

Athletics South Interclub 2009/2010

The following statement documents in more detail some of the proposals for the upcoming Track and Field season. Having been in the sport for over 18 years I was eager to start this role with all guns blazing, perhaps it should be said I was a little brazen! Following the release of the original draft program and proposals for 2009/2010 I have received incalculable number of emails and phone calls and have been in discussion with athletes, parents, coaches and officials to gauge what the athletics community would like to see this season. This feedback has been invaluable and I have certainly taken onboard every comment and suggestions and I believe the new draft program will reflect this. It was mentioned to me that I will always have a hard time pleasing everybody, quite true, but hopefully the following proposals and programs will satisfy most.

One of the strongest concerns voiced was that the programs would be shortened and that with the increase in registrations prospective athletes might be turned off from the sport. Coupled with this the draft programs didn't leave those who simply enjoyed doing every event on a Saturday afternoon a chance. Yes, interclub should be marketed for all levels of athletic ability with the aim of enjoyment, be it the elite athlete chasing world qualifiers or those competing for chocolate frogs. It could therefore be argued that expansion not restriction is the key for future success.

However, it was highlighted time and time again that we need more officials. In order to run a successful interclub I believe the board must look at ways to better recruit (train) and retain our often-undervalued officials. It was discussed with me that some officials are getting overly stressed and some events appear to attract less officials than others. A lack of numbers was an indicator for some events to run behind last year with athletes often needed to fill in the gaps.

I consider we have a great resource in that we have hundreds of registered athletes competing weekly. I believe it is achievable to adopt a similar approach that *Hockey Tasmania* has developed where senior players are rotated throughout the season to officiate in a variety of roles such as umpiring, canteen duty, match managing and coaching. I see there to be no reason why a similar model could not be adopted here, where senior athletes officiate either onsite, in admin, or in the canteen etc. This could also go a long way to improve the current culture that some athletes have about officials and their behaviour towards them and lead to a better appreciation of the role the officials. Improving the number of thankyou's from athletes post events would also help. This recruitment could also increase the number of accredited officials registered with AS a great resource when national events are to be considered.

Another option is to extend a hand to parents of athletes who spend lengths of time on the seats at Interclub. Thanks to the new seating by Hobart City Council, a few hours in the sun lending a hand might be welcome relief from a cold behind on these seats. This could be achieved by having the commentator asking for athletes and officials (parents) to attend sites approx 10min before start time to get events underway on time – as has been occurring at times already. It is all about getting a message across that for the sport to run smoothly many hands are required. And while we reward athletes and officials for staying the entirety of a meet with spot prizes I believe that some sort of thanks such as a drink ticket for a hard earned tea/coffee/soft drink would go a long way.

Updating the crowd of performances is an area where we could easily make some good improvement. Each week there are so many great performances from some of the juniors that never get a mention, whether due to media restraints in Richards article or just go unnoticed. State Championships really come to life with commentary especially when reported from the field sites. I understand that the infrastructure needed for this is expensive but a two-way walkie talkie would be a great investment for AS so that progressive reports could be made from field sites to the announcer. Making people aware of what is going on I believe would take away some of the flatness that occurs at interclub. Likewise commentating during track events builds excitement and awareness in the crowd. It is also a great feeling for the athletes competing. Music might be better suited to when twilight meets are held.

Currently men and woman compete together in some of the jumps, throws and all distance events including walks. There has been quite a lot of support for our women sprint athletes to be given the opportunity to compete against the men on the track. This would give our top women runners the opportunity to produce faster times in a more competitive race. It is proposed that women could enter as ‘invitation’ for all track events to 1500m for 2009/2010. Women athletes would enter on the men’s entry sheet clearly indicating the invitation. So that focus is not taken away from the women’s races no competition points will be offered for invitation athletes.

Building on the sessions concept developed over the last few seasons, it is planned to have sessions graded in an effort to more evenly spread the number of athletes in each session. Some of last season’s sessions resulted in larger numbers of athletes in some and few in others. This imbalance resulted in some events taking much longer than others and delaying the start of events. This is also led to some athletes only being able to perform in one or two rounds before needing to compete in another event. In the throws one of the issues was that when shorter throwers followed longer throwers it was taking a great deal of time to pull tapes and record distances. As has been discussed this can be helped by grading athletes and/or by having two tapes to measure. By grading, athletes would throw or jump in progressive order of performance, for example furthest to shortest or vice versa.

Last season there were up to four sessions per throwing and jumping event resulting in twelve fields for the day. It is anticipated that this season three sessions will be held reducing the fields to nine for the day. This would result in session one being a mixed session and performance based (graded). There would then be a separate session for men and women (session two – non graded) for all throws and jumps. For example, session one of the high jump will have a starting height of 1.40m. This session would

be open for men and women to compete together, above this height. There would still be the option for women to compete in a women's event separately rather than the combined if they wanted, and vice versa for the men. Likewise session one for Javelin might be for all throwers over 30m (arbitrary number) and session two for the rest of the men and women athletes, again a separate session for the two.

Athletes should not be penalised for failing to meet minimum requirements as all times/distances/heights are graded according to points. As stated the intended purpose of sessions is to more evenly distribute athlete numbers. If for example an athlete is unable to compete in for example session 2 of the men's discus due to a long jump competition he could be granted allowance to compete in session 1 through the discretion of officials. Having documented minimum requirements would result in most athletes keeping to the appropriate sessions.

Track races would also be graded. More accurate starting times will assist in athletes knowing when their races will take place. For example 200m men session one would be for those who run under 25sec, held at 2.45pm and session two for men running over 25sec held at 3.00pm. The program will also state times men and women will run.

Relays will continue to be held traditionally at the end of each program so that club managers have time to organise teams and that this will allow athletes to enjoy the most sociable part of the program. There has been some discussion about allowing mixed teams to compete, whether weekly or monthly. I believe that this should be discussed fully in the near future. I believe that this concept could work so long as *clubs are being represented*. This would also allow the AT relay squad members to run at a sanctioned meet. This should not detract from a club focus, but build the sociability of athletics. I believe it would result in greater participation numbers and more enjoyment. I would much rather see 8 teams competing in a 4x400m rather than 3 club teams. I would be in the view that mixed teams being invitational would be non-point scoring.

I make a proposal for your discussion to create an AS relay trophy for U/16 and Open men and women. On program B you will note that the relay has been left open for the AS relay championship. I feel this concept would be a hotly contested event and would be a good media point in exposing such an event to the public promoting our southern clubs and building once again on traditional club rivalry.

The championship would involve a different relay on each Program B – relays included would be 4x100m, 4x200m, 4x400m and a medley relay. Points would be awarded to all finishing teams as in normal interclub rules however only the first represented club would receive points to the relay trophy.

For example:

Men 4x400m

ES 1st – 20 points IC (10 points Relay Cship)

ES 2nd – 19 points IC (0 points Relay Cship)

OVA 3rd – 19 points IC (8 points Relay Cship)

SB 4th – 18 points IC (7 points Relay Cship)

SB 5th – 18 points IC (0 points Relay Cship)

NS 6th – 18 points IC (5points Relay Cship)

This is only one example of how points might be allocated, it is as I have stated up for discussion.

Post discussions with Steve Lance it was agreed that Twilight meets would be suited to a Wednesday night, in place of a TMA meet with TMA competing alongside AS athletes. The Twilight meet series is aimed at emphasising enjoyment and socialisation in the sport. As with last season the Bill Barwick meet, incorporating the U/18 and Open Mile and 100yard, will be held as a Twilight meet. It is also proposed this be held January 13, 2010. These meets will also be points free.

You will note that there has been a twilight meet set for February 10, 2010 the Wednesday before the Briggs Athletics Classic. I have earmarked this meet as the AS relay night where could compete in preparation for the Tasmanian Relay Championships held on February 13-14, 2010. This meet could result in many benefits for AS athletes including;

- Final selection trials before Briggs Athletics Classic
- Opportunity for national athletes to compete before Briggs Athletics Classic
- AT relay squad participation
- Final selection trials before Tasmanian Relay Championships
- Potential coaching sessions from AA coaches, athletes

The events for this evening will be discussed closer to the date.

I have proposed that the current method of entering events on the blue/pink cards will cease and a trial period of three months to use entry sheets similar to that currently used in cross-country and TMA. It is a tried and proven system in other states and would result in athletes taking responsibility for their entry and make it easier for officials to sort fields/heats. The entry sheets would be based on the current card concept retaining all information. This does give us the scope to allow additional info such as personal best performances, which could aid in highlighting performances when results are tabled. For example an U/15 who runs a 10sec pb in a 1500m although finishes 5th I believe deserves a mention. This would also aid in ranking athletes for field events so that they can jump/throw in a progression.

Also to be trialed for three months will be an enforced cut off of 30min prior to the commencement of events where administration officials would take up the entry sheet and no further entries would be accepted - firm. I believe this to be sufficient time for athletes to arrive at the track and enter and give themselves adequate time to warm-up. The extra 10min for administration I hope will go a long way to keeping events running to time. Since no event starts no earlier than 1pm the earliest athletes will need to be at the track will be 12.30pm, 20min later than last season. This also brings AS in line with AT meets.

An idea for thought and perhaps another proposal for next season would be having the option for athletes to enter online via the Athletics South website. This would involve athletes downloading an entry form identical to written format from the AS site and then attach as an email sending to for example asinterclub@athleticssouth.org giving the athlete the ability to enter all events for the days meet. Attachments from emails

would be printed on the Sat of competition by admin staff upon arrival and subsequently details entered for the day on event sheets. Athletes who enter on-line would need to confirm their entries before the start of an event ie 15min prior to event commencement. Again this is an early thought but was in response to a couple of emails I received from Little Athletics parents who suggested it would be easier for them coming from morning competition.

Another suggestion was that if the athlete did not show up who had entered online then there would need to be in place a ruling to penalise athletes. This is also something the board needs to consider in regards to athletes who simply do not turn up to events once they have entered without withdrawing. This has resulted in events being delayed in the past is getting very frustrating for all.

The suggestion of having a 'Golden League' style event during the Track and Field season has proven to have some merit. However this idea might be better suited to season 2010/11 allowing some of the other ideas to be trailed and more thought into this concept.

I have been in discussion with a couple of Little Athletics parent who wanted to know if throwing implements, hurdle heights and starting heights for high jump would be catered for the younger athletes. As a board as we are looking at attracting more athletes of the 9-12 age group this is an area we need to discuss if we are to fully accommodate these athletes. I have been in discussion with the AT Director of Track and Field and AT president and as currently stands these athletes will use U/14 implements and hurdle heights.

I would like to conclude by thanking the board and indeed the AS community for their input into the last discussion paper. It has certainly reinforced the notion that athletics in the South is a growing sport accommodating for a wide range of athletes. I am still learning the ropes so I thank everyone for their patience. Please forward this second draft program and summary of points to all club members.

Unfortunately I will be away in New Zealand over the next two weeks and will therefore not be available at the next board meeting. However please make any correspondence or comment via email as I will be keen to finalise all programs and calendars to take to publishing for early September. srae@utas.edu.au

Summary of Points.

- 3 month trial for 30min check in
- 3 month trial for entry sheets (replace entry cards)
- 3 sessions for throws and jumps. Session one will be mixed and with minimum requirements for session. Session two will be for men and women to compete separately with no minimum requirement
- 2 sessions for sprint events
- inaugural AS relay championship trophy
- women able to compete by invitation in mens track events
- relays to remain at end of program
- interclub not to be shortened
- retention and creation of officials
- increased commentary updates, particularly from field sites
- twilight competition series inc Bill Barwick mile
- with TMA to trial a 1200-1300 meet on Saturday all programs will commence at 1pm starting.