



from the editor

E. Gary Hill

NOTHING BREEDS A SHARPER EDGE than high-level competition. And a sharp edge is what America's best athletes will need this year if they're to do anything of note at the Olympic Games. But there's another piece of integral honing which comes first: our old friend the Olympic Trials.

And I'm left wondering, again, just how they're supposed to do it, given that the

country is now almost totally devoid of meets in which to find any competition, let alone that of the high-level variety.

I touched on this subject in this space in last July's issue, when I asked "What If They Didn't Give Any Track Meets?"

As I noted then, May came and went last year without a single Friday or

Saturday that would remotely rouse the ticket-buying public's interest. Not offering anything to the fan base is bad enough, but the tragedy here is the athletes' almost complete lack of meaningful competition in the 6 weeks leading up to the Trials.

If you're truly world-class, and you're lucky enough to be in one of the events that's to be staged at Pre or the adidas Grand Prix, then you've got a small window in early June. But for May, your choices are limited, and we sing hallelujah for meets like the Georgia Tech Invitational, Arizona's Elite Throwers meet, the NTC Classic in Florida and the High Performance affair at Occidental. But that's about it.

It would be easy to turn this into a tear-fest at the litany of lost meets, but that's not my intent here so I'll resist the urge. My prime concern—particularly at a time when the Olympic qualifying window is months shorter than in the past—is that too many U.S. people won't be able to either get in shape in time for the Trials and/or get an ever-tougher Olympic qualifier (and with the team being chosen on the spot in Eugene, there will be no post-meet chasing of standards).

All of which brings me back to this year's indoor season. It was wonderful that USATF found a way to stage another meet in Madison Square Garden to replace Millrose. And it was terrific that the federation was able to get Fayetteville back into the fold as a significant fixture.

But—and far be it from me to tell USATF and prime sponsor Visa how to spend their sponsorship dollars—what the heck is the point of spending hard-to-find resources on indoor meets when they are so irrelevant compared to outdoors?

Every penny that went into funding those way-off-the-timeline affairs should have found its way into doing something to repair the wreck that is outdoors. Winning a pissing match with the Armory people, methinks, does nothing for the Olympic team.

One also need remember that the indoor side of the sport, by its very nature, disenfranchises a significant portion of the competitors. If your event is the steeplechase, the 10,000, the 400 hurdles, the discus, the hammer or javelin, you need not apply.

It seems to me that we've reached a crossroads without most people realizing it. The sport has contracted to the point where USATF can keep either the indoor or outdoor version alive, but not both. And attempting to nurture both leads to neither receiving the standard of care that's required.

It's time for indoor to become a federation afterthought.

