



from the editor

E. Garry Hill

SOMETIMES THE SQUEAKY WHEEL does get the grease. Back in my May column I lamented the poor state of field-event-result presentation even at the highest level. I wrote, “Can you imagine watching any of the popular ball sports without a scoreboard? No indication of the score, no idea how much time is left in the game? Anybody who tried to sell a sport with that kind of spectator aid would be laughed off the planet.

“Yet that’s just what happens with field events, which not only make up about half the disciplines in the sport, but also dominate the landscape in terms of time of competition. But walk into a track meet at any level—even the World Championships or Olympic Games—and your chance of finding out what’s going on in any of the jumps or throws is almost impossible. Even with all the marvels of modern electronics.”

Somebody actually listened to me for once!

But somebody actually reads my screeds! The folks at Flash Results—who do the timing and run the field boards at the biggest of U.S. meets using Lynx equipment—took my message to heart, and at the NCAA Championships I had to rub my eyes to be sure I was seeing what I was seeing: the top placers in the field events at each venue, scrolling by during the competition.

Flash’s Tom Jennings explains, “This was a Flash development, led by our scoreboard guru, Cody Dannen, specifically addressing your column. The live Internet results were a similar project to silence the boo-birds!” Giving credit where credit is due, he continues, “Both of these software projects would not be possible without the capabilities of *VinceScore*, developed and continuing to progress by our contractor Vince Giarrocco of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, who has taken Lynx’s FieldLynx to great heights.” Hopefully, those who control such things in the international arena will take notice and follow suit sometime soon.

That same May column also praised the IAAF for its World Indoor protocol of cutting the final round in the throws and horizontal jumps to 4 competitors, competing in an isolated window free of running-event distraction.

As an offshoot of that, this year’s Diamond League has enacted a cut-down methodology of its own whereby only the top 4 competitors get to jump in the last 3 rounds. I saw it in action at the Pre Classic and thought it worked fairly well, but I’m apparently in a minority there, as athletes and their agents have been railing non-stop against it since the beginning. (See p. 47 for Olympic long jump champ Greg Rutherford’s thoughts on the process.)

To my mind (and I’ve said it in this space many times before), some kind of streamlining is required in a modern world, particularly when TV is involved and the DL, above all else, is intended as a TV-friendly competition. There are too many jumps/throws by people who have no hope of affecting the top end of the competition. And the true stars appear on the runway/ in the circle too infrequently.

There are many formulae which could be employed, but I remain convinced that each round other than the first should be putting somebody in peril of not advancing. After all, lose-and-you’re-out is one of the underpinnings of all great team-sport tournaments. And it happens in rounds of running events. There’s no reason it shouldn’t be an integral part of field event competition.

My favorite model would be this: OG/WC finals have 12 contestants; everybody gets a chance to foul once, so after 2 rounds you cut it to 10; 3 rounds to 8; 4 rounds to 6; 5 rounds to 4. And when the 4-person final sequence comes around, given them 90 seconds instead of a minute.

Having 3 rounds with 4 contestants is too hard on the athletes, particularly when passing comes into play, but I expect DL officials to tweak that so it’ll work too.

Less is more!

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