



Norte Alentejo O' Meeting

The Five Elements

What mystery is this, leading hundreds of people to abandon their “comfort zone”, year after year, facing the winter and heading to Portugal to participate in the Norte Alentejano O' Meeting? The answer comes in the five fingers: Water, Earth, Sun, Stone and ... Orienteering!

Written by Joaquim Margarido

It was in 2007 that the Norte Alentejano O' Meeting presented its credentials for the first time. Its beginning was in a bet made by Grupo Desportivo dos Quatro Caminhos, and since the very start one became aware of the orienteering potential of this inner region of Portugal. There was a perfect match between the ambitions of the northern club to move forward, and the proposal to put the Norte Alentejo region on the world orienteering map. The municipality of Nisa was successively joined by Castelo de Vide, Alter do Chão, Crato, Portalegre and Marvão, changing the initial dream into an undeniable reality: the Norte Alentejano O' Meeting is, today, an acclaimed event worldwide, both for its technical quality and organisational capacity.

Over nine editions, NAOM grew and consolidated itself. It incorporated the National Championships Sprint and Middle Distance in 2008 and 2012, and has been an IOF World Ranking Event six times. In 2011 it was part of the Portugal O' Meeting – one of the prestigious events of the regular winter calendar - with the presence of all the world's best athletes without exception. And last but not least, it has consistently contributed to the promotion and affirmation of Portugal, and in particular the Norte Alentejo region, as a tourist and sports destination of excellence, especially in the winter.

Training Camps complete the offer

To wander through this region of Portugal is to meet with ancient times when the first men settled here, mak-

ing these lands into their “safe haven”. From prehistory to the Roman civilization, from the Arab and medieval period to the present day, art and culture have strolled hand in hand with a preserved landscape of great beauty, appealing to the good taste and the feelings of each. Reasons why Maria Gabriela Tsukamoto, former Mayor of Nisa, claims that “much more than the courses planned on the maps, more than practising a sport, more than a healthy relationship between the visitors and the locals ... the participants in the NAOM find here endless beauty, spread over a vast natural and architectural heritage.”

The charms from a cultural and landscape angle, combined with a unique gastronomy - where the wine, olive oil and herbs imposed themselves as excellent complements - are major attributes of this region. But to the competitor there, alongside the great competition, there are Training Camps of excellence. Founded in late 2011 by Fernando Costa, a man with great experience in the sports associations and event organization, Orievents has the goal to organise events and to promote orienteering activities for schools and companies. It works jointly with entities related to disability, promotes the training of sports agents, does the communication and sponsorship of events and produces orienteering maps. But it's in the Training Camps that lies one of Orievents' biggest offerings, with a current offer of 21 training courses on forest maps and 7 on sprint maps, with many of these workouts created by renowned figures in world orienteering such as Eva Jurenikova, Philippe Adamski or Oleksandr Kratov.



Norte Alentejano O' Meeting From 2007 to 2015

The Romanian Ionut Zinca and the Finn Riina Kuuselo were the first athletes to sign their names on the event's Hall of Fame in 2007, opening a list that is growing year by year. The list already includes, among many others, names such as Simone Niggli of Switzerland, the Frenchman Thierry Gueorgiou, the Czech Eva Jurenikova, the Norwegian Olav Lundanes, the Swedish Helena Jansson and the Portuguese Tiago Romão. In 2015 it has been the turn of the Ukrainians Oleksandr Kratov and Nadiya Volynska to be acclaimed as the big winners of NAOM, after two days of high level competition that attracted over 700 participants from 15 different nations to Castelo de Vide and Marvão.

To Oleksandr Kratov this year's NAOM was, “as always happens every time I travel to Portugal, a nice experience. I really enjoyed the courses and the terrain as well. Also the maps were great. Nowadays, the terrain is extremely well mapped, the maps are perfectly readable and it's a pure joy to run and read them. It's amazing.” The athlete concluded by saying that NAOM 2015 was “exact-

ly what I was looking for: really nice terrain, high quality maps, really good competition and a top level organisation.”

Nadiya Volynska also made a very positive summary of her participation in the 2015 edition of NAOM and in particular the second stage: “I really enjoyed the courses – in a very detailed terrain, greener than usual – so I had to work on my strategy. I had to be more careful, not run too straight, find some around route choices, and it worked. The placement of the controls was something that pleased me a lot, along with the infinity of route choices offered.” Regarding the victory itself, Volynska remarks that “It was very motivating”, adding that, “it was time to take a test race more seriously, pushing hard most of the time and I think that I succeeded.” Also a word to the organisation: “the best there is, at the level of major events in Scandinavia”, she concludes.

To learn more about NAOM 2015, please visit <http://www.gd4caminhos.com/naom2015>.