



Administrator's Annual Report to the AGM November 2018

2018, like all years before, proved to have its fair share of challenges; whilst for the most part we were blessed with wonderful sunny days for the majority of fixtures, we did have one match cancelled due to inclement weather, and a couple of others who were a close-run thing. We held a total of 173 league fixtures, including all finals and promotion matches, involving 311 teams across both age groups, and, given that we have well over 20 000 athletes registered on our portal, it's clear that we, as a league, offer competition opportunities for a significant number of young athletes.

One area that has produced a significant number of complaints and comments is that of officiating in league fixtures. It seems that a number of clubs are consistently failing to provide their full quota of officials, and many of those who do sign in are unqualified volunteers. Whilst it's encouraging on the one hand to have people willing to step up and help out, unless we can persuade many of these volunteers to attend the courses to qualify as officials, then we are putting those qualified officials who do turn up under huge pressure to plug the gaps; moreover, we are in danger of doing a lot of athletes a huge disservice. I think it's safe to say that we are going to come under more intense scrutiny and it's highly likely that results from some matches will not be eligible for Po10 rankings if the situation continues to decline. Whilst our rules state that at least one of the field judges signing in must be a level 2 field judge, the current requirements for a level 1 licence (the majority of our fixtures are at level 1), is a minimum of two qualified field judges on each field event with a level 2 on all long throws and pole vault, and unless we meet these criteria at our matches then the results will not be compliant with our licence and will not therefore be eligible for Po10 rankings. It is a similar situation for track judges and timekeepers where at least four qualified officials should be in attendance.

We have continued to look at finances this year, and our new Finance Officer has been hard at work acquainting himself with the idiosyncrasies of the YDL accounts as well as trying to deal with a decreasing budget. He has done an excellent job in his first year and for that we are all most grateful. As a committee we are looking at cuts we're able to make without adversely affecting the league and its athletes, and to this end one of the changes we have decided to implement is that in 2019 we will no longer be issuing printed Handbooks, it will be published on our website as usual for clubs to access, and if necessary print up relevant pages for distribution to officials and athletes.

One of the challenges issued from the last AGM was to reduce the costs of the National Finals, and Joyce, ably assisted by the finals sub group, has done a sterling job reducing the net costs to marginally over £10 000 which is well over a 55% reduction. A fantastic achievement in these difficult times and again very deserving of our thanks. It's no easy task organising any event such as this, but they pulled it off with aplomb and I feel sure that all those involved were immensely grateful to have the opportunity to compete at a national event as a team. It was a fitting way to finish off the season and our congratulations must go to Reading AC, league champions in the lower age group, and Blackheath & Bromley Harriers, their counterparts in the upper age group, and it the latter who now go on to represent GB in the European Champions Club cup, as a result of their win. I'm sure we all wish them good luck.



Area co-ordinators have been busy sorting out the divisional structures for next year, a pretty thankless task at times, and I am most grateful to them for taking a lot of pressure from me as it is they who generally deal with first line enquiries from clubs and take a lot of the flak when things don't meet with everyone's favour. I referred earlier to the number of teams participating in the league in 2018; for 2019 we have lost some teams and gained others, but overall the number of participating clubs remains consistent.

The results software is proving to be popular with all but a small minority; the team managers' portal is working well and cuts down on a lot of work for everyone involved in the results process. Where host clubs have been able to go 'paperless' the final results have been more accurate as team managers have been able to take more responsibility for making sure the declarations are correct. Even for tracks without wi-fi, a mobile phone link makes it possible to run a match without the use of the tedious paper changes and inevitable errors involved in transferring data.

The software offers us an even greater opportunity to look at areas of concern, and I have been going through the competitor numbers in each of the events, so that we can begin to look at how we can improve the competition experience for our athletes. It's not uniform across the divisions and in general the participation levels in Premier divisions is good, but there are some areas where we would like to focus our attention and try to come up with some strategies. The Midlands region is again at the forefront of some of these changes, and Joyce is looking at holding joint fixtures for some divisions, not only will there be more competitors in events, but it should also increase the number of qualified officials available; she is also looking to organise an event specific throws competition for one of the areas, which will shorten the competition day, and help to alleviate any H & S problems around the throwing cages.

You will all by now be aware of the new directives around throwing cages which may have a negative impact on the long throws in competitions. We will be taking a very careful look at the timetables in both age groups, but it is difficult when we don't have a clear idea of exactly what is available, stadium-wise, out there.

Finally, on behalf of our committee, I would like to extend our thanks to all those people in clubs across the country who continue to work hard week in, week out supporting their athletes and making things work. There's a small army of team managers, officials and volunteers out there and without their enthusiasm and commitment there would be no matches; so, thank you one and all. I would also like to express my personal thanks to my fellow members of the management committee, who are also volunteers with many other varied commitments. I look forward to another year where we continue working together to ensure the future success of our sport.

Marian Williams
YDL Administrator