



Report of the FIL Development Program: 2019-2020 Season

Submitted by FIL Artificial Track Development Manager Fred Zimny

The FIL Development program is broad in scope and addresses the needs of both general class, junior and youth level athletes. It attempts to assist NFs through the support application process within budgetary guidelines. Programs that received support via 2019-2020 FIL development initiatives include the FIL Luge School, Patenschaft, track vouchers, FIL Group 1, FIL Group 2, race accommodation support, coaching, equipment, travel support, race accommodation support, and individual NF projects. The entire FIL Presidium and staff should be thanked for their unwavering support of athletes in the FIL Development Program. In particular, Vice President of Sport Claire DelNegro has been instrumental in helping guide improvements to the program and the assistance of Erika Votz has been invaluable.

What follows is a review of some of the larger support categories administered by the Development Program:

FIL Luge School

The FIL Luge School took place in Sigulda from Oct 13-20 and was attended by 35 new athletes from 13 nations. The School is traditionally the first event of the year for FIL Group 2 and was fully funded by the FIL for all participants for both accommodations and track fees. Headed by FIL coaches Petr Kinzel, Bogdan Macovei and Tomas Kinzel as well as 11 other international coaches, athletes collectively received over 700 training runs over the course of the week. On-track training, start practice and physical training were all part of the daily schedule. While the week was productive and provided a solid foundation on which the participants can build for the future, it was felt that more track time was needed for athletes to gain additional practical experience and this will be a goal for future schools.

FIL Teams

A corner stone of the entire FIL Development Program are the two FIL Teams, Group 1 and Group 2. For both groups the FIL provides coaches, equipment, transportation and includes weeks that are fully funded for both track fees and/or accommodations. Group 1 was led by new head coach Maciej Kurowski and assistant coach Yuriy Hayduk and together they led a total of 18 athletes from 10 different nations through the 16 week training and race schedule of the general class. The group collectively took more than 1000 runs during the course of the season. Race results were a mixed bag for the group with a future goal of improving performance and providing enhanced equipment for the more experienced athletes. The addition of Maciej Kurowski to the FIL staff is a very positive step toward providing athletes with year-round guidance regarding training and equipment in the future.

Group 2 was again led by head coach Petr Kinzel along with assistant coaches Bogdan Macovei and Tomas Kinzel. Group 2 had a total of 47 athletes come through the program with the high number in a given week of 32 athletes and a low of 11. All together, Group 2 athletes took a total of 4291 runs during the season. The help of other NF coaches at various times from BIH, BUL, CZE, GEO, JPN and TPE was invaluable and they are thanked for their assistance. Athletes in Group 2 were offered a total of 6 weeks of training throughout the season in addition to the group attending all the Junior/Youth WC races for those who were eligible to race.

Patenschaft Program

The FIL provides financial support to the host nation for each smaller nation hosted through the patenschaft program. The NFs taking part in the Patenschaft Program in 2019-2020 included: ARG/GER, POL/GER, SUI/GER, AUS/USA, SVK/USA, NED/RUS & SWE/AUT.

Vouchers

Valued at €25 each, track vouchers provided by the FIL can be used at any track toward training costs. For the 2019-2020 season, a total of 12,000 vouchers were distributed to NFs for a total allocation equivalent to €300,000. While all nations saw a decrease in the number of vouchers they received from the previous year for budgetary reasons, it was still a significant source of assistance to all NFs. Vouchers are distributed to nations based on a number of factors including need, participation and team size.

Transportation

Each federation participating in overseas World Cup events receives an allocation toward flight support and often equipment transportation costs. Additional support is provided to some nations through the support application process to ensure their participation in competitions and training. Nations receiving additional transportation subsidies through the development program included: AUS, CRO, CZE, JPN, MDA, NZL & SLO.

Equipment and material purchase

Subsidies were provided in 2019-2020 to obtain the necessary equipment to ensure safe and reliable participation in WC events. Support for the purchase of suit/shoe/glove sets are made available to developing teams as are helmets to all nations at no cost. Athletes participating with Group 1 & 2 are also offered a sled to use at no cost. In total, over €100,000 in equipment support was allocated to member nations.

Coaches

The greatest support the FIL provides in terms of coaching are the FIL coaches used by developing nations in Group 1 & 2. The FIL funds 100% of the cost for 3 coaches at the junior level and 2 at the general class level for nations that do not have the resources to fund their own coaching staff. Additionally, when possible the FIL will also help fund the cost of a coach for an individual nation. For 2019-2020 these nations included BIH, CRO, CZE, GEO, NOR & SWE.

Race Support

The FIL provides €500 for each athlete at a WC event for up to 4 athletes per nation plus an additional €1000 for nations participating in all disciplines at a competition. This is a significant way for NFs to offset their weekly costs and will continue to be a part of the FIL support program.

Conclusion

The FIL has made significant efforts to try and alleviate the increasing costs borne by NFs to have their athletes participate in the sport of luge. Though it is financially impossible to address all the needs of every nation, there are many programs in place to help relieve the burden of travel, training, equipment and accommodations for developing nations. Costs will continue to be a main focus of attention moving forward. Based on some of the things learned during the 2019-2020 season, new changes and improvements will be implemented for the coming 2020-2021 season, some of these include:

- A discouraging trend seen in 2019-2010 was the number of NFs who did not take advantage of all the assistance provided them by the FIL. Many NFs were allocated sleds, suits, race shoes, gloves, helmets, vouchers and finances that went unused or uncollected. This will be addressed to better tailor support to the needs of the NFs for the 2020-2021 season.
- Future physical training standards for participation in FIL Group 1 & 2.
- Implementation of summer training camps for FIL Group 1 & 2 athletes (pending the current health crisis).
- Increased accountability on the part of NFs on voucher usage and financial allocations.
- Provide higher quality equipment to experienced athletes participating in FIL Groups 1 & 2.

- Stronger guidelines for NFs participating in Group 1 & 2 on registrations deadlines, communication, transportation needs and accountability.
- Individualized year-round support and oversight of athlete training by FIL Coach Maciej Kurowski.