REPORT

FINA APPOINTED TASK FORCE

PART 8 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. CONCLUSIONS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Francis Crippen, a USA open water swimmer passed away during the FINA 10 km Marathon Swimming World Cup race that took place in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday 23 October 2010.

The death of an athlete during a FINA event was the first such event in the history of FINA. In order to better understand the circumstances of the death of Francis Crippen, a Task Force was formed by the FINA Executive with the mission to produce an independent, transparent and unbiased report.

The Task Force collected, analysed and reviewed documents and information from individuals and organisations and proposed recommendations in order to improve open water swimming.

Related to specific topics, the Task Force concludes the following:

1.2. RULES AND REGULATIONS

The Task Force felt a need to analyse the set FINA Rules and Regulations with two purposes:

- Firstly to see if the Rules and Regulations were adequate. In this regard the Task Force concludes that that the Rules and Regulations need revisions and refinements especially in the safety area.
- Secondly to analyse where it was observed that the set FINA Rules and Regulations were not followed at the Fujairah event. In this regard the Task Force concludes that there were rules which were overlooked or inadequately fulfilled by the UAE Organising Committee, especially rules that were related to the safety of the competitors. This was compounded by a lack of thorough oversight of implementation of rules by the FINA Technical Delegate.

1.3. VENUE

The Task Force analysed the venue at the Fujairah event to better understand the circumstances wherein the accident took place. The Task Force concludes that in general, the race course was well set up and all basic requirements such as pontoons, turning buoys and the start/finish area were fulfilled. There was

however no mandatory certificate of suitability for the use of the venue issued by the appropriate local health and safety authorities. There was also no liability insurance cover signed and in place while it is a FINA requirement.

1.4. CLIMATIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

The Task Force analysed the climatic and environmental conditions at the Fujairah event. The race took place in a protected and secluded lagoon. The visibility was good, the humidity was normal; there was neither wind nor waves. The air and water temperatures were high.

1.5. SAFETY

The Task Force realised that there has been growing concern over the safety of the sport as it increases in popularity and competitiveness. The Task Force realises that the swimming community has responded with a commitment to ensure that the risk of future harm to athletes is minimised to the fullest extent possible given the risks inherent in the sport of Open Water Swimming.

The Task Force is of the opinion that the Open Water Swimming Rules have not always been amended to establish clear requirements with regard to safety at Open Water Swimming events in closed areas like bays, rowing basins and small lakes, where "the one safety craft per swimmer rule" is impossible to achieve.

The FINA Rules state that the Organising Committee has to provide safety boats as required, having regard to the course. No mention in the Rules however is made on the quantity of boats, the requirements of the people that are handling the boats and their lifesaving/lifeguarding certification and/or background and their positioning.

The Task Force concludes that safety measures were not addressed or properly implemented at the Fujairah Event by the Organising Committee and the FINA representative. Overriding all these factors are the Open Water Swimming safety Rules and Regulations that in some instances are too vague, leaving room for interpretation.

The Task Force concludes that the inadequate surveillance and safety measures made it difficult, and at times impossible, to recognise and act upon an athlete in distress.

1.6. CAUSE OF DEATH

The Task Force analysed the cause of death of Francis Crippen.

It is the opinion of the Task Force that a multitude of factors may have played a role in the death of Francis Crippen. The medical cause of death derived from the autopsy report is that a patent cardiac disease was not found. The Task Force, however, is of the opinion that cardiac abnormality (such as mild expression of cardiomyopathies or undetected channelopathies) cannot be excluded with all certainty as well as the possible occurrence of uncontrolled exercise-induced asthma in unfavourable race environmental conditions.

The Task Force acknowledge that factors such as a combination of high physical exertion and fatigue in conjunction with high air and water temperatures and potential dehydration, consistent with heat exhaustion, were all possible contributing causes which led to Francis Crippen's progressive incapacitation. This led to a loss of consciousness in the water which ultimately resulted in drowning.

Because the Rules require completion of the last race of the series, consideration should be given to the possibility of the athlete continuing to race despite feeling distressed or fatigued.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to improve safety and reduce the risk of harm to athletes in the future, the Task Force recommends the following to be considered by FINA.

2.1. UPDATING OF FINA RULES AND GUIDELINES

The Task Force recommends that the FINA Rules and Regulations covering Open Water Swimming be amended considering the comments made in the Task Force Report. This should include, but are not limited, to the following points:

- A differentiation in the Rules and their application between specific features related to race distances and course design.
- The roles and double roles of referees and judges.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Technical Open Water Swimming Committee.
- The roles and responsibilities of the appointed FINA Delegates.
- The roles and responsibilities of participating Federations entering competitors (e.g. the obligation to have accompanying persons and their competency).
- The roles and responsibilities of participating Competitors.
- The roles and responsibilities of the Organising Committees.
- The positioning of safety personnel.
- Minimum safety requirements for all open water events covering safety equipment standards, qualification of lifeguards, escort boats and safety boats ratios.
- Minimum medical requirements at FINA Open Water events.
- Consolidate the FINA Open Water Rules and associated resources into one document, with checklists and forms.
- Refine the Host City Contract.
- Refine Organising Committee Compositions for the different Open Water Swimming Events.
- Addressing multiple positions/functions in one event.
- Addressing maximum number of competitors.
- Addressing the chain of command within the Organising Committee and its departments.
- Addressing elements that would trigger to not start an event or to stop an event and who has the final call in terms of making these decisions.

2.2. ALLOCATION OF AN EVENT TO A HOST FEDERATION

The Task Force recommends that the FINA revises the allocation of an event to a Host Federation. This should include, but are not limited, to the following points:

- The bidding procedure as well as the bid allocation.
- The pre-event on-site inspection. The Task Force recommends that the FINA makes an on-site inspection and approval of the venue before any bid can be considered.
- The change of venue procedures.
- The necessary information needed in the invitation and the timelines required having information confirmed.
- The standardisation of the venue and events.
- The submission of an insurance cover before the event takes place.

2.3. EVENT SAFETY

The Task Force recommends that for Open Water Swimming Events, FINA should task a Working Group to work on, amongst others, the following aspects:

- Risk Assessment. The initial step in addressing safety management is to conduct a risk assessment. Without the adaptation of the strategy to the specific conditions of the location with respect to potential hazards and other factors influencing the safety of swimmers, safety will not be effectively managed. The aim is to reduce the risks to a minimum. This assessment should be part of the bidding documents of possible hosts to any FINA event.
- Disaster Plan.
- Relocation Contingency Plan.
- Safety and Emergency Plan.
- Escort Boats and Safety Boats Ratio. Safety and accompanying boats should ideally have propeller guards and rescue and resuscitation equipment on board. In the case a rescue boat is used it should be manned with at least two people, one driver and one lifeguard. If jet skis are used for safety, then they should be equipped with rescue equipment and a rescue board behind the jet ski. Lifeguards should wear life vests. In the case a jet ski is used it should be manned with one driver and one lifeguard.
- Safety Personnel qualifications, ratios and their positioning.
- Early identification and emergency response plan to athletes in distress.
- Emergency vehicles. See later in Medical Action Plan.
- Major Incidents: Evacuation Plan
- Search and Rescue Plan

2.4. UPDATE OF CLIMATIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS RULES

At this point in time, the low level of water temperature is defined in the FINA Rules, which is not sufficient. The Task Force recommends that for Open Water Swimming Events, FINA should task a Working Group to work on, amongst others, the following aspects:

- Air Temperature. FINA should set minimum and maximum air temperature limits for a competition and this in relation to the water temperature.

- Air Humidity. FINA should set minimum and maximum air humidity norms for a competition and this in relation to the air and water temperature.
- Visibility. FINA should set minimum visibility standards for a competition.
- Air quality. FINA should request air quality reports at proposed race venues. Different countries have very different attitudes to air pollution and quality. Air quality reports for marathon venues should be officially confirmed by international health organisations. The Organising Committee should also avoid using old and polluting boats at Open Water Events which form a risk for the adjacent swimmers.
- Water Temperature. FINA should set minimum and maximum air temperature limits for a competition and this in relation to the air temperature. During the hearings, minimum temperatures of 18 ºC (64.4 °F) and maximum temperature of 28ºC (82.4°F) were recommended.
- The water temperature should be measured in the company of a randomly selected coach/trainer, swimmer and delegate in three places on the course of each marathon the day before the race and checked again on the day the race before the start. The temperatures should preferably be taken at a depth of 40 cm.
- Water and Air Temperature combined. FINA should look at temperature ratios where a combination is made between air temperature and water temperature.
- Water quality. FINA should demand a water quality report at the proposed race venues. Water quality reports for marathon venues should be officially confirmed by international health organisations.
- Water Fauna and Flora. FINA should regulate swimming races where marine dangers are present. This should include measures related to jelly fishes, sharks, crocodiles, and other dangers related to Marine Fauna and Flora.
- FINA should consider safe limits to other environmental conditions such as wind, wave size and currents.

2.5. RACE EQUIPMENT

The Task Force recommends that for Open Water Swimming Events, FINA should task a Working Group to work on, amongst others, the following aspects:

- Course design and lay-out. Clear rules should be set by FINA and enforced and the set standards must be met and proved by organisers.
- Feeding Pontoons. Specifications should be available related to the size, the distance, the positioning, the anchoring, the feeding protocols, the shading and the number of feeding pontoons. Specifications should also be available on first aid and resuscitation equipment on the feeding pontoons as well as on the communication tools to a liaison on land and to the Safety and Security Officer. Finally specifications should be available on how and when coaches will be dropped to the pontoons and transported back to shore.
- Rest and/or recover Pontoons. Specifications should be available related to the size, the anchoring, the shading and the number of rest/recovery pontoons.
- Turning Buoys. Specifications should be available related to the shape, size and colour of the Turning Buoys.
- Direction Buoys. Specifications should be available related to the shape, size, colour and number of the Direction Buoys.

- Finish Funnel. Specifications should be available related to the shape, size, and touch pads of the Finish Funnel.

2.6. MEDICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommends that for Open Water Swimming Events, FINA should task a Working Group to work on, amongst others, the following aspects:

- Medical Action Plan. A developed and properly executed Medical Action Plan (MAP) is essential to effective medical care at any sports event. The plan should be in written form, easy to access, reviewed and updated periodically.
- Medical Clearance – Pre-Participation Medical Evaluation. FINA should analyse a mandatory medical screening and/or a periodical health evaluation for competitors which should include a cardio-vascular evaluation in agreement with the Consensus Statement of the IOC. Elite competitive athletes participating in international events organised under the responsibility of FINA should undergo a pre-participation medical evaluation in full agreement with the rule 8.3. of the Medical Rules (see appendix 04) and should obtain a certification of eligibility for participating to these events. Medical clearance should be renewed annually. A document related to the pre-participation medical examination is given in Appendix 50.

2.7. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommends that for Open Water Swimming Events, FINA should task a Working Group to work on, amongst others, the following aspects with the aim to further professionalise the sport:

- Technical Meetings.
- Training opportunities in swimming pools and in open water.
- Transponders and GPS Technology. FINA should analyse if GPS technology should be applied.
- Final marathon of the season. The rule about completing the final race must be reconsidered.
- Accommodation, food and drink standards.
- FINA to develop a process for investigating, reporting and acting upon concerns raised by athletes, coaches and FINA TOWSC delegates regarding safety at FINA OWS venues.
- FINA to consider also the recommendations of the athletes, coaches and federations that since the event have worked to refine their own safety rules and regulations.

3. FINAL STATEMENT

It is the opinion of the Task Force that there is an urgent need for an organisational commitment to athlete safety as a top priority, and to update and amend the Rules and Regulations of Open Water Swimming to keep up with the sport as it moves forward as an Olympic sport.

Commitment to the priority of athlete safety needs to start with the leadership of FINA as it considers and responds to the numerous safety recommendations contained

within this report as well as the recommendations put forth from the Federations and athletes.

This commitment to athlete safety as a priority extends also to the responsibility of the Federations, and needs to be embraced at the level of the coaches and athletes themselves to receive the proper training and education to both demand appropriate race safety measures as well as recognise risk warning signs.

END OF REPORT