

DRAFT

World Para Nordic Skiing Sport Forum

Summary of main outcomes

February 2017

Dear all, please find below a summary of the main outcomes from the World Para Nordic Skiing Sport Forum which took place in Finsterau, Germany on 17 February 2017.

Notes:

1. Welcome

2. Roll call

3. World Para Nordic Skiing Chairperson Report (Rob Walsh – RW)

a. Introduction of STC members:

- i. John Farra (JF) – Vice Chairperson
- ii. Tor Undheim (TU) – Head of Competition
- iii. Dia Pernot (DP) – Head of Classification
- iv. Len Apedaile (not present) – Head of Technical Control
- v. Alexey Kobelev (not present) – Head of Biathlon
- vi. Akzhana Abdikarimova (not present) – Athlete representative

b. Election for new Athlete Representative

- i. The 2 year term for Akzhana's role as athlete rep has concluded. WPNS had send out forms for nomination of candidates to be the new athlete representative, but no nominations were submitted so we are not holding elections here at World Championships as planned. The STC highly values the involvement of athletes and the role of the athlete representative. We will extend the nomination period and will hold elections during the World Cup event in Pyeongchang.
- ii. There are some challenges that decrease the candidates for athlete representative: the time commitment required and the need to be able to conduct meetings in English are challenges for some. Some nations indicate they may have an athlete who is interested, though.
- iii. Interested athletes need to contact their NPC to have the proper nomination forms submitted. If an athlete is interested and is having difficulty with the nomination process please contact Rob Walsh.

c. Two greatest challenges facing the STC are Classification and Development

- i. Development: There are other sports applying for participation in the PWG and to remain as part of the games we need to show that we have a strong, growing sport. We need to develop more programs in new countries and also increase the number of athletes in the nations currently competing. Nations are asked to support these efforts since they will benefit all.
- ii. Classification: We will get a report on classification later in the meeting.

4. IPC Head of Snow Sports Report (Dimitrije Lazarovski (DL))

- a. Rebranding: Beginning this season we are transitioning from being IPC Nordic Skiing to World Para Nordic Skiing. This is being done for all IPC sports with the goal of providing more development of the sports outside of the Paralympic Games. This should provide more flexibility with possible sponsors.
- b. SDMS: This year we implemented online systems for entries which should make event planning and registration better for both teams and organizers.
- c. Development Grants: This past year we had grant from German government to introduce 3 nations (Armenia, Iran, Lebanon) to get equipment for 2 athletes each in lead up to 2018 PWG. This year we will try for 6 additional countries for a camp for development. This should include classification to allow participation in PWG 2018.
- d. 2022 PWG: The event program has not yet been finished. Nordic Skiing risks losing some events if we do not increase numbers at World Cup, World Championships and other events.
- e. FIS Subcommittee: Cooperation with FIS and Para Alpine skiing is making good progress, especially in Youth races. We are looking for opportunities for similar cooperation for Nordic.
- f. Marketing: the new effort to live stream from World Cup and World Championships has been successful, and will continue to provide opportunities for future sponsors. Dimitrije will work with broadcasters to make live stream content available when they want it.

5. WPNS Classification Report

- a. DL - VI classification research: This new research project will lead to a sport specific classification process for Nordic skiing. We hope to have this in place for the 2018-19 seasons. Thank you to those athletes who have participated so far.
- b. DL - Sit ski classification research should be finished after next year's World Cup in Oberried.
- c. USA – would like to see the plan for conclusion of the sit ski research and how it will have impact, including effectiveness of the expert meeting.
- d. DL - Standing classification research is being investigated. The STC made a proposal last summer to make adjustments to LW standing classes (including separating LW5 from LW7) but this was not approved by the IPC Classification Committee.
 - i. GBR – In the future the STC should let the NPCs/nations know when a proposal is being made so that it can be supported (identify committee members, make sure WPNS is present in the discussion).
- e. A classification expert meeting will be held in Bonn in June. We need coaches and athlete involvement to make it most beneficial.
- f. DP gave a presentation regarding the sit ski research and results. The full presentation of the research can be made available on request.
 - i. One of the conclusions of the researchers is that we need more data, more athletes in the LW10 class in order to increase the confidence of results. One possibility would be to use athletes from other sports but so far we have not been able to arrange this with interested athletes (from alpine or rugby for example). Suggestion from USA that perhaps we can use retired athletes from Nordic.
 - ii. CAN suggests that future tests should focus on trunk stability with trunk leaning forward at 45 degree angle, as this is an optimal poling position.
- g. GER – research does not always reflect reality. Sometimes the people on the track are more informed of true data.
- h. GER suggests that classifiers be present at all World Cup events in order to gain a more practical understanding of the sport.

- i. CAN – We would like to see a written definition of what is considered “evidence based” for the purposes of defining sport classes. DL suggests that this could be found on the IPC website.

6. WPNS Competition Report

- a. TU presented the planning calendar of events for the next several years (see slide presentation for details).
- b. TU – STC is also looking to increase race formats that use “first to finish” as determining winner. This could include relay, mass start or pursuit. Currently we have a sprint and CC relay.
- c. A short survey was handed out at the Sport Forum so nations could submit suggestions and thoughts on race formats.
- d. Discussion on options for changing World Championship format
 - i. GER – believes having a WCH event every year will promote the sport
 - ii. FRA – having WCH every other year allows teams to save funding, and gives more importance to the event.
 - iii. GBR – supports GER idea of WCH every year.
 - iv. Suggestion that splitting BT and CC championships might help promote BT more
 - 1. Could also make the event schedule less crowded so athletes would be more likely to compete in all distances.
 - 2. CAN – splitting the championships could also allow for each sport to have more races and this means more classic races for CC at WCH.
 - 3. TU – perhaps we can have WCH for BT in 2020 and see if it is successful.
 - 4. JF – suggestion that nations put forward recommendations for possible organizers for such an event.
 - v. No clear preference was evident for which model to use (every year, alternate years, etc.) STC will continue to discuss.

7. WPNS Technical Control Report

- a. The TD Working group is working on new WC and WCH rules along with TD checklist and organizer manual updates.
- b. Updated documents can be found on website
- c. TD/BT IR seminar was held in Sept 2016 in Bonn. This seminar is now held in person every 2 years and done by internet in other years to save money.
- d. WPNS needs 2-3 more TDs and BT IR, especially in Europe, to help work events. LA will continue to look for good candidates.
- e. Report about 2018 PWG
 - i. LA is Race Director, liaison for OC and WPNS, FIS, IBU
 - ii. Sit ski course construction was completed in Dec 2016
 - iii. Snow Control inspection was held Feb 1-3. There are some challenges but for now progress is on track.
- f. Equipment Inventory
 - i. This is second year. Improvements were made this year to provide more information.
 - ii. Some question about rifles – if the rifle has been adapted to address the impairment of the athlete then it should be included in the inventory. If you are unsure then please enter it.
 - iii. Reminder that modifications to equipment in the inventory need to be submitted so that the information in the inventory is current. Minor adjustments can be made during the season but major changes need to be submitted by Sept. 1

8. WPNS Biathlon report

- a. Shooting equipment – Air rifle, electronic, .22 cal
 - i. Over the past 2 years we have done tests with athletes using electronic and .22 rifles.
 - ii. Tests did not show a clear path of which is best for the future of the sport, so for now the STC recommends that we continue to use air rifles and make a strategic evaluation of the alternatives in the future.
 - iii. UKR recommends not changing from air rifle. CAN and GER agree.

- iv. Nations requested that no change be made until after the 2022 PWG in order to allow for planning and transition. STC will discuss in the spring and make an announcement.
- b. Biathlon relay format has been tested in Vuokatti this season. There are some changes that need to be made but overall but athletes seem to like the concept. STC will continue to work on this.
- c. CAN – with CHN bringing a large team and RUS returning in the future, this means that our current limit of 10 range points might not be enough. Recommends increasing the number of required range points for hosting. STC will investigate.
- d. RW – WPNS biathlon range is not being used by organizers for World Cup and still costs WPNS money to maintain. To avoid this the range could be sold in Europe. Organizers would then have to rent the range from regional owners of equipment, as is often done now.
 - i. KOR – How does WPNS plan to ensure that all ranges work at events and are current?
 - ii. Increase in expertise by BT IR should help. Ranges in most regions are owned by private organizations not IPC so they are responsible for maintenance.
- e. STC would like to resume the activity of the BT working group. We are starting discussion with Kurvinen about having private rifles for VI athletes – this would be one topic working group would be helpful in solving.

9. NPC Recommendations:

- a. NOR: For World Cups, WCH and PWG – We want on official biathlon training on the day before the first biathlon event. This official training shall be arranged at the same exact time period as the competition time on the following day.
 - i. RW said that the STC recognizes the importance of having good training opportunities before BT events and already does put an official training day (without competition) before the first BT race when possible. Sometimes other interests conflict with this such as classification/first appearance, Organizers ability to get volunteers, desire by teams for a short event, etc. STC proposes that this recommendation from Norway be a “best practice” and we will try to arrange it but not make it a rule.

- ii. NOR agrees to make it a best practice but not a written rule.
- iii. All in favor. 0 Against.
- b. FRA: Modification of the B1 race factor in Biathlon
 - i. Since this is the same recommendation as GER we discussed them together as one.
 - ii. FRA says that the best would be to include all of the range time and not just shooting, since finding the lane/mat/rifle could also be an issue.
 - iii. RW – Right now the only data we have is from time of rifle activation (swiping the chip) to first shot.
- c. GER: Adapt the %-factor in BT for B 1 Athletes to compensate the disadvantage in shooting time.
 - i. RW – WPNS Biathlon IR Joe Bajan has got data from Kurvinen for many years and is looking at this “first shot” data to find out what the disadvantage is and then we can find a way to make it more fair. This effort was started this season. Other efforts (such as putting a screen to block the view of the targets) were also tried.
 - ii. Hans Peter Neeser (former STC Head of Biathlon) said this issue is very complicated. An advantage might be not only in range time but penalty time, but some of this is included in the ski time factor.
 - iii. UKR – They have one B1 athlete and agree that this is a disadvantage but the amount is very difficult to calculate. If we want to make a good decision then we need someone to put in a lot of time to study this.
 - iv. GER: Even if the adjustment is not perfect, if we can make an improvement it is worthwhile.
 - v. RW proposes that the STC will continue to work with the data we have for Kurvinen and make an adjustment based on this as a partial solution for the near future. No objections from nations.

10. Meeting closed

11. ACTIONS:

- a. STC to continue to request classification changes and include nations in this discussion.
- b. Plan for classification will be addressed at expert meeting.
- c. STC will continue work on % factor for VI athletes in BT to include shooting time data.
- d. STC will work with Coaches group to continue work on BT relay format.
- e. STC will discuss shooting format changes during spring and announce if we will make any changes before 2022.
- f. Nations are asked to complete the written survey distributed in the sport Forum and return to the race office or TCM before the end of WCH.
- g. Nations are asked to identify good potential organizers for future WPNS events (regional or WC level)
- h. Nations are asked to ensure their equipment inventory information is complete and current.
- i. Nations are asked to submit any recommendations for development opportunities for the sport.

World Para Nordic Skiing 2017 Sport Forum Survey Results

Question	Yes	No	Other / No Answer
1. World Championships			
1a. Are you in favor of having WCH every year?	1	9	1
1b. Are you in favor of WCH every year except Paralympic years?	6	5	0
1c. Are you in favor of separating BT and CC WCH into 2 shorter events and alternating one every year (CC one year, BT next)	2	7	2
2. Race Formats			
2a. Do you support BT Relay that was tested this year (with small changes)?	4	5	2
2b. Do you support a BT relay if different from what was tested this year?	7	0	4
2c. Do you support the idea of a CC skiathon/pursuit with a short (+/- 30 min) break to calculate skating leg start time? Mass start, first across the finish wins.	6	2	3

3a. What is the biggest challenge to getting new athletes in your nation?

Not all athletes will ever be able to be a part of a National Team or attend international competitions because of the systems as it is today. A lot of LW9 athletes will be treated unfair by the system for classes and % as it is today. They have lost even before enter the start line. That doesn't increase amount of athletes. You don't want to spend year of training without to get any chance to reach your goal, because of unfair system.

For VI athletes challenging to get guides at their home places.

Weak foundation in snow sport & ice sport

Most athletes do not understand rules & regulations in sports and classification

Not enough known for the sport to the people in our nation

No snow in much of the country so it is not a popular sport

Very hard sport to train for disabled persons

Long path to success

Too many options for other activities for athletes

Not enough athletes, many federations trying to steal athletes

Expensive to train and compete (Money)

Money

Money

not enough events for athletes in para sport

not enough effort to find and scout new athletes

3b. What is the biggest challenge to holding WPNS Continental Cup or other sanctioned race in your nation?

Where to get financial support

Money

Money

Lack of Human Resources, lack of organizer experience

Technical officials, facilities of the resort & venue

Lack of snow and facilities

We have hosted IPC events each of the past few years at significant expense
Finding clubs that have the knowledge and resources to hold para events with 6 races per day.
Complicated process for getting rifles in/out country
Why call it an Asian Cup if non-Asian can compete?
New infrastructure (BT range) has to be set up each time since no permanent need for international competitions

3c. What ideas do you have for growing the sport of Para Nordic?
Take care of athletes with several disability (LW9/LW3/LW2) and use the abilities within the %-system to make a more fair competition
Make classification more fair to allow for legitimate recruiting of athletes from any class with a chance of success
"Rookies race" - or maybe a junior's race to introduce young athletes in the sport in a proper way.
Technical official training/education project (need more)
Different level WPNS competition should be held in different regions
More support from IPC
Hire someone highly experienced in media and event management into WPNS
More media coverage
More sponsors
Lower participation fee
Organize events for able-bodied and disabled to compete together
More first-to-finish race formats
Help reduce expenses for taking up Nordic sport perhaps by making used equipment available

4. Other Comments
Attract more sponsors to cooperate with IPC &NPCs
We think it's a good concept with Paralympics every 4th year, World Championships every 2nd year. This will keep the status of a WCH. And the long CC-distance should be the last day.
Try separate WCH each 7-9 days in odd years, and cancel one WC that year to keep # of events the same.
Need for objective classification based on latest medical research on range of motion and muscle strength
More fair classification, especially for VI
Bring ID athletes back into IPC games
More promotion / advocacy in regions with lower Nordic culture
Do not allow smoking at events in areas where athletes are present
In relays hard to understand fairness - on sitting courses the standing athletes with one pole and sitting athletes should be about the same speed
Course design for standing athletes with 2 poles feels unfair for athletes with only 1 or 0 poles