

Växjö, Sweden. November 8th, 2019

To:

IAAF: Lord Sebastian Coe: President;

c.c. Jon Ridgeon: CEO; Paul Hardy: Competitions Director;
Inaki Gomez: IAAF Athletes Commission Chair

European Athletics: Svein Arne Hansen: President; Christian Milz: CEO

Diamond League: Petr Stasny: Coordinator and CFO

Meeting Directors: Birmingham/London: Cherry Alexander; Brussels: Cédric van Branteghem;
Doha: Thani Al-Kuwari; Prefontaine: Tom Jordan; Lausanne: Jacky Delapierre;
Monaco: Jean-Pierre Schoebel; Oslo: Steinar Hoen; Paris: Souad Rochdi;
Rabat: Abdeslam Ahizoune; Rome: Luigi D'Onofrio; Shanghai: Ellen van Langen;
Stockholm: Jan Kowalski; Zurich: Andreas Hediger;

Wanda/InFront: Phillipe Blatter: CEO

Press: Gianni Merlo; President AIPS, Duncan Mackay: Editor InsidetheGames, Others.

Dear Lord Coe

You may remember that we, as a representative group of athletes and coaches with a background in the throws events, sent you a letter dated October 1st 2019 about the proposals for the Diamond League for 2020 season and beyond. Within this letter we presented a number of proposals and ideas of what the IAAF could do to allow all events to remain a part and thrive within the Diamond League circuit.

Among those proposals were: Alternate years Javelin and Discus. Maximum of eight competitors so no need for reduction of field after 3 attempts. Computer led scoring which decreases the time taken to complete the event. Four attempts rather than the normal six. Warm Up outside the arena. Two events taking place at the same time! Long Jump/Triple Jump and Discus/Javelin. We even showed possibilities of moving the discus outside the stadiums to parks specifically to overcome the issues of the Diamond League final. We felt many of these proposals had merit and were certainly worthy of further exploration and discussion prior to any decisions being taken, but none was forthcoming.

We have now received initial word from the recent Diamond League board meeting and it appears that our proposals did not merit even further discussion with those of us directly impacted by these decisions. We therefore would like to respond to this press release and would want to remind you of something that you hopefully already know:

Discus throwing dates back to the ancient Greek Olympic Games some 34 centuries ago, and as famously depicted in the Fifth Century B.C. statue on display at the British Museum "Discobolus," by the sculptor Myron. The 8th century B.C. poet Homer also referred to discus in his works Iliad and the Odyssey. By doing what you did yesterday you are seriously destroying the historical and cultural heritage of the sport of Athletics because of some short term marketing strategy. As the elected head of the governing body of IAAF or as you now like to call yourself World Athletics, this is not your task to do. You are supposed as an elected representative to serve all nations and importantly all events within the sport. We even wonder if you are legally able to do this in relation to your position as representative head of the sport of Athletics?

In more recent history, Discus has long been a major part of Athletics, since 1896 a primary Olympic event for men and since 1928 for women. The first athlete in history to win and successfully defend his Olympic title over four Olympiads was the great Al Oerter, who would surely be turning in his grave right now at the disservice that you are doing to this great event.

The Diamond League in particular are not rewarding loyalty to their own product, as the Discus event above any other has been most supportive to the Diamond League in Head-to-Head competition among the best athletes in the event. The male and female medallists from Doha World Championships met on virtually every occasion at the Diamond League competitions this season. 5 of the 6 athletes met at every competition with the single exception of Fedrick Dacres who had to miss one competition due to an Academic Exam at his University for a total of 29 out of a possible 30 appearances. No other event comes close to this, and as an example, the highly anticipated clash in Doha between World Superstars and Diamond League favourites in 400m Hurdles: Karsten Warholm and Rai Benjamin, only ever met before this in the Diamond League Final!

We are also glad to inform you that thanks to the efforts of our members such as Daniel Ståhl and Fedrick Dacres and their coaches, 2019 is the best year ever in Diamond League history on the men's side, with two throwers throwing in excess of the magical 70m line in two of their Diamond League appearances. This has never happened before. From a social media point of view, the IAAF Media department saw the value of a character such as Daniel Ståhl as World Champion, as his happiness and response to his victory in Doha was the biggest image of the Championships and garnered the greatest social media response, trending around the world.

This led to the fact that your esteemed colleagues at the IAAF have recently nominated the best male discus thrower as the only representative of the throws events among the male athlete of the year nominees for the World Athletics Award 2019, while at the same time you are taking his event and platform for his art away.

Under your first term as president of the IAAF you have been preaching to federations and athletes alike, cooperation between all of us, so that we should work together for the good of the sport in developing Athletics as the number one Olympic Sport. We have been supportive of this need to cooperate as requested but we do not feel that you have been cooperating with us. We cannot believe that any athlete or coach in any event within the sport, agrees with the decisions taken yesterday. We believe that you and your staff are isolated in your own world trying to sell and please your paymasters rather than your own assets, namely your athletes and coaches. We have seen evidence that you are not even listening to your own Athletes Commission.

You are focused on 90 minutes as the key determining factor for success for our sport like it is a football game. There is no evidence that 90 minutes is the answer and by choosing this as the key metric you are placing yourself in a box which has led to these unnecessary changes. We see thousands filling city streets for so many Marathon events, which until recently and only with great expense, innovation and modification, was not even possible in less than 120 minutes, and people waited with baited breath and Everest conquering like expectation to see if this was indeed possible!

Athletics is not football and should not be presented that way. Golf and Tennis are successful sports, enjoying exceptional television coverage on a regular basis over four days or even two weeks. Athletics is special simply because it contains 36 unique events which draw upon exceptional skill and dedication from a variety of sizes, body types and intelligence. While most other major sports are trying to expand and broaden their reach, our sport remains determined to reduce our appeal and potential market. The FIFA World Cup has expanded from 16 teams in 1978 to 48 teams that will play in 2026, and they all look the same irrespective of what position they play! If nothing is allowed to take longer than 90 minutes, we would not have any Golf, Tennis, opera or theatre.

You refer to research when making these decisions but this is not a level playing field across events when 10,000m will get an uninterrupted 28 minutes of television coverage when the discus is limited to 30 second review of the best three attempts from a competition that was completed an hour before. Of course some events may be seen as more popular than others because the way they are presented. You should focus more on how you communicate these events within the TV coverage in order to promote and educate the viewing public to the intricacies of these events, and not merely pay lip service to the TV coverage and commentary without the necessary expertise in order to develop all areas of the sport.

As a former politician, you are aware that rival political parties must be afforded the same opportunities in the lead up to an election. Therefore, it is pretty easy to understand that something that is almost never shown cannot be perceived as popular. We wonder if such a poll would stand up to any rigorous scrutiny by a serious researcher. We doubt this very much.

We have heard you say that "something has to be done". Again, it is not your mission to destroy certain events and discriminate between events and athletes, this is not what you are elected to do. To quote Greta Thunberg, the 16 year old climate activist from Sweden: "How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you are doing enough... you are failing us". In the spirit of the young activist we call for a Global Protest against your decision. "The eyes of future generations are upon you. If you chose to fail us,we will never forgive you".

As World Athletics you have a responsibility to all regions. At the European Athletics Golden Tracks Awards last week, three of the top four finalists for the male athlete of the year were throwers. 50% of these guys will not be able to compete on the same level as others in relation to prize money, sponsorship and exposure to the fans, just because they throw hammer and discus. As coaches we ask, how are we going to develop these events in the future or recruit young people to throw?

The fans look at their stars on TV, the Finns look and follow javelin, the Kenyans look towards middle and long distance events, while sprints are perhaps popular in USA and Jamaica. In Europe there is a lot of interest and quality in the technical events. Today, the fans in Sweden follow Discus and Pole Vault. Daniel Ståhl and Armand Duplantis are the superstars of the sport in Sweden. Was it always like this, no because these events and their popularity are cyclical and follow the personalities of the day. These personalities need to be nurtured, well nourished and placed in the spotlight in order to grow. Who does not remember the impact of such athletes like Carolina Klüft on a generation of Scandinavian girls. Haile Gebrselassie on the youth of East Africa or the magical rivalry between athletes of their generation such yourself and Steve Ovett.

This is a sport of both Track and Field, as well as road and country. Yet where are our representatives at the decision making table as it seems that these discussions are going on behind closed doors, impacting on the lives of thousands of athletes around the world, but also their coaches, families and the tremendous volunteer base that our sport relies upon.

If you, in your sporting heyday were faced with the elimination of your favourite 800m event you were lucky that you could choose to run 1500m or the Mile. Discus throwers do not have that choice, and while your own marketing department in Doha may have created the images, nobody is going to pay Daniel Ståhl to run the 400m hurdles against Karsten Warholm in any Diamond League meeting next year.

We kindly ask you as our representative, to reconsider your decisions and keep dreams and careers alive.

Yours in Sport

On behalf of Throwers, Coaches, and supporters of Field Events everywhere

Global Throwing: Vesteinn Hafsteinsson, Shaun Pickering, Hans Uurike, Raul Rebane.

Athletes including: Daniel Stahl; Fedrick Dacres, Lukas Weissshaidinger, Matt Denny, Ehsan Hadadi, Simon Pettersson, Ola Stunes Isene, Sam Matthis, Andrius Gudzius, Traves Smikle, Piotr Malachowski, Martin Kupper.

Coaches including: Vesteinn Hafsteinsson, Julian Robinson, Ben Thompson, Mac Wilkins, Lars Ola Sundt, Dane Miller, Gerd Kanter, Rene Sack, Juergen Schult,