

SSAA Chairman's Report - 2013

There are some days, weeks, months or even years that we do not remember for any special reason – there are some that we do. I am sure that we will all reflect on the last year with a sombre mixture of emotions, memories and perspective.

For Brian and those involved with the outstanding 2012 ESAA National Cross Country Championships, there must have been a strong feeling of pride, exhaustion and...‘never again’. Unfortunately 2013 proved to be an incredibly frustrating year that probably caused Brian the same amount of grief without the prestige of staging a national event. The miserably wet weather forced the rare decision of a postponement of the county champs. Did he complain or give up? Did we decide to miss the South West Schools Champs because we didn't have the county results to select a team? No...and that's what makes this association so successful!

On a cold Sunday morning we met at Yeovil Olympiads clubhouse and used every available statistic coupled with the vast experience and knowledge of those that attended to select a county team – it was the athletes that benefitted from that meeting, and that is what this association is about!

Brian then used all his acquired knowledge from the nationals to quickly organize the county champs back at Merryfield, which was again a success. How he kept calm throughout the whole process of postponement, trying to find an alternative date, deciding on how area and county teams should be selected, I'll never know. People rallied round and we got the job done. That's why this association is so successful.

News of Bill's illness shocked us all but even then I still believed the 'tough old northerner' would see it through – sadly this was not to be. The hardest thing I've written was my Grandma's eulogy – the second was my chairman's message at this year's county track and field champs. Like so many people, Bill inspired me in all aspects of athletics. He never formally coached me but on the odd hurdles session I did with him he knew how to get the best out of me. Sadly I'm still rubbish at hurdles. As a coach he was my 'go to' on most things and was a great help in achieving my level 3 qualification. As an organiser, I could always seek his counsel on whether I was making the correct decision. As an official, I enjoyed the efficiency of working with him at the county champs. As an announcer, he just always knew the right thing to say...and when to remain quiet.

During the county champs we all felt something was missing: a friend, coach, announcer, advisor, someone who actually remembers which hurdle goes where and at what height and weight! We went about our jobs without the usual opportunity or wish to share a joke with each other, in between trying to get through a very busy programme. I'd probably say we survived the county champs but we got the job done and the athletes were able to excel, probably with most not ever appreciating the emotion of the day. That's why this association is so successful.

Bill encompasses everything the association is about because we do what is right by our athletes...something Bill always did. What Bill has brought to Somerset athletics is immeasurable but when I look around the table today I see a group of people that I greatly respect and know will do all they can to continue the great tradition of the Somerset Schools Athletics Association. My one fear is: where is the next generation? I believe that as an association succession planning is vital. I don't know how, except to invite young PE teachers or athletics enthusiasts to our executive to continue the great work of this association. I am proud to be a member of the Somerset Schools Athletics Association and I have been immensely proud to be its chairman.

Thank you.

Steve Ladd
SSAA Chairman 2013