from the editor

BACK IN JANUARY OF 2014 this space was dedicated to the concept “The IAAF & USATF Halls Of Fame Need More Members.”

What was true then has become even truer today, but in this column I’ll just talk about the more important of the two Halls, the IAAF’s, which hasn’t been well handled from the get-go, and almost 5 years after its inaugural class was inducted still numbers a mere 48 (31 men, 17 women).

How we got to those 48 still grips me. When the IAAF did its inaugural class of 24 in November of ’12, it ensured that all geographical areas and all event groups were represented. That’s wonderfully PC and even makes some decent marketing sense, but it offends my sense of what a HOF is all about. And what the first class named is all about, which is the honor of being super-special.

The criteria for the first class selected also mandated that the athletes must have at least 2 gold medals from the Olympics and/or World Championships. So if you were an athlete in an event that didn’t allow doubling, or your career was before the WC were invented, or you were boycotted out of a Games or were from an era where there were no Olympics at all, or were from an era where many/most Olympic gold medalists promptly retired, you need not apply.

Two more sets of 12 were added in ’13 & ’14. “But what about the classes of ’15 & ’16,” you might well ask? Big ball-drop by Monaco on those. Instead of using the Hall as a spectacular tool to create good memories at a time when the federation has been mired in the muck of the Diack scandal and then the Russian doping melodrama, it choose simply to ignore the Hall.

One hopes the IAAF will get back on track this year, but even if it does I have to ask, “Why hasn’t there been any publicity about it?” Other sports manage to make hay with their Halls for many months of the year. Why not a list of say 100 candidates at the start of each year, cutting that to 50 quarterfinalists at mid-year when the Diamond League goes on its inevitable hiatus and then to 25 semifinalists a month or two before the class proper is introduced?

Speaking of the invisibility of the Hall, should you want to know who is currently in, the word “fame” appears nowhere on the IAAF’s home page. Instead, you need to go to a row of profile photos and then to 25 semi finalists a month or two before the class proper is introduced?

Simple made-up-on-the-spot-math: let’s conservatively say that each of the 22 standard men’s events should average 5 HOF members each. And—through no fault of their own, but a shorter history—is a shorter history—let’s say the 21 women’s events should average 3. That makes for a “proper” total of 173 members. Subtract the 48 already in and that means at least 125 are missing.

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