

From: Peter Taylor 19 July 2007

Dear ARA Council members,

As a member of the ARA council (immediate past President) and also of the IRF (World Championships Competition Manager), I am writing this to comment on Neil Phillips' message to the ARA leadership group, which is copied below. I had not seen the message until Richard Robinson sent it to me, and I have a number of concerns with it.

When Neil asked me to take on the job of competition manager of the world championships, I said yes for two reasons. First, I thought that I could have a positive influence on the event itself. Second, I thought that if someone who had essentially been 'in the opposite camp' from Neil and Rod Phillips became part of the IRF, it could create an opportunity to resolve the impasse that has existed between the ARA and the IRF for too many years. Further supporting this opportunity was the fact that Phil Holman, who had good relationships with Neil and Rod, was President of the ARA.

Over the last eighteen months or so, Neil, Rod, Phil, David Rowlands and myself have been meeting to try to work out a framework under which the ARA could join the IRF. Phil, David and myself thought that we had just about done this with a proposal that is pretty much the same as that which the ARA council has recently voted in favour of. The major ingredients of this proposal were that

- the ARA will join the IRF immediately provided that the IRF works towards a situation where all of its members are national peak rogaining bodies, rather than individual people,
- upon joining, the ARA would start making a significant contribution, both financially and in terms of expertise, to the development of rogaining overseas (for example it might invite and fund organisers of future World Rogaining Championships to visit major championship rogaines in Australia), and
- the current members of the IRF who do not represent a national peak rogaining body be allowed a time period of two years to organise such a peak rogaining body (which could take a number of forms) in their country. If they do not do so, then their status on the IRF would be as observers rather than members.

The basis of the discussions was the ARA's position that it is unreasonable for it to join a federation in which a number of members have essentially been appointed by Neil and Rod. Thus, the intention was to work towards a situation where the IRF is made up of national peak rogaining bodies (plus an executive), but recognising the reality that there needs to be a lead time in working from the current situation to such a position.

Neil's message below proposes that the ARA join the IRF as is. This is a completely different course of action to that which at least Phil, David and I thought we were working towards. Of course, Neil is entitled to put his opinion, but I am disappointed to see that it is so different from the direction in which our negotiations were heading. Unfortunately, I

have to say that such an about turn in not inconsistent with the sorry history of ARA/IRF interactions over the fifteen years that I have been involved with them.

With respect to the specific content of Neil's message, I have the following comments.

- The history quoted there is, to say the least, selective.
- The absence of the ARA from the IRF is a major issue. International rogaining has developed reasonably well over the last fifteen years, but with more resources it could have developed better. I believe that it ought to have done so. To help international rogaining develop as it should over the next ten years, a way needs to be found for the ARA to join the international body.
- As one of the three ex-ARA presidents mentioned in the message, I do not support the proposal that the ARA join an IRF that has its current membership structure.
- Neil and Rod do communicate well via newsletters. However, it is not true that the IRF has open governance. An immediate example is Neil's message below. I'm an office holder of the IRF as well as a council member of the ARA and I didn't even know that he was planning to send the message, let alone have any input into it.
- Regarding governance and democracy, the IRF has elections, but the electorate is not well defined. Indeed it changes very frequently due to Rod and Neil inviting new people to be involved.

To summarise, I'm not happy that Neil's message implies that I support its proposals. On the contrary, I support the ARA's recently-enunciated position which sets out the conditions that would need to be satisfied for it to join the IRF.

Best wishes,

Peter Taylor
19 July 2007

The message from Neil.

To the Australian Rogaining Association leadership group

This is an open letter to the Australian Rogaining Association leadership encouraging you to consider seriously the benefits of joining the International Rogaining Federation. This could be done speedily, and on similar terms and conditions to a number of other member countries. The timing of this letter is to coincide with the annual meeting of the ARA in July 2007.

The last time a broad vote of Australian rogainers was made public, there was strong opinion in favour of the ARA joining the IRF; to quote from July, 2001 [needs citation]:

“Are you aware that at the recent vote to join the IRF,
- States representing 75% of Australian rogainers voted to join the IRF.
- Two-thirds of the ARA executive voted to join.
- 80% of the subcommittee set up by the ARA to deal with this matter supported joining.
- 83% of the ARA representatives at the Sydney meeting with the IRF supported joining.
From the IRF perspective, every single ARA representative (except one) who has sat down and discussed the current issues with the IRF supported joining. That's no mean feat.”

Rogaining is expanding rapidly. 19 countries are represented on the IRF Council. An Estonian event recently attracted 900 rogainers. From an overseas perspective, the presence or absence of the ARA in the IRF is not a major issue. However, at an Australian level, and at a personal level, the ARA not being a member is a tragedy. The period of time that Australia will be the pre-eminent rogaining nation is limited. These years should be used guiding and strengthening the international spread of the sport along the ways exemplified by Australian rogaining. The IRF executive believes that maintaining the role and the significance of the ARA is beneficial to the sport and has worked hard to do this. This is not always easy.

Understandably, many of us have ideas on how we might improve the operation of our rogaining associations. Different ideas and debate on what direction the IRF can take and how it might be structured can be useful. Australian rogainers are better served having the ARA influencing these debates from inside the IRF, rather than from without. Over the years, there are many examples of the IRF taking suggestions from Australian rogainers seriously and acting upon them. In 1995, the IRF was advised to improve its communication, in 1997 its legal structure and protection for office bearers was discussed and improved, in 2000 it was transparency, elections and governance, since then it has been unified rules and standards, and quality of major rogaines. All these have been acted upon decisively. In consultation with the ARA, the IRF is currently developing a Code of Conduct to guide constructive interaction, tightening and reviewing its membership globally, preparing for elections, and has foreshadowed the opportunity to revise and update its Constitution.

The IRF Executive team includes three former Presidents of the Australian Rogaining Association: please speak to any of these three about the value of the ARA joining the IRF. For those who are interested, I have attached a two page article addressing specific issues.

Neil Phillips
June 2007

Why it may be reasonable for the ARA to join the IRF

Credibility

The IRF is recognized by virtually all rogaining countries (including Australia) as the peak world organization for the sport. The IRF sanctions or oversees three of the four major international rogaines (WRC, European Rogaining Championships, North American

Rogaining Championships), the other being the ARA Championships. All major overseas rogaining championships use the IRF rules, which are derived from, and almost identical with, the ARA rules. All major decisions about international rogaining are made through the IRF.

Transparent governance

The IRF is extraordinarily open and transparent in its functioning. For several years, we have included the ARA president and other ARA senior figures in discussions, AGMs and other meetings, decisions, newsletters and planning. We send out a two-page letter monthly. We forward to all members and to the ARA, a separate monthly report on the roles and responsibilities of each executive member listing all activities and what is planned by the executive.

Good governance

For a decade, the IRF has adopted a professional approach to the running of the sport. There has been a continued evolution of strategic planning, with regular input from many of you and from virtually all rogaining countries. We have an annual schedule of elections allowing for steady rotation of all executive positions on a four yearly cycle. We are soon to hold elections for 2007, including an election held over from 2006. Officers have been guided by an informal code of conduct that is currently being revised and formalized.

Democracy

The IRF constitution and the way it is applied are highly democratic. If a country meets the specified requirements for membership (largely related to running 24 hour rogaines), it can get a vote in either of two ways. If the country has a national body representing rogainers, providing rogainers with adequate autonomy and seeking to represent them, that body will nominate the national representatives. If there is no such body, the IRF secretary will coordinate a process whereby all the senior rogainers in a country nominate and then elect their own representatives directly to the IRF. This process is renewed as required for each individual country. It is time consuming and labour intensive, but very democratic. The advantage of this structure is that it has allowed rogainers from many more countries to be represented on the IRF with a vote.

IRF plans for this year

The membership structure has been severely criticized by a few Australian rogainers as being 'wrong' or 'undemocratic' for allowing individuals to represent countries. Interestingly, there is indeed a problem with the current IRF structure but this problem is the opposite of that suggested by those criticisms. The current structure takes democratic representation to a level that is too labour intensive and time consuming to be sustainable. It is equivalent to all Victorian rogainers casting a direct vote for the VRA president, more democratic but more costly than the current arrangement. For this reason, the IRF membership structure is under review and will be voted on later this year. As the first step in that process, the IRF has spent much of the past year updating the membership and making sure that all those who may be entitled to vote on the IRF structure (which of course includes the ARA) have the opportunity to do so. This process is likely to result in rogainers from ten countries being part of that vote and rogainers from a further nine countries being important contributors to that decision.

Self interest

Fifteen years ago, the ARA was seen worldwide as the Mecca of rogaining. It was seen as the holder of the philosophy and standards of the sport. It had an aura and credibility internationally. Inevitably, some of this has decreased as rogaining grows elsewhere, but much Australian influence still remains. The ARA can best use this influence positively by joining the IRF. In many respects, the current situation of the ARA not being a member is like the boycotts of the Los Angeles and Moscow Olympic games in the 80s. No one remembers the compelling reasons, and the lasting affect has been on individuals.