

Culture Committee CC 21-02 p2

Date: 18 December 2002

Time: 9.15am – 12.30pm

Venue: Committee Room 1, National Assembly for Wales



Who we are

The Welsh Schools' Athletic Association (WSAA) was founded in 1946 with the aim of providing a competitive structure for male secondary school athletes. Thanks to amalgamation with the equivalent Girls' organisation there has been for the past forty years just one Association catering for all Schools' Athletics in the Principality. The Association is affiliated to the Schools International Athletic Board and the Athletics Association of Wales.

Since 1946 the Association has been organised on a County (now District – see Fig. 1) basis with individual schools being affiliated to and participating in the activities of the WSAA through membership of their Schools County and District Associations. This continued with the local government reorganisation in 1974. Prior to the reorganisation into 22 Unitary Authorities a Working Party was set up to consider the difficulties the WSAA would encounter. After much discussion and consultation it was decided to maintain the structure of eight areas which would compete at national level. It was felt that this option would serve the interests of athletes and teachers best especially when considering our Track and Field Championships, as the alternative would have led to the necessity of providing two nights' accommodation for 1400 athletes (and staffing to ensure their safety) as our competition would have expanded to a two-day event, at least!

Hence, entry to all our National Championships and qualification for our Inter Schools Track and Field Cup Final come through this District structure

.Competition Structure

(both Track and Field and Cross Country)

Figure 2

To supplement this structure which caters progressively for the "star" performer

We provide nationally:

The Track and Field Cup

As an Association we are very well aware that athletics can become an elitist sport with personal physique and stature giving great advantages. To combat this and to make the sport both enjoyable and beneficial and yet retain the competitive element the Cup Competition was introduced. This is aimed specifically at the younger age group at secondary level (NC Years 7 – 10) and is an Inter School TEAM

competition with the average size of team being 12. By various methods of competition (League/Knock Out/ Area Championships) each District brings forward four District Champions to compete on the second Wednesday of July in the National Finals in Brecon.

The Inter Schools Cross Country Championships

As for Track and Field we are aware that our National Cross Country Championships cater primarily for the elite athlete. To counter this the Inter Schools Cross Country Championships were introduced to give the grassroots athlete the opportunity to compete on a wider stage. Over the years these championships have proved very popular seeing up to 700 athletes involved in races in three different age groups (from NC Year 7 through to NC Year 13). This has given athletes of very different abilities the opportunity to compete and the focal competition is that for school teams.

Our Senior Athletes

Conscious as we are of our responsibilities to our younger athletes we are also very aware that the future of the sport in Wales depends on our ability to retain young athletes of proven ability within our sport. Over the years we have initiated competition for those in the 17 – 20 years age group not only in our domestic events but also at international level. Annual international competitions in both Track and Field and Cross Country are held with our parent body – the Athletics Association of Wales – and the Scottish Schools Athletic Association. In 2003 the Cross Country Fixture will involve again teams representing West Midlands and South West England Schools' County Associations. An invitation has also been made to West Midlands Schools to field a team in the equivalent Track and Field Match.

This initiative helps maintain these athletes in our sport and enables a smooth transfer from school sport to the senior level. It also represents a pleasing aspect of our good relations with the Athletics Association of Wales.

Other National and International Events

Combined Events

For the past nine years we have held an increasingly popular and successful Combined Events Championship.

This championship was introduced to promote this aspect of our sport and in its short history our champions have progressed to represent Great Britain in Combined Events Internationals at Under 20 and Under 23 level.

It is expected that these championships will not be held in 2003 because of the current financial situation.

Indoor International Pentathlon

This event takes place annually in December and has, since its inception, been hosted by the Scottish Schools' Athletic Association.

Our participation has become more successful during recent years and we are now considered to be serious contenders in the team event. In 1999 a Welsh female athlete won the individual gold medal in the Under 18 age group for the first time.

Sadly, Wales will not have a team in 2002 because of the current financial situation.

Indoor International Track and Field Match

This Match was introduced by England in 1994 as an introduction for younger athletes to international competition and is viewed by all the Home Countries as an essential part of the development programme for athletes in the Under 16 age group.

With the opening of the new indoor facility in Cardiff the Welsh Schools Athletic Association were delighted to be able to host this event in 2000 – *sadly, this fixture has not been held in the past two years because of the lack of sponsorship.*

Coaching and Development

With the support and encouragement of our former sponsors, TSB, a coaching and development programme was introduced for athletes in the Under 15 and Under 17 age groups – this programme was part sponsored by Sportmatch Wales.

An essential aspect of this initiative was that this became a joint initiative with the Athletics Association of Wales which has enhanced the necessary co-operation between the two bodies – all to the benefit of our athletes.

This initiative was aimed at:

- Grassroots athletes – in that we were able to provide coaching clinics throughout Wales for local schoolchildren.
- "Elite" Coaching – a squad was formed which would meet at different times in the year so that our international and potential international athletes could benefit from expert coaching and guidance from the national event coaches in Wales. These athletes were also given the opportunity to compete as a squad in Championship meetings throughout the United Kingdom.
- Event-specific coaching – a Middle Distance Residential Course, which is held every October, and a Combined Events Course, usually held prior to the Indoor International Pentathlon Meeting.

Since our loss of sponsor we have maintained a lower key programme with the support of the Athletics Association of Wales, who have received limited funding from the Sports Council for Wales.

Support of District Schools Associations

Whilst we were in receipt of sponsorship we were able to provide financial support by way of a grant which went some way to making up for the lack of funding for schools sports associations by local authorities. This enabled local associations to provide competition for schools athletes as well as several innovative development schemes – both coaching and competitive. The grant also went some way to helping district associations provide transport to national events.

This grant has not been paid to District Associations since the ending of our sponsorship agreement with TSB.

Why we need sponsorship

We have received no funding from statutory bodies in Wales since the local government reorganisation in 1974. Since that time we have enjoyed in varying degrees sponsorship from:

Esso Petroleum 3 years

The National Dairy Council 11 years

and TSB 5 years

The sponsorship agreement with TSB ended in 1997 following their merger with Lloyds.

Since then, despite vigorous efforts, we have not been successful in finding a sponsor to support the complete programme of the Association.

Our programme in 2002/2003 includes:

1 Inter Schools Cross Country Championships 9 November 2002 Brecon

Cost to Association £1000

2 Indoor Pentathlon International 14 December 2002 Glasgow

Cost to Association £3500

3 National Cross Country Championships 8 March 2003 Brecon

Cost to Association £1000

4 Senior (i.e. Under 20) Cross Country International 23 March 2003 Brecon

Cost to Association £1000

5 Schools International Cross Country Meeting 29 March 2003 Dublin

Cost to Association £6500

6 Combined Events Championships 28 June 2003 Cardiff

Cost to Association £1500

7 National Track and Field Championships 5 July 2003 Brecon

Cost to Association £6000

8 NASUWT Cymru T&F Shield Final 16 July 2003 Brecon

Cost to Association £4000

9 Schools International Track and Field 19 July 2003 Cardiff

Cost to Association £8200

10 Under 20 Track and Field Meeting 16 July 2003 Brecon

Cost to Association £1600

*This total does not include administration costs – all performed by volunteers – committee meeting costs, nor insurance costs.

Income in 2002/2003 (provisional)

Income from Match Fees (charges to athletes) £8000

Sponsorship (8) £3500

Affiliation Fees £3200