

Randy Longmuir

The Vancouver Island Athletics Association (VIAA), composed of the majority of Zone 6 Track and Field Clubs, has continued to be effective in the promotion of Athletics on Vancouver Island and Powell River. During the course of the VIAA meetings, many items discussed are aimed toward strengthening and enhancing the BC Athletics Strategic Plan.

1. Athletic Development (Sport Performance) - The VIAA clubs host a series of Track and Field meets supporting the development and performance of the Zone 6 athletes. These meets are scheduled so as not to conflict with High School meets and are structured to provide a suitable lead up to provincial championships.

One of the challenges facing the VIAA continues to be lack of facilities. Currently, Victoria, Duncan, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Courtenay, and Powell River are the only communities with facilities capable of hosting track and field meets. Other communities have not made significant headway in obtaining the funding and partnerships necessary to provide additional facilities.

2. Coaching (Coach Education) – The VIAA continues to host coaching clinics prior to the beginning of the season, and throughout the year, in an effort to encourage new people to be trained and certified as coaches and for current coaches to increase their knowledge. Most Zone 6 coaches are recruited from the parent membership and there is constant uncertainty about a club's ability to retain coaches, especially if the coach's child does not participate in track and field the following year. Long-serving coaches are few in Zone 6, with the majority lasting fewer than 5 years.

3. Competition – The VIAA works diligently to ensure that the meets being hosted are well organized and have a high caliber. The competition schedule is established to maximize performance opportunities for the athletes. In recent years, Nanaimo Track and Field Club has hosted the BC Summer Games and JD Championship, and is hoping to host a variety of meets over the next few years. The Nanaimo Track and Field Club is to be complemented for their initiatives, especially in light of repeated attempts by other community groups to change the usage of the facility, which would reduce its ability to host championship meets.

4. Organizational Capacity – Some Zone 6 clubs, as mentioned previously, have had difficulty in recruiting and retaining their coaches. While some clubs possess a stable and long-term coaching staff, many of these same clubs have seen a drop in their athlete numbers. This uneven distribution of coaches/athletes does not appear to be easily solved. Retention of club executive members also poses a constant problem in some clubs. Too few volunteers result in a few individuals doing the majority of the work in many clubs. Volunteer burnout soon follows, further complicating the situation. This is a significant challenge for many clubs, and a continued challenge that BC Athletics will need to address moving forward.

2014 Highlights and Success Stories

The Zone 6 clubs continue to provide strong Junior Development and Midget track and field programs. Nanaimo Track and Field Club hosted the very successful BC Summer Games this year, and the VIAA track and field meet series continued to be well-attended and well-organized.

Initiatives for 2015

During 2015, Zone 6 will continue to provide a series of competitive opportunities. Planning is underway for coaching and officiating courses to be offered within Zone 6 in the spring of 2015, and a “My First Meet” initiative is planned in an attempt to introduce new athletes, parents and coaches to the dynamics of a track and field meet.

Respectfully submitted by Randy Longmuir