

## 2014 British Athletics Facts

### ABAC Fact File 26

### The number of Under 20 Women Track and Field Competitors.

**1. The numbers.** Several people have questioned whether the 2014 YDL rule changes will adversely affect the lower Divisions because participating clubs have very few under 20 year olds and under 17's may not wish to compete as under 20's particularly in field events where implement weights are being changed (See FF 25)

By using the 2013 Power of 10 records we have determined that there were 1,910 women athletes in the under 20 age group who took part in track and field athletics in 2013. A few were affiliated to schools or unattached. There remained 1,800 shown as belonging to a British club ( 346 were listed). That is an average of just over 5 per club. Only 954 under 20 women took part overall in 2013 in the YDL, with an average of just 550 attending all of the matches held around the country on each event day.

The only nationwide club competition for this age group is the YDL Upper Age Group. In this competition there are 17 individual events for under 20 women, each with an A and B string. With athletes averaging 2 individual events/meeting, clubs would need 17 athletes to fill all the places.

**2. Numbers needed for a YDL team.** Each YDL team requires 17 under 20 athletes for both A and B events, that is they require 34 events to be filled in each age group. Now most athletes will double up. So in reality a team would be well placed with 17 under 20 athletes. Last year only 17 Under 17 A strings were required. There were no "B" string events. But this year there will be A & B strings in 9 Under 17 track events making 26 U17 places to be filled.

**3. Actual club numbers.** We asked Rob Whittingham to look at the strength of clubs in the women's YDL. 2013 figures showed that only 14 clubs in the country have 17 or more Under 20 Women and only 49 have 10 or more. 224 have 5 or less.

For the smaller clubs in the lower YDL Divisions the situation will be difficult. To assess the potential problems we looked at the breakdown of clubs from a low level division from each of the South, Midlands and the North in 2014, and examining the athletes from these clubs in 2013.

The 21 clubs examined had 88 athletes in the Under 20 women age group, but only 56 took part in the YDL, **an average of 2.7 athletes per club to cover 34 places.**

But the athletes who registered a performance in 2013 did not compete in all 4 YDL meetings through the summer. Analysis shows that on average each athlete competed in just over 2 meetings, again reducing the number available for each match.

**4. Will there be problems in 2014?** Looking at all the events to be covered and the number of athletes who will probably be competing in 2014 **we calculate that just 8.5% of all events in these lower division matches will be filled with athletes in the correct age group.**

Of course many Under 20 events could be filled with under 17 athletes but 2 changes for 2014 will make this worse for the lower divisions in 2014. There will now be 2 strings for all under 17 track races. Although this will be welcomed by the bigger clubs, for the smaller clubs they will have fewer athletes to fill the Under 20 races.

In 3 of the 4 throwing events, the under 17 women will be throwing different weights to the under 20 women. How many under 17 women will want to throw the under 20 implement, when their performances will not be shown in the standard rankings on Power of 10?

**5. Was this foreseeable?** UKA were aware of these problems well before April 2013 but chose to ignore all advice and continued with the small format changes deemed advisable after the YDL's inaugural year. It is

difficult to understand why a league was set up with twice as many places for under 20 athletes as under 17 when in reality there are twice as many under 17 athletes as under 20. Increasing the number of Under 17 places will help the elite clubs but simply make it worse for the smaller clubs. This imbalance will be worse this year.

The most damning criticism of UKA is the fact that, despite having all the resources of Power of 10 available these have not been used, and the officials running the YDL have been given no assistance with the facts in helping to anticipate the problems arising from the changed format.

**6. Problems ahead.** Based on this analysis ABAC predicts that the lower Divisions of the Upper Age Group YDL in 2014 will be poorly supported. We shall await results from the first week and report again.

End

April 10 2014