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from the editor

E. Gary Hill

WANNA GET A TRACK FAN'S ATTENTION? Bring up the fact that our sport *might* have to give up some Olympic events down the road (see p. 64). Now that I have your attention...

As distasteful as it may be to you, let's address the unaddressable: if something(s) on the current program has to go, what would it be? It's important to note that this discussion refers to the Games only, although any discipline that loses its Olympic cachet probably doesn't have much of a future elsewhere.

**So what if we had no
choice but to cut
Olympic events?**

It's also important to note that the decision may well not be left for track to decide. Other stakeholders—notably the IOC and TV interests—will surely have a say as they attempt to evolve the overall picture of sport.

And track, with an aging fan base (“an unsustainable average of 49” Seb Coe has said), can surely be seen as ripe for revision.

I'm going to try to look at this in a cold and dispassionate fashion, trying to let my brain do the talking rather than my heart. The fact that I put the only event I was ever any good at on the expendable list should tell you I was at least partially successful.

The events, and a few perhaps-relevant thoughts regards their Olympic future:

- 100—obviously a slam-dunk keeper.
- 200—hard to follow with the stagger, and lane draw renders many of the runners sure-losers. Although some cite the “redundancy” with the 100, but the media loves multiple medal-winners, and with Usain Bolt fresh in mind, I'm guessing it's safe. (As an aside, to keep a sprint double intact I'd replace the 200 with a 50; 5 seconds of blazing speed.)
- 400—same stagger/lane problem as the 200, but not as pronounced. Better with 1-turn stagger.
- 800—what's not to like? It's in.
- 1500—another classic that's not remotely on anybody's hit-list.
- Steeple—feels contrived in a stadium setting. Better done as a Winter Games “cross country” event with some frozen tundra livening it up. It could be in danger.
- 5000—gotta have a distance race, and this is a good one.
- 10,000—may not have same “redundancy” appeal as the 100/200 and for modern audiences probably takes too long. Definitely on the block. I don't see the sense of making it a road race.
- 110H—another icon that should be immune from harm.
- 400H—could easily end up characterized as not bringing anything new to the table.
- Marathon—since the word is synonymous with Olympics, would never happen.
- Walks—I'll lump them together because I suspect one is on the line. Probably the 50.
- Relays—the rest of the world doesn't share the U.S. fascination with baton events, and a lot of bodies could be eliminated this way. But do you really think NBC would allow their cutting?
- HJ—one of man's core physical things is jumping high. Not a problem.
- PV—too spectacular and crowd-wowing ever to go away.
- LJ—like the HJ, but in another axis. Too logical to eliminate.
- TJ—it's a “construct” that I think casual fans have trouble relating to. On shaky ground.
- SP—show of strength takes little space and can be moved to creative venues like the street or shopping mall (or the greatest site ever: Ancient Olympia).
- DT—lose the imagery of the discobolus? Never.
- HT—safety issues, real or otherwise, could be a major strike for an event that's a “construct.”
- JT—man has been throwing spears since the beginning. Despite safety, think it'll stay.
- Multis—concept of world's greatest all-around athlete runs too deep to be extinguished. I can see requests for some format changes to make it more watchable to the non-geek.

Here's hoping that *everything* stays, of course, but logic tells me to be prepared for some snipping.