Athletics essay sample

As athletics is an internationally based sport it has an international governing body- the International Association Athletics Federation, more commonly known as the IAAF. However UK Athletics (the UK's national athletics governing body) has a larger influence on athletics in our country. Launched fairly recently in 1999, It has had major success in its schemes to attract the younger generation into athletics. UK athletics promotes athletes, draws up rules and heavy anti-doping programmes, works with not only the IAAF but local initiatives too and organises all major national athletics events.

However it could be argued that one of its main aims is to attract as many youngsters into the sport as possible. This they achieve through their many initiatives and schemes. StarTrack, possibly the most successful of UK Athletics' schemes runs throughout the country during the summer holidays. It gives youngsters, aged 8-15, the opportunity to be introduced to athletics in a friendly relaxed environment. Running over 5 days they get an opportunity to try out all disciplines of athletics with many getting scouted for the local clubs at the same time.

This is has been incredibly successful nationally with around 9000 children taking part across 80 venues around the country. A large majority of these children end up taking up athletics on a regular basis with either a local club or within their school. Locally StarTrack has also been successful. The Amateur Athletics Association, based in Kings Lynn, encourages StarTrack as a way of introducing new talent to athletics and has 3 venues within the county. The local AAA have also introduced shine awards initiative within the StarTrack scheme to encourage the young athletes to strive to be better and gain a sense of achievement.

The local area is home to three major clubs, Great Yarmouth, Norwich and Kings Lynn. Although the standard is not as high as, for example a London club, the local clubs do produce a handful of athletes of a high standard, many of which are competing or heading to compete for Team GB. Within the county we currently have one athlete competing for GB in the high jump and one athlete showing promising development in middle distance. Also a Norfolk female 800m runner was chosen to take part in the ‘ on camp with Kelly’ initiative and as a result is currently winning major competitions in junior ladies categories.

The main league is the Anglian League where about 15 teams compete during the season. CONAC often end up winning the league most years with GYDAC finishing around 3rd or 4th position. Teams in Norfolk also compete in the young athletes league and the men’s league, yet these are generally less well turned out and extend to a wider competition, therefore the local teams rarely end up finishing high up in the league tables. There are many other organisations connected to athletics, contributing in various aspects of the sport. (see appendix 2).

A young athlete may show promising ability at school sports days or local mini competitions and decide to join his/hers local club. Here they can get involved in Sportshall competitions and U11 mini races. If they show great ability they may get chosen for the competitive team when they reach U13 age group category. This is not based on qualifying times as different clubs have different standards so selection is merely based on the head coaches’ discretion. Here they would start competing in bigger races and would compete in the annual Norfolk schools.

If they come 1st or 2nd they would progress to run for Norfolk at the Anglian schools meet. If they perform well here and/or run inside the qualifying time for their age group then they will be selected for the prestigious English Schools. These qualifying times differ for each age group and gender, yet are set for the whole country (see appendix 3 (entry)). Norfolk has just been downgraded to a grade C county so can only take 30 athletes to the English schools, therefore you have to achieve the qualifying time for your event or to have shown promising talent throughout the season to be taken.

If the athlete produces an exceptional performance here they will be scouted for a bigger, well known club or be offered a personal trainer. They will then be expected to train more often and become dedicated to the sport. This will then result in them producing GB qualifying times to be accepted into the Team. (See appendix 3 (national)) for qualifying times to gain automatic selection for Team GB). Some athletes may not produce qualifying times at the proposed qualifying meet, yet officials look at previous performances earlier on in the athletes season and often base their decision on this.

High profile athletes may wish not to compete at this proposed meet yet would gain automatic selection due to their previous successes. The power of 10 initiative illustrates the targets and aims for elite athletes. It’s aim is to get as many athletes reaching the power of 10 target (whether it be a certain time i. e. 21. 96s for 200m U17men or 5. 38m for long jump U15 girls) by the 2012 Olympics. Recordings of every athlete in the country are kept on the database and those reaching the targets are clearly defined as elite. Athletics on the whole is one of the best sports for promoting male/female equality within its participants.

Compared to male dominating sports such as football and rugby where the ratio is 90: 10 athletics provides provision for equally both male and female competitors. In the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games 41% of GB's team where female and 59% male. This shows significant equality and illustrates the dramatic change from 776bc in the first Athens games when there where no female competitors. Yet internationally the figures are 38% female and 62% male. This highlights how other countries have not yet equalled out the balance of male/female competitors in athletics.

Many, often developing countries still hold sexist views on women and athletics or sport in general. Locally, GYDAC used to follow GB's trend with 43% females and 57% males in the club, yet recent figures suggest otherwise. Currently there are 78 male members and only 21 female. This could be due to the creation of many local girls football and basketball team- distracting them from athletics. Generally athletics clubs are unisex throughout the country, this differs hugely to most other sports where gender is split and teams are available for each gender.

Locally I have not been able to find any information on disabled athletics. I have researched within the internet and various books, and have spoken to chairmen of local athletic clubs. GYDAC and WVAC have had in the past two slightly disabled members yet no special provision has been undertaken to cater for them. If disabled people wish to participate in athletics locally they will be forced to travel a long way to use the appropriate facilities. Overall athletics is a well balanced sport. It is a unisex sport giving equal opportunity to male and female participants.

However looking closer into the difference between locally and nationally it is not so balanced. Funding nationally is very good with major companies and associations putting lots of money into the sport. However I feel that local clubs are not getting enough funding and are being forced to rely on private efforts to keep the club going. Also I believe that although a lot of funding is being put into grass roots and development programmes nationally, locally clubs are being missed out due to their minority population.

This results in not as many youngsters being attracted to the sport locally even though nationally figures are high. Locally, disabled facilities are obviously a problem as there is nowhere to participate within the county. More schemes are needed to help disabled participants into the sport, as evidently national schemes have been successful. As athletics is fairly popular within the county already I believe that the introduction of disabled facilities would be effective. Overall it seems athletics internationally and nationally is very good, yet more attention needs to be paid to local clubs and organisations.