

2014 Athletics Facts

ABAC Fact File 28

Analysis of YDL Participation in 2014

Introduction. The YDL was set up in 2012 and funded for a two year period by a Sport England Grant. Its future is to be reviewed following an AGM held on the 21st November 2014. The main object of the YDL was to promote the retention of 17 to 20 year old athletes. In 2014 it increased the potential number of under 17 year old athletes participating by adding a “B” string to all track events. ABAC has commissioned Rob Whittingham to analyse the past summers participation levels to see whether the objectives have been met. Here is what he has reported for the Upper Age Group.

Youth Development League Upper Age Group – The Facts.

2013. In 2013 the number of athletes taking part in the whole season was 5,978 comprising

1,893 U17 Men,	1,423 U20 Men
1,708 U17Womem,	954 U20Women

2014. In 2014 The YDL had 21 divisions with 132 teams. Composite teams are allowed so the total number of clubs taking part was 196. (The schedule is 9 track events and 8 field events for both U20 & U17, men and women. For U20 2 athletes are required for all events, for U17 2 athletes in each track event, 1 in each field event. For a 6 team division, 720 places are available)

Throughout the whole 2014 season a **total** of 5,921 athletes took part. The age group numbers were:-

1,871 U 17 Men	1,330 U 20 Men
1,736 U 17 Women	984 U 20 Women

The **average** number of competitors for each of the 4 match dates was 3,350 -

1,078 Under 17 Men	711 U 20 Men
1,026 Under 17 Women	535 U 20 Women

Analysis.

The number of under 20 year old athletes competing in track and field was detailed in this year’s NUTS statistical review. The totals are 3932 U20 men and 2550 U20 women. That means 33.8% of men (1330/3932) competed in the YDL and 38.6% of women.

In 2014 the 132 teams and 196 clubs achieved an average of only 5 U20 Women per match during the whole season, with only about half that number being available in any individual match.

Further analysis shows that, below the 6 premier divisions, the number of athletes competing fell drastically. For the 96 teams and 136 clubs at this level the numbers were:-

Whole season	1103 U17M,	997 U17W,	704 U20M,	508 U20W
Average match	623 U17M,	584 U17W,	366 U20M,	270 U20W

It is clear from these figures that the current format only works for around 40 clubs in the whole country. The very long and full events schedule is wasted on the majority of the teams.

Teams are competing using a timetable of over 6 hours for fewer than 300 performances per match. In one match this season there were only 85 performances. This is dispiriting to both athletes and officials.

What do the clubs think? WSEH analysed the participation levels of their first Premiership match of the 2014 season. They sent the details to UKA and the YDL. They confirmed that in the U20 age group there were 49 male and 37 female competition slots unfilled. In the U17 match there were 35 male and 14 female slots left vacant.

Cannock and Staffs AC analysed the situation for the Midlands and their methodology was used by Gateshead Harriers who have completed an exhaustive study of unfilled competition slots for all events at all matches in the U17 and U20 Leagues. They showed that in 2014 the Total Percentage of Positions filled were :- North 59.2%, Midlands 52.4% and South 62.0%. *(The full Gateshead spreadsheets may be accessed here).*

(Now we should note that many athletes competed in more than one event with some having as many as four events. Clearly the number of athletes is much less than slots filled and that is where the figures from Rob Whittingham's analysis fill the gap.)

ABAC Comments. Despite increasing the capacity of the YDL in 2014 there has been a reduction in the number of competitors. Statisticians advised UKA before the league started in 2013, that the number of competing Under 17 and Under 20 athletes did not justify the imposed format. In 2014 the situation worsened despite introducing the extra under 17 B string track races.

ABAC highlighted the potential problems in Fact File 17. We conclude that the 2014 format for the YDL is actually discouraging athletes in these critical age groups. Just as we predicted participation levels continue to fall.

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