

MCAA T&F League - Secretary's Report for 2023 Season

From my league secretary's point of view this season turned out to be somewhat busy.

Right from the start of planning we recognised that the results software needed to be updated – both in terms of teams/divisional structure, but also to ensure the league maintained flexibility over the match format and scoring. We tried in the first instance to approach commercial providers – but the cost (a few thousand pounds) was just unrealistic for the league. Neither did we have access to a fully open software solution that we understood and could edit. First big job of my year then was to write a results package from scratch – and keep it simple enough for someone else to maintain if necessary. Must admit I was on edge for the first round of matches – you can check the software as much as you like but using it in anger is the real acid test.

Organising the technical match innovation likewise absorbed a fair amount of time. I did load myself a bit on this task as I was keen to make the athlete experience enjoyable. I also felt the pressure of making this innovation work. In addition to getting the officials together I was quite keen to provide athletes with pre-drawn heats/pools to try to make sure athletes found the meeting enjoyable. Hopefully all this served the athletes well - although more on-the-day flexibility with heats re-drawing would have been helpful I reckon. Pleased at the end of the day with the turn-out, with the standards achieved and importantly with the athletes' enjoyment. I greatly appreciated the thanks that I (and my wide who stepped in as Field Ref) received.

Difficult to gauge how matches worked out in the divisions unless you're part of those matches. From a slightly parochial viewpoint then - for division 4SW – we had a good time. The athletes enjoyed it and the flexibility offered by the C string athletes greatly helped, as far as I could tell, with team spirit. Some gaming of the scoring system to gain good B and C string points – pick an unpopular event – but also many examples where the event was noticeably enhanced when clubs were able to field three event specialists.

Officials and venues were though still an issue for a number of divisions. Re-jigging field officials' rota in the week before an event seemed to be a regular occurrence. Finding viable tracks and/or willing hosts also somewhat of an issue. We managed to overcome the issues on each occasion but I got the distinct feeling it was very unstable and could easily have tipped number of times into events and/or match cancellations.

Despite the stress of the league organisation I did enjoy the season and that, at the end of the day, is the only question I ever ask myself for my athletics. After all this is, for those outside the world's top 100 or so, not a sport we do for financial reward.

Richard
MCAA Track & Field League Secretary