

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2010

2010 has been another year marked by growth and prosperity for every section of the club. Much of the media attention has, quite rightly, focused on the success of our elite athletes but we must not lose sight of the fact that the GIAAC's real strength is its ability to cater for the needs of the whole island community. We do that well.

Whether it is through the excellent and comprehensive road and cross-country programme that provides running opportunities for all levels of runners or the extensive programme of track and field training and events that is attracting a growing number of senior athletes, we are a club that has a very clear vision of what it wants to achieve and delivers those objectives. As always, it has been a particular pleasure to witness the numbers of colts and juniors who are given the chance to learn to love a sport in a supportive and well-organised setting.

My report allows me to present observations from a personal point of view and I want to mention a shortlist of highlights which in many ways exemplify everything that is good about the GIAAC:

1. Saturday July 1st Saumarez Park Tearooms – Watching Lee Merrien's 8th place finish in the Marathon in the European Championships

A bunch of us watched Lee's plucky and determined run as he thread his way through the field to finish within the top 10. On the back of Lee's excellent London marathon debut it was great to watch an athlete who has given so much to Guernsey athletics (as well as Newham and Essex beagles) reap the rewards he deserves.

2. 24th – 30th July All terrain challenge

GIAAC has developed an enviable record in organising athletic events. This year was no exception with the Easter Festival, Spearpoint ½, First Rand cross-country series, Intertrust league and British athletics league but a particular favourite has to be the all-terrain challenge where 50-60 competitors thoroughly enjoy a difficult and demanding seven races in seven days. A particular highlight is to see so many of our elite athletes having a go.

3. Saturday 21st August British Athletes League

The island did Guernsey athletics proud as hundreds turned out to see the highest quality athletics event ever held in the Bailiwick. The quality of the event was demonstrated by the 42 new entries that it created in the club record book. Local athletes will have learnt simply by watching how top athletes across all disciplines prepare for their events.

4. 10th October Kylie Robilliard – Commonwealth Games 100m hurdles heats

The trials and tribulations of our Commonwealth Games Team are well-documented. We had high hopes of the team but the vagaries of athletics kicked in to debilitate the team. Their efforts, marshalled by team manager Alan Rowe, have been underrated and the steely determination that they demonstrated in difficult conditions is best exemplified by Kylie's 100mtr hurdles heat in which

she finished 4th, one place short of automatic qualification to the final, and an agonising .12 seconds slower than the 8th fastest athlete.

5. Saturday 13th November Hampshire Cross-country league , Goodwood

We are fast developing a group of juniors who have the potential to make real progress in athletics. Key to their development is exposure to racing off island and sponsorship from First Rand has enabled us to take away junior teams to the Hampshire Cross-country league. The November trip demonstrated the benefits. The likes of Katie Rowe, Finlay Wright, the Mason brothers and Luke Bisson plus many more all tested themselves against the best juniors from one of the most successful running counties. It was hard work but well worth the experience

It is indicative of the level of GIAAC activity that I could have matched those highlights tenfold with other activities: The First Rand Series was one of our best; we enjoyed inter-insular success in both the winter and summer, the inter trust meet gets better and better; we continue to add to our programme with additions such as the 5k Saumarez park race on the last Friday of the month.

Key to our success are some of the themes that recur throughout the highlights that I have identified:

- We strive to mix the development of elite athletes with the needs of younger athletes and ordinary runners
- We pay attention to detail to ensure that events are well-organised and enable participants to focus on enjoying participation
- We work in partnership with sponsors, sports organisations and the wider community so that we can all share in the successes of our sport

The future

Two years ago the GIAAC committee talked about entering a golden age of athletics and set out a road map for the club that took it through to the 2014 Commonwealth games. We are now into our second year on that road and are pleased with the progress we have made. A particular highlight for this coming year will be the Isle of Wight Island Games. We have a longlist of 40+ athletes in consideration for about thirty places – our largest ever team and an indicator of the strength in depth that we have in Guernsey athletics.

Although there are numerous successes we are not complacent and we are aware of the challenges we face. Fortunately most of those challenges are a product of our success. The club is striving to do more and more and to a higher level each year. To meet the expectations that we have created we need to put in place the following:

- The club is fortunate to have a committee that loves athletics. Alongside our professional staff Zoe and Dale, we are committed to drive the club forward. To do this we do need to increase the numbers of people who make things happen. In particular we need to ensure that more people help to organise events. In many ways the two most important events for

the club in 2011 will be the officials course that we hope to hold in the spring and the coaching course in the summer. We need to increase the numbers of coaches and officials to ensure that we can fulfil our commitments

- Our finance report reads well – not least because of the tireless efforts of Geoff and his team to husband our resources effectively - but if we are to continue to grow the efficient use of resources will be key. In particular we need to be adept in raising funds for the Bermuda island Games in 2013. We have a young team attending the 2011 island games. If everything goes according to plan they will be in peak condition for Bermuda in 2013 – the only issue will be the cost. The individual athletes will be the main benefactors and we really want to see them involved in doing their bit to raise funds.
- We are introducing a number of innovations to our track and field programme this year, so that we can provide local athletes with quality opposition throughout the season. The revised inter-insular format; increased off-island races and a series of quality race nights will all work if we give them our full backing

Athletics is a funny sport. At times it seems the epitome of individualism and lone activity. But it isn't. To be truly successful it is as much a team sport as rugby or football. To get a sense of that team spirit just pop down to the track on a tuesday or thursday night.

So many people are involved in making Guernsey athletics the vibrant, exciting successful club that it is today but it would be remiss of me not to thank a few:

The committee has worked tirelessly over the year both in their committee roles but also as coaches, event organisers and athletes, elite or otherwise;

The coaches put in hours of effort and I am especially impressed with their ability to focus on seeing things from the athlete's perspective

Race organisers and officials continue to volunteer their services and to support the club in all weather

We ask much of parents and they rarely complain.

Lastly, we must applaud the efforts of our athletes, young and old, fast and slow. Perhaps they are just being polite but they do seem to appreciate our efforts on their behalf. They train hard , listen to their coaches (at least some of the time) and, most importantly, enjoy their sport.

Yours in sport

Alun Williams

