

Helsinki, 2nd November 2011

To the Member Federations of the IOF

World Orienteering Championships in the future

Proposal from the IOF Council

1. Background

Evaluation of Elite Events Programme

The current programme model for the World Orienteering Championships (WOC) was decided at the IOF Extraordinary General Assembly 2001 in Tampere, Finland. Related to the decision was a directive to make an evaluation of the programme when a sufficient number of championships had been staged. The Council announced at the 2008 General Assembly its decision to initiate a project to fulfil this obligation. The project included a broad survey of different aspects of WOC and involved a number of interest parties. In an internet-based poll, more than 400 replies were received.

The Council presented the survey results and gave the member federations opportunities to discuss the progress and results at two occasions: first at the 2009 Presidents' Conference in Lillafüred, Hungary, and then at the 2010 General Assembly in Trondheim, Norway. At the General Assembly, the Council presented its concluding guidelines for further development, which were generally supported. Further, the General Assembly voted in favour of a proposal from Norway to introduce a mass-start event in the WOC programme.

WOC in the Future

Given the results of the 2010 General Assembly, the Council appointed a project group consisting of 12 persons representing different areas of a WOC, e.g. athletes, coaches, organisers, and representatives for media and television, for smaller and developing orienteering federations and from outside Europe. The project group was given the task to develop a proposal for a future WOC programme based on the following principles:

- The programme should diversify
- The programme should remain within 8 days
- A new relay for mixed gender teams should be introduced

2. Council's proposal for a new WOC programme

Based on the work of the project group, the Council has concluded on a proposal for the future WOC as follows.

A modern and visible WOC

In the IOF strategy, WOC is underlined as the primary vehicle for making orienteering visible. It is therefore necessary to continue to develop WOC to be competitive in the modern media environment, to make it possible to raise its "market share" in sports media and to appeal to new generations of athletes and sports consumers. To achieve this, it is necessary to blend the traditional formats, based on interval starts, with new competition formats such as "first-to-finish" and action oriented events based on sprints. This blending should also include a mix of individual and team oriented events.

A WOC for all

The 2010 General Assembly decided on a changed policy for membership of the IOF. This meant that the number of nations which are allowed to take part in WOC dramatically increased, from the former full members to all members. In the IOF's strategy, it is considered important to have a broad participation of nations at WOC. It should be the event to celebrate the best, but also the yearly festival for world orienteering, involving the entire IOF family. In the development of the programme, this has been an important factor. It is reflected in the programme sequence where sprint-oriented events and events with no pre-qualification have been positioned in the earlier part, but also by giving more opportunities than in the past for the nations to take part in the finals without qualification races.

A WOC with focus on finals

To organise a WOC is a complex project, where the mapping of terrains and the arenas are two of the elements putting heavy demands on resources. Recognising the importance of maximising the promotional value of each WOC competition, it is found that the qualification races conducted today do not contribute enough. In order to enrich the programme it would be impossible to just add more finals, as the organiser's burden would become unrealistic and the demand to have a programme within 8 days would not be possible to meet. It is therefore necessary to remove the current qualification events of middle and long.

The Council presented its conclusions based on the work of the project group to the member federations at the Presidents' Conference in Chambéry, France in August 2011. The presentation included two alternatives, one with 4 finals and one with 5 finals. There was a general preference for an alternative with 5 finals, hence it is proposed that the future World Orienteering Championships should include the following formats:

- Sprint
- Sprint relay
- Middle
- Long
- Relay

3. Implementation

This chapter details the implementation by specifying the programme structure, participation rules and qualification for the Long final.

Programme structure and contents

For the athletes to have sufficient recovery, and for the organisers' and the television's need for time to re-group between settings in different arenas, the WOC programme is proposed to be structured in three blocks with a rest day between each block. Further, in polls and hearings conducted within the project, the chasing start format has received strong preference over the mass start format. A similar strong statement of support has been recorded for the Long to be maintained as an interval start format. This is reflected in the proposal.

Sprint individual	Interval start qualification + interval start final
Sprint relay	Mixed teams
Middle	Interval start prologue + chasing start final
Relay	Separate genders
Long	Interval start final

Participation

The principle to award start places to nations should be maintained. It means that the right to start is given to a nation (or to a region) which then decides on the athletes to start. The only exception to this is when awarding a start place to the reigning World Champion. This start place is personal.

The principle that a maximum of three athletes per nation can participate in a final is maintained. This can only be extended by places awarded to the reigning World Champion or to the Regions.

Format	Participation
Sprint	Qualification: 3 athletes per nation + reigning World Champion Final: According to results of qualification
Sprint relay	Final: 1 team per nation (2 women + 2 men)
Middle	Prologue: 3 athletes per nation + reigning World Champion Final (chasing start): All athletes completing the prologue
Relay	Final: 1 team per nation per each gender (men and women)
Long	Final: Pre-qualified athletes (details, see below)

For the Long final, starting places are awarded based on the following criteria:

Nation's places	Nations are ranked based on <u>all results achieved in the previous three WOC's</u> Women and men are calculated and ranked separately Nations ranked 13-24 are guaranteed one place Nations ranked 7-12 are guaranteed two places Nations ranked 1-6 are guaranteed three places
Regional place	Each region is guaranteed to start with at least one athlete
Individual place	The reigning World Champion is guaranteed a personal place

This will give a start field of 47-49 athletes from 28-30 nations, which can be compared to the current model where 45 athletes can start coming from between 22-25 nations.