

British Athletics

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The Shame of British Athletics

In Britain, Athletics is now a nationalised sport and the controlling bodies, UK Sport and Sport England, are systematically destroying the ambitions of our young athletes.

An example of how this cancer of UK Sport and Sport England is infecting the 2012 Olympic host nation follows:

Children who have worked towards the goal of representing their county of Middlesex, have been denied the chance of participating in the South of England Inter-County Cross Country Competition, to be held in London on 21st November 2009, because they have not been put onto the computer system of England Athletics.

This corrosive strategy of "registration from playground to podium" ensures that 99.99% of British citizens are now excluded from high level athletic competition. This attack on the sport must be considered alongside the decision of UK Athletics to prevent many athletes from competing at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In the athletics throwing events of Shot, Discus, Hammer and Javelin, for Men and Women, only one British athlete was selected. Furthermore an equally disastrous decision not to send teams to the 2010 World Cross Country Championships has been made. Not only do such decisions break the hearts of British Athletes who have worked hard to demonstrate themselves to be the best in the UK, it undermines the international competitions who are denied the participation of an enthusiastic athletics nation.

By ensuring that British Athletes do not turn up for these hugely important international competitions, the British Government are undermining the very concept of sport for sport's sake. If every country followed the British Government policy, international sport would be killed stone dead. Many in athletics believe that the British government has set about this destructive pathway deliberately, because they consider several athletic events to be a problem from a health and safety perspective.

UK Sport and Sport England have set their sights on destroying grass roots ambition. Athletes being selected for high level competition, from County upwards, are required to quote their England Athletics registration number. This means 99.99% of British nationals without such a number are excluded irrespective of their natural ability or commitment to the sport. New young athletes who demonstrate themselves to have an outstanding ability in the sport, are burdened with the bureaucracy of getting themselves registered. "Getting registered is not difficult" the professional bureaucrats will insist, but that misses the point about athletics. In athletics your pass to higher level competition must always be your winning position in the trials, not your registration status with UK Sport or Sport England, or one of their governing subsidiaries.

The solution would appear to be to starve UK Athletics and England Athletics of the public money that feeds such corrosive activities. Government money from UK Sport and Sport England pays the wages of hundreds of people at UK Athletics, England Athletics, and the hangers on within the networks, for zero athletics benefit. In contrast to the huge numbers of publicly funded bureaucrats, a mere 33 athletes receive support from the public purse. The money received by these few elite athletes is on a scale with the lowest paid office worker within UK Athletics/England Athletics.

If Britain is in a recession, then please cut the public funding given to UK Athletics and England Athletics, and allow Clubs and Counties to welcome new children and adults into a sport where the only barriers are in the steeplechase.