Nollie Stofberg is one of the most accomplished coaches in the South African tug-of-war history. His best achievement remains the winning of three silver and one bronze medal during the 2002 World Outdoor Championships in Pretoria and the qualification and participation of both women and men teams at the last 2 World Games.

Born and bred in a tug of war family in the renowned Goudini Breede River area in the Western Cape, it was inevitable that he was to follow in his dad - Henry Stofberg - steps. Henry represented South Africa in 1973 in Switzerland where his 720 team won the bronze medal. Nollie always had the goal to go one up on his dad, hence the silver medals in Pretoria in 2002. And he is not stopping - he wants more and has continued to invest a lot of his private time in preparing teams for future successes.

Nollie is a partner in an independent brokerage business in the financial services sector. Their core business is short term insurance, life insurance, medical cover, fixed investments, unit trusts and estate planning. They service approximately 1,000 clients from their base in the Western Cape.

He is married to Estelle, herself a puller in the silver medal 560 ladies team in Pretoria in 2002. They have two sons, Hendriko (11) and Driaan (9). Both of them have also started to follow in dad and granddad’s footsteps with participation in the SA youth leagues. The family lives in Worcester, about 100 kilometers from Cape Town.

His philosophy in life, be that in sport, work or pleasure, is that you will achieve what you believe. “All that a man achieves, or fails to achieve, is the direct result of his thoughts. Thinking will make or break you, so make a conscious decision to think things that will add value to yourself and others”, is his motto.

Nollie participated from school level and represented the SA Schools in 1984. In 1986 he joined the SA Police Service and went on to represent a range of teams on national and international level - gaining colors on several occasions from 1986 to 1991. In 1996 he started his coaching career with the well known Goudini Club where he succeeded in building service approximately 2,000 clients from their base in the Western Cape.

In 1996 he started his coaching career with the well known Goudini Club where he succeeded in building a core of pullers who went on to become the backbone of the South African national team from 1998 until now. Some of the old hands have now retired and a renewed building phase has started. His vision is to ensure that South Africa will again be on the rostrum at the 2010 Championships - an event once again scheduled for South Africa.

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In the last years the TWIF membership has increased considerably, but we need to accelerate entries of new members so that we may meet the requirements of international sports. With 35 affiliated members presently, the demand of 40 members for ARISF and 50 for ARISF is within reach. I hope to leave a legacy of a well organized international sport federation, ready and prepared to comply with the standards of current international sport. I sincerely hope that TWIF will find a young and dynamic Executive President who, with your support, will lead TWIF to maintain its rightful place within ARISF, IOC and World Games and to regain its place on the Olympic programme.

Members of the tug of war family have changed over the years: teams from new countries are competing against sons and daughters of former champions, but it is still a family. It will take some years before my grandson can compete for any victory; in these years tug of war will have progressed further, but you will continue to enjoy it as I have done in all those years. Traditionally I end this last column of the year with wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

CO KOREN President TWIF

The future - beyond 2006 . . .

I suddenly realize that this will be one of my last columns. In October I announced that I would not be available for another term of office after Congress 2007. The travel and scope of the work as TWIF Executive President has dreadfully expanded over recent years, resulting in a workload that left little or no time for family life. After more than 40 years involvement in the tug of war sport, I concluded to spend more time with my family which includes a new grandson.

I will finalize the various projects which are currently on my desk, such as the software for TWIF, the ICT and media projects.

I hope to continue in an honorary position representing TWIF internationally. You will still meet me and my wife at TWIF events, but then more relaxed, as visitors. I am particularly looking forward to the World Championships in 2010 when TWIF celebrates its 50th anniversary, a grand event that I certainly would not wish to miss.

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The future - beyond 2006 . . .
hi-tech assists on many levels

The draw is made from the input to the computer and produces a printed sheet which also assists with the Doping Control. Copies are also given to the recorders, judges, marshals and team coaches.

TWIF uses the software suite Microsoft Office, which is used all over the world. The 3 sections used are:

- Access - the database section
- Excel - the spreadsheet section
- Power Point - the presentation section

For World Championships 2006 in the Netherlands, with help from an IT company, further progress has been made with a validation process by the various international representatives being built into the accreditation process. This enabled organisers to check the accuracy of the information required on all pullers and teams. Once captured this information is transferred to the organiser, then on to the administration office and on to the officials running the championship.

For this Championships the collection of data was done by entry into the computer via an on-line entry form which produced an accreditation card. Online forms were produced which can easily be adapted for the specific needs for events in various countries. It is also foreseen that puller passports will in future hold all the pullers details which will assist with the information required by WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency) and may well assist with obtaining visas.

It is envisaged that in future all recorders will use computers, but a paper backup system will still be required to cover all eventualities.

President Koren concluded by allaying fears from some members as to the real need for such “hi-tech” programmes and equipment to run championships. He assured members that this is the only way forward if the tug of war sports wishes to present itself for participants, spectators and the media on the same level as other sports do.

The next day was a day of rest for the lads before they represented their country on Saturday in the World Championships at 600 kilos. Nine countries entered the weight and the same team that competed in the Open competition represented Ireland again and they never lost a point in the first round.

They met Switzerland in the semi-final and went on to meet England in the final. The strong and determined men of Killylough did their country proud winning the Gold Medal for their country beating another team that have a lot of history in the sport of tug of War-- Owen's Vianca Cross.

Although since 1986 Killylough have won international medals nearly every year; this year has been the clubs greatest achievement—winning two gold medals at a World Championships with the same lads competing in both competitions.

The Netherlands certainly seems to be a lucky venue for them.

Killylough is a small club from the Republic of Ireland that was first formed in 1971. The team comprises mainly of lads who are involved in the construction and farming industries. They are based in the rural part of Ireland, Killylough being a townland in the small village of Tydavnet in the county of Monaghan. The team won their first national title in 1980 and since then they have won 52 national titles. Since 1986 they have represented their country ever at outdoor International Championships. This year they were beaten in both the finals of the 560 kilos and 600 kilos by Bruxelles. The team were very disappointed as they had represented their country almost every year since 1986. But luck was on their side as for the first time the 600 kilo weight class was included in the World Championships and they were allowed to represent at this weight.

In August they were invited to Northern Ireland to compete in the 640 open clubs competition at the United Kingdom Championships and they beat Boley in the final. Boley having just returned from Sweden where they were the 640 kilos winners in the Friendly International. Killylough were triumphant and their confidence returned, now the gold medal at the World Championship was the next target in their sight.

The 640 kilos open clubs competition was held on the Thursday and 29 teams were competing. Killylough were in Group 3 which they won. Then they met Oman’s Vianca Cross in the semi-final and went on to beat the Vianca Boys of the home country in the final for the coveted Gold Medal.

Three times lucky in the Netherlands.

Can any other team worldwide beat this outstanding record?

CONTRIBUTED BY ROSEMARY SMITH