

# Editorial

World championships are getting very confusing. This year's world marathon championships in China saw the introduction of short marathons. The name is from a town in Greece, from which a very long nonstop run was made to carry the news of a battle to Athens. Whatever else you call it, 3.5km is not a marathon, except for young children.

## Devaluation

It follows on from 5km races with portages at world sprint championships, confusing for those who think a sprint should be a pure race in a straight line with no distractions.

Recently we have seen extreme slalom added to world slalom championships, although many would see it as a freestyle event, even one with a considerable fun element rather than something to be taken in deadly earnest.

Sprint distances have been added to WWR and 200m to sprint. Each time there will be new winners, more happy people, including Ed McKeever and Liam Heath over 200m. Our Lizzie Broughton likes the 3.5/5km distances.

In recent years we have seen a proliferation of events, sprint events restricted to those with particular levels of disability and, with less disputes about categorization, breast cancer survivors in dragon boat racing. To world championships we have added junior world champions, under 23 world champions and veterans. We have Olympic champions, world champions, European champions and champions from national level downwards. Not just champions, the ICF place great store on all medals. Competitors are categorized by what medals they have won. The more events, the more ages, the more classes, the more geographical categories then the more medalholders entering subsequent events and the more important the ICF events sound.

The more short events, the more chance of getting on television. For a marathon that also applies if there are more shorter loops than in going from A to B as events are easier to film.

Which are more important, the competitors or the spectators? Somebody involved with television told me that viewers were more important because there were many more of them. This reduces competitors to the level of entertainers. He might also have added something about finance. I disagree. Without the competitors there would be no sport. Without the spectators the competition would continue, even if missed by the masses. Even after Olympic Games coverage, most of the public could not name any of the canoeing competitors a couple of days later. People do not talk of additional events of a few minutes to make it easier to film football, cricket, rugby, golf or tennis.

**Stuart Fisher**

Journalism is printing what someone else does not want printed: everything else is public relations - George Orwell



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Unusually, I am concerned about the efforts which go into excessive transparency at British marathon committee elections although I accept that they are for the best of motives.

## Transparency

When you are looking for someone to chair the committee there should not be a vote taken in the annual meeting, requiring 50% support, if there is only one nomination. Stan Missen has been seeking reassurance but the reason he has had no opposition at successive elections is because people feel he is doing a good job. Having been the only person properly nominated, it would be very awkward if he were not to get the required number of votes in confirmation at the annual meeting and the statutes do not require it. It would be possible for him to be ousted with nobody to replace him.

Likewise, there should not be a similar vote for those nominated for marathon committee seats unless there are more nominations than seats vacant. Those nominated people should be elected as a matter of course. What happens if those in the room oppose the elections of correctly nominated candidates, leaving unfilled committee places?

Let us take a hypothetical case. The nationals and, hence, the annual meeting are held in Truro or Inverness. Some candidates stand on the platform of wanting them to be held only in the centre of the country in future but they and their supporters do not attend because the distance is too far to travel or they are unable to do so. Thus, those at the meeting have a bias towards those willing and able to make the journey and could oppose the election of those of the opposite view. You can probably think of other examples.

I do not support the widely held view that prisoners should forfeit the right to vote. Some people are in prison for breaking what they believe to be bad law. Regardless of your opinions on Brexit or the climate, for example, feelings are such that some might end up in that situation. I hope you would support their right to express their views, even if you do not support their methods. That is a long way from seeking too much transparency in marathon elections but it is the far end of a long road.

Perhaps a better approach to canoeing elections is to allow further nominations in the meeting itself to avoid the situation where nominations beforehand have left vacancies.

**Stuart Fisher**

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*Hungarian Ferenc Csima is first off the water in the Keyo Brigg Bomber middle distance world championships quadrathlon.*