



# from the editor

*E. Garry Hill*

**“IF IT AIN’T BROKE, DON’T FIX IT”** has its virtues, but I fear that too many people in our sport have for too many years been unable to recognize track’s state of broke when it has for too long been staring them in the face.

That’s what makes this issue of the magazine an uplifting one for me. As you’ll find as you page through this installment, there’s news about a trio of movers-and-shakers who are independently of each other taking steps to find a new health plan for our sport.

**Maybe it is broken, and those fixing it deserve recognition for it**

The most powerful man in the sport, Seb Coe, is the one at the forefront of change, with Svein Arne Hansen and Chris Bucknam also chiming in from other areas. I don’t agree with everything that they’re doing, but what they’re up to, fortunately,

isn’t just “change for change’s sake.” That’s the key part.

Belying his politician days as a member of Britain’s Conservative party, Coe is by traditional IAAF standards a flaming radical. I love his mantra of “nothing is off the table” as he tries to remake the pro side of the sport from the ground up, even if I fear his plan to drastically modify the manner by which athletes will qualify for the Olympic Games and World Championships is horribly flawed. The basic premise is that qualifying standards will disappear, to be replaced by an ongoing “world rankings” system.

Coe claims this will provide a “clear understanding of the hierarchy of competitions,” but after almost a half century of being intimately involved in the world rankings biz—even if our famed version is based on different principles than where the IAAF is going—I have marked reservations about the implementation thereof.

It would, of course, be silly of me to dismiss this project out of hand before all the details are known—those are promised for early next year—but I know enough of the mindset of the creators thereof to remain somewhat skeptical. The worst-case-scenario ramifications of what such a system would do to a nation’s ability to choose OG/WC teams—particularly the U.S., for whom the Trials meets are so crucial—flat-out scare me. Let’s hope I’m wrong.

As for European Athletics president Hansen (see p. 39), his innovation is a plan to stage a U.S. vs. Europe dual meet several weeks before the ’19 World Championships in Doha. This is being touted as a “new” concept, although it’s only slightly so, the “Americas” having met Europe in duals in both ’67 (Montréal) and ’69 (Stuttgart). Both meets were seriously flawed by defections from major players on both sides.

I worry about defections once again, given the window into which the meet is being slotted. As I argued in this space back in January of ’15, given the late-late date of Doha, kicking off at the end of September, early September simply *must* be where the USATF Championships (or a separate WC Trials meet) must be staged. Surely other nations must be thinking about this as well.

Lastly, check out pp. 26-27 for Sieg Lindstrom’s incisive analysis of what the new National Relay Championships, the baby of Arkansas head Chris Bucknam, means to an important month on the U.S. calendar. Since the sport began, April has been Relay Month in the U.S.: will this new meet—one of major proportions at the collegiate level—be a boon or a boondoggle?

Some fear that it will handicap traditional fixtures Drake and Penn, but I don’t. The former has remade itself at the top end with appealing pro competitions and attendance-king Penn’s high school strength—and vibrant Jamaican-driven audiences—should remain unsullied while a handful of the best NCAA teams do their own baton thing.

*Plus ça change plus c’est la même chose?...* I think not!

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