

Midland League – Chairman’s Report, Sun 4<sup>th</sup> December

Following the challenges of the past 2 years it is pleasing to report that we were able to deliver a full League season this year. Overall, it is pleasing to report that Competitor Numbers were comparable to 2019 and the drop-offs in some events which we had feared did not materialise, although we are also aware that a few clubs have struggled this year. That being said, it is still clear that there is a continuing fall in the numbers of ‘true’ Senior Athletes competing and that some of the technical events are not popular and standards are either very good or very poor, with little in between. For this season we introduced a number of innovations in terms of Photo Finish (Divisions 1 & 2) and Bonus Points. These were designed to make the league more attractive to athletes. They have been popular and served to improve the standard of competition, whilst other changes have freed up space in the timetable and greatly reduced the number of ‘fill-in’ athletes.

The Management Committee have met several times during the year and have sort to pro-actively address any issues we have identified. The main challenge has been a small number of clubs who have consistently failed to provide officials in accordance with the League Constitution. We have worked hard to support clubs who face these challenges but, as a consequence, several clubs have chosen not to re-apply as members of the League.

In order to address the issue of Officials recruitment and training the League intend to use the Officials Training Grant which we received from England Athletics in order to run Training courses for our member clubs during the early months of 2023, and in time for the new league season. These courses will be held in both the east and west of the region and will be a blend of On-line learning and real practical experience.

This year the management committee are bringing forward further proposals to improve the league and make it more ‘Athlete Focused’. I urge you to consider these changes very carefully and treat them as a complete package which if implemented will complement one another. Also, please look at them from the perspective of the athletes and the wider sport, rather than the narrow lens of ‘what does it mean for my club’. Ultimately, if it’s good for the athletes, it will also be good for their clubs. We also need to be mindful that YDL U20 age group is likely to see major changes from 2024 onwards and be ready to respond positively.

Finally, I would like to offer my thanks to the whole Management Committee and especially Richard White for their hard work and commitment to deliver the league this season. We also owe our thanks to Dave Taylor who not only provided our results program but also handled all of the athlete registrations and declarations as well as checking all of the results and passing them to Power of 10 for publication.

Bryan Acford – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022