



# from the editor

*E. Garry Hill*

**JUST LIKE SOME ANNOYING GIF** endlessly looping on your computer screen (I thought I'd come up with a hipper metaphor than "like a broken record"), here I am yet again to beat you over the head with thoughts that the sport—particularly at the high end—needs to improve its look and feel.

If real estate's manta is location-location-location, track & field's should be presentation-presentation-presentation.

**To keep track & field viable, presentation is everything**

Fortunately, I now have a kindred soul in this regard in Seb Coe, who back in our July issue was quoted thusly: "I won the English Schools title 44 years ago and the format hasn't changed. I'm pretty much watching the same format over the same period of time. I can't think of any sport

that's remained inviolate to change for that amount of time. We have to be more innovative, we have to be braver and more creative in formats."

As you'll find in this issue (see p. 40), he has once again called for "radical change," saying, "I'm not ruling anything out."

Some changes may happen in time for the '19 Worlds, he continued, noting that perhaps entire events may be cut from the program, along with a radical reshuffling of the schedule that would be harsher on contesting multiple rounds. He explained, "A greater focus on semis and finals, so you're not having the soufflé collapsing halfway through the evening because the crowd has just seen a spectacular final and then you go to the first round of another event."

That echoes what I wrote in my April 2016 column when I said we needed a "Darwinian pruning." As I put it then, "The 3-ring-circus model may have worked for Barnum & Bailey a hundred years ago, but I don't think it flies anymore."

Every discipline currently on the docket has its staunch adherents and any attempt to eliminate it will meet with fierce resistance. So will attempts to streamline the Worlds by any methodology that involves fewer athletes (and a nation's functionaries—a species of which the movement has no shortage—getting a chance to take a trip to faraway places).

Streamlining the Worlds would also trickle down to the Diamond League level, where it's perhaps even more needed. It's one thing, in the context of an Olympics/World Championships that runs through two weekends, to have enough events to fill the program sufficiently to sell all those seats, and it's totally another to sell what keeps the pro side of the sport alive in the regular season and that's a concise program lasting a couple of hours.

While the DL concept has done an admirable job of bringing "equality" across the spectrum of events I fear that Monaco is helping kill the sport with its a-place-for-everyone thinking. Maybe some events do need to go.

Without pointing any fingers at which disciplines should go, if I were a DL meet director I'd be losing sleep nightly over having to stage events that I know aren't putting a single butt in the seats, and, worse, staging them at the expense of knowing that only every couple of years—unless I have unlimited resources—can I stage such marquee events such as [fill in the blank] , but here's a hint: how can you claim to be staging a real track meet if you don't have a high-end men's 100?

The first thing the IAAF needs to do is conduct a far-reaching survey which rates all the sport's disciplines in terms of popularity, and—as much as almost nobody will like this—simply axe the bottom-feeders.

From where I sit Coe is displaying the insight and moxie needed to fix things, but does he have the political capital to get it done?

Or is cutting events the third rail of the sport?

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