

Prepared by: Gerry Swan & Sue Northey, Middle Distance Committee Members Senior Track and Field Committee

British Columbia middle distance runners demonstrated depth in the youth and midget age groups, had some excellent performances in the junior division 800-meters while three British Columbia runners produced quality efforts in the women's 800 meters and men's 1500-meter events.

The province's middle distance athletes won medals in eight events at the Canadian Youth/Midget Championships that included gold performances by Marita Deschiffart in the midget girls 1500m SC, Katelyn Hayward in the youth 2000m SC and Deon Clifford in the Youth boys 2-k SC. Add the silver medal by Nathan Wadhvani in the midget boys 1500m SC and it seems to demonstrate that the steeplechase is an event at which our provinces younger athletes seem to produce quality performances. Other silver medals were won by Miryam Bassett (midget 1200m) and Deon Clifford (youth 1500m). Bronze medalists included Erica Deschiffart (midget girls 2,000m) and Nathan Wadhvani (midget boys 2000m).

At the Canadian Junior Championships BC had quality performances by both Keffri Neal who won the boy's 800 meters (1:49.88) and Sean Keane with a second place 1:51.54. Alycia Butterworth and Lindsey Butterworth each won gold medals at this competition in the 2-k steeplechase and 1500 meters respectively.

The Canadian Senior Championships saw Helen Crofts a gold medalist in the 800 meters, Chantelle Groenewoud the silver medalist in the 3-k SC and Geoffrey Martinson was third in the men's 1500 meters.

Internationally, Helen Crofts was eighth in the final of the FISU women's 800 meters and Geoff Martinson qualified for the semi finals at the World Championships. Christian Gravel was 6th (3:58.81) in the final at the Commonwealth Youth Games while Tanya Humeniuk and Katelyn Hayward were Canadian teammates in the 2-k steeplechase at the World Youth Games.

Four of our province's middle distance runners received federal carding status. Geoff Martinson received a C-1 card in the 1500 meters while Helen Crofts (800m), Justin Marpole-Bird (1500m) and Jessica Smith (800m) were granted Development cards.

While, as noted above, BC has pockets of strength in the middle distance events, the discipline lacks in overall depth and quality of performance, particularly in the senior age groups. The answer to this dilemma is not easy and undoubtedly has its roots in numerous causes. Definitely recruitment of talented runners and providing those individuals with the coaching, facilities (outdoor and indoor) and other incentives that will capture them for the sport of running is fundamental to future progress. In addition, our coaches need to have a support group available that provides them the incentive and atmosphere that allows them to become masters of their trade. The development of Cam Levins, who is undoubtedly a Rising Star in Canadian Middle Distance running, demonstrates the advancement that can be made if a talented athlete is discovered and provided the atmosphere in which to progress.

Clubs and coaches must take responsibility for nominating athletes for annual provincial and national awards as this chore should not be the sole responsibility of the senior committee. Perhaps more

awareness of the provincial awards in particular must be made. It's a shame when a worthy athlete is not considered for nomination but the responsibility for this should be a club responsibility.

The National Training Centre concept is a reality for our sport. While there are certainly benefits to this concept there are items that must be solved before it can be said that this plan is actually workable. At the very least, there needs to be a meeting of the minds between provincial associations, club structures, Athletics Canada and the National Training Centres if advancement is to be made **without destroying morale**.

Sue Northey, Gerry Swan—December 2011