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# from the editor

*E. Gary Hill*

WILL BEIJING REALLY BE World Championships No. 15? As I said in this space in my column of July '07 (from which this month's edition borrows liberally), I must have been having an awful lot of fun since '83, because time certainly has flown.

There are the world's greatest track meets—think Olympic Games, U.S. Olympic Trials, Zürich, Pre, Millrose, the Penn Relays. And then there is the world's better-than-greatest track meet, and that's the World Championships.

**I'm still in favor of 3  
World Championships in  
every quadrennium**

Needless to say, I'm thrilled that I have been lucky enough to live in an era where I was around—and able to go see—the Worlds, starting with edition No. 1.

But better than the Olympics? When I went to my first Games, Munich '72, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. And I still hear the angels every four years when I tread on Olympic soil.

But the OG has grown ever more bloated and commercial and is now just too danged trendy. It's not as special as it once was. And in a worrisome trend that only increases with each passing Olympiad, track gets kicked into the background too much. I'm not a background kind of guy.

There's no such fly-in-coach status at a World Track & Field Championships. Perhaps I don't quite hear those angels singing (I'm not so foolish as to have lost sight of just how special the Olympics are), but in terms of an enjoyable track meet, it just doesn't get any better. Nine glorious days of nothing but track at an overall higher level than the Olympics, with a program spread out so that it's generally easy to pay close attention to almost all of the events.

Oh sure, there are times when in a monstrous city—think Tokyo '91, and probably Beijing this August—the meet gets swallowed up and the general populace doesn't even realize we've passed through town, but that's a small price to pay for our own glorious be-all, end-all meet.

For years the IAAF carried on the silly little fiction (usually just in a footnote buried in their rulebook) that the Olympics was also “the world championships,” but that was a lower-case version demanding to become The World Championships.

In '83 it happened. And fortunately for the sport, Primo Nebiolo's IAAF presidency came along in the same timeframe. Forget whatever personal obsession for power it may have been that drove him, the wily Italian dragged the sport—often kicking and screaming—into the 20th Century. And laid a decent blueprint for the 21st.

Part of Nebiolo's vision was making track more high-profile, something that didn't just happen every four years, and he realized that a true Worlds was the right way to go. So after quadrennial versions of the meet to kick it off in '83, '87 and '91, we went biennial in '93. In the view from this corner the sport has never been better served.

There are those who say that the every-two-years schedule is too much and we should halve the stagings. Too often?! I say the meet isn't held often enough. The size/import of the Olympics precludes having a WC that season, but I'm all for filling in that “missing” third year, even if it will impinge somewhat on other international meets. But one meet it can only make better is the USATF Championships, doubling as the WC Trials, instead of being meaningless to many.

If just about every other sport worth mentioning can crown its best on an annual basis, why can't track? Those gap years only give the general media another excuse to ignore us and downgrade our product.

Whether the next IAAF president is Seb Coe or Sergey Bubka, I hope he channels some of Nebiolo's vision in taking the sport to a higher level and we add future Worlds in 2018, 2022, 2026 and so on ad infinitum. With an emphasis on the “infinity” part of that.