

PRESIDENTS REPORT – AGM – CAPE TOWN – 11 MARCH 2022

Welcome to the 2022 Annual General Meeting of South African Masters Swimming or SAMS. For the first time the 2021 AGM was held by video conferencing on 12 June 2021 as the 2021 nationals were postponed to March 2022. The AGM was the first part of the 2021 Presidents meeting.

We have been 36 months under different levels of lockdown due to efforts to contain the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have already been through 4 waves. Vaccination has progressed substantially. The rules and regulations were updated regularly complicating planning materially.

What a journey to be here at the 37th SA Masters Swimming Long Course Championships here at the University of Western Cape pool. I am glad we are finally in Cape Town for the gala and social events.

What a journey to be here! The championship was originally planned for 2019 but had to be postponed due to the severe drought. 2019 was held in PE. The 2020 championships were held as planned in Germiston. Shortly after Germiston the Covid-19 lockdown started, the first of many waves. The Cape Town nationals were scheduled for March 2021. During the drought all pools were emptied, all cracked and required major refurbishment. For March 2020 the only pool available and affordable was Belville, although not ideal to host a championship. As we entered the second Covid-19 wave in December 2020, at the request of regions, we made the call to postpone the championships, the first time in the 37-year history of SAMS. Cape Town City had promised that the Newlands pool would be refurbished. All events were planned accordingly for March 2022. Unfortunately the repairs were delayed and we had to move to the University of Western Cape Pool. The UWC only allows vaccinated persons to enter. Some unvaccinated persons received exemption for medical reasons. In December 2020 we then launched the survey to determine whether to host the gala. 86% still indicated yes and we decided to host the March 2022 SAMS national championships. We are sad and miss the fellow masters who could not come due to Covid-19 risks, regulations and choices.

We are all deeply indebted to Cape Town Masters for their perseverance to manage all the changes and host us this week. Many innovations have been introduced by the LOC in consultation with SAMS. We'll evaluate afterwards what worked well and continue to improve the organisation and great experience of the event. This year it is the back-strokers turn to dash for cash. We thank Western Cape Aquatics for officiating and the UWC for making the venue available.

As part of the planning for the championship we regularly reviewed the financial viability. As part of this we (SAMS and LOC) decided to increase the fees to ensure a profitable championship. The value offering is still exceptional compared to other sports and the LOC of the organizing region deserves to hold a profitable championship. I witnessed the stress on the LOC of a small region like MEGA during the 36th championship held at Germiston when they were potentially facing a loss. Eventually they earned R15000 for an exceptionally low-cost championship. We rather help those few who need help then make it so cheap that it threatens the financial viability of the event and hosting club or region.

The first Presidents' meeting using video conferencing was held on Saturday 13th June 2020 and the second on 12 June 2021. The presidents meeting is the most important meeting in the SAMS calendar on reflecting on the past year and planning the next year. Unfortunately, we could not spend time to get to know each other better.

The annual Presidents Meeting is also strategically important within the context of the swimming calendar. If a Club President is unable to attend, a qualified and responsible representative should be sent to attend. The Presidents Meetings are instrumental to understanding the workings of SAMS. Many relevant matters are tabled for discussion at the meeting and experience has shown that time and time again it is the unrepresented regions that land up asking questions after the fact about matters that have already been addressed, strategized and resolved. So, regions please make

every effort to attend the Presidents Meeting. It's important.

Freestate Masters has dissolved as the high fee issue could not be resolved with Freestate Aquatics. Other regions have managed to negotiate mutually acceptable affiliate registration fees with their affiliates.

SA Masters Swimming is part of SSA as it is an aquatics discipline. That is not going to change. By appreciating this reality and nurturing and respecting the relationship with SSA, Masters actually get to continue as they have always done. Your SAMS committee is the gate keeper to this relationship and to our swimming world. During the Covid-19 pandemic SSA developed the protocols and established systems which allowed registered swimmers to train and participate in galas. SSA has offered to increase presence of masters at SSA and CANA level. Any person willing to serve on committees please contact me.

FINA has rescheduled the 19th FINA World Masters Championships 2022 in Kyushu, Japan, to 2-11 August 2023. The 19th FINA World Masters Championships 2022 were initially rescheduled for 31 May – 9 June 2022. They had originally been scheduled for August 2021. I hope some of us can participate.

SAMS currently has 579 registered Masters Swimmers. This is marginally more than 2021 registrations of 559 and down from the 2020 registrations of 603. The 2021 year benefitted from regulations that only registered swimmers could train at clubs during the Covid-19 pandemic. Open Water continues to grow in popularity with many swims being held around the country. Masters in age groups of 31 and up are well recognized at these events. This is both encouraging and inspirational.

The 38th SAMS Nationals National Masters Long Course Championship will be held on 15 to 19 of March 2023 in Mbombela. The Open Water on Sunday 19 March 2023 is at Longmere venue. The SAMS region Tshwane agreed to host 2023 SAMS Nationals. The arrangement with SSA is that the SSA region officiates the gala. We are very grateful that both NTS and MPS agreed to officiate and support the organisation of the event.

The 39th **Nationals National Masters Long Course Championship is planned in Gauteng.** Wahoo has been approached to organise the event most likely at the newly build St Andrews 50m pool.

The 40th **Nationals National Masters Long Course Championship is planned in Durban.** KZN hosted the first nationals forty years ago and we are planning to celebrate four decades in Durban. Hopefully 2 masters will receive the first 40 year attendance awards, a great commitment and blessing.

The short-course nationals were held October 2021. It was great that the attendance improved and we congratulate the winning club Wahoo and region Central Gauteng.

As a very unusual season ends, I'd like to thank all committees in the country for their hard work and dedication to the sport of swimming. This includes the current SAMS committee which needs to be thanked for its outstanding work over the past year. It has been my pleasure and my privilege working with you. The SAMS committee members are:

1. Stefan van der Westhuizen: SAMS Vice President
2. Rosemary Clark: SAMS and KZN Registrations and facilitator of KZN Galas.
3. Winston Clark: Treasurer (SAMS, KZN and Synergy)
4. Carina Hambloch: Secretary (SAMS and KZN), Chair of Synergy and facilitator of KZN Galas
5. Ann Gray: Open-Water events and Records Manager
6. Jenny and Peter Ireland: Records Manager
7. Carole Bridges: Manager of the SAMS Website

8. Owen Van Renen: Newsletters and Social Media Co-Ordinator
9. Dawn Lloyd: Colours, Awards and Custodian of SAMS' assets.
10. Simone Webb: Support where needed and facilitator of KZN Galas. (resigned 16 Nov 2021)

We had limited formal meetings where all members participated as many of the committee are in different geographical locations. We made extensive use of video and call conferencing, emails to make round robin decisions as and when issues arose and WhatsApp group. The minuting of decisions still needs to be improved in this new way of working. SAMS committee continued for the 2021 season.

At the end of the championship the KZN team hands over SAMS to Cape Town after three tumultuous years. We decided to postpone handover to after the Nationals as Cape Town had their hands full. We are very grateful that Robbie Taylor from Cape Town Masters has agreed to serve as the next SAMS President. I wish him and the new team well.

Close off thanking staff who continue to serve.

- Derek and Joyce Fyfe for diligently updating the SAMS handbook.
- John Petersen for his extensive support and help for LOC to setup the schedules and awards evening.

We urgently need new volunteers to handle the many different roles. I appeal to you to consider taking over these responsibilities as we need to hand over to the next generation.

Please invite friends, family and swimmers to join swimming and masters "to swim for fun, fitness and fellowship." It will be good for all.

Please keep safe, wash your hands and sanitise, practice physical distancing and interact socially in a safe manner.



WOLFGANG FECHTER
SAMS PRESIDENT