



from the editor

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I EAGERLY AWAIT THE DETAILS on the IAAF’s new world rankings system (so you don’t get confused, we’ll call our 71-year-old version the World Rankings, while their upstart proposal gets the lower-case treatment), which was discussed last month, both as news in *Last Lap* and opinion in this space.

As part of his promoting the new concept—the specifics of which are promised for the first quarter of the new year—federation majordomo Seb Coe said, “For the first time in the sport’s history, athletes, media and fans will have a clear understanding of the hierarchy of competitions from National through to Area and up to Global events, allowing them to follow a logical season-long path to the pinnacle of athletics’ top two competitions.”

Will we be singing the off-year blues in 2018? (aka, why not a World Champs?)

The key to that statement is *top two competitions*. My point being that if it’s so darned important to have a path to the top two competitions—a statement with which I agree completely—why then is 25% of the annual calendar devoid of either of those meets. Will we be singing the off-year blues in 2018?

In other words, if we’ve got the option for another pinnacle year, why aren’t we staging a World Championships in ’18? Wouldn’t it only be logical to further the sport with another event that raises the sport’s global profile?

The only “good” reason I think I’ve ever heard for not having an off-year Worlds is that it would make life difficult for athletes competing in the European Championships and/or Commonwealth Games. Funny, nobody ever seems to worry about whether or not the odd-year-staged Pan-Am Games have to find a place on the calendar with the same-year World Championships. I guess you can chalk that up to the outsized power of European nations in general and Britain in particular when it comes to running the sport.

(I shouldn’t be too harsh on our European friends, as their staging of the bulk of the Diamond League circuit helps keep the sport alive, but there is a difference between invitational meets and international championships affairs.)

There are also those coaches/federations who think that it’s too much of a burden to expect their athletes to compete at the highest level year-in and year-out. Ignoring the fact that athletes in most other sports—notably, the sports that have the most *popularity*—somehow manage to do it, only enhancing their reputations/pocketbooks, nobody mandates that because a meet is there that you have to take it seriously. Want a year off? Take one.

So the “biggest” meet of 2018 will probably be the European Championships. Now look at our men’s Top 10 in this year’s AOY voting (see p. 10), minus the retired Farah: Barshim, Kendricks, Manyonga, van Niekerk, Taylor, Fajdek, Farah, Kipchoge, McLeod, Vetter. Of those, only Fajdek & Vetter might be at the Euros.

Things are somewhat better on the women’s side, with a Top 10 of Włodarczyk, Lasitskene, Stefanídi, Thiam, Obiri, Semenya, Perković, Kipyegon, Ayana, Thompson. The first 4 are possible, plus Perković.

Still, overall that’s only 6 of the first 20. You’ll excuse me if I have trouble calling that a “pinnacle” meet. Some in the IAAF might counter, “but we have a World Indoor Championships to think about.” The Indoor is a nice winter-time diversion, but it’s not the real sport, with all the events on a proper-sized track.

But will we be singing the blues this season? Fortunately, I think not, because the individual stars are there to do their amazing thing(s). I’d just rather have them singing (to mix a metaphor) *As Time Goes By* rather than *Old MacDonald Had A Farm*.