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# from the editor

**IF YOU READ OUR MESSAGE BOARDS** on our website (and if you don't, why not?!) you'll know that annually few subjects generate more traffic than the back-and-forth over who should be the Athletes Of The Year. That's a lively topic that inspires much impassioned debate.

There were those who were aghast this year when it was suggested that the *T&FN* voters might not follow the same path as the IAAF did in its big-prize-money choices of Usain Bolt and Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce. As it turned out (see pp. 10 & 36), our voters did not, albeit by the narrowest of margins on the men's side.

**Thoughts on how our Athlete Of The Year process works**

There is a logical school of thought that it could be nobody but the fabulous Jamaicans, given that each won 3 golds at the Worlds.

And that's where the major disconnect comes in. In preparing seasonal records for our voting panel, *T&FN* doesn't include relay

performances. We stress that this is meant to be an *individual* award, not one that gives bonus points for being in one of the 2-3 events where being on a relay team is possible (and furthermore, where it also requires being from a very select group of nations that have fast relay mates to join with you).

This is not remotely a new concept; it's one that has been part of our thinking for decades and has affected the likes of Carl Lewis and Michael Johnson in the past as much as it did the Jamaican duo this year.

We don't address the matter of doubling when sending out our AOY ballots, but I have a firm conviction—and I know other panelists share it—that doubling is greatly overrated. It would be one thing if doubles were available to people in every event, but they're not. How many golds would women's AOY Valerie Adams have picked up in Moscow if there were shot events with 2-3 different weights of implement?

Back when Lewis was in his prime, I floated an idea with the rest of *T&FN's* editorial department that we totally reinvent the wheel and make people separate entities in different events. As in, your ballot might list Lewis in the 100, 200 and LJ, with his thus getting 3 of your 10 votes. Obviously, that never flew, if for no other reason than because in the year in question it appeared that Lewis might end up as both AOY and runner-up, so good was he in each of his events.

Obviously, not all the members of our international panel share my thoughts on doubling. Overall, 61% of our AOYs (31 men out of 55, 27 women out of 40) have World Ranked in more than one event that year. A few of those just might have made it on their best event alone, but you see the trend. Medals sell. They just don't sell as well to me as most, with the result that it's a rare year when both my AOY choices match the panel as a whole.

I'll also cop to having a soft spot for the field events, where nerves-of-steel technique enters into the equation in a way that only the hurdles among track events can match. And I have another soft spot for undefeated seasons; I love the concept of never losing.

Those two feelings are strongly related, by the way. Find me an undefeated field eventer like Adams, and in my opinion that's the very definition of an AOY. For me, an SAFP season that included a 4<sup>th</sup> in the 100 and a 2<sup>nd</sup> and a 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 200 couldn't compare.

There was no undefeated men's field eventer, although Bondarenko came close, his one defeat being on the countback, so he was never outjumped. Close enough in what is always, when you come down to it, a subjective decision.

I'd just like to see athletes in all events have at least a fighting chance at winning.