

BORROWINGS FROM ROYAL PERSONAGES AND OTHER MATTERS by Stan Greenberg

Instead of my usual rushing pen to paper in blind fury and indignation, I have waited for some time to answer Bob Phillips's "questions" as posed in his article in the last NUTS NOTES. But each time I read the item I get just as cross, so here goes.

As I am trying to type this in a spare moment (and I do mean moment) between my job, NUTS work and other Stats projects you must forgive me if there is not the usual (sic) fluency to my thoughts.

To my recollection, Bob was one of the first of the NUTS to "choke in a cloud of sophistication" and one can well remember his cynicism at meeting after meeting at the White City when little or nothing seemed to give him any pleasure.

The implication that, because one is involved in the sport as announcer, selector, journalist or even bottle-washer level, one is not interested in athletics is ludicrous if not daft. (Incidentally I borrowed the 'one' from a certain Royal personage and am happy to return it.)

I would agree with the idea of duplicating the lists and even more so with taking the organisation out of London - not because we "can't take the pace" but because it would be nice, and instructional, for some of the other "lively adventurous group" to realise just what is involved.

We have not lost our sense of direction, our purpose, our motivation. What we have lost is our youth. And by that I do not necessarily mean physical and mental energy - though to be honest it is not what it was with most of us originals. No, what I refer to is that most of us have married, had children, advanced our careers etc. etc, and cannot or will not make the time available to carry on as previously. This is not surprising. In fact what is surprising is the high proportion of those who have carried on, in two or three key cases carrying the brunt of our avowed endeavours, i.e. the Book.

To suggest that our infiltration, and I use that work deliberately, into the various facets of the sport has got us nowhere is quite wrong. The fact that team selections, at all levels, are far better and, despite what the Press may say, far less biased than ever before is in great measure our doing. Announcing is far better than possibly ever before - again a reflection in great part of the work done by some of our members. Timekeeping, in which we probably lead the world in reliability (something I sometimes regret) has been improved over the years due to certain efforts by NUTS members. Similarly with other aspects of running meetings. Programmes, which in Moscow are seemingly produced by Bob's Masonic Lodges, are models of what they should be when the NUTS are involved. Ranking lists in the Press would be non-existent. Bottles would rarely be washed. Etc. Etc. (This phrase was borrowed from a theatrical Royal personage.)

Despite the above, which I consider to be tremendous achievements by a group of people with initially no influence, standing, money or authority, I personally have had quite enough of it. I came to that conclusion some years ago, but unlike others who in various way opted out - usually for quite valid reasons and no criticism is intended - I can't let go until there are others to take my place. And there are not. Not that I am so marvellous (O.K., so I am) but that we just cannot recruit sufficient new talent with the same interest and, dare I use the word, devotion. We have been extremely fortunate with a few of what I will call the new recruits but generally speaking they are not prepared to make the effort that we do. Therefore with no-one to take over the tasks that I do - albeit most of them self set - I just cannot back away from it all.

And so as I ride into the sunset of my life I will carry on with what I decided I would do 25 years ago - and my athletics as well. I still get tremendous fun out of the sport, not least when talking about past events and experiences. And although I do not have the opportunity to sit with other NUTS as much as I would

like, the new phase of my participation in the sport has enabled me to meet foreign NUTS in many parts of the world which has added a new and different dimension to the sport for me.

So finally (thank goodness) as much as I miss those wonderful, balmy evenings at Motspur Park, the present and future of athletics is, for me at any rate, pretty good and fulfilling. Really finally, anytime someone would like to take over Commonwealth Statistics, and can satisfy me that he can do it the way it needs to be done, I will pass over to him much hallowed material, including a number of handwritten exercise books of invaluable data compiled by Bob Phillips in his involved days.

WALKING EVENTS IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES

A resolution was carried at the AGM on 8 September deploring the removal of walking events from the Olympic Games with effect from 1980 and calling for the institution of world championships for walking. The Hon Secretary accordingly wrote on these lines to the Marquess of Exeter; the following reply was received:

Burghley House
STAMFORD

Dear Mr Huxtable

1st November 1973

Thank you for your letter. To clear up one point on your use of the words "fait accompli". As you will know, walking is included in the Olympic Games because it is under the wing of the IAAF and therefore is part of the athletic programme.

This request was therefore put to the IAAF, as similar ones were put to all the other International Federations by the Programme Committee of the IOC for reductions, and it was considered by the Council of that body and the full Congress in Munich a year ago and accepted, as no alternatives for the necessary reduction were proposed by any Members.

I think that perhaps the enclosed letter which I wrote to another body may help to make the position clear. In the meanwhile no doubt you will be putting your proposal concerning the Lugano Trophy to the British Board to take it up directly with the IAAF. Incidentally I am able to tell you unofficially that the matter is in fact already in hand.

Yours sincerely,

ENC.

sgd EXETER

COPY

11th October 1973

There seems to be a general misunderstanding as to what happened about the walking events. The history is that a few years ago the International Olympic Committee decided that the Olympic Games had become too large to achieve their maximum effect, an opinion which was widely held outside. Every sport was asked to make a contribution to their reduction, and a committee was set up of IOC and NOC members to make specific suggestions. Naturally enough no sport likes its programme being reduced. Athletics were asked to reduce the number of entries from 3 to 2, and to eliminate the 50 and 20 km walks. As a result of negotiations by the Honorary Secretary and myself we managed to maintain the present method of one entry per event and up to 3 if all qualified to a very high standard, approximately 6th in the previous Olympic Games. Incidentally there is no standard for walking. We also managed to keep the 20 km walk in for Montreal, the 50 having added disadvantages of being unacceptable with the huge crowds in the city at the time of the Games for traffic reasons. Our contribution was discussed by the Council of the IAAF who were unable to suggest any alternative, and the Congress in full session in Munich a year ago confirmed that they could think of nothing less harmful, no doubt having also in mind that less than one-third of our member countries compete in walking.

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WALKING EVENTS IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES concluded

Naturally the walkers are very unhappy about this, but this is factually what happened. As far as I know there is no question of eliminating the walks from any Area Games or Championships, and the question of a World Championship outside is under active consideration.

(I should welcome views from members, particularly our two walks experts.
Ed.)