

OA Head Coach Report – WOC 2017

Preparations for WOC 2017 got underway in August 2016, when I, and athlete Leon Keely went to Tartu, to check out the area, as well as going to a few Forest and Sprint areas, for training.

June 2017:

As WOC was early this year (before JWOC) I arrived in Finland on Saturday, 17th, and attended Jukola – Joensuu. Seeing that WOC started on Friday, 30th June, I decided to start the pre WOC camp on Tuesday, 20th June, to allow 10 days before the first event. Five athletes took up this option, Bridget, Simon, Belinda, Krystal and Henry. Brodie arrived on Friday, 23rd, Natasha and Matthew arrived on Monday, 26th, along with Manager Wendy, with the final athlete, Bryan arriving on Thursday, 28th

Accommodation for the pre WOC camp was at Kullaga, from the 20th until the 27th, were we then shifted to the Team accommodation at Puhja, until WOC was over.

Training, got underway on the day we arrived, Sprint map near Tartu. Over the next week we got a good mix of Sprint, and Forest areas to train in. Training for such a diverse group of athletes, all with different events, and races to do at different times of our stay over there, went well, with the athletes working well together, to minimise the need to go back to a area, that someone else had trained in the day before, or going to, the day after.

WOC Week:

Sprint Qual: Henry and Krystal ran well to qualify easy, Natasha just made it

Sprint: 37th and 39th from Henry and Krystal respectively, Natasha mispunched the spectator control

Sprint Relay: Not the best start (22nd) from Krystal, being held up by other runners, strong run from Henry (21st) solid run from Simon (20th) nice finish from Natasha. Final place 20th

Long: Nice strong run from Bryan (39th) solid run from Natasha, (39th) another good performance from Krystal (42nd) workman like effort from Matthew (44th)

Middle: Great solid run from Simon (34th) solid run from Matthew (42nd) disappointing run from Belinda (52nd) likewise from Bridget (54th)

Relay: Men: Excellent run from Simon (14th) not so good from Henry (19th) solid finish from Matthew. Final place 18th Women: Disappointing run from Krystal (22nd) shocker from Belinda (23rd) solid run from Natasha. Final place 23rd

Belinda:

- Sprint Qual, 20th, 40 secs of qualifying.
- Middle, 52nd, + 24.40 min/75.6% from 1st place
- Relay, 2nd leg, + 25.10 min, Leg place 23rd, Team place 23rd

Bridget:

- Middle, 54th, + 26.16 min/80.5% from 1st place

Brodie:

- Sprint Qual, 24th, 45 secs of qualifying.

Bryan:

- Long, 39th, + 34.20 min/32.5% from 1st place

Henry:

- Sprint Qual, 7th, 23 secs inside qualifying.
- Sprint, 37th, + 1.44 min/12.1% from 1st place.
- Sprint relay, 2nd leg, + 2.06 min, Leg place 19th, Team place 21st
- Relay, 2nd leg, + 15.03 min, Leg place 25th, Team place 19th

Krystal:

- Sprint Qual, 8th, 41 secs inside qualifying.
- Sprint, 39th, + 3.06 min/22.3% from 1st place
- Sprint relay, 1st leg, + 2.11 min, Leg place 22nd, Team place 22nd
- Long, 42nd, + 34.46 min/43.9% from 1st place
- Relay, 1st leg, + 16.30 min, Leg place 22nd, Team place 22nd

Matthew:

- Long, 44th, + 41.14 min/39.1% from 1st place
- Middle, 42nd, + 8.37 min/25.9% from 1st place
- Relay, 3rd leg, + 6.58 min, Leg place 18th, Team place 18th

Natasha:

- Sprint Qual, 15th, 00 secs inside qualifying.
- Sprint, Mis Punch
- Sprint relay, 4th leg, + 3.46 min, Leg place 17th, Team place 20th
- Long, 39th, + 31.48 min/40.2% from 1st place
- Relay, 3rd leg, + 9.49 min, Leg place 14th, Team place 23rd

Simon:

- Sprint Qual, 21st, 19 secs of qualifying.
- Sprint relay, 3rd leg, + 2.59 min, Leg place 18th, Team place 20th
- Middle, 34th, + 7.04 min/21.4% from 1st place
- Relay, 1st leg, + 3.18 min, Leg place 14th, Team place 14th

Were to from here?

Was starting the Pre Camp 10 days out, to long? It may have been, but not by much. Back in previous years when we had forest only WOC's, getting into the terrain 10 days out was the done thing, not only to get use to the unfamiliar terrain, but to get over the shift in time zone, and to acclimatise to a Europe Summer. But with the Sprint being the first discipline, we don't need to be there as early. terrain is so similar, temperature plays less of a problem, so getting over travel is the remaining issue. Could get away with 7 days, which is what Brodie did.

On the other hand, when we go to forest WOC's only, we need the 10 days, unless you have been to the area previously, something that Bryan did, and it worked well for him. Olav Lundanes had some 70 visits to the Tartu terrain in 2017 alone, so having familiarisation with the local forests pays of.

We need more hard races. Of the 6 Sprint Qualification races, 2 were won in 10.33, the average winning time was 11 mins. We don't have races that quick, we still seem to panda to the idea that if we are doing a Sprint, we want our moneys worth, so the longer we are out there, the more value we get. This is wrong. If we cant have races in the 11 min area, how are our athletes going to get the experience of real fast racing. So many of our athletes commented after the race was over, and they had only just started, they never got up to full speed.

Likewise in the Long, we don't go long enough. This years winning times were 105 and 80 mins. This years Oceania was 96 and 82, we need more of this. Last years Aus Champs was 82 and 69, far to short. We have 2 chances a year to get this right, the Aus Champs, and the May selection trials, and we could include Easter. We need to do this, otherwise when are our athletes going to get the experience.

Relays. This is our big time let down. We have the team to do better than this, its just that we cant get the result. For some reason, the average Australian Orienteer, does like, or doesn't compete in Relays. They are seen as the 'last event of the week' and 'I'm not good enough' or 'I will let the team down'. We need more of a 'team' atmosphere. This can start in Clubs, but needs to be in NOL's. Some states are going down this road, SA and Qld come to mind. There is a team training's, and accommodation at NOL events, but we also need to do much more if Australia is going to get results that show the quality of our runners.

Our runners have to also step up, and get experience when they can. There are Athletic events, Road, Cross Country and Relay that are available. Our team members should be taking all the chances they can get, and become members of they local Athletics Club, do these races, do the training's, do all the stuff, so that they can get use to the demands of 'real' competition. We need to get out of our comfort zone (Orienteering) and put ourselves in situations were the result is unexpected, this is were when we will experience the full effect of being anxious, and therefore nervous, or fearful of what the outcome could be.

How to achieve this

We need to get our heads out of the forest, and train with the best that are out there. Maja Alm does 9.06 and 15.40 for 3 & 5 k respectively. She races against PPL like Eloise Wellings. If she does, why dont we? Then there are the Boys, they are running around 8 and 14 for the 3 & 5 k. When Ralph Street spent the Summer of 2015/16 in Victoria, he joined up with Athletics Victoria, and ran a number of 5 k track races. How many Australian Orienteers were doing the same? If we dont get out there, and run and train hard, how are we ever going to race hard once we get to WOC

What about ParkRun? Every Saturday morning in many places around Australia (and the World) were you get a free time trial over 5 k. Triathlon and Trail/Mountain running are also possibilities, the answer is out there, but our athletes need to get out of there comfort zone, and experience some hard racing.

Do we take a leaf out of the AFL book, and look more internationally? NZ isn't that far away, and while we get there on a regular basis, there is much more on offer that we can use. The terrain is different, the competitors are different, the athletes will not be in there comfort zone, that's what we need.

Then there is Asia. Its not that far away. The Asian Junior and Youth Orienteering Championships are in August for M/W 20, 18 and 16. They have a Sprint, Sprint Relay and Middle race. This is true International racing and right on our door step. While we will be unofficial, its the experience that our team members get that counts. We also have a lot of expertise within Australian Orienteering, we could help develop these countries, and in return, we get the racing experience we so desire.

When I was at JWOC after this years WOC, I got talking to a Danish team official. They were talking about a couple of Girls, that they spending some time on, some where in the region of a Maja on running speed. There argument is its easier to teach someone to Orienteer, than it is to teach them to run. Should we look at those who show a interest, and help them more to learn Orienteering. Is Joseph Dickinson one of these? Comes from a Soccer back ground, has the ethos to train hard, now he Orienteer's and gets the results. Joanna Maynard is another. You dont win races without having ability. She trains, and runs hard. If we spent some more time on her, just like the Danish team does, will we get some better results?

There is no doubt that success breeds success, we only need to look over the ditch to see that working.

While not directly connected to a WOC report, but to getting the best from our Athletes, are we giving them the chance of doing hard courses, early enough? Check out the course here <http://rg.akaver.com/gadget/cgi-bin/reitti.cgi?act=map&id=130> for W12 (Milla Key) This was the Spectator race as WOC, is a moderate course, and so much harder, (but still easy) than anything you get in Australia.

If we cant give our Athletes the experience of competing on hard courses earlier in there development, they are starting way out the back of the pack once we get to JWOC/WOC.



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