

ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

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The Soldier, the Teacher and the Forester: **Conflicts Around Orienteering Races in Late 1960s France**

Orienteering racing has existed in France throughout the twentieth century, but its precise introduction as an institutional sport dates from 1967. At this time the activity was controlled by the Fédération Française d'Éducation Physique (FFEP) and faced some difficulties. Indeed, the FFEP, an old organization which had been founded by promoters of the “natural method” of physical education, was in its final days. Will Stalbrand, a member of the Swedish federation of orienteering racing, developed new forms of support and ways of encouraging the activity. Stalbrand's innovation was to establish an independent organization for orienteering, the Fédération Française de Course d'Orientation (FFCO), which was formed in April 1970, from several groups which did not share a common vision of the sport.

The national board of the FFCO, which included representatives from the army, the schools, and the Office National des Eaux at Forêts (ONF), exemplified the diversity and the fragility of the union. Each of these constituencies conceived of orienteering in its own way and without following international norms that had been established in 1961: the army found orienteering a useful means of training soldiers, while the ONF and the schools valued orienteering more as a means of education than a sport activity.

This paper uses the archives of the French orienteering organizations, as well as interviews with leading figures in the activity from the 1960s to analyze the institutional conflicts that surrounded the birth of the FFCO, and the various stages of its development.