



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

IF YOU'RE READING THIS COLUMN YOU PROBABLY THINK of track & field as an entertainment option as good as it gets, but why not consider ways to make it even better?

Here, in no particular order, as I first did in a version of this column in July of '02, are 10 ways—some perhaps obvious, some off the wall—to increase your enjoyment of the sport:

1. Don't sit close to the track. Sitting down close, even at the finish line—just like center court or the 50-yard line—is way overrated. If you really want to watch races develop, or

follow the field events, sit higher up or closer to midfield. Even consider sitting on the backstretch, near the 1500 start. That's an amazing vantage point for many things.

2. Think of the sport as *field & track*. Unskilled announcers and poor visual aids make this a tough one, but if you can, learn to enjoy the ebb and flow of the jumps and

throws. How? Chart the event yourself, if the data is being presented.

3. Bring a non-fan to the meet. Not only will you have the chance to create new followers, you can also boost your ego by being expert-for-a-day. Cultivate your kids or grandkids.

4. Join or start a fantasy league. "Owning" athletes is a real kick in the pants (and sometimes in the head) as the IAAF's Diamond League game has shown.

5. Volunteer to work a meet. The sport gives lots to you; give something back, even if it's just raking the pit or dragging hurdles about. Better yet, think about becoming an official, a commodity we're woefully short on in most places.

6. Combine going to meets with tourism. No matter where you live, or how little time you have, there are always culturally enlightening things worth stopping to see on the way to and from, even for a local meet.

7. Visit both ends of the talent spectrum. If you like high school track, with all its purity and unfettered emotion, step all the way up to an NCAA or USATF Champs. . Be blown away by the athletic talent those at the top end exhibit. Conversely, if you're jaded by years of following the pros on the Euro Circuit, go and watch an elementary-school field day. The sight of those uncoordinated little critters giving their all will bring tears to your eyes.

8. Forget you're a *T&FN* reader when you watch track on TV. This is not a slam at the TV people, because they really do try hard. But they're pitching the sport at a wide demographic, one that's not remotely track savvy. Be thankful for what you get and revel in the fact that you understand the sport better than 99.99% of the populace. (Fortunately, online coverage tends to be a bit more sophisticated these days; use that option when possible.)

9. Go out to the nearest hangout with other fans after a meet. If you enjoyed the day the first time round, you'll enjoy it even more when you rehash a race, or fight over what strategy might have helped Runner A beat Runner B. Do debates: is Usain Bolt now the sport's all-time greatest, period? What's the solution to Team USA's baton woes?

10. Take advantage of modern technology, even if you worry that electronic gadgetry is taking over your life. Prepare for a meet by checking out what's being said online ahead of time. When you go to the meet, take as big a smartphone/pad/tablet/laptop as you can. Make sure it's got all the handy apps and links imaginable that will expand your appreciation of what's going on. After the meet, read multiple reports on how other people saw it.

PS: Not listed above—because it goes without saying—is never throw away a copy of T&FN!

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