



from the editor

RECOGNIZE THESE NAMES? Kenenisa Bekele, Usain Bolt, Tyson Gay, Steve Hooker, Yelena Isinbaeva, Asafa Powell, Sanya Richards-Ross, Andreas Thorkildsen, Blanka Vlašić. Of course you do. They're some of the biggest names in the sport.

Are track's biggest stars getting enough Diamond League exposure? I think not.

So big that when the IAAF announced its blockbuster Samsung Diamond League series back in the fall of '09, it accorded these 9 megastars "Diamond League Ambassador" status.

Here's those names again, with numbers attached: Vlašić 2; Bolt, Gay, Powell & Thorkildsen 1; Richards-Ross, Bekele, Hooker & Isinbaeva 0.

The numbers come from a *Stat Corner* chart (see p. 39) listing all the DL winners

for its 3-season lifespan, 2010–12; they tell us that among them the 9 superstars have won a grand total of 6 DL championship titles. Some 45% of them haven't won one at all and the planet's biggest draw, Bolt, drew blanks the first two seasons.

Before the first season got underway, another five Ambassadors were named. They were actually more successful in their DL pursuits. Valerie Adams, Allyson Felix & Barbora Špotáková now have 2 titles apiece, with Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce at 1 and Tero Pitkämäki shut out. But the overall picture isn't satisfying.

Obviously, injuries and other things beyond the athlete's control (like having somebody else come along who was better) have contributed significantly to the numbers. But by any standard, it's hard to call this "spotlighting" of the sport's biggest stars a raging success. Worst of all, in my book, is that the planned guarantee of major head-to-head clashes has gone by the board.

In summing up the first season in my column of May '11 I wrote, "Despite the injuries, the sprint trio did appear in 12 of the 14 DL meets (9 in the 100, 3 in the 200), but the sum total of the promised gaudy sequence of head-to-heads expressed itself as Gay beating Bolt in Stockholm, Gay beating Powell in Gateshead and Bolt beating Powell in Paris. Not good enough. Not the IAAF's fault, but nonetheless not good enough."

And it continues to be not good enough, as the sport's biggest matchups continue to happen almost never. Perhaps the official motto of the IAAF should become "quack," because its big stars continue to duck each other. Look at high popularity/big ratings sports like tennis and golf, each of which has a handful of majors a year.

Can you imagine a Wimbledon without Djoković, Federer and Nadal? A Masters without Tiger and Lefty and Rory? Would not happen. Yet track goes on, year after year—even after the creation of a high-profile series—and its stars still don't meet.

Our sport, of course, has been behind the give-the-masses-what-they-want curve for what seems like forever. Think of all the years that went by with the big invitationals not having Bayi vs. Walker or Coe vs. Overt. Clashes that would have garnered no end of publicity for a recognition-starved sport.

A clash that today is personified by Bolt and Blake. Not to pick on them, because they're just part of the same culture that has come to drive our sport. And now Bolt's agent (see p. 38) flat out says we shouldn't expect to see them meet often outside the big championships, claiming those head-to-heads would only devalue the medal races.

Sorry, but I'm not buying it. Quack!

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