



UNIT 30:

PLANNING A SPORTS TRIP

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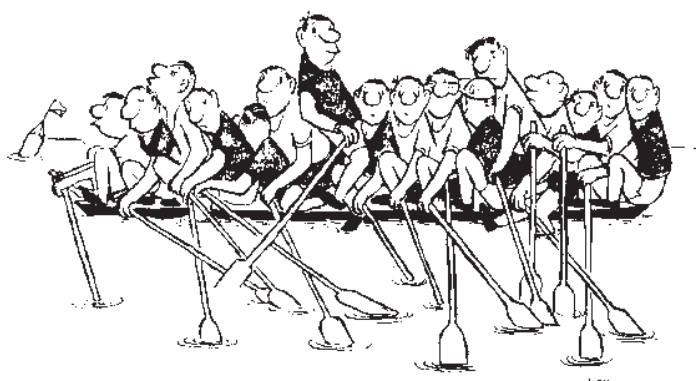


UNIT 30 - PLANNING A SPORTS TRIP

Travel can be an inspiring, enjoyable and educational experience. It provides the opportunity for athletes to meet and compete with other athletes and for coaches and trainers to share ideas.

However, competing away from home can also be an upsetting experience if the tour members are not prepared for all the adjustments that they must face. Therefore, it is important to plan ahead, to try to anticipate all problems and eliminate them so there is the least amount of disruption to the athlete's performance.

Most aspects of a sports tour can be organised and planned for in advance, especially if you start with plenty of time. However, there will always be unexpected occurrences and many things you will learn only through experience. It is very important that when things do go wrong you remain calm, use your resources and above all else, keep a sense of humour.



A. Start Planning

1. Chef de Mission

When first developing a tour, a team manager or Chef de Mission is appointed to take on the responsibility of planning and leading the tour. You must ensure that the person selected has the experience, leadership and organisational skills for the job.

The duties of the Chef de Mission are:

- ◆ to supervise the coordination of clothing, equipment, finances, transportation and scheduling
- ◆ to coordinate all efforts to meet the needs and desires of the athletes, coaching staff and trainers and to minimise problems (at least in players' minds!)
- ◆ to act as liaison between the Organising Committee and the sports team
- ◆ to head the team delegation and fulfil all protocol functions while on tour

In the words of one manager: *“Coaches coach, players play, and the managers do everything else”*.



2. What to Expect

Talk to all available sources to find out what to expect. These include:

- ◆ other teams or individuals that have travelled overseas, or travelled to the country you are going to
- ◆ the external affairs department of your national government
- ◆ books and resources in the library
- ◆ your country's consulate or embassy in that country or area

If the competition you are entering is very significant and if the country you are travelling to requires major cultural and climatic changes that will affect the performance of your athletes, you may be well advised to send one person on a pre-visit to review the situation. Alternatively, you may wish to set up contact with a reliable person in that country to inform you of all you need to know. The concept of the Olympic Attaché was established because of such needs.

You will want to inquire about food, accommodation, facilities, transportation, training and competition schedules and facilities, certain customs and laws of the country, the geography, language, exchange rates, banking, medical services and so on.

3. Questions to Ask

Food

- ◆ What kind of food will be served? (foreign, own country, etc.)
- ◆ How will it be served? Main dining room, cafeteria, buffet, sit-down?
- ◆ Is there adequate food?
- ◆ When will food be available? Is it available at appropriate times for training and competition?
- ◆ Are meals served only at one centre (i.e. hotel?)
- ◆ Can boxed lunches be obtained?
- ◆ Are snacks available? What will these be? Where can you arrange for them?
- ◆ Are special meals available? i.e. for diabetics, vegetarians?
- ◆ What type of fluids are available - water, juice, carbonated drinks, tea? Are the beverages safe to drink? Where can you find them - rooms, accommodation, competition site? When are drinks available?
- ◆ What are the arrangements for paying for meals? What is included or excluded in the price?

Accommodation

- ◆ Where is it located?
- ◆ For whom - athletes, plus who? - trainers, coaches, managers?
- ◆ How many per room?
- ◆ Are rooms all together in one unit?
- ◆ Is a common meeting room available?
- ◆ Toilets and showers - shared or private?
- ◆ Is headquarter office space or equipment available?
- ◆ Is medical - physiotherapy space available? Will there be doctors and physiotherapists available to visiting teams? At what cost?
- ◆ Are there equipment storage areas? Where? Can you lock them?
- ◆ What are the arrangements to receive and send mail?
- ◆ Cost - who pays for what?
- ◆ Is there available accommodation for family and friends?

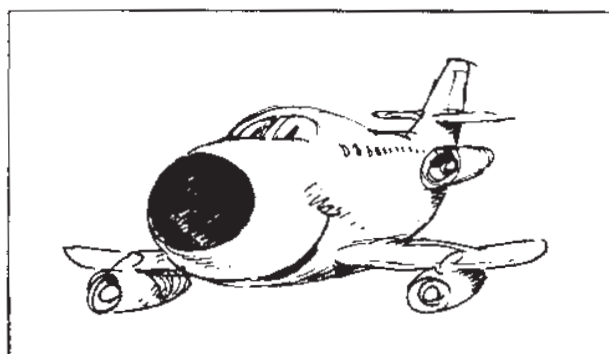


Competition and Training Facilities

- ◆ Where is it in relation to accommodation?
- ◆ Are there any concerns for security?
- ◆ Are practice facilities available? Where? When available? How to get to?
- ◆ Is there transportation to the competition site? When? How flexible is it to accommodate your specific needs?
- ◆ Are there change room facilities for each team, or are they shared?
- ◆ Are there medical services available? What's included?
- ◆ Press room location?
- ◆ What are the playing surfaces?
- ◆ What food and drink are available at the training and competition facilities?

Transportation

- ◆ What is made available - charter buses, personal vans, taxis, rent-a-car?
- ◆ How does one get from the airport to the accommodation site? Will the team be met by someone from the Organising Committee?
- ◆ How does one get from their accommodations to the practice and competition sites?
- ◆ Is there transport available for leisure-time activities - buses, cars, subways, taxis?
- ◆ What costs will be incurred for transportation?



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Competition

- ◆ What are the schedules and venues for the competitions?
- ◆ Is there an organisational meeting scheduled for all teams to inform them of the conduct of the competition?
- ◆ How will communication be affected between the Organising Committee and each team?

Geography

- ◆ What will be the climate? When is the wet and dry season? What will be the range of temperatures and humidity?
- ◆ Is there a problem with altitude?
- ◆ Are there time zone considerations?

Language

- ◆ What are the spoken languages?
- ◆ In what language will the sporting event be conducted?
- ◆ Will an interpreter be provided or must one arrange their own? At what cost?

Customs

- ◆ What are the major religions? Can the religious needs of your team be fulfilled?
- ◆ Are there any political issues or sensitivities that should be known?
- ◆ What are the acceptable dress customs?
- ◆ What are the “common courtesy” or acceptable social customs? (i.e. tipping)
- ◆ Will there be cultural events that your team will observe or participate in?



Laws

- ◆ Are you aware of the important and applicable laws of the country concerning use of drugs, alcohol, offensive behaviour?
- ◆ Where is your country's Consulate or Embassy located? Do you have their phone number? Are they aware of your arrival?
- ◆ Who do you contact in case of trouble?
- ◆ Can your medical staff practice in the foreign country?

Banking

- ◆ How will you undertake paying your expenses?
- ◆ What are the exchange rates? How do you best exchange money?
- ◆ Do you have to make advance arrangements to use foreign banks?

Leisure Time

- ◆ What leisure activities can you plan for your team?
- ◆ Are there sight-seeing tours, or cultural events?
- ◆ Can you arrange team meals away from your hotel?

B. Travel Arrangements

1. Airline Travel

Contact a reliable travel agency or deal directly with an international airline. You want to find the best flights to suit your needs and the best available rates. So, you must know:

- ◆ the size of your group (athletes, coaches, trainers, medical personnel, managers)
- ◆ your budget for airfare
- ◆ dates of departure and return (remember to account for acclimatisation and jet lag) and the location of the nearest airport to where you will be staying
- ◆ the baggage limits
 - weight restrictions
 - number allowed per person
 - extra baggage charges
- ◆ the special arrangements for equipment that is to be shipped separately

Find out:

- ◆ how long it will take?
- ◆ how much it will cost?
- ◆ where to pick it up, when, and how to transport it
- ◆ what arrangements will you have to make with customs
- ◆ will changing dates of departure or return have a financial penalty, and if so, how much?



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2. Documents

Passport

- ◆ In order to enter most foreign countries, each person travelling will need a current passport. Contact your travel agent, international airline, foreign affairs or the passport office to find out about applying.
- ◆ Leave plenty of time for passport approval (5 - 6 months).
- ◆ The manager should record all passport numbers and names and keep them separately from the passports.
- ◆ Should a passport be lost or stolen, contact your embassy immediately.
- ◆ Be sure you have established where your nearest embassy is, who to contact, and let them know you are coming before you leave your country.

Entrance Visa

- ◆ Some foreign countries require that you have an entrance visa. Check with your travel agent, Foreign Affairs Department or your embassy in that country to see if this is a requirement.
- ◆ Find out how long the visa is good for, and if it will allow you to bring in any medication or drugs required for the team and all your special equipment.

Insurance

- ◆ Check what the airline policy covers and add what extra coverage you will need while away. It is a good idea to have extra insurance for valuables such as cameras and special equipment.

3. Vaccinations

- ◆ Vaccinations may be required when entering or returning from the country you are travelling to.
- ◆ Find out what is necessary and what is recommended (taking into account the effect on your athletes) and plan to have vaccinations given to all those travelling, ensuring plenty of time for adjustment and recovery.

4. Customs Regulations

- ◆ The country you are travelling to may restrict what you may bring into the country. Find out what restrictions are present. Also, find out what restrictions exist in bringing back items.
- ◆ Be sure to record serial numbers of all equipment and valuables such as cameras, with your customs office before or as you are leaving so when you return with them, you will have proof that you left with them.
- ◆ Do not take letters or gifts of unknown contents for “friends” to people in the country you are visiting. You will be held responsible for the contents, and should they be illegal in that country, you will be punished according to their regulations.



Athlete Information

Full Name: _____
Surname _____ Given Names - 1st, 2nd, etc. _____

Present Address: _____

Home Address: _____

If different from above: _____

Phone Number: Home: _____ Work: _____

Date of Birth: _____ (tick one) Male Female

Birth certificate #: _____

Country born in: _____ Citizenship: _____

Passport #: _____ Date of Issue: _____ Date of Expiration: _____

National Identity #: _____ Player ID Card #: _____

Medical Information:

Name and address of insurance coverage: _____

Policy Number: _____ Eyeglasses Prescription: _____

Specific Medical Instructions (i.e. diabetic requiring regular medication)

List any medications the athlete is currently on: (use generic names)

List any allergies:

List any medical considerations: (i.e. asthma, diabetes)

Emergency Contact: Name two people and their addresses and contact numbers where they can be reached should there be an emergency of any sort.

1. Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____

2. Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Work: _____ Home: _____



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C. What Else to Take

1. Documents

- ◆ List all tour members and passport numbers. This is often required by hotels etc., so the manager should have 3 or 4 copies.
- ◆ complete travel itinerary
- ◆ complete schedule of events and timing
- ◆ Medical - refer to Unit 32 Sport Medicine
 - Prescriptions
 - take full amount required for use during trip
 - take typed document showing full generic name
 - take doctor's certificate describing drug and its purpose and dosage
 - register medication with officials in charge of competition
 - get medical clearance to bring drugs into the country, if necessary

2. Clothing and Equipment

- ◆ full medical kit should be packed
- ◆ team uniforms - playing, warm up, formal
- ◆ practice gear - anticipating extremes of weather
- ◆ leisure and formal wear - suitable to dress standards of the host country
- ◆ nylon laundry bag for each person
- ◆ personal supplies to last the full trip
- ◆ own special equipment - do not assume it will be provided
- ◆ video equipment to record team performance
- ◆ those wearing glasses should bring an extra pair

3. Useful Extras

- ◆ official letterhead, carbons, papers and pens
- ◆ masking tape and markers
- ◆ a international adaptor
- ◆ non-electric alarm clock
- ◆ long extension cord
- ◆ gifts
- ◆ your country's flag and tape recording of national anthem
- ◆ international driver's license
- ◆ maps of city and area
- ◆ extra non-perishable food

4. Finances

- ◆ find out the exchange rate and set up a liaison with a bank in the country you will be visiting
- ◆ take money in traveller's cheques - keeping a separate record of all the numbers in case of loss or theft
- ◆ also take some small currency for use on arrival for taxis, tipping etc.
- ◆ have an internationally recognised credit card for use in emergencies
- ◆ Caution: Some states will not allow you to purchase their currency until in the country and will not allow you to take their currency out of that country. Currency dealings with private citizens could result in arrest



D. The Trip

1. Briefing

Before you go, have a briefing session with athletes and coaches. Explain the:

- ◆ itinerary
- ◆ accommodation and food expectations
- ◆ host country customs - the religious, political and economic situation
- ◆ adjustments - time zone, climate, altitude, food and water, insects, animals, medical, etc.
- ◆ the expected code of conduct - sportsmanship, friendship, kindness and the fact you are representing your country
- ◆ identify any security precautions, including safety of personal belongings
- ◆ express any team rules including curfew. Explain how discipline will be handled
- ◆ public relations - learn a few phrases in the foreign language; dress in neat attire; respect host country's laws and customs; do not steal; be discreet in expressing and exchanging political, economic and religious views
- ◆ press interviews - identify questions to expect and how to respond to the media
- ◆ identify any technical matters concerning training and competition that should be known before arrival

2. Equipment and Baggage

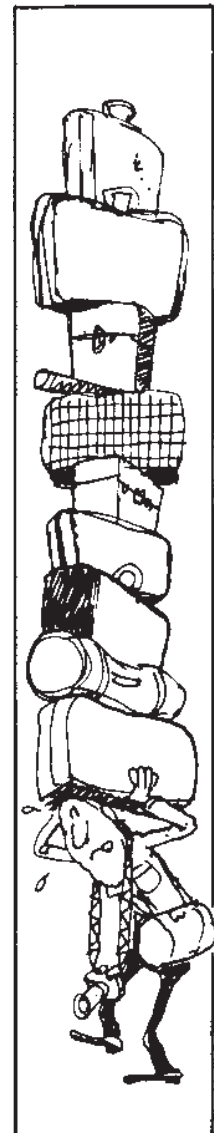
- ◆ each piece of baggage should be clearly marked with identical, large, colourful tags, to ease baggage collection
- ◆ be sure to know how many pieces were checked
- ◆ all equipment can be labelled with non-removable ink
- ◆ camera and film should be carried in hand luggage so the film is not harmed by x-ray machines
- ◆ ensure that arrangements have been made for transportation of baggage as well as the team
- ◆ double-check that nothing is left behind when moving on; leave a forwarding address with the hotel

3. Media

- ◆ organise an opportunity for the media to interview the team prior to departure
- ◆ have a team handbook ready with data and photos of each athlete
- ◆ prepare press releases as required
- ◆ have media contact telephone or telex numbers so you can transmit results

4. Protocol

- ◆ attend all meetings, receptions and ceremonies given in your honour
- ◆ remember you are representing your country



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5. Helpful Hints

- ◆ be a good sport - gracious if you lose, non-patronising even if clearly superior
- ◆ expect to be self-reliant, and plan that way
- ◆ other countries may operate at a faster or slower pace of life
- ◆ keep your sense of humour, be forewarned and attempt to adapt
- ◆ relationships and goals are important - remember everyone is there to help the athletes
- ◆ have shared goals so you can focus on the objectives of the trip rather than its distracting elements
- ◆ standardise routines before competition so the athletes have some familiarity and security even in a foreign country
- ◆ you may need an interpreter but one may not always be with you. Try to learn a few key phrases. Those of the host country will likely be more responsive because you have made an effort. Do not let the language barrier dampen your positive attitude

E. When You Return

- ◆ prepare press release or an interview opportunity for the media to review your trip
- ◆ thank-you notes should be written to all who helped you - be sure to obtain their addresses before you return home
- ◆ evaluation of trip by coaches, manager, and possibly athletes
- ◆ reports written for your sport governing body (see Unit 16G for tips on writing reports)



