



High Performance Review

April - July 2015

Conducted by Wilma Shakespear

Sail Canada | Voile Canada

Portsmouth Olympic Harbour
53 Yonge Street | rue Yonge
Kingston, Ontario
Canada K7M 6G4
613.545.3044
www.sailing.ca

The Executive Summary

Responding to an approach from Sail Canada's Board, Own the Podium commissioned an independent Audit of the sport's High Performance Plan "2020 Vision – The Pathway to Success."

Results at the London Olympic and Paralympic failed to meet medal targets. The sport had recognized the need to develop a comprehensive athlete pathway prior to the Games. The poor results triggered this action. 2020 Vision was the result of a broad consultation process within the sailing community.

Since 2012 the program has seen significant cuts to its funding levels recommended by OTP. This results from their concern with Sail Canada's performance, their athlete pool and strategies to reverse the lack of podium production.

The Board's concerns with the implementation were not matched by the National Office who felt the plan was basically on track. The differing reactions exposed a disharmony at the top of the organization that can breed distrust.

The Approach.

A comprehensive list of prospective interviewees was prepared by the High Performance Director (HPD) and a Board Member. From mid-April to mid-June sixty interviews were conducted. Many completed a Rating Sheet that provided data to support the findings.

There was a very positive response to the interviews. A strong desire to see Canada back on the Olympic podium is fueling the quest for meaningful change. The four international sailing federations contacted shared their experience building successful programs.

Key Findings.

1. Specialized Training Environments

Two of three clearly defined class training groups are not functioning as envisaged. This must be addressed in order to move the plan forward. It may require adjustments to staff and/or the plan.

2. Coaching Development.

All three national coaches have been recruited from abroad. Strategies must be in place to ensure their technical knowledge impacts across the sailing community; from learn to sail to the national team. The recently released “2015 – 16 Goals and Timelines” provides a good starting point.

The high level of importation reflects a concern that coach development in Canada is off world pace. It is important for sailing, that the bright young generation and the older experienced generation of Canadian coaches, have every opportunity to develop their skills and are aligned with the national coaches and the national plan. Working together is the key to moving coach development forward.

Canadian coaches should feel confident that if they are good enough they will progress in the system. The recent loss of a talented young coach to another sport indicates that this may not currently be the case.

3. Athletes

The national team must be restructured to reflect the goal of podium performance. It should be underpinned by squads/teams that clearly identify the performance level at each stage. Progression should provide increased financial support. For national team members the aim should be to lift all logistical and competition costs and provide adequate living support.

A team culture that values and supports the athletes is needed. Representing Canada should be a great source of pride. Supporting each other is what we do. Skilled leadership can use the power of the collective to ignite and inspire the individual to achieve their performance goals.

4. Leadership/Management

Sail Canada needs to rethink its current program structure to provide the leadership and management skills that are required to drive the program forward. The HPD’s dual role; 75% leadership and 25% coaching, is not appropriate; it compromises both roles.

Staff management must meet acceptable standards. Managing some with a formal review and others with casual conversations is not consistent with delivering podium performance. Job descriptions must be accurate and clearly understood by the high performance community. A six monthly formal review will provide valuable feedback on progress. It should also identify professional development opportunities to continually grow the individual’s skill base.

The management of Sail Canada’s High Performance Program should change. The current structure has a disconnect from the HPD to the ADC to the ED and the

Board. Alignment, continual monitoring and open communication are essential to drive the program forward.

5. The Athlete Pathway

Aligning the pathway is critical to long term success. To date the approach is seen as reactionary with the leadership unclear. While there have been some encouraging steps forward much more needs to be done to ensure that everyone is connected.

The “2015-16 Goals and Timelines” provides a sound starting point. A detailed implementation plan is needed to identify staff, timelines, responsibilities, and resources. Progress should be regularly monitored and communicated across the network.

6. The Integrated Support Team

The IST operates in the three CSI's/CSC's rather than a network wide approach. Athletes and coaches value the access they have and embrace the need for these services. There is much more that could be achieved with a significant increase in the financial investment. This would positively impact the daily training environment and the competition arena.

The investment in sailing specific technology is very limited. This needs to change. Within the sailing community professional sailors, IT experts and sail makers could provide a sound starting point.

7. Resources

The limited resource base impacts the implementation of the plan. The high performance program is operating on what we have rather than what is required. A detailed costing to establish the level of investment is a sound starting point. The urgent need to find additional funding sources is reinforced by the forthcoming closure of Wind Athletes and the downward investment trend from OTP.

8. Looking at Successful Sailing Nations; Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, The Netherlands.

Their management teams each have three key positions that provide; cutting edge leadership, world class technical knowledge and athlete pathway development. Sailing programs are coach led by experts who are mostly recruited from around the world. Sports science, sports medicine and sailing technology are used in the daily training environment and the competition arena. The national team identifies medal potential and is underpinned by a pathway that allows the talent to rise to the top. A strong team culture is critical.

9. The Rating Sheet

Results rate the program as average to below average.

10. Moving Forward

A more business focused approach is needed to move the program forward. Detailed plans that identify; staffing, timelines, resources and outcomes, should be constantly monitored. Outcomes need to be regularly communicated across the network. Ensuring that the right people are in the right position is critical.

Regaining the podium for Canada will require a long term commitment from the Sail Canada Board and the sailing fraternity. While we should constantly look outside our sport and our country for ideas that may help us, the system that is developed must reflect the unique nature of Canada. This is one of the most important lessons to be learnt from our international contacts.

Recommendations.

1. Restructure the Management of the High Performance Program

Appoint a High Performance Committee (HPC) that is responsible for “ Vision 2020 –The Pathway to Success”. The HPC will critically evaluate the plan, constantly monitor the implementation and regularly communicate its findings to the Board, the staff and the broader sailing community.

OTP and the Sail Canada’s Board should work together to appoint the HPC. A four member committee is recommended; one from the Board, one from the ADC and two others with extensive business experience, a strong sailing background and current knowledge of High Performance Sport. The ED should be an ex- officio member of the Committee.

Suggested Timeline; HPC operational by 1st September 2015

2. Appoint a Fulltime High Performance Director.

Go to the open market to source the leadership and management skills that are required to move the program forward. A strong sailing background is required.

The HPD will have a dual reporting role; On Performance matters the HPD will report to the newly created High Performance Committee (HPC). On operational matters they would continue to report to the Executive Director

The HPC, working with the ED, will drive the recruitment process.

Suggested Timeline; Fulltime HPD in place l by 1st January 2016

3. Restructure the National Team

The HPC to take responsibility for restructuring the National Team. The National Team should represent Olympic medal potential. It is underpinned by squads/teams that provide a pathway to the top for the most gifted. Performance standards and the support offered at each level should be clearly identified. For national team members the aim should be to provide logistical, travel, education and living costs.

Suggested timeline; To be published at least three months prior to the next national team announcement.

4. Drive the Development of the Athlete Podium Pathway and Gold Medal Profile.

A fulltime Talent Development Manager (TDM), working to the HPD is the recommended leadership option. Using the recently published 2015-2016 Goal and Timelines, the HPC and the HPD conduct a critical analysis. Follow this by developing a business plan that identifies, staff, timelines, measureable outcomes and the resources required to move the podium pathway and the characteristics of a gold medal for each targeted Olympic boat class forward. Aim to have the basic structure in place pre Rio. This should include an online tracking system to monitor an athlete's progress.

Aim to raise the bar post Rio. Develop a planned approach for the next quadrennial that constantly refines and challenges athletes and coaches in the pathway to reach world standards. The HPC will closely monitor the implementation, recommending changes or interventions they feel will positively impact the national pathway.

Suggested timeline; TDM in place by 1st February 2016

5. Continually Evaluate "Sail Canada Vision 2020 - The Pathway to Success"

Establish whether the foundations of the plan; three Specialized Training Environments and six supported boat classes, is the best way forward for Canadian sailing. The HPC and HPD to lead the discussion and involve the Executive Director and the high performance staff across the network. An annual "Health Check" led by the HPC should encourage robust discussion that aims to continually refine the approach. At the end of each quadrennial a thorough analysis is required. Learning to be your own best critic is a key element for success in the increasingly competitive world of high performance sport.

Suggested timeline; Health Check October 2015, Full Review of program Post Rio 2016

6. Increase Investment.

Accurately cost the program. Look to see where additional resource can be found from smarter alignment of the current structure or from new sources. While the HPC looks for more efficient alignment the Board should seek the additional investment.

Suggested timeline; Implement post Rio

7. Improve Staff Management Practices.

The ED and HPD must ensure that each member of national team employed by Sail Canada has a job description that accurately reflects their current role. It should be

performance based. Biannual, formal staff appraisals that assess the individual's performance need to be in place. Such appraisals form the basis of a professional development plan designed to continually grow the individuals skill set

Suggested timeline; implement immediately

8. Prioritize Coaching Development.

The HPC should assist the HPD and the ED to develop strategies that ensure the technical knowledge brought into the system by the three international coaches' impacts Canadian coaching development from Learn to Sail to the National Team.

Talented Canadian coached must be given every opportunity to become world class. They are critical to the long term outcomes of "The Pathway to Success".

Suggested timeline; implement immediately