

GRADED TRACK AND FIELD MEETINGS BRIEF HISTORY

The first thing to say is that many athletes don't really know what the graded series really is therefore its best to go back a little before going forward.

Its not exactly clear as to when the graded league track and field meetings commenced but there is consensus that it would have been in the early 1950's, in the region of 70 years ago. There were two athletic associations in place up to 1967 therefore prior to that both associations hosted separate meetings.

The tracks in use at that stage were Morton Stadium, cinder track from 1958, College Park, Iveagh Grounds and Belfield, all grass tracks. From time to time events were held in Ringsend Park, Irishtown, and Sundrive Road, both of which had cinder surfaces but with poor underfoot conditions.

The graded leagues were established to provide opportunities for athletes to compete against athletes of a similar standard. Prior to that anyone who entered an event even beginners could wind up competing against Olympians.

Initially there were three grades A, B and C with standards appropriate for the time. Points were awarded for the first eight in event in each grade and overall winners trophies were awarded at the end of the series.

Additionally where an athlete achieved a superior grade standard they were promoted upwards. In other words if an athlete in grade C achieved a grade B standard in an event they were atomically promoted to grade B. Similarly they would be promoted to grade A if they achieved such a standard. The athlete was only promoted in the event they achieved the superior standard, therefore one could be grade A in the 1500M, grade B in the 400M and grade C in the 100m etc.

Athletes had no choice but to compete in their allocated grade based on performance.

In more recent times grade D was added for beginners, with some success. Bearing in mind the technology improvements in equipment and stadia, the draft grades have been drawn up for consideration.

Seamus sent out an excellent questionnaire which attracted a decent response. The purpose of this section on the agenda is to put all the ideas forward to this board for consideration.

The main feature of the feedback is that the graded series is a valuable asset in possession of the county board and many are happy with the present format. It was also said the series could benefit from a freshening up, maybe some music, razzmatazz, but not criticising the present basic format.

In the feedback some athletes suggested having Saturday afternoon meetings or a blend of Wednesday and Saturdays. It can be difficult to get to the venues for 19.00 on a traffic busy Dublin evening.

There was an appetite expressed for some pace making in Middle Distance events. On this point Charlie is in the process of discussing athlete requirements with senior coaches.

A suggestion of having "Gala Nights" of say 800s, where the main concentration would be on one specific event including sprints and field events.

Contacting field event groups seeking commitment and in return hosting their event in a high profile way.

Running sprints with the wind if equipment and tracks allowed.

Having a second series of sprints on the same day

Include relays

Hosting non-standard distances ie 300M and 1000M

Using all the Dublin tracks if possible, DSD, UCD, Tallaght and Morton.

Hosting masters only events either having an exclusive meeting or blending with a graded meeting

Working with clubs to recruit additional officials

Implement the club singlet rule

Live stream some or all meetings.

More latterly an informal meeting was held with AAI to look at synergies and advantages we might experience by cooperating with their recently launched "TRY TRACK AND FIELD" initiative which was successful for the indoors last year.

Tightening up of the timetable to eliminate gaps between events. A possible 2 hour per meet maximum time, indeed some meets might even be condensed into a 90 minute programme.

Reformatting of the event programme – there is no necessity for each meet to start with a sprint event – why not start with a middle distance events for a change? This may also provide an opportunity to recast start lists/Lane draws for middle distance events if athletes entered do not check-in, thereby avoiding a situation where there are maybe 3 races at 400 when only 2 may be actually required based upon the numbers who check in.

Stadium commentary to be interspersed with music over the PA system – It ought to possible to have music played between events and indeed during some of the distance races. This will generate an atmosphere that athletes enjoy.

To attract more sprinters it is suggested to hold both 100 and 200 races on the same night once there is a sufficient gap between both. This ought to attract more sprinters to each meet where there is a double up possible.

Where there are insufficient entries, for example a women's 5000 which might only have 3 or 4 athletes entered it is suggested that that event should be cancelled once entries close and before the timetable is published. There is nothing more of a turn off for spectators then a distance race with a tiny sprinkling of athletes spread out after a lap or 2.

Is an 8 meet a season programme necessary or required? Would a reduction on the number of meets from 8 back to 6 work? Sometimes less is more. This will also reduce the burden on officials.

The Dublin Championships when incorporated in the graded series to be held spread over 2 successive meets with cash prizes.