

Train them young, says Lydiard

by Peter White

When the Olympic Games open in Athens in August, sports fans will remember New Zealanders in black singlets winning medals and attaining glory on the athletics track.

This time, it is unlikely there will be any competitors trying to emulate the middle-distance running feats of Halberg, Snell, Walker, and Dixon, but that may change in the near future. Athletics New Zealand operations manager, Tony Rogers, is working on a strategic plan to re-establish our international reputation and core values.

Our most successful coach, Arthur Lydiard, says poor training methods are the major reason we have not won an Olympic track medal since 1976, as we still produce talented athletes.

The 86-year-old legend says we

need to teach them the right method – the proven method he used to coach 18 Olympic champions.

"This involves developing stamina by running long distances to build conditioning, strengthening leg muscles by running up hills, and developing maximum anaerobic capacity by adding interval-type speed training. Building the base conditioning is the key," he says.



Arthur Lydiard

Lydiard knows it takes dedication and a consistent work ethic to challenge for titles, but does not believe our younger athletes are prepared to put in the hours needed.

"We can produce another Snell or Walker but need to balance all training aspects over a long period of time to peak on any given day," says Lydiard.

"The best time to start the programme is pre-puberty as their ability to use oxygen compared with body

weight is greater than adults, so there's no reason at all why a 12-year-old boy can't run 20 miles. That's why the Africans beat us. They are running when they are young, building up strong ankles and spring."

Lydiard has battled with administrators over the years but now has supporters at Athletics New Zealand. The new administration is determined to have another golden era, and hold him in high regard.

Rogers, a former Lydiard trained elite athlete, has played a part in Lydiard finally getting life membership last October.

Rogers believes coaches need to be exposed to enhancements made to the Lydiard system, and agrees many of his philosophies are used world-wide in endurance sports. He says young athletes are not prepared to put the same effort in that he did under the Lydiard system.

"When I was an elite athlete, students could not believe I would train

every morning and every night and do a full day's teaching as well," says Rogers.

Aside from coaching methods, the major contributing factor to New Zealand's lack of athletic success internationally has been the loss of our best talent to American universities.

Rogers' strategic plan is to get the best out of this "missing talent". Fifteen endurance athletes who have represented New Zealand, and over 30 others who have not quite made the selection criteria, are currently in America on university scholarships.

Rogers is instigating camps with high-performance coaches and an ongoing support network for top athletes like Adrian Blincoe and Nick Willis. The goal is for Athletics New Zealand to be far more pro-active, assisting athletes while they are overseas and encouraging them to pursue their goals when they return home.

"There's no reason at all why a 12-year-old boy can't run 20 miles. That's why the Africans beat us..."

Questions raised over University Games points scoring system

by Tiana Miocevic

At the recent University Games held at Otago University over the Easter break, Otago won nine events and AUT won nine events. So just how did Otago become University Games champions? Was AUT 'robbed'?

Bruce Meyer, sports and recreation co-ordinator at AUT, was also AUT's team manager at the games. He says it is a complicated process in identifying the overall winner, and is based on a couple of aspects – the number of participants in the sport, and the number of universities participating in the sport.

"The more people in total playing a sport, the more points are awarded for the sport," Mr Meyer says. "Furthermore, a sport must have a minimum of four campuses competing for it to be awarded any points at all."

Although AUT won both netball and basketball quite convincingly, they were awarded only 11 points for each first place because there were only about 60 participants in each sport. Rowing, on the other hand, had 380 participants in total, which means that Otago was awarded 14 points for first place.

"The argument then is that winning the basketball is less valuable than winning the rowing, so why should we bother at all? Many people want to see the sports equally valued," Mr Meyer says.

He says the points system was

adapted from Australia three years ago. "The system is bizarre in terms of what is awarded for a win. They are rethinking the system, but they haven't got there yet," he says.

Arsel Aslam, team manager for Otago, says that the participation points will always favour the home team or the neighbouring team because they are able to send a bigger team to the games, but that this advantage will not skew the results overall.

"Rowing is an unfair example," Mr Aslam says. "No matter where the games are held, Otago will always have a strong rowing team of over 90 participants."

Mr Aslam says that although both AUT and Otago won nine events, AUT gained points for only seven. AUT won the aerobics and rugby, but neither counted because three other universities did not compete in these sports.

"All the universities knew which sports would not be awarded points before the games, so it is just unfortunate that AUT lucked out this time," Mr Aslam says. "I guess the participation system should be reviewed but I don't doubt that AUT will take advantage of it next year."

Mr Aslam is referring to the recent confirmation of AUT as host of the University Games next year, which will give AUT a much-needed boost in team numbers.

Mr Meyer is confident that AUT will have a strong team next year.



PHOTO: KEITH NG

AIRTIME: Mountain bike action at the Uni Games

South Auckland man invents new form of football

by Owen Hembry

A new sport invented by a South Auckland man and played by mixed teams of men and women has been quietly growing in Auckland. With more than 3000 people taking part in the 2004 season, it is about to get kicked into the big time.

Sub football is a non-contact game similar to soccer, played seven-a-side on smaller pitches with unlimited substitutions, allowing for large groups of mixed-ability to play as a team.

Puketutu Island resident, and Everton United fan, Bill Davies, says the idea came to him one night and he immediately wrote a fax to New Zealand sporting great, and then mayor, Les Mills.

With the support of Mr Mills the Auckland Domain was selected as the

venue and the next step was to find some teams.

"For three months that's all I did – send faxes to companies. I said: 'Here is my PO box number, send me money', and they did!"

Mr Davies says the original participants were all from a soccer background and wanted to play the same way.

"They wanted to fight and abuse the referees, and I didn't want that."

With the focus on skill, players are not allowed to slide tackle, shoulder barge, or use any physical strength to win the ball from an opponent, and any rough play or abuse is

met with an instant ban.

Mr Davies says this difference was crucial in opening the game up to new players, and with three point goals and one point scoring boards each side, Mr Davies says scores such as 20-16 are not unusual.



Bill Davies

Teams are primarily from companies around the Auckland Domain area playing after work, and the mixed team competition is twice as large as the men-only game.

"Everybody from the MD to the office boy is playing. They have a totally informal relationship in Sub football—the office boy becomes the superstar as he scores

the goals," says Mr Davies.

The 2004 season will have five sponsors, 45 referees, 3000 players, 270 teams playing in four divisions at pitches in the Auckland Domain and Seymour Park, and with each team paying \$495 to join it is becoming a big business.

"I had no idea it would grow as big as it has. What started as a hobby has become a full-time job," says Mr Davies.

He says the next step is to grow the game throughout the Auckland region and to get more involvement from local councils.

However with recent interest from the New Zealand Football Association wanting to affiliate sub football, he says he is keen to keep it independent.

To enter a team, visit the Sub football web site www.subfootball.com.

Maori colts coach takes on Indian rugby team

by Sudesh Kissun

Kiwi John Wright's success with India's cricket team has been noticed by the Indian Rugby Football Union.

An Aucklander has been appointed coach of the Indian national rugby team, currently ranked 91 out of the 95 rugby-playing nations.

Former Maori colts coach and current Maori selector Willie Hetaaraka was appointed earlier this year and is based in Ahmednagar.

Hetaaraka is eyeing Indian players from this part of the world to increase the strength of his current side, and to improve India's ranking.

He says the current Indian side is mainly made up of Indian army officers.

Rotorua agent Trevor Albert says Hetaaraka was interested in anyone with Indian blood and an interest in rugby.

"Now that they are planning to go out and play international games the coach needs to build up a team with greater depth.

"We are looking for anyone who can trace their roots back to India."

Albert says Hetaaraka is eyeing props and locks for his side.

Albert, who is the president of Rotoiti Rugby Club in Rotorua, says he is confident that Indian rugby players will be found in New Zealand.

In neighbouring rugby-crazy Fiji, Indians make up 43% of the population but have never embraced rugby.

Fiji is New Zealand's arch rival in world sevens rugby and is ranked 12th in the world.

In an interview with *The Sunday Express* newspaper in India recently, Hetaaraka says his month-long camp with Indian army officers was promising.

He says the army has huge potential in strengthening rugby in India.

"Rugby suits a soldier, it has physical contact, aggression, team work strategies and the like," he told the newspaper.

But he pointed out that Indians fell short when it came to coping with the physical nature of the game.

The top teams in the world boast average weights of 95-100 kgs and average heights of six-feet and more.

Hetaaraka points to the success of Japan and says while size does matter, the right game plan can do wonders.

"Rugby is a physical sport and size does matter but India is in the Asia region and play Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Japan.

"So given the right game plan and with the genetic size of Indian players you can play at speed.

"Take for example, Japan, who performed brilliantly against France in the World Cup.

Hetaaraka coached the Maori colts side from 1998 to 2001.

He was appointed Maori selector in 2002.

In 1994 he coached the Thames Valley NPC side and his side won the Air New Zealand third division provincial title the following year.

Hetaaraka was nominated for the coach of the year award.

Hetaaraka's wife Stephanie says her husband left for India recently and will remain there during the rugby season.

According to the IRB website, India has 28 clubs and 6,500 registered players.

Anyone interested in joining the Indian rugby team can contact Albert on 07-3620816.