

2009 MIDDLE DISTANCE REPORT
FOR BC ATHLETICS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

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The middle distance discipline's year was highlighted by the performances of Gary Reed, who established a new Canadian record in the senior men's 800 meters (1:43.95) and was a semi finalist at the World Championships of Athletics, Helen Crofts, the 800m bronze medalist at the Pan American Junior Championships establishing a new BC Junior Women's 800 record (2:05.19), Meredith MacGregor whose 3,000m steeplechase performance of 10:07.99 established a new BC Sr. women's record in that event and Rebecca Johnstone who won the 800m bronze medal at the FISU Games.

This province's middle distance runners have once again been awarded four federal cards, the same number as last year, albeit that one athlete from last year's selections was dropped but another one gained this status. The discipline's federally carded athletes for 2010 are Gary Reed, Julia Howard, Rebecca Johnstone and Meredith MacGregor.

This discipline had a number of athletes selected to Canadian international teams.
FISU Games: Rebecca Johnstone, Julia Howard, and Meredith MacGregor
Pan American Jr. Championships: Helen Crofts
World Senior Championships: Gary Reed
World Youth Championships: Travis Vugteveen
Francophone Games: Meredith MacGregor

It's a compliment to the athletes who were selected to Canadian teams but, unfortunately, with the exception of the World Senior Championships and Francophone Games, they were all self funded teams: an expensive proposition with team fees ranging from \$2,500 to \$3,000.

As committee members we attended a number of group meetings and responded to a steady stream of emails. Selection of athletes for various BC teams, the awarding of provincial athlete assistance monies and selection of venues and dates for BC Championships are three of the major responsibilities of the committee. However, selection of BC team members and the awarding of BC Assistance money is decided on objective criteria that, for the most part, is carried over year to year so this eliminates much of the discussion. Our greatest hope is that funds for travel and BC Athlete Assistance money will not undergo drastic reductions by government sources. One of the most valuable programs BC Athletics offers to its members is the BC Team concept. Our province has been a leader in the provincial team concept and that has had very positive outcomes for our association. It is concerning, however, that Athletics Canada has decided that when scoring athletes performances at national championships that that association has decided not to award points to particular clubs when athletes compete for a provincial team. I would hope that AC would address this flaw and some changes could be made so that clubs could receive points even though the athletes competed for a provincial team.

As in the past one of our greatest concerns, and I realize that it is also a concern of most, is the dearth of quality depth in so many of this disciplines events. In a number of events it is not unusual to see a four, five or six second gap between the top and second ranked athlete in a particular age division. We are sure there are a number of reasons for this that range in being unable to recruit talented athletes, not providing adequate competition, unable to provide the proper incentives, lack of streamlined and stimulating competitions, lack of facilities, particularly indoor facilities, lack of knowledgeable coaching and so on. Whatever the reason(s), we need to put our collective heads together to solve the problem if we are to advance the sport.

At the recently concluded BC High School Cross Country Championships we witnessed some hope in that three talented 14-year old girls placed first, second and seventh in that event. The sad part is that two of these athletes are not members of BC Athletics. Does this mean that they see more opportunity in other athletic pursuits and compete in running as a very secondary activity?

Perhaps we need more collaboration between our coaches in the hopes that we might be able to further the advancement of running: an exchange of ideas and the building of practical things that can be done to further the quality of performance. In any case, we continue on with the challenge and wish each of you and your athletes success.

Gerry Swan, Sue Northey—December 2009