

BFIT President's report for the year ended 2019

2019 was a very busy year for BFIT. The year started off with budgeting and strategic planning sessions to understand our financial footing and where resources could practically be allocated.

Events

BFIT is always seeking sponsorship to subsidize the cost of events and programs. To date we are able to meet our financial obligations but diversifying our sponsorship base is essential to the long term sustainability of triathlon in Barbados. The fact of the matter is we are heavily dependent on funding from the BOA in order to execute our events and activities and some of our other sponsors have indicated they will not be supporting us going forward, estimates indicate a loss of \$10k to \$15k in sponsorship revenues going forward. To address this BFIT wants to reach out to businesses that are connected or share similar values with the triathlon community. Any ideas and introductions from our membership would be greatly appreciated.

Our 2019 event calendar comprised of 10 events for kids and 9 events for adults/age groupers. We would like to remind the age groupers that most times there is a kids event the adults are invited to come and do a training session or practice race beforehand.

BFIT's events covered a wide spectrum of multisport races, i.e. try-a-tri (2), sprint distance (2), Olympic distance, duathlon, aquathlon, ITU Continental Cup, CARIFTA team Sessions, and a Technical Officials course.

New events included the Aquathlon contested as a National Championship, Parent mini triathlon, Church of Nazarene Tri.

Events that we were unable to put on due to lack of resources and timing included the Celebrity Mixed Relay Challenge and the Ray Bayley Mixed Relay. We will look to combine these two events as it is important to give mixed relays exposure as the ITU is placing more emphasis on this race format.

Highlights from local and overseas events included:

- Having three participants in the Bridgetown Continental Cup, Eric Lashley (debut), Matthew finished 5th, Jason Wilson (final ITU race)
- Matthew Wright 10th place at the PanAm Games in Peru
- Niel Skinner finished 3rd (8th overall) at the Aquathlon American Championships in Colombia
- CARIFTA team finished 2nd in the country standings and the collective performance of the 11-12 boys and multiple individual podium finishes.
- Matthew Wright and Amy Cox were crowned National Champions.
- Increase in arrivals for Nationals of 70%, with the field being split almost 50/50 between local and visiting triathletes
- 9 Barbadians/residents completed the Ironman Panama City Florida race

With regards to events we were able to enlist the help of Derek Wilson and Nicholas Lashley to act as Race Director which was very appreciated.

The week leading up to Nationals saw various activities scheduled to enhance the visitor experience. These included a group swim and ride and multiple Swim Smooth clinics.

Our race fees will remain the same for 2020 with special early bird discounts being available for some of our major events and we will continue the practice of having member and non member pricing. These pricing strategies are in place to entice early registration so as to make the event planning more efficient and provide a value proposition to our members.

During the year BFIT purchased its own branded finishing arch, this now makes our finish line completely recognizable. Unfortunately the air pump motor was not working at our last event of the year, the aquathlon. Luckily it was covered by warranty and the replacement motor has been ordered and shipped.

Other event related matters included looking for willing individuals to learn how to operate the timing system to give Peter Gibbs a break from time to time. BFIT is willing to pay and train any individuals.

I would like to acknowledge all the volunteers who generously donate their time to make sure our events run smoothly and the athletes come away with positive experiences. Thank you to all the volunteers.

Marketing and Public Relations

In 2019 there was a concerted effort to put triathlon and BFIT into the spotlight. I have previously mentioned Barbados' triathlon exploits and achievements are more well known internationally than at home.

The year started out with a marketing initiative aimed at attracting UK triathletes to participate at Nationals. This involved sending Facebook invites to some 300 triathlon clubs and a print advertorial in 220 Triathlon Magazine. Facebook boosts have been our primary method of reaching triathletes from abroad. Our efforts did result in 7 visitors with their families coming from the UK. We anticipate a lag effect and will continue to reach UK triathletes and offer them a complete race experience. We will also be looking at using the same strategy to attract Canadian triathletes and then American triathletes. A huge thanks goes to Janine Banfield, Melanie Bissaillon and Kelly Cardozo for their efforts in assisting with these initiatives. BFIT was fortunate that the Tourism Development Corporation (TDC) generously provided funding towards our UK marketing activities.

Some of you may have noticed an increase in activity on our Facebook and Instagram pages. This is a result of Janine Banfield who diligently posts and takes wonderful photos to provide interesting content.

BFIT was fortunate to have individuals and events recognized in the newspaper numerous times. Most of the time BFIT prepared its own press releases and circulated them to the various media outlets.

BFIT also engaged several photographers and videographers throughout the year. We continued to add to our digital content library that we can draw on to create promotional material for future events.

It was encouraging to see that BFIT members were recognized and received several nominations at the BOA and NSC awards ceremonies. I would like to congratulate the following triathletes for their nominations:

1. Luke McIntyre - BOA junior sportsperson (nomination) and NSC youth award (nomination and recipient)
2. Ashley Weekes - BOA junior sportsperson (nomination)
3. Niel Skinner - BOA junior sportsperson (nomination)
4. Matthew Wright - BOA senior sportsperson (nomination)
5. CARIFTA Triathlon Team- BOA outstanding team (nomination)
6. Darren Treasure - NSC sports administrator (nomination)

These nominations demonstrated that Triathlon now stands amongst the ranks of cricket, track and field, squash, netball and other Nationally recognized sports.

Late in 2019 a group of 9 Barbadians and residents completed the Ironman Panama City event. This was a great accomplishment and promoted triathlon in Barbados. Their ironman feat was very inspiring and I believe the largest contingent of BFIT members ever to participate in the same Ironman event at the same time. The press was eager to pick up on this story and hear the details from these individuals. Congratulations to:

1. Peter Gibbs
2. Richard Perkins
3. Neil Burke
4. Greg Austin
5. Jerome Lamontagne
6. Geoffrey Noel
7. Sean Gill
8. Shawn Denny, and
9. Andrew Kirby

Administration & Governance

As mentioned the first things done in 2019 were budgeting and a strategic planning session. These two activities allowed BFIT to map out the coming years and prioritize what is important to the success of triathlon going forward. The main takeaways from the strategic session were youth development, financial sustainability, task allocation and event execution.

In 2019 BFIT took great strides to improve the administration and governance of the organization. BFIT is now an incorporated not-for-profit sporting organization, for some time the Executive was weighing the pros and cons of becoming incorporated. Based on the level of activity and the growth being realized some of our funding sources requested it, primarily BOA, NSC and the Arts and Sports Promotion Fund. What eventually helped make the decision was the level of funding Arts and Sports Fund was prepared to give the CARIFTA Triathlon and Aquathlon Team subject to BFIT being an incorporated entity. One peculiarity of becoming incorporated was director Burkley Lowe was determined to be a politically exposed person due to his employment with the Ministry of Education. As a result Burkley now serves as an "unofficial director". Incorporation does come with additional administrative burden but in the end we feel it was the right time for BFIT to take this step.

As a result of incorporation the BFIT's account at FCIB had to be updated to reflect the newly formed entity and its Executive Board and changing of bank signatories. Current bank signatories consist of Derek Wilson (Treasurer), Lynne Wright (Secretary), Darren Treasure (President) and Peter Gibbs (Past President).

The activities of BFIT now require daily attention. As a result Anicia Wood has been contracted as a sports administrator to assist with many of the day to day tasks of keeping the BFIT running smoothly and at a high level. Anicia's involvement gives the Executive members the ability to focus on the "big picture" such as funding, marketing, budgeting, strategic planning and development to name a few. A heartfelt thanks goes to Anicia for her hard work and support she has given to BFIT.

In 2019 PWC agreed to "compile" the 2018 financial statements as sponsorship. They have also agreed to provide the same service for the 2019 financial statements. As with the decision to incorporate more of our funding sources are requesting financial statements that have been prepared by certified accountants.

Other governance activities performed by BFIT included regular quarterly Board meetings which were minuted and event planning meetings were also held multiple times throughout the year.

BFIT saw its total membership rise from 86 in 2018 to 106 in 2019, a rise of 23%. The membership is split between 34 voting memberships (18+) and 72 non voting junior members. The rates were \$50 and \$60 respectively and will remain so for 2020.

Areas identified for further follow up were review of the By-laws and whether a Constitution needs to be put in place. Also succession planning needs to be considered and the implementation of term limits for the Executive Directors.

Development Activities

During our strategic planning session we identified youth development as a priority task. By developing the youth BFIT will stay relevant in the eyes of our primary sponsor, the BOA. Developing youth also secures longevity of the sport where all National Federations are recruiting from a relatively small pool of athletes.

Our first foray into youth development was the February launch of the Junior Emerging Athlete Program, "JEAP", which targeted triathletes ages 16- 23. The objective of this program was to identify and select junior triathletes that have the potential and desire to become elite triathletes. The athletes must make triathlon their primary sport and commit to the training schedule set out by BFIT appointed coaches, Oein Josiah and Jason Wilson. After an initial assessment of past performances and other criteria three athletes were selected, Zahra Gaskin, Niel Skinner and Eric Lashley. Being part of the program meant BFIT funded coaching, race entry fees, insurance and other incidentals with the aim of peak performance at CARIFTA. The second part of JEAP is to provide overseas race opportunities subject to obtaining corporate sponsorship and timing of the training schedule.

BFIT still has had no response on its proposal to introduce triathlon into the primary schools on a test basis. The proposal has been repeatedly sent to the NSC since 2017. If and when this becomes a reality we expect triathlon will rise to another level in Barbados.

In April BFIT held an ITU Level 1 Technical Officials course which had 17 participants from Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada and Jamaica. Barbados now has 7 Level 1 certified Technical Officials. We look forward to having these individuals play a greater role in our events going forward.

Women's initiatives have become a focus of sport globally. BFIT believes women should be actively involved in all aspects of triathlon. As such BFIT launched Ladies in Triathlon, "LIT", as a way to get women training together. The first step was to invite females to train or do a practice race before our kids series race. This initiative showed good momentum early then faded by year's end. BFIT has tried to revive the enthusiasm in 2020 by encouraging and enabling female cycling groups to train together.

On a recent piece of news I have received notice that Bushy Park will be offering an annual membership of \$100 to allow cyclists to ride the track on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. This will provide a safe alternative to riding on the roads, especially for the younger triathletes.

BFIT sees the need for more triathlon coaches in Barbados. It is felt that more coaches will entice more athletes to join the sport and stay with it. Currently we are seeing athletes shy away from making triathlon their primary sport due to lack of training opportunities and triathlon clubs. BFIT in the past has acted as a club and a National Federation but the time is quickly coming where the roles will have to be separated in order to grow the sport further.

Current certified triathlon coaches in Barbados include:

1. Pierre Stanford - PATCO level 1 Coach
2. Harold Lewis - PATCO level 1 Coach
3. Oein Josiah - PATCO level 1 coach, Ironman Certified Coach
4. Darren Treasure - British Triathlon level 2 Coach

In order to increase the number of certified coaches BFIT intends to hold an ITU level 1 coaching course in late April 2020.

Before I close, I could not leave without speaking of Jason Wilson's retirement from competitive triathlon. In 2019 Jason raced his last ITU event in Barbados, upon discussion with Jason we felt this would be a fitting way to close a triathlon career that has inspired and motivated a new generation of Caribbean triathletes. An intimate reception was held in the BOA Museum to honor Jason and wish him much success in the next phase of his life. What Jason accomplished was nothing short of outstanding and makes him a legend in Barbados the Caribbean. In short Jason put Barbados on the global triathlon map and for that we will forever be grateful. I look forward to working with Jason as he serves in the role of Technical Advisor with respect to BFIT's youth development programs.

Now it is Matthew Wright's turn to represent Barbados on the world triathlon stage. Matthew is an outstanding young man and like Jason before him, is making a name for himself on the ITU circuit and flying the Barbados flag high. Matthew will be putting his final push towards qualification for Tokyo in 2020. He plans to race our Continental Cup race in April which is being changed to an Olympic distance event to make more qualifying points available. Please come out and support Matthew as we want to give him the best home field advantage we can offer.

We are truly blessed to have two great ambassadors of the sport who are so generous and willing to give back to help the age groupers and youth.

As many of you know, I am passionate about triathlon. I feel triathlon encompasses so many positive values, not just from the health benefits but from the social and lifestyle benefits as well. I firmly believe triathlon is a lifestyle choice not just an activity, so I am identified with triathlon and I have embraced that. From the day I became President I have made it my mission to build on the foundation of what Peter and others passed on. I am very proud that BFIT has become synonymous with triathlon in Barbados and the Region. Barbados and Trinidad are seen as the leaders of triathlon in the region and for good reason. However our work is not done as there are areas we have not been able to scratch the surface due to lack of resources mainly human capital and time, i.e mixed relay events, para-triathlon, community outreach, long distance triathlon and schools triathlon to name a few. In order to continue the positive impact we will have to actively recruit other passionate people like ourselves. Don't be afraid to ask "how can I get involved", we can always find something that fits into your busy schedules. Triathlon is a community and communities function best when everyone contributes. By attending this meeting I know you have a vested interest in what happens in our community so I ask you to share these messages.

In summary 2019 was a busy yet satisfying year with many firsts. When I look at all we have accomplished together I am awestruck. There is simply no explanation why Barbados has achieved what it has over the years. We are an island with a small population, where triathlon is buried deep in the sports chosen by its residents, we have no presence in the schools, and limited funding. The only reason I can come up with is the PEOPLE, we are fortunate to have such great people who are working together and allowing the sport to flourish. On that note I want to close by thanking my fellow Executive, Directors, you the membership and volunteers for all your hard work, dedication and support. Thank you all and may we have a successful and rewarding 2020.