISCM has a limited number of boats available. The preference however, is for athletes to provide their own equipment. It is anticipated that, where the provision by Athletes is not feasible, boats would be made available.

As a purpose built site, the ISCM is an excellent venue and one that has been well maintained. The shore-side facilities are modern, well designed and provide a very flexible but comprehensive base with full access for anyone with disability. Audio visual facilities are available together with digital reference materials and high speed internet connections.

An independent catering facility is located on site, the proprietors of which are very willing to support the needs of the Centre.

3.3 Powered Safety and Coach Boats

There are several RIBs of sufficient size and performance to cover all of the Olympic classes. Most of these are quite new and there is an engine replacement policy in place that ensures, as much as is possible, that all of the safety and coach boats are reliable.

3.4 Suitability of Training Area

The ISMC is on the shore of The IJsselmeer, which is the largest lake in the Netherlands with an area of 1,100 km². Although there is a reasonable amount of other traffic, depending upon the season, it is possible to identify sufficiently large sailing areas in which to operate.

The weather factor is reported to be such that worthwhile training can be carried out on most days. The prevailing winds will normally provide a good training environment. Although the IJsselmeer is shallow, wind-blown waves can quickly form to provide a suitable sea state for developing and practising sailing techniques in waves.

3.5 Matching Programmes to Individual Athlete Requirements

Current practice includes a good dialogue between coaches and athletes that allows individual needs to be addressed. The web-based diary system provides a useful method for both reflection and planning if used to full advantage.

It may become necessary to give more attention to the requirement for tailored programme delivery when working with athletes who have arrived with different background pathways.

3.6 Training Records

The web based personal records are an excellent system for those who are receptive to that way of working. However, experience gained from current users is that not everyone makes best use of the facility.

As there is a requirement to maintain records of progress and performance, an alternative staff driven system will almost certainly need to be introduced.

3.7 Emergency Procedures

The ISCM has a well equipped on site First Aid room. Full medical facilities are available in the nearby town of Medemblik and further medical care is readily available depending upon the precise requirements.

3.8 Equipment Maintenance

The on-site workshop is well equipped and staffed by a group of volunteers. Additional technical facilities are available in Medemblik.

4 Programme Review and Development

4.1 Review of Training Programmes

Current practice relies upon post session reviews. Whilst these are appropriate for large squad groups, it is likely that a system of periodic formal reviews will be necessary in the context of the work of an ISAF Approved Training Centre.

4.2 Validation of Performance Reviews

The most obvious validation is by way of further improvement in performance based upon accurate assessments at specific points in the programme. The ISCM has been advised to consider this requirement, together with the method of achievement and reporting when it starts to run programmes for overseas athletes.

4.3 Use of Reviews to Improve Performance

The ISCM has been advised to consider the way in which it can gain benefit from the outcome of any reviews. Whilst this is not feasible without practical examples of overseas Athletes undergoing training programmes, a process for documenting outcomes, recording associated changes to future plans and impact of such changes should be embedded within the overall programme design. The ability to demonstrate or reflect on impact will almost certainly support future development of the programmes on offer.

5 Miscellaneous

5.1 Promotion of Training Activities

The ISCM has an informative web site that accurately describes what it is able to offer. Through the ISAF Approved Training Centre status, it is proposed that the web site will be updated accordingly, with relevant links to the ISAF web site inserted.

The ISCM has been advised to consider preparing a Fact Sheet that can be given to prospective 'clients' in order to inform them regarding what the ISCM can offer and some of the methods by which it sets out to achieve results.

5.2 Support to Potential Users

The ISCM will provide whatever support is reasonable and feasible to potential users.

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

There is a variety of accommodation available in the Medemblik area. The plans to build an accommodation unit may also provide a low cost option in the future.

The Watersportverbond has experience of providing logistical support, including on water coaching to athletes at World class events for the Netherlands Olympic and Paralympic athletes. The ISCM will be able to draw on this experience when planning related training programmes.

5.3 Social and Pastoral Support

The ISCM is aware that overseas athletes are likely to require a different level of support from the Dutch athletes with whom they currently work. Whilst it is possible to plan much of this in advance, it is unrealistic to expect to be able to cover every eventuality. A flexible approach will be needed, at least until some practical experience has been acquired.

Recommendation

The ISCM is a well equipped venue with adequate resources and established links to relevant agencies that combine to make it well suited to the task of delivering World class and Olympic / Paralympic standard coaching and athlete development. The venue has several years' worth of experience in hosting training and supporting athletes representing the Netherlands at World, Olympic and Paralympic competitions. It is therefore recommended that the ISCM be awarded ISAF Approved Training Centre status.

Action Plan

Upon granting the ISCM status as an ISAF Approved Training Centre, the following actions should be undertaken in order to establish an operationally effective venue delivering a World class and Olympic standard of coaching and athlete development.

- Create an identity for the ISAF Approved Training Centre work that differentiates it from the other activities run at the ISCM. The purpose of such an action is to ensure that those tasks that are specific to the ISAF work are not compromised by the normal running of the Centre.

- Devise a marketing strategy to actively promote the work of the ISCM as an ISAF Approved Training Centre and recruit overseas national athletes onto their programmes in order to ensure that their status is operationally active.
- Produce formal contracts for use between ISCM and both MNAs and individual athletes in order to establish a clear understanding of what is required of all of the relevant parties. Such contracts should include a record of the current ability of the athlete, details of the methods by which progress and performance are reported and actions to be taken in the event of variation.
- Devise a formal method for identifying and selecting suitable athletes for training and determining their specific training needs. The current profile of the athlete should be recorded in detail in order to establish a datum for measuring improvement.
- Establish a scheme of work that includes periodic reviews of progress and performance of athletes, coaches and contributing organisational factors. Such reviews should form the basis of and support feedback to MNAs and other stakeholders including NOCs and Olympic Solidarity if involved in the funding process.

Acknowledgement

The support, enthusiasm and hospitality of Christoffel van Hees, Carlijn Botterweg and Mark Schuurman was exemplary. Their enthusiasm for both the work that they currently do and the opportunity to expand this current delivery to a wider audience of international athletes was evident.

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