

DEVELOPING ATHLETICS IN THE UK.

AN ABAC PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN THE COACHING  
STRUCTURE TOWARDS 2012

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### AN ABAC PROPOSAL TO STRENGTHEN THE COACHING STRUCTURE TOWARDS 2012

#### **Background:**

Over recent years the coaching structure for athletics in the UK has been altered considerably by the sport's governing body. Unfortunately this has not achieved the desired effects as many volunteer coaches at club level have been discouraged by increasing levels of bureaucracy and many experienced and historically successful coaches have been sidelined.

At the same time athletic clubs face increasing demands for coaching services, not just from their own membership but also from the recent expansion in school-club links. In many cases schools are seeking coaching services during school hours.

If the sport is to achieve long term success as well as meet the more immediate demands of the 2012 Olympics the present plans of UKA (the sport's National Governing Body –NGB) need to be supplemented by a new, dynamic, non-bureaucratic coaching programme based on experienced coaches who at present remain outside the NGB's coaching programme. The coaches are there but to best utilise them this will require significant funding.

ABAC has produced this proposal detailing how this could be achieved. The plan, summarised in this document, is designed to supplement and strengthen the work of UKA so as to help achieve National targets for future athletic performance.

#### **ABAC Coaching Concept:**

The immediate and greatest challenge facing British Athletics is to produce success at the London 2012 Olympic Games. But aspiring and potentially aspiring Olympic athletes cannot succeed without good coaches and a solid club based infrastructure to provide the necessary pathway of competitive opportunities

British Athletics has been declining in national and world standards for over a decade but with the advent of the **Association of GB Athletics Clubs** (ABAC) the potential to radically turn Britain's fortunes around is going to become a reality.

Athletic success is a process reliant on talent identification, driven by coaches who fully understand the pathways towards achievement.

### **Current levels of participation and coach qualification:**

There are, according to UKA, around 18.000 UKA level 1 coaches,( which is the most basic qualification requirement awarded after a single day's course attendance.) The top level coach is graded 4.

Although working with coaches graded under the UK scheme ABAC recognises advantages in promoting the UK Coaching Certificate levels 1-5 which are recognised by the government funded National Coaching Foundation(now known as Sports Coach UKL:[www.sportscoachuk.org](http://www.sportscoachuk.org) )to promote coaching education, qualification and development.

Most UKA level 1 coaches are only student teachers. Yet although almost every child in school participates in one form or another of some athletics activities for part of the school year the vast majority of PE specialists do not hold any formal athletics coaching qualification. A conservative estimate would be that 9 million school pupils aged between 8 and 16 experience some formal athletics activity for a small part of each year and of these approx 33.000 (officially recognised U15 and U17 age groups girls and boys) are recorded in out of school club competitions. (data: [www.powerof10.info](http://www.powerof10.info) )

School is the crucible for athletics and those who feel motivated and have the right guidance will be encouraged by a teacher, a parent, friends or an athletics coach to join a local club and take advantage of the opportunities to improve and further enjoy the sport and to try and reach their long term potential which, ultimately for some, may be as an Olympic Champion.

Across the country there are currently estimated by track and field statisticians (who record all performances) around 50.000 active athletes (statisticians estimate that 2/3rds are under 17) in track and field clubs who compete and around 4000 coaches belonging as members to the 400 registered track and field athletics clubs in the UK, some of whom will also be connected with schools, colleges and universities.

**Running Clubs:** There are approx. 1000 running-only (non track) registered clubs with an estimated membership total of around 160.000 across the UK. Average age is estimated at between 35-40 with a range of between 18-75years. Running clubs tend to have very limited coaching input but ABAC believes that many would welcome expert advice to attract and keep younger members.

## The ABAC Coaching Programme Aims

The key aims relate to:

### **Development of coaches' knowledge and qualifications**

**Provision of better qualified, more knowledgeable and better supported coaches during and after school hours at athletics tracks throughout the UK.**

### **Provide coaching support for non-track running clubs.**

ABAC intends to help increase the number of coaches in the UK not solely in quantity but, more importantly, in quality. It intends to improve as far as possible the level of knowledge and competence in the process of coaching achievement from school children to seniors in the UK recognised age groups, U15, U17, U20, U23 and senior male and female and in particular to develop specialist coaching for paraplegic athletes who also compete in their own Olympic Games.

ABAC intends to develop a dedicated and professional managed specialist coaching website and data base\* of coaches throughout the UK where news, information, advice, articles and interactive communication can increase the exchange of knowledge and experience opportunities to help coaches (including teachers of athletics who would require additional modules to comply with UKCC DfES and DCMS) succeed in developing to the best of their ability those under their care and guidance.

\* The ABAC data base will request all coaches to provide and annually update their details:

- Age, qualifications,
- Member of or engaged with: club/school/college/university
- Number coached, age range and quality of athletes coached/advised
- Training venues and times used
- Contact details

### **Master Coaches:**

The pinnacle of the ABAC scheme will be a small number of **master coaches** who together have produced more than 500 top International athletes over the last 20 plus years and whose standing is such that they have provided expert guidance in setting up coaching schemes in many countries as well as providing services for the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF). A list of some of the ABAC **master coaches** is provided in Annex 1.

The **master coaches** will operate in three ways,

First, each will be supported to coach a very small squad of talented athletes identified by them as potential world class achievers.

Second, each will provide advice and guidance to a small number (say 5 per master coach) level 3 and level 4 ABAC coaches (and eventually level 5 coaching members) and assist them with developing their squads.

Third, they will advise on and help implement the proposed ABAC club centred coaching development programme. This will be both track centred and for running only clubs.

### **Coaching aids.**

In parallel to this work it is proposed that top quality state of the art teaching aids are developed including ABAC literature and DVD master coach classes. This part of the programme is not costed nor included in the main ABAC Programme but it is anticipated that a sponsor will be able to provide in-house facilities to allow these products to be developed for the benefit of the coach, sponsor and ABAC.

### **Benefits to the sponsor:**

The sponsor will be clearly associated with the **Association of GB Athletics Clubs** drive towards success over the next 6 years at all major Championships and Games for Britain's athletes and in particular at the London 2012 Olympic Games. (e.g., "SPONSORS NAME.....SUPPORTING THE DRIVE FOR BRITISH ATHLETICS GLOBAL SUCCESS")

- All publicity material and banner headline on the dedicated website to prominently display the sponsor's name and log
- The sponsor will be involved with a programme of work which although operating in parallel with the work of the NGB as well as being co-ordinated with it, will be free of the bureaucracy usually associated with government backed NGB's.
- ABAC would offer a range of branded coaches clothing (tracksuits, sports bag and T shirts/sports collar shirts) as a good means of wide ranging logo exposure for the sponsor.

## **Costing and implementation.**

Time is of the essence. The ABAC plan has a window of opportunity for success due to the fact that 5 years is the minimum period needed to develop new athletic talent up to world class levels and in time for the London Olympics.

The NGB's (UKA Ltd) present programme of coaching development is broad brush and will take many years before success could materialise.

ABAC's proposal is for the new coaching support structure to be tightly focused and clearly definable in attainment in every event at each level, geared for maximum achievement in realising British athletes potential for major championship success.

**The ABAC plan is focussed and designed to deliver at both elite and grass roots levels. It can be up and running quickly only with the injection of significant financial support (around £500,000 per annum).**

The ABAC programme will be run by a team assembled by ABAC and it's sponsor to objectives and a programme of work to be mutually agreed.

## **Concluding Summary**

ABAC's has produced plans for a new and tightly focussed coaching initiative based on the most successful coaches in the country. The ABAC plan offers the opportunity for a major sponsor to make a key contribution to the success of athletics leading up to the 2012 London Olympics.

Along with the successful implementation of this programme will go substantial publicity for the sponsor starting immediately with the inclusion of world renowned **master coaches** from day one.

Thereafter publicity will develop at all levels down to nation wide local communities as the benefits move to local clubs, tracks and schools.

## **ABAC Master Coaches – Details**

**Background.** ABAC master coaches all have the distinction of having produced large numbers of International athletes over a long period of time. They are out with the coaching structure developed by UK Athletics Ltd (UKA) the sport's National Governing Body (NGB) and the majority have not been part of main stream, centrally funded coaching in the UK over the last few years.

The **ABAC Masters Coaching scheme** aims to empower many of the greatest coaches this country has seen and by so doing plans to support ongoing NGB initiatives while at the same time making a vast treasure trove of knowledge available to support the development of less experienced coaches and their athletes.

The ABAC **Master coaches** include:-

### **John Anderson.**

*John has over 40 years of experience of producing International athletes and has coached more than 160 athletes for UK teams. In the last 3 years he has developed 12 athletes who performed well at major representative competitions and was one of the free lance coaches who developed medal winners in the last European track and field championships.*

*John's has coached 5 athletes to world records and includes Olympic and World title holders among his successes.*

*John coaches all disciplines and includes world record holders Dave Bedford, Dave Moorcroft and Liz McColgan among his many successes.*

### **John Bicourt**

*Double Olympic steeplechaser John Bicourt, a former head of dept teacher and college lecturer, has managed and advised many of Britain's top international athletes since 1980 along with many other athletes from around the world. In particular he has managed and had a major input into the training schedules of several Kenyan world champions, Olympic medallists and world record holders. He has also coached and managed a number of British International athletes including double Olympic 10,000mts finalist and Chicago marathon winner, Paul Evans; World and Olympic Games steeplechaser, Roger Hackney and world championship 1500/5000mts runner Adrian Passey. He managed UKA's CEO, Dave Moorcroft in his post elite period and was specialist steeplechase coach*

*and manager to Mark Rowland the 1988 Olympic bronze medallist. John was previously invited to lead an international coaches conference on middle distance running for the IAAF in Reykjavik, Iceland.*

### **John Isaacs.**

*Specialist sprint coach John Isaacs sprung to public prominence in the late 1980's by producing a string of sprint sensations starting with reigning UK 200 m record holder John Regis and 1990 Commonwealth Games 200m gold medallist Marcus Adam. He was the National events coach for 100/200m from 1986 to 1993 before withdrawing from front line coaching.*

*John has consulted for the Finish and Swedish Athletic Federations and has lectured around the world on behalf of the IAAF.*

*His world and Olympic medallist also include; Tony Jarrett, Gary Oakes, Heather Oakes, Darren Braithwaite and Shirley Thomas.*

### **Wilf Paish MBE**

*Wilf is one of the most respected figures in world sport and is a former coach to the Great Britain Olympic athletics team. A master coach in all disciplines he has been responsible for training over 200 GB athletes including Olympians Peter Elliot, Mick Hill and Tessa Sanderson. Over a 50 year period his athletes have won medals of all colours including world and Olympic gold.*

### **Mike Smith**

Mike has been engaged in coaching for over 40 years during which time he has held a variety of coaching posts with the governing bodies of athletics in the UK. These include; Secretary SCAA Coaching Committee during the 1970's and '80's. Past Southern and Southwest Event Coach. National 400mts co-ordinator for UKA. Chairman UKA Speed management Group until March of this year.

Mike has coached numerous athletes who gained success at Olympic, World, European and Commonwealth level. These include Donna Hartley /nee Murray, Kriss Akabusi, Todd Bennett, Roger Black and Iwan Thomas.

Mike is also a qualified middle distance and jumps coach. He is present Chairman of Team Southampton. He is a teacher by profession and was senior master at a Southampton Comprehensive school until early retirement to concentrate on coaching and writing. He has worked with BBC local radio for over 30 years presenting and reporting on sport.

**Mike Winch**

*Mike is the premier master throws coach in the UK following a highly successful athletics career with one devoted to coaching and improving the standing and performance of coaching in the UK.*

*He was Performance Director for the Manchester 2002 England Commonwealth games team and National Event Coach for the shot putt on several occasions over the last 25 years . Mike has lectured and coached for the IAAF and is author of three current strength and conditioning books for all athletic events.*

*Mike has coached many International throwers including Olympic finalist Judy Oakes OBE, and current Internationals Emeka Educhuku and Phillipa Roles.*