



Administrator's Annual Report to the AGM November 2024

As each year progresses, the challenges seem to get more and more complex. Although we welcomed 2 new committee volunteers, albeit as casual vacancies in the first instance, thankfully they haven't been put off and are standing for election this year; unfortunately, we lost one of our old stalwarts so have had to try to find replacements for the roles he filled. We were, at that point, already short of a Midlands Co-ordinator, so this just added more pressure on those who remained. From my perspective it was great to have Nicola Thomson volunteer to take on the role of Northern co-ordinator, and Grace who picked up the Finals' Co-ordinator role for 2025 which just left the Results' Co-ordinator for me to pick up.

Finding fixture dates that worked for everyone was, as usual, an uphill battle, made more difficult by the EA age group championships moving forward, and whilst we always try to find dates that don't overlap with the schools' summer holidays, 2024 proved to be more difficult than usual, which resulted in the number of fixtures for the Southern UAG being reduced to three, which concurs with both the North and Midlands; it seemed that no-one really wanted a match in August. We do try to avoid school exams for the older athletes which is why we utilise the start of the May half term for the 2nd round matches. However, I think it's fair to say that trying to please all the people all the time is nigh on impossible.

Simon Fennell has produced some excellent data from the 2024 results software to help us to look at what's going on nationally with regard to teams competing, officials working at matches, athletes competing and the turnout by event all of which has proved extremely helpful.

In terms of our numbers, we lost a total of 6 teams and gained 11, 3 of which were brand new to the league. We remain the biggest league in the country with 217 clubs competing in one or both age groups:

- Midland region remains the largest with 8 divisions in the LAG, 6 divisions in the UAG with a total of 82 teams
- Northern region had 7 and 5 respectively and a total of 67 teams, while
- Southern had 6 and 5 respectively and a total of 75 teams.
- The Scottish region is the smallest, as they only operate in the LAG with a total of 3 divisions and 23 teams competing.

There were 87 fixtures in the LAG and 49 fixtures in the UAG, we have used 76 different venues altogether – some have been used on more than one occasion, and some were part of double header matches.

In terms of structures, the Southern LAG change to 5 equal division 1's to try to reduce the cost and environmental impact of long journeys being undertaken for our youngest athletes. Finding hosts, in some regions proved to be an uphill task, and although we do provide quite extensive guidelines to hosting a fixture it's still disheartening to note that a number of hosts failed to source their chiefs in advance as we recommend with some leaving it until the last week. There are too many events taking place across the country to be that laid back, so we strongly suggest that any club hosting a match sorts out the volunteers needed as soon as possible.





Officials are in relatively short supply around the country, and we were quite concerned at the changes to Level 1 officials' qualification which no longer required any experience before qualifying, this we felt could put a lot more strain on the existing level 2's who would have to mentor, and cover any shortfalls in knowledge, and experience.

We introduced a new system of recording officials for matches, requesting that clubs use a similar system of recording to that for the athletes on their portals, once on the portal, declaring officials for matches became a much simpler job for team managers, using the drop-down menus. This has proved to be an excellent tool in terms of seeing the whole picture but while some clubs bought into this and recorded their officials correctly, making the job of scrutinising matches much easier (for which we are eternally grateful); there were others who didn't bother to do this which meant a lot more checking and chasing, it also potentially slews the data if we can't get the accurate picture of all officials who worked.

In all we had 2237 individual officials recorded, with 302 of those attending 4 or more fixtures. We are most grateful of the hard work and dedication of you all – thank you.

Simon also provided a breakdown of the % turnout for individual events by age, some of which reinforces what we have been suspecting.

- In the field events, Triple Jump (40.1%) and Hammer (33.3%) remain poorly supported across all age groups while Pole Vault has an even lower average return of 14.4%.
- On the track there are low returns for Hurdles especially long hurdles (25.1%), 3000m (30%), and all Steeplechase events (17.3%).

We need to get our thinking caps on to look for alternative ways to encourage the take-up of these events.

On a personal level, I'm very grateful to our management committee for their support and assistance during the year. Both Janice and Grace have helped with the scrutinising of all our Northern matches, and I also wish to thank Joyce Tomala who helped with the Midlands results; without their help I couldn't have covered it all. They've made a big difference to my workload for which I am indebted.

Last and by no means least, I must express my profound thanks to Grace for everything she has done to help me; she has encouraged me when I've struggled to keep it together, she's picked up some of the workload when things have started to grind me down, and of course, she's told me off as well when that was needed. I will miss having her there to keep me going. She leaves a big hole to fill.

On the positive side, I'm sure Stuart will be happy to see her NOT sitting at the computer for hours on end, and my phone bill will probably be a lot lower!

Marian Williams
UK YDL Administrator
November 2024

