

2014 Athletic Facts

ABAC Fact File 27

2014 Funding awards to elite athletes continues to be a lottery

Introduction. In Fact File 9 ABAC looked at the number of athletes funded for the 2012 Olympics. Their performances, potential and costs were detailed. To summarise: 46 athletes were podium funded and 9 extra for the relays. An additional 52 athletes received financial support as part of a longer term development plan. The total cost of the elite athletes programme in London Olympic year was c£4,300,000.

Fact File 15 looked at the subsequent achievements of both funded and non funded athletes at the Olympics and noted that seven of the British athletes who reached finals in the 2012 Olympics had not been supported by UKA. These were :

Robbie Grabarz :	Bronze medallist in the high jump.
Andrew Osagie :	800 finalist, placed 8 th in 1:43.77' to go 4 th on the British all time list.
Jo Pavey:	7 th in both the women's 5000 and 10000 final.
Julia Bleasdale:	8 th in both the women's 5000 and 10000 final.
Lawrence Clarke:	4 th in the 110h.
Alex Smith:	The first British finalist in the men's hammer for 30 years.
Sophie Hitchens:	Finalist in the women's hammer, breaking the British record.

Funding for 2015. Three of the above athletes have now been included in the UKA podium funding programme for the 2016 Rio Olympics. Has their inclusion been decided by performance improvements? We looked at their 2014 world rankings. These 2015 funded athletes are:-

Robbie Grabarz, who did not compete in 2014 and has no current world ranking.
Andrew Osagie, ranked 13 in the world this year with 1.45.37.
Lawrence Clarke, ranked 37 in the world 110h in 2014.

Clearly none of these athletes warrant inclusion based on 2014 form. But they did surprise in 2012 and it is to be hoped they will peak again in 2016. No doubt that is UKA's hope too.

Are World Rankings a good indicator of medal prospects? An analysis of athlete world rankings in the years leading up to an Olympics has determined that 82% of medallists were in the top 10 of their event while 93% were in the top 20 rankings. Outside that there will always be the occasional surprise but to have a good chance of a medal an athlete really should be in the top 10 of world rankings. So how do the athletes supported by UKA for 2015 rate? To create this list we have used *the All Athletics Event Rankings for 2014*. These award points for performances and positions in Championships and are considered more relevant than the straight IAAF Rankings based on a single best performance.

In descending order, the best medal possibilities in 2016 Rio are:- by Name,(Age in 2016),
2014 World Ranking.

1. Greg Rutherford (30)	2=,	2. Tiffany Porter (29)	3,
3. Lynsey Sharp (26)	3,	4. James Dasaola (29)	5,
5. Shara Proctor (28)	6,	6. William Sharman (32)	6,
7. Katarina Johnson Thompson(23)	7,	8. Laura Weighman (25)	8,
9. Andrew Osagie (28)	13,	10. Adam Gemili (23)	14,
11 .Christine Ohuruogu (32)	18,	12. Mo Farah (33)	20/14,
13. Hannah England (29)	25,	14. Lawrence Clarke (26)	37,

A further six 2015 podium funded athletes have not been ranked in 2014 but plan to return to competition in 2015. These are:- Holly Bleasdale (25), Jessica Ennis Hill (30), Robbie Grabbarz (29), Dai Greene (30), Andy Pozzi (24), Perri Shakes-Drayton (26),

Have things changed after the 2013 World Championships? We note that at the 2013 World Championships only 3 British athletes won individual medals. Of these two live and train in the USA with American coaches. UKA pay their top event coaches £250,000 per annum and have an annual coaching bill approaching £2million in 2014. With total staff numbering 99 in 2014 and only one medallist coached in the UK serious questions should be raised about the elite programme. Much attention has been focussed on strengthening men's and women's relay squads as competition in these events is limited and the chances of winning medals are much greater. Recognising this has meant funding priorities have changed over recent years.

In 2011 there were 46 podium funded athletes, plus 9 additional relay athletes. Also funded were 52 podium potential athletes making 107 in all. In 2011 UKA employed 105 staff.

In 2014 there are 20 podium funded athletes, plus 18 additional relay athletes. Also funded are 39 podium potential athletes making 77 in all. UKA currently employs 99 staff.

Conclusions and comments. In 2011 nearly half those on Podium funding failed to make GB's Olympic squad. Reducing the numbers on Podium funding for Rio 2016 shows a more realistic approach. We note there has been a small reduction in UKA staff numbers during the last 4 years but still it remains as bloated as ever.

We repeat again that the Olympic medal count over the last 4 Games has remained static at 6. (**1996 6, 2000 4, 2008 4, 2012 6**). There has been no progress despite UKA turning over more than £300 million including over £130 million of tax payer and lottery funds since it was incorporated in 1998. Its role is just to promote elite athletes and reducing their numbers should be similarly reflected by a culling of UKA staff.

End 12.11.2014