

Administration in sport — a much needed kick-start?



The second issue of the *South African Journal of Sports Medicine* in 2004 coincides with an exciting time of the year for sporting events. This is the time for the Comrades marathon, Berg River canoe race, Tour de France, European Cup and Wimbledon — all great events with a rich history. The new international rugby season begins for South Africa while the athletes

from various sporting codes prepare themselves for the Olympic Games. While this is a busy time of the year for the competitors in the various events, it is also a busy time for the support staff behind the scenes; the sports doctors, physiotherapists, biokineticists, coaches and administrators. Of these support staff, the administrators are facing increasing pressure as they are expected to deliver a professional service, often with little financial reimbursement. The days of the 'blazer brigade' administrators, to use the term coined by a rugby journalist, are numbered. Now the sport administrators are expected to act as facilitators, who plan and strategise to increase the level of sporting performance, while also devoting energy and resources to increasing mass participation in their sport. While the administrators of some sporting codes are achieving success, other administrators are clearly dragging their feet, enjoying the cocktail parties and high-profile functions while the sport they have been given the responsibility to manage slips and slides towards mediocrity. Perhaps it is quite timely that the Sport and Recreation Distributing Agency (SRDA) of the National Lottery Board has asked the South African Sports Commission to facilitate a process to formulate relationships between the SRDA, tertiary institutions and priority sports federations with the goal of assisting these federations with the development of their respective codes of sport. This process is underway. The next step requires the federations to prepare a 4-year plan which they can submit for funding to the SRDA.

The areas with the potential to be covered by this funding are:

- scientific and medical support, including biomechanics
 - sports technology
 - life skills
 - athlete career and education
 - team preparation and training camps
 - equipment requirements (sports specific and sports science equipment)
 - coaching
 - education and training, including the development of unit standards (coaches, administrators and technical officials)
- information management, including database development
 - modified sport programmes
 - addressing access and equity issues, including transformation and inclusion of the disabled
 - sports management, including the development of succession plans for the NFs
 - facility management
 - talent identification
 - research
 - infrastructure (from club to national level)
 - high performance plans.

Plans are also underway for professional consultants to assist the federations so that the 4-year plan has clear objectives with accountabilities for the administrators. If this process is managed properly it may prove to be the elusive light at the end of the tunnel that signals an improvement in the management of our sport.

This issue of the *Journal* contains a range of interesting topics. The paper (van der Merwe and Grobbelaar), showing that over-the-counter nutritional supplements may be contaminated and cause a positive drug test, is cause for alarm. This paper is important from two perspectives: (i) athletes need to show more responsibility when using nutritional supplements as the risk of a positive drug test associated with these supplements is real; and (ii) manufacturers of supplements need to bear some of the responsibility of proving to the consumer that their product is free of contaminated substances and they also need to be accountable should an athlete test positive for a banned substance while using their product. Shelly Meltzer, dietician and board member of the Institute of Drug Free Sport comments on this study and provides further information on the use of nutritional supplements in sport.

The next study, by St Clair Gibson and colleagues, raises the question of 'accelerated ageing' in muscles associated with repetitive weight-bearing exercise and poses some interesting questions for future research studies.

Research into exercise immunology is the fastest growing branch of exercise science. This branch of research is also alive and well in South Africa, with a series of papers from Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria and Stellenbosch University. Next there is a two-part paper on dietary macronutrient recommendations for optimal recovery after exercise. This comprehensive review contains 135 references on studies that have investigated various aspects of nutritional intervention and recovery after exercise and offers some practical, evidence-based guidelines for practitioners and athletes alike. I trust that you will enjoy reading this issue!

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