



PADDLESPORT SOUTH AFRICA

(formerly Canoeing South Africa)

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



Welcome to the World! Durban October 2025.



Olympic Hopes September 2025



*Keegan Vogt – Junior World
Marathon Championships Silver
Medal*

1. President's Overview

It is my privilege to present this Annual Report covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, a year that will stand out in our federation's history as one of transformation, world class sporting achievement, and the honour of welcoming the world to our shores. This was the year our federation formally became Paddlesport South Africa, the year our elite athletes delivered some of the finest international results, and the year Durban hosted the ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships.

None of what follows would have been possible without the dedication of our administrative team, our high-performance athletes and coaches, our development structures, and, above all, the volunteers who give their time at technical committees, provincial unions, club and race organising level across the country, and last but not least, the members. This report is an attempt to capture the breadth of this year, and to say thank you to the people who made it happen.



2. A New Identity: From Canoeing South Africa to Paddlesport South Africa

The single most significant governance milestone of the reporting period was the federation's rebrand, which took effect on 1 April 2025, the very first day of this reporting year. After more than three years of consultation with our provincial unions and members, the South African Canoe Federation, and then Canoeing South Africa, the body that has governed our sport since 1956, became Paddlesport South Africa.

The change was made to better reflect the true scope of the federation's mandate. Where "Canoeing South Africa" spoke primarily to marathon (including rivers), sprint, slalom and canoe polo, our federation has for some years administered a far broader family of disciplines aligned with the International Canoe Federation, including ocean racing (surfski), Waveski surfing, stand-up paddling (SUP) and paracanoe. The new name and identity are inclusive of every one of our paddlers, whatever discipline they call home.

The transition was managed deliberately rather than overnight, in recognition of the practical and financial realities of rebranding signage, gazebos, flags and kit across every union and club in the country. A new website was launched at paddlesportsa.co.za, and our national teams took to the world stage in fresh branding for the first time.



Hamish Lovemore competing in the rebranded National Kit

3. Administration and Governance

A rebrand of this scale, layered on top of an already demanding international season and the hosting of a home World Championships, placed significant strain on our small administrative team. I want to record my sincere thanks to the people who kept the federation running smoothly through it all.

Colin Simpkins — Secretary General

Colin has once again been the steady hand behind the federation's day to day governance, correspondence with the International Canoe Federation and African Canoe Confederation, coordination between the Board, provincial unions and technical committees, and the countless administrative demands that come with a rebrand, a home World Championships and a full international calendar. His experience and calm efficiency are relied upon more than most members ever see, and the federation owes him a great debt of thanks. As race director of the World Championships hosted by ourselves, a massive task – our sincere gratitude to Colin.

Katharine Atkinson — Finance

Katharine has managed the federation's finances through a particularly complex year, balancing the ordinary running costs of the federation against the additional financial demands of the rebrand, the hosting obligations of the Ocean Racing World Championships, and the administration of grant funding secured during the period. Our audited annual financial statements for the year to 31 March 2025 were signed off in September 2025, a reflection of the diligence Katharine brings to this critical role.

Linda Ulrich — Online Administrator

Linda keeps the engine room of the federation turning, our online membership and race entry system, athlete registrations, and the digital administration that underpins every provincial and national event on our calendar. As our membership base and event calendar have grown, so too has the complexity of this role, and Linda's reliability behind the scenes is felt by every paddler who registers for a race or renews a membership. Every membership or race entry is linked to Linda.

Janet Simpkins — Development and Social Media

Janet's long list of unseen and critical work is often not known or goes unseen in the Federation. The development co-ordination around the country, mass logistics pertaining to travel, accommodation, meals and entries to National Championships and International events, hundreds of social media posts, reporting, kit ordering, kit collection and kit distribution. The role is diversified and challenging, yet Janet stays true each day keeping critical projects in check and every deadline being met. Working through the night uploading grant applications, Janet will still not miss a deadline that is required. A backbone to the Federation and a tireless force for paddlesport.

Thank you to each of you Colin, Katharine, Janet and Linda for your professionalism, patience and commitment to Paddlesport South Africa.

World Championships start Single Ski



4. High Performance Highlights

This was, by any measure, one of the strongest years of international results our federation has produced. Our athletes competed with distinction across sprint, marathon and ocean racing disciplines, and the depth of talent coming through, from junior to senior level, is a genuine cause for optimism as we build towards our next generation of world class athletes.

Hamish Lovemore — A Breakout International Season

No athlete defined the year for Paddlesport South Africa more than Hamish Lovemore, whose consistency on the world stage across three major disciplines marked him out as one of the outstanding paddlers of his generation.

- **Szeged, Hungary — May 2025:** Lovemore claimed silver in the men's K1 1000m at the ICF Canoe Sprint World Cup, narrowly beaten to gold by Hungary's Olympic champion Balint Kopasz in a field that included six of the eight Paris 2024 Olympic finalists.
- **World Games, Chengdu, China — August 2025:** Lovemore won two silver medals in the canoe marathon events — the K1 short distance and K1 long distance — both times finishing runner-up to Denmark's Mads Pedersen after gruelling sprint finishes.
- **ICF Canoe Sprint World Championships, Milan, Italy — August 2025:** Lovemore added a further silver medal in the men's K1 5000m, again finishing second to Pedersen, cementing a rivalry that defined his season.
- **ICF Ocean Racing World Championships – October 2025:** Hamish together with his partner Jenna Nisbet, secured a bronze medal in the mixed SS2 event earning himself a further world medal in another discipline.

Taken together, Lovemore's four silver medals and a bronze medal in major international competition in a single year — at a World Cup, a World Games and two World Championships, across both sprint,

marathon and ocean racing disciplines, represents one of the finest individual seasons produced by a South African paddler, and places him firmly among the athletes to watch on the road to LA 2028.



Marathon World Championships

At the ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships in Győr, Hungary in September 2025, Team South Africa returned home with two silver and two bronze medals. With Lovemore forced out of the event through illness, veteran Andy Birkett stepped into the senior men's K1 race and claimed silver — his fourth silver medal in that event and his ninth career World Championship medal, a remarkable record of consistency at the top of the sport.

The standout story of the regatta, however, belonged to the next generation. Junior paddler Keegan Vogt claimed a silver medal in the junior K1 and a bronze in the junior K2 (partnering Ryley Smith), a breakthrough performance a year after narrowly missing the podium, and a strong signal of the

depth developing in our marathon pipeline. Jade Wilson completed the team's tally with a bronze medal in the women's U23 K1.

- **Andy Birkett** — Silver, Men's K1, ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships, Gyor, Hungary (September 2025)
- **Keegan Vogt** — Silver, Junior Men's K1, ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships, Gyor, Hungary (September 2025)
- **Keegan Vogt & Ryley Smith** — Bronze, Junior Men's K2, ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships, Gyor, Hungary (September 2025)
- **Jade Wilson** — Bronze, Women's U23 K1, ICF Canoe Marathon World Championships, Gyor, Hungary (September 2025)



Jade Wilson on her way to securing a World Medal in Gyor.

5. Hosting the World: ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships, Durban and High Performance Results

The undoubted centrepiece of our events calendar and one of the proudest moments in the federation's recent history, was hosting the ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships in Durban from 17 to 19 October 2025. This was the first time the World Championships had ever been held in South African waters, and it was fitting that it came to Durban, the acknowledged home of ocean racing, where the discipline's first ever race was held in 1957.

The event was delivered by a small team of dedicated volunteers forming the Local Organising Committee, with the Durban Undersea Club being the host venue. More than 640 paddlers from over 30 nations descended on the Durban Undersea Club for a week long program of racing, training and social events.

The championships began in spectacular fashion for the host nation on the opening day of racing, the SS2 mixed doubles event. Matt Fenn and Saskia Hockly turned last year's bronze into gold, winning the world title in the 28km race from the Durban Undersea Club to Amanzimtoti. Hamish Lovemore, partnering Jenna Nisbet, added a bronze medal in the same senior race, while South Africa also topped both the junior and U23 mixed doubles categories, a clean sweep of the event's three major titles on home water.

On the closing day, in the SS1 singles events, home favourite Kira Bester successfully defended her women's world title, overcoming New Zealand's Danielle Richards in an emotional race in which she paid tribute to her late coach and mentor, Pete Cole, who passed away earlier in the year. Australia's Cory Hill won the men's title.

While the host nation did not sweep every category on the singles day as some had hoped, the spirit and standard of competition, with athletes from Europe, the Pacific and Africa sharing the podiums across the week confirmed ocean racing as a truly global discipline, and confirmed Durban's status as a world class venue for our sport. The federation is enormously grateful to the sponsors Eurosteel, Shaw & Partners, eThekweni Municipality, KZN Department of Sport, Art and Culture, the National Department of Sport, Art and Culture, CMH, the International Canoe Federation for the livestreaming funding, Adreach, the host venue Durban Undersea Club, and a host of other sponsors that supported us in various ways. To our LOC where do we even begin to say thank you for over a year of meetings, planning, discussions, debates and ultimately delivery of the most successful championships to date. This would not have taken place if it were not for the team behind the event. Administratively, Linda, Janet and Katharine our sincere thanks, you are not seen, but we see you! The army of volunteers for the event delivery, our immense gratitude to each and every one of you who made a flawless event possible. The safety crews, simply put, there is no event without you, thank you.

An added, and much needed, bonus to the event was the phenomenal livestreaming production which was made possible by the generous support of the ICF. It was, undoubtedly, the best livestreaming of any previous Ocean Racing World Championships.



Kira Bester World Champion

South Africa Medal Table

2025 ICF Canoe Ocean Racing World Championships

Durban, South Africa | 17–19 October 2025

Discipline	Category	Athlete(s)	Medal
SS1 (Individual)	Senior Women	Kira Bester	Gold
SS1 (Individual)	U23 Women	Georgia Singe	Silver
SS1 (Individual)	U23 Women	Jade Wilson	Bronze
SS1 (Individual)	Junior Men	Samuel Mocke	Gold
SS1 (Individual)	Junior Women	Ellen Strydom	Silver
SS2 (Doubles)	Senior/Open	Matthew Fenn / Saskia Hockly	Gold
SS2 (Doubles)	Senior/Open	Jenna Nisbet / Hamish Lovemore	Bronze
SS2 (Doubles)	U23	Holly Smith / Heath Clarke	Gold
SS2 (Doubles)	Junior	Ryley Smith / Ellen Strydom	Gold
SS2 (Doubles)	Junior	Madison Fourie / Matthew Coetzer	Bronze

Total: 5 Gold | 2 Silver | 3 Bronze — 10 medals overall

6. Media, Communications and Public Profile

The rebrand, our athletes' results and the hosting of a home World Championships combined to give Paddlesport South Africa its highest public profile in recent memory. Our new website and digital channels, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and a WhatsApp based entrant communication system for major events, carried the federation's message to a growing audience across the year, and our official Facebook page continued to grow its following.

Independent sports media coverage of the federation was extensive and positive throughout the period, with our rebrand, our athletes' World Championship and World Games medals, and the Ocean Racing World Championships all attracting significant coverage from national and international outlets, including TeamSA, Good Things Guy, Eyewitness News, IOL and the International Canoe Federation's own Planet Canoe platform, as well as dedicated international surfski and paddling media. This coverage has been instrumental in raising the profile of paddlesport in South Africa and in showcasing our new identity to a global audience.

- New national federation website launched at *paddlesportsa.co.za*
- Dedicated event microsite and WhatsApp communication channels for the Ocean Racing World Championships
- Consistent growth of our official Facebook, Instagram and YouTube channels
- Extensive positive national and international media coverage of our rebrand and our athletes' result

7. Development

I want to thank Janet Simpkins, our National Development Coordinator, for her tireless and often unheralded work at grassroots level across the country over the past year. Janet's role connects the federation to clubs and provincial development structures, and her commitment to widening access to our sport continues to lay the groundwork for the next generation of Paddlesport South Africa athletes.

A large contingent of our development athletes competed provincially and nationally as well as an incredible opportunity for breakthrough performances internationally for young, talented athletes. Internationally, a young group of development paddlers competed in Azerbaijan with Kyle Armdorf securing Gold Medals in two events. Sbulelo Ngobese earned his Protea Colours with his selection to Junior Sprint World Championships that took place in Montemor, Portugal. Simphiwe Khwela and Njabulo Zondi joined Sbulelo Ngobese at the Olympic Hopes Regatta in Racice.



Sbulelo Ngobese competing in Auronzo, Italy June 2025



Development Paddlers were involved in the Kings Baton Relay that took place in South Africa

8. Thanking Our Volunteers

None of the achievements recorded in this report from the rebrand, the medals, or a flawlessly delivered home World Championships would be possible without the volunteers who form the true backbone of Paddlesport South Africa. From technical committee members, to provincial union office bearers who run our sport region by region, to club committees who keep the grassroots of paddling alive, to the race organisers who plan, permit, marshal and clean up after every event on our calendar — this federation runs on volunteer time and goodwill.

To our technical committees, whose expertise underpins the fairness and safety of every discipline we administer; to the chairs, secretaries and committee members of every provincial union around the country; to every club committee member who signs up new paddlers, coaches juniors and keeps a clubhouse running; and to every race organiser who delivers an event on our calendar, often at significant personal cost in time and energy — thank you. Your contribution is the foundation of

everything Paddlesport South Africa achieves, and it does not go unnoticed or unappreciated. To my Board, my sincere gratitude for your support, dedication, and thoughtfulness in each and every decision taken for the sport, thank you!

9. Looking Ahead

As we close this reporting year and look to the next, Paddlesport South Africa does so with real momentum. Our new identity is established, our profile has never been higher, and our athletes led by Hamish Lovemore and Kira Bester, and a deep and improving marathon, sprint, canoe polo and ocean racing squad are building a credible case for further South African success.

On behalf of the Board, I again thank every administrator, athlete, coach, volunteer, technical official, provincial union, club and race organiser who made this such a memorable year for our federation. I look forward to building on this foundation together in the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Pople', with a horizontal line underneath.

Kim Pople

President, Paddlesport South Africa