

Gerry Swan

As this year comes to an end and in my capacity as one of the individuals representing the middle distance discipline of the BC Athletics Track and Field committee, I am submitting the following words of wisdom garnered from my unbiased observations.

This year, as in the past, middle distance running comprised a large segment of the active athlete participation in our sport. In addition, the association has a collection of active coaches who put in countless hours and effort to further this discipline of middle distance running. No matter what the climatic conditions, this associations middle distance coaches have braved (as have the other disciplines) the harshness of BC's winter conditions to do an admirable job of producing athletes of top quality.

Because of this, the standards set by the middle distance runners are of good quality and the discipline has athletes from both sexes who are excelling. The performances recorded by our province's middle distance runners have resulted in a number of them being chosen to represent Canada at a variety of international competitions including the World Championships. Amongst those runners are senior aged athletes Keffri Neal in the 800m (1:47), Cam Levins in both the 5000m (13:20) and 10-k (17:07), Lucas Bruchet 5,000 (13:29) and Youth aged athletes Taylor Lyman (1:51.73 and Dean Ellenwood (1:51.78) who ranked first and second in that age division.

Amongst the females, excellent performances were recorded by senior 800m runners Fiona Benson (1:59.59) and Jessica Smith (2:01.07) in the 800m distance. Benson, who we may now have lost to Alberta, recorded a Canadian leading time of 4:05.24 in the 1500m. Rachel Cliff (15:33) ranked 3rd in Canada at 5,000m closely followed by Natasha Wodak (15:44) with a fourth place ranking. Sixteen-year old Hannah Bennison had a creditable 9:33.44 in the 3,000m and during the cross country season demonstrated that she is poised for greater things to come by posting a decisive and easy win at the Canadian Jr. Championships.

If there was a concern I had it centered on the uneven standards established to qualify for BC teams. There is no easy way of establishing standards and in the committees desire to have representation from all disciplines at championships and with standards established on possible placement at national championships and not necessarily on quality, it sometimes seems that the more popular (number wise) that a discipline has, the harsher are the standards that must be adhered to for selection to a team. The committee has struggled in the past with this topic and it is my opinion that as yet, we have not come to an equitable solution. On the positive side, however, because of the standards that have been established that are held out for everyone to observe, selections to various teams are made on an objective basis that leads to little argument.

One last point, while I know that the committee has always tried to select an excellent venue on which to hold BC Track and Field Championships, I would urge them to take time to make sure that such championships are awarded on a basis that spreads out the wealth.

In any case, I have enjoyed serving on this committee for so many years, but since I have now approached the golden years of life, it behooves me to give way to younger blood so I will not be seeking reelection (or selection) to this committee. I would like to thank Tara for leading this committee for the past two years (or has

it been more than that number of years, Tara). In addition, thank you to all the committee members who I know have the interest of our sport as a whole as the primary reason why they have been willing to serve.