



# from the editor

*E. Garry Hill*

I KNOW YOU'LL FIND THIS HARD TO BELIEVE, but as I write, it's almost the end of May and I haven't been to a single track meet all year. I'm not completely sure, but I'm guessing that you'd have to jump into a time machine to make it as far back as the last time that happened, which was probably something like 19-(gasp)-56.

What's worse is that my absences—in a perfect storm of circumstances beyond my control—will continue through the monster Eugene trifecta of Pre/NCAA/USATF (but will not encompass Beijing in August). I haven't missed both the Nationals in the same year since '69.

**The best part about going to a track meet is visiting with your like-minded friends**

But cry not for me, because I realize I have been blessed in the see-big-meets department, while so many fans—better fans than I—rarely, if ever, make it to the top-end competitions.

My point in bringing up the subject is that while I have missed and will miss so many ne plus ultra performances the first half of this year, more than that I'm missing my track friends.

When you get right down to it, even if you're an ultimate numbers junkie like me, able to be thrilled to the max just by simply reading results, isn't the best part about the sport actually going to a meet and getting the chance to schmooze with your like-minded compatriots? No amount of modern e-communication can make up for in-person contact.

Being a hardcore track fan, after all, makes you a part of a very small fraternity. (Maybe we should develop a secret handshake!)

Every time I'm part of a get-together of our elite group (be it old friends or brand-new buddies), I find it trumps all the class reunions in the world. Not only can you have more than one a year, you can also share a bond that few others can appreciate. A noted major-college SID once said, "The only thing I hate more than track is field." Silly bastard got it backwards: the only thing one should *like* more than track is field.

Or like them equally, which is what I consider the hallmark of a real hardcore fan of the sport. Doesn't matter which of the events it is; they're all great. Even if some are greater than others.

As somebody once said, the real answer to, "Describe the worst track meet you ever saw," is, "FAN-tastic!"

Why are meets fantastic? Probably for the same reason that for so many people the best part of a football game is tailgating. And I don't mean for the hot dogs & beer. Early in my almost half-century of doing it, I discovered that an integral part of really enjoying a meet was the "tailgating" that goes on before, during and after the competition itself.

Eagerly anticipating what happens before the meet, dissecting it precisely during the competition and then arguing afterwards over what we just had just seen or didn't see. And even more eagerly anticipating doing it all over again the next time.

The saddest part of any year? The final day of what you know will be your last meet of the year, even if it's something as awesome as the Olympic Games.

Knowing that when you say goodbye to your track buds it will probably be many months before you sit down together again, exchanging the secret handshake that only the hardcore know. Shake, pal!

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