

sport

16: The number of Olympic medals Team SA won at the last two competitions

DANIEL MOTHOWAGAE
daniel.mothowagae@citypress.co.za

Outgoing SA Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (Sascoc) president Gideon Sam this week recalled with a laugh his first days at the helm when someone asked if the local Olympic governing body was a flour-making company.

Bizarrely, Sam said this confusion counted as one of his highlights in nearly a decade leading Sascoc.

"I'll never forget that day in 2008 when someone in a packed hall in Mpumalanga said: 'We thought Sascoc was a flour company all along.' That's when we established the nine provincial sports confederations to at least have provincial Sascocs," said Sam in a frank interview with City Press this week.

It is the final countdown to the end of his time at Olympic House - he steps down from his post at the end of the year, in accordance with the federation's age limit for a seat on the Sascoc board, which is 70.

This is a rather unfamiliar exit considering that Sam's departure comes way before the end of the ongoing Olympics cycle, which means he is also not going to board Team SA's plane to next year's Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan.

Also marking a not-to-so happy exit for Sam is that he leaves after a year during which Sascoc was subjected to a ministerial inquiry over governance issues amid allegations of financial irregularities and maladministration.

Arguably one of the most vilified sports administrators in the country, the Cape Town-born Sam aptly described his time at Sascoc as "sweet and sour".

"If you look across the country, which organisation does not get investigated or looked into? It's a normal process within our South African context," he said.

"So Sascoc is not immune [to this interrogation]. There is no doubt in my mind that the first eight years were good and, as they say in the Bible, those were the fat years."

Sam said cracks in the relationship among fellow board members emerged in the build-up to the 2016 Sascoc elective conference, including the much-publicised fallout with chief executive Tubby Reddy.

"People on the floor didn't speak with one voice. We went to the 2016 election divided. There were two factions - one for Hajera Kajee [Sam's long-time vice-president] and the other for me ... that was the beginning of a divided board. Going into the third quadrennial [next year] was not that easy. And the [ministerial] inquiry came."

Sam said he had developed a thick skin over the years and claimed that the divisions led to some interpreting his leadership style as dictatorial, the same line that the ministerial inquiry highlighted in its final report.

However, he maintained that he was firm in his approach and was never one "to impress the general assembly".

"That's bad administration to please people, but, with consensus, you go far. I don't see that as dictatorship. I was a headmaster and a rugby manager in the olden days. My colleagues at the school used to tell the players not to 'mess with this short man' because they knew I would go hard on them if they were to lose games with stupidity," chuckled Sam, whose middle name is Napoleon, after French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

There are already changes happening in Sascoc's leadership, some of which were effected during the federation's annual general meeting last Saturday.

The federation held a special election to vote in the first

SAM REFLECTS ON MESSY END

Leaving with a cloud hanging over his head, Sascoc boss says the past decade at the helm has been sweet and sour'



SO LONG Gideon Sam says he will leave it to the people to judge him on how he fared as head of Sascoc since 2008

PHOTO: WESSEL OOSTHUIZEN / GALLO IMAGES

GIDEON SAM AT A GLANCE

A man with many hats

Positions held in SA sports administration

- Sascoc president
- Swimming SA president
- Springboks manager
- SA Rugby Union committee member
- National Sports Council
- National Lotteries Distribution Fund
- Golden Lions Rugby

International roles

- Commonwealth Games Federation vice-president
- International Olympic Committee commission member of sport and environment
- Association of National Olympic Committees commission member of marketing and finance

Abu Dhabi race may surprise with some action

JORDAN WOOD

sports@citypress.co.za

As the last race of the Formula One season, the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix is always in danger of being boring.

Lewis Hamilton won the drivers' championship (once again) and his teammate Valtteri Bottas is guaranteed second place. Mercedes won the constructors' championship so long ago that nobody can remember when they actually did.

Behind the two stand-out performers, Red Bull's Max Verstappen should - barring any miracles - take third place in the standings ahead of the Ferrari duo of Charles Leclerc and Sebastian Vettel.

In other words, there is not much at stake in Abu Dhabi - or is there?

The short answer is yes, and much of it has to do with the crazy and exciting race two weeks ago in Brazil, where Verstappen won his eighth grand prix.

But behind him, all kinds of mayhem took place, which is bound to be carried over into today's race.

Ferrari team principal Mattia Binotto, who presumably went into the Brazilian race thinking their season could get no worse, found out at Interlagos that it could.

With only a handful of laps to go, Vettel and Leclerc collided into each other and, although it was no more than a gentle touch, both had to retire and were denied a podium finish.

Binotto summoned them to a meeting. "We did it the Sunday after the race, but we did it as well on the following days, during the week," he said.

"We discussed together, all three together, individually, and I think that they understand what happened was not acceptable. And we know how to move forward."

Another driver to be denied a podium finish - and deny Red Bull an unexpected one-two - was Alexander Albon, who was taken out of the race by Hamilton in the penultimate lap.

Hamilton was uncharacteristically apologetic after the incident: "I massively apologise to Albon ... it was completely my fault."

Race stewards shared his view and gave him a five-second penalty, dropping him from third to seventh place.

The young Thai driver will want to show that his performance in Brazil was not a once-off.

"It was disappointing at the time. But,

F1 standings				
DRIVERS			PTS	
1	Lewis Hamilton	GBR	MC	387
2	Valtteri Bottas	FIN	MC	314
3	Max Verstappen	NED	RB	260
4	Charles Leclerc	MON	FR	249
5	Sebastian Vettel	GER	FR	230
6	Pierre Gasly	FRA	TR	95
7	Carlos Sainz Jr	ESP	ML	95
8	Alexander Albon	THA	RB	84
9	Daniel Ricciardo	AUS	RN	54
10	Sergio Perez	MEX	RP	46
CONSTRUCTORS			PTS	
1	Mercedes			701
2	Ferrari			479
3	Red Bull-Honda			391
4	McLaren-Renault			140
5	Renault			91
6	Toro Rosso-Honda			83
7	Racing Point-Mercedes			67
8	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari			57
9	Haas-Ferrari			28
10	Williams-Mercedes		W	1

Source: formula1.com

Graphics24

Abu Dhabi Grand Prix

Today, 3.10pm

Venue: Yas Marina

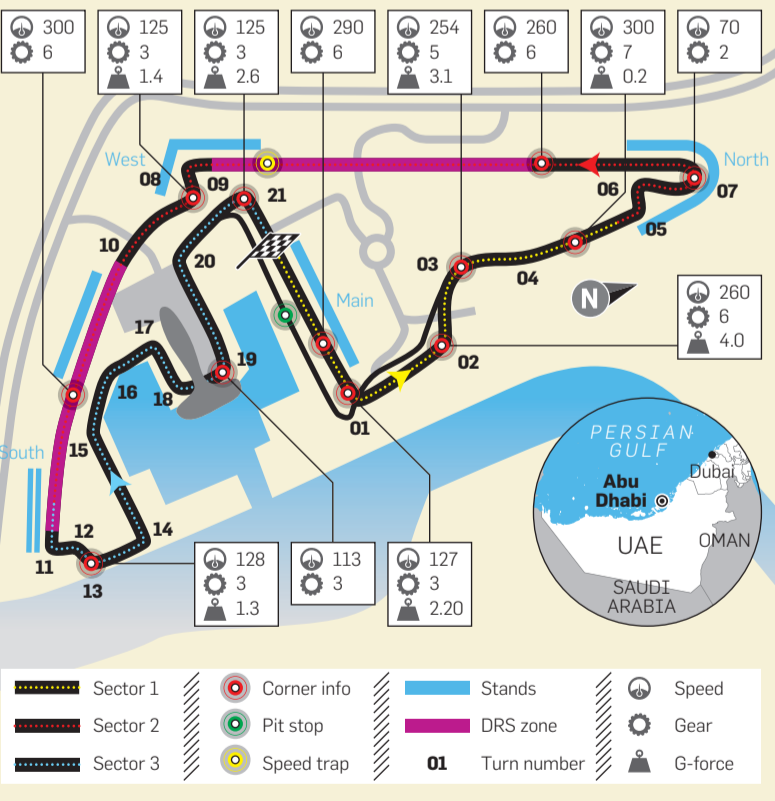
First grand prix: 2009

Number of laps: 55

Circuit length: 5.554km

Race distance: 305.355km

Last year's winner: Lewis Hamilton (Mercedes)



Source: formula1.com

Graphics24

on reflection, it was a good weekend for me. It was one of the first few times when I could mix it with the big boys and there were more positives than negatives."

The two drivers who benefited from the Ferrari fiasco and Hamilton's mistake were Pierre Gasly, who lost his seat at Red Bull to Albon during the season, and McLaren's Carlos Sainz. They finished second and third, respectively, to take their first podium positions.

For both, the result was massive as they now have a chance to become the best of the rest. With the top five drivers being streaks ahead (all of them with more than 200 points - Gasly, Sainz and Albon have less than 100), they all have a chance to finish sixth.

Gasly is on 95 points, Sainz is on 94 and Albon is on 84, but undoubtedly has the fastest car of the three. With prize money

being allocated on the basis of results, a good finish is really important.

For Nico Hülkenberg, today's race marks his last in Formula One as the Renault driver has lost his seat to Esteban Ocon and cannot find a new team for next season.

"For sure I'm going to miss it next year when I have to watch the first race on TV," the German said.

The 31-year-old takes with him a record that he presumably does not want. His 178 grands prix races (starting in all but two of them) are a record number of races without a podium finish.

He has three fourth-place finishes and it would be a fitting tribute if the other drivers were to move over to let him finally take a podium.

But with so much at stake in Abu Dhabi, that will remain a fantasy.

MO FARAH'S BIG OLYMPIC U-TURN

Olympic champion Mo Farah is returning to the track to chase more gold in the 10 000m at next year's Tokyo Games, he said on Friday.

The 36-year-old Briton, who is a four-time Olympic champion and six-time world champion over 5 000m and 10 000m, retired from track athletics in 2017 to focus on road marathons, and he went on to break the UK record.

"I've decided that, for Tokyo 2020, I'm going to be back on the track. I'm really excited to compete and ... give it a go in the 10 000m," he said. "I will train hard for it and see what I can do."

The three-time 10 000m world champion said in March that watching Briton Laura Muir claim the European Athletics Indoor Championships 1 500m and 3 000m double made him realise how much he missed the track.

"Having seen my fellow athletes, who I've competed against in the past, and watching the European Athletics

Indoor Championships on TV, I was thinking: 'Oh, man. I want to get back out there,'" he said.

"That's just me. If things are going well and I've got a chance to win a medal, I'd love to come back and run for my country."

Farah, who will still have to qualify for the Games, said he had enjoyed running marathons. He finished eighth in Chicago in October after winning last year with his best time for the distance, 2:05.11 - a European record.

"To win the Chicago Marathon was nice and to finish third in the London Marathon was okay, and it's been a great learning curve for me," he said.

Farah was bombarded with questions about his former coach Alberto Salazar, who was handed a four-year ban in September by the US Anti-Doping Agency at this year's Chicago Marathon. Farah, who has not been accused of any wrongdoing, worked from 2011 to 2017 with Salazar.

— Reuters

Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority

ARE YOU TRAINING YOUR EMPLOYEES IN THE HEALTH OR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT SECTORS?

Employers registered with the HWSETA that wish to apply for mandatory grant funding and/or discretionary grant funding are required to submit a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Report (ATR) by 30 April 2020.

To assist stakeholders with understanding this process, the HWSETA will be hosting a series of provincial workshops during January and February 2020. This will guide Skills Development Facilitators (SDFs) through the WSP and ATR processes to ensure compliance with our requirements for submission.

All submissions are to be processed through the HWSETA ERP Portal via the HWSETA website at www.hwseta.org.za. Workshop attendees will be trained on the online system.

Visit the HWSETA website at www.hwseta.org.za for the workshop schedule. All RSVPs must be done via the Events tab on the website. Please note that details of the venue will only be communicated to those who RSVP by the deadline. No walk-ins will be permitted on the day.

The HWSETA regrets that it is unable to cover the costs of any transport or accommodation.



Bridging the Skills Gap