



Pelorus Trust
North Island Secondary Schools
Track and Field Championships
Masterton 2013

Post-event evaluation report

30 April 2013

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Acknowledgement:

Thanks to the 93 survey participants for their time and suggestions. Special thanks to the officials for their detailed accounts and additional conversations to clarify matters.

Disclaimer: This report gives an account of the events surrounding NISS 2013, based on the feedback received via the survey and other emails and conversations. While the opportunity was extended widely to give feedback, it was not possible to interview everyone involved. I regret if any aspect is misrepresented because of this. Athletics Wairarapa remains open to any corrections or further constructive feedback.

Introduction

On 7/8 April 2013 the North Island Secondary Schools Athletics Competition was held at the Perlorus Trust Athletics Track, Colin Pugh Sportsbowl, Masterton. As this was the first time the event had been held in the Wairarapa, the organizing committee proposed a post-event evaluation to guide planning for the following year, on the understanding that it would be hosted for two successive years in the Wairarapa.

At the event the recording and results systems did not function well, resulting in unacceptable delays in reporting results and significant disruption to the schedule of events. Athletics Wairarapa Inc was asked by the NZSSAA Executive Chairperson to provide a copy of their report to provide a better understanding of the issues that arose and to determine if sufficient mitigations could be put in place to ensure that similar dysfunction did not occur in 2014. In addition, the Masterton District Council has requested a copy of the report, to assist with their planning for next year.

The purpose of this report is therefore three-fold

- to analyse the feedback and describe the issues experienced
- to make recommendations to mitigate any real and perceived risk in hosting the event in Masterton for the second year as planned,
- to provide the basis of a 'hand-book' for organisers of future events, regardless of where they are held.

This report is based on verbal and written accounts of the experience of participants and analysis of the results of a web-based post-event survey. It contains a summary of the themes presented, and a series of recommendations for the event organisers, the Athletics Wairarapa Club, the Wairarapa Regional All Weather Track Trust, the Masterton District Council and the NISS committee.

Summary of major recommendations

(see appendix 2 for a full list of the recommendations)

- That the Track Trust is approached to
 - a. Pursue purchase of a new timing system for use in the Wairarapa
 - b. Create permanent paths in high traffic areas
 - c. Complete landscaping according to plan
 - d. Negotiate with the District Council regarding lighting

- That the solution for the issues with Sportscore are widely shared

- That the organizing committee
 - a. Works with the NISS committee to develop an event handbook based on their own experience and the experience of others to aid planning for themselves and other areas new to hosting this event
 - b. Ensures role separation for key positions, appropriate delegations of authority and that each key position has at least one understudy.

- That Wellington Centre and Athletics Wairarapa work together to
 - a. ensure that more local and regional people are upskilled in both Sportscore and Finish Lynx
 - b. ensure continued drive to train more local and regional officials

- That the District Council is approached to
 - a. upgrade the toilet facilities
 - b. remove of centre ramp in front of the club rooms to allow better foot traffic flows

Background

NISS

The New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletics Association was formed in 1973, by a small group of secondary school teachers.

The aims of the Association are:

- To organize New Zealand Secondary Schools Championships annually at various centres throughout New Zealand.
- To encourage the participation in athletics of secondary school pupils from every New Zealand Secondary school.
- When financially possible, to organise and select teams to take part in international competition.
- To advance the interests of athletics generally and of secondary school athletics in particular.

The North Island Secondary Schools athletics competition is an annual event, bringing together the best college-age athletes who have been selected by their schools, and follows on from regional meetings held earlier in the season. It is usually the last event on the athletics calendar, held after the 'season' has finished, usually in late March or early April. A duplicate event is held in the South Island, and a national competition takes place near the end of each school year.

NZSSAA meets annually to plan the calendar and make decisions on any matters arising, with regional meetings scheduled as the need arises.

Athletics Wairarapa Inc

Athletics Wairarapa was formed in March 2012, by bringing together two very longstanding athletics clubs in Masterton and Carterton. The change was made because the clubs recognised that completion of the all weather track in Masterton would change the face of athletics in the Wairarapa forever, and strong steps needed to be taken to ensure that grass-roots home-town athletics continued to flourish.

Athletics Wairarapa's strategic intention is 'to deliver a premier athletics experience that gives members the opportunity to succeed and experience lifelong activity and enjoyment at their own level.' Additionally, they 'will be a strong and sustainable club that engages with the communities that (they) serve.'

Following the completion of the track surface in December 2012, Athletics Wairarapa assisted in running a Centre meet on 12 January, North Island Interprovincial meet on 26th Jan, and the Wairarapa Secondary Schools on 5th March. In addition, the principle organizer ran the NZ Masters in Wellington 1 – 4 March and assisted run the Capital Classic on 25th March. This was done to ensure the club had a several practice runs before the North island Secondary Schools event.

Wairarapa Regional All Weather Track Trust Inc

Formed 6 years ago, the Trust was responsible for raising the funds and overseeing the construction of the all weather Pelorus Trust Athletics Track in Masterton. An exceptionally wet summer in 11/12 meant the completion of the track surface was delayed by 12 months, and landscaping could not be completed until the track was completed, not helped by the drought conditions this summer.

The Trust is currently formalizing their relationship with the Masterton District Council to be responsible for the management and ongoing maintenance of the facility.

Given the small population of the region, there is considerable cross-over of membership between the two bodies and a shared desire to grow the sport in the Wairarapa and wider region.

Summary of issues

The dominant issue was the failure of connection between the Finish Lynx software (which gives the photo-finish results) and Sportscore (which enables heats and finals to be drawn up and produces the results), the inability to resolve this in a timely manner and the lack of mitigation possible at the time.

In researching the issue, a number of compounding issues were uncovered, only one of which would still have caused significant problems even had the two systems been able to communicate with each other. This was the discovery of flaws in the database of athletes, stemming from multiple entries of an athlete's name against their various events, rather than single entry of the name, with all the events attached to that single entry (see appendix 2 for a full explanation).

Other notable issues related to the facilities available at the track and warm-up are and ripple effect in the call-tent from the failure of the results system.

These, and a variety of less dominant issues, are dealt with in the next section, which details the results of the survey and draws on emails and verbal conversations in the discussion at the end of each section.

Methodology

The serious nature of the disruption to the advertised programme dictated the content of an on-line survey, primarily designed to provide a factual basis for analysis of known issues and capture of any new ones. (see appendix 1)

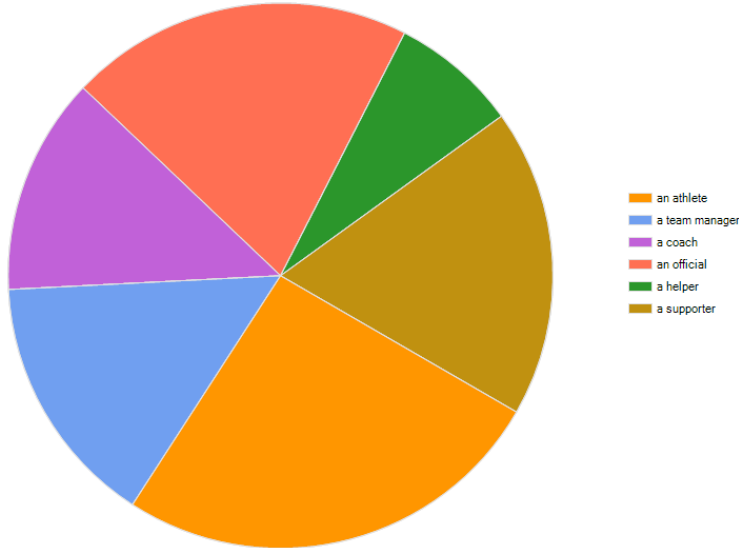
The investigative phase in the 3 weeks following the event resulted in a variety of emails and phone conversations with a wide range of people associated with the event and the sport. At the time of writing, the survey had attracted 93 replies.

It is important to note that this is not a random survey. Respondents were self-selecting, which pre-supposes they had a point of view that they wished to share. This has an inherent bias though the feedback, with a few notable exceptions, was largely constructive.

Results

Question 1: Participants

I attended the NISS Athletics competition in Masterton as



Discussion

There was a good spread of participants, enabling a reasonable balance of perspectives to be provided.

The largest single group was athletes (26%) followed by officials (20%), supporters (18%), Team Managers (15%), Coaches (13%) and helpers (8%).

Outside the survey mechanism, many emails and/or phone conversations were received from 8 individuals, predominantly officials.

Question 2: What did you like about the event?

There were 72 respondents to this question, some commenting on several facets.

In summary:

Item	No of comments	Themes
Track/venue	25	The track colour, newness, quality of equipment and convenient location. One respondent also noted that 'it will better when the grass has grown and the clubrooms modernised'. Close proximity to accommodation and town facilities, location, enjoyment of experiencing new venues.
Event	22	the atmosphere, friendliness of the people, caliber and calmness of officials, spectator support, size of event, food for officials, smooth running field events with great commentary.
Athletes	11	Participation and high standard of sportsmanship/behavior.
Competition	10	Caliber of racing and times achieved.
Counter-view	6	'nothing springs to mind' 'nice venue but not yet equipped to host an event this size and stature'.

Discussion

This section provided some balance to the survey. While the primary intent was to seek performance improvement, it was refreshing to hear the excitement of the athletes about competing on the new blue track, the acceptance that many of physical limitations would be gone by next year, and to hear about those parts of the competition - notably the field events - that were less affected by the issues plaguing the rest of the competition.

It was also interesting to note that those most critical of the event responded tended to respond earlier in the survey period, so this clearly provided a valuable mechanism to capture thoughts and feelings while they were fresh.

Question 3: What did you dislike about the event?

There were 85 respondents to this question, some commenting on several facets, resulting in 189 separate comments.

In summary:

Item	No of comments	Themes
Facilities/shelter	54	no grandstand (18), layout of surrounds leading to congestion or interrupting viewing (8) quality of seating (7), unfinished grounds looked dirty, toilets, access into grounds, weather, lighting, miscellaneous
Timing/delays	52	Delays in scheduling, delays in obtaining results (52)
Organisation	36	Non-specific (13) Programme changes, warm-up disruption, marshaling and re-marshaling, scheduling conflicts/concurrent events, management of volunteers.
Communication	19	Quality of commentary (8) information to athletes on the day (5), warmup area (4) positioning of speakers, inappropriate timing and location of feedback
Warmup	12	Quality of area, communication, non-specific
Officials	8	Lack of (6) audience support for(2)
Equipment	3	Setup (2) borrowed
Miscellaneous	6	Location, cost, nothing disliked.

Discussion

This question provided valuable validation of impressions and unearthed a few other issues that had not yet been documented.

Facilities/shelter

The cool and showery weather after a long hot summer caught some spectators out, despite the information about the open seating being available on the NISS website and in information to schools. Given the weather forecast, the organizing committee had secured cover at all stations and borrowed large umbrellas from the Cancer Society, but there is no substitute for a covered stand. While fundraising for this will be considered in the longer term plans of the Track Trust, completing equipment purchase is the top priority and clearly a covered stand will not be available for the 2013 NISS competition.

Recommendations

- That the organizing committee investigates the feasibility of temporary canvas awning over part of the stands.
- That landscaping around the track is completed as per plan
- That location of shade/shelter tents is revised for minimum impact to viewers
- That the organizing committee considers using the gate by the swingbridge for spectators, reserving the gate in the carpark for athletes and officials.
- That the Wairarapa All Weather Track Trust continue negotiations with the District Council regarding at least minimal street lighting for the track area.

Timing/delays

Failure in the timing and recording systems was the single most detrimental issue over the event. An explanation of how Finish Links and Sportscore work is included in appendix 2, along with a description of how and when the issues arose at the NISS event.

Athletics Wairarapa had already invested in new computers to network and run the integrated Finish Lynx and Sportscore systems. Following the event, the Wellington Centre has advised that their aging timing

system will no longer be available for hire away from Newtown Park. Accordingly, Athletics Wairarapa and the Track Trust are urgently pursuing purchase timing equipment for use in the Wairarapa, while approaching other centres to investigate loan/hire if timely purchase is not an option.

Most of the other issues raised in this section relate to the inability to produce results, seed races, allocate lanes and determine finalists – all stemming from the failures described in appendix 2.

The one issue that was not identified on the day, but was determined during the investigation, was the duplications in the database of athletes supplied by NISS. This significantly contributed to the difficulties described above, but is not well known as the cause. Discussion with the Sportscore developer resulted in a work-around fix on the day. Post-event cleansing of the database and retesting has resulted in flawless performance in Sportscore. Detail on how to avoid this problem is shared in appendix 2, for other users of the system.

Examination of written accounts (which will be required reading for the organizing committee) and conversations with results staff involved showed a team of people under huge pressure with not enough time or headspace to find solutions other than immediate work-arounds. That those work-arounds worked as well as they did is a credit to those involved, including those who have put in long hours post-event to reconcile data and get results published. Never the less, there are fundamental issues that need to be addressed before another major event is held in Masterton.

- The issue of local cameras and timing gear has already been mentioned, but this solution does not address the basic problem of lack of people highly experienced in the use of electronic timing via Finish Lynx and Sportscore. This has been a known problem over some years in the region and not addressed, and this came to a head at the NISS event.
- Secondly, regardless of any knowledge imbalance or relationship issues, it does not appear that enough time was taken on Friday night or Saturday morning to ensure the system was fully functional and this is a mistake that cannot be repeated.
- Thirdly, the responsibility for any part of the system cannot rest on one person. One of the major recommendations of this report is that every key role has an understudy and this is particularly relevant to the timing and results systems.

Recommendations

- That the Track Trust and Athletics Wairarapa pursue purchase of a new timing system for use in the Wairarapa.
- That the Track Trust and Athletics Wairarapa investigate permanent housing for the timing equipment
- That the knowledge of how to avoid data-entry errors into Sportscore is widely shared
- That more local and regional people are upskilled in both Sportscore and Finish Lynx, and that each key position has at least one understudy.

Organisation

Some survey respondents had harsh criticism of the organization of the event, while others were considerably more tolerant. There was significant dissatisfaction at the re-ordering of events and flow-on effect this had on warm-up preparation and in the call tent.

The decision to re-order events was made when it was clear that reconciliation between the two computer systems to gain accurate placing and seedings was going to take some time. Rightly or

wrongly, it was an attempt to keep the event flowing rather than grinding to a halt, and was seen as the lesser of two evils.

Similarly, the decision to reschedule some events to Sunday morning, but to continue with the relay events attracted both positive and negative comment. Some felt the decision should have been taken earlier, some felt the relays should have also been postponed, other felt they were a necessary finish to what had been a difficult afternoon for many athletes.

Several underlying themes emerged from the overall feedback: the need for additional contingency planning; the need to define the skillset and experience required in some key areas; unclear delegation of authority in some areas and over reliance on too small a number of individuals.

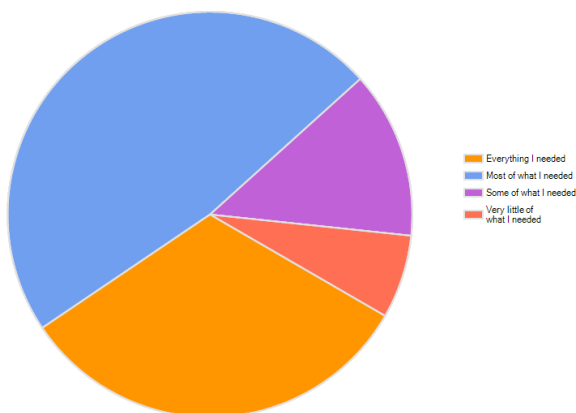
Recommendations

- That the organizing committee
 - Seek further input into and advice on their plans from areas which have already hosted this event (note that advice was sought and taken for 2013, but it would be valuable to repeat this now other areas have seen the potential of the facility).
 - Work with the NISS committee to develop an event handbook based on their own experience and the experience of others to aid planning for themselves and other areas new to hosting this event
 - Split roles so that individuals have fewer tasks and clearer delegations
 - Develop and peer review contingency plans

The other items in this section are covered under the replies to subsequent questions.

Question 4: Pre-event information

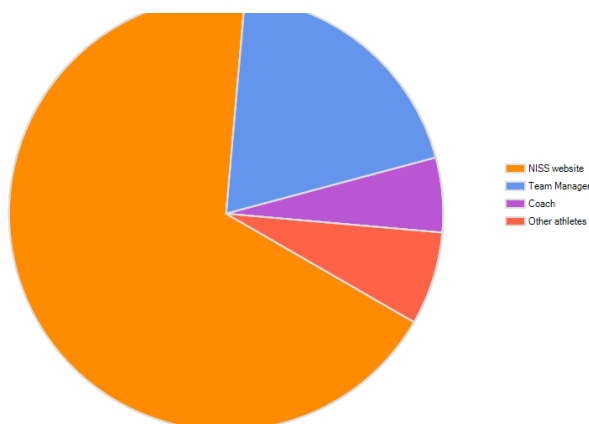
Prior to the event, how much of the information that you needed did you get?



Discussion

More than 75% of respondents report receiving most or all of the information they needed. Also included in the response were suggestions for improving information quality and flow.

Outside of survey mechanism, interviews with organizers and officials indicate that an 'event manual' would be useful for event planning, and a 'desk file' on Sportscore operation would assist in the results room.



Question 5: Information source

Discussion

Almost 70% of respondents got most of their information from the NISS website, indicating that this is a trusted and reliable source of information.

This was reinforced by the spike in the number of replies, once the post-event survey link was posted on this site.

Question 6

How difficult was it to find suitable accommodation?

63% said it was easy, 17% tried several places, and 20% found it difficult.

Discussion

Many respondents booked early and had no difficulty. Some respondents over-booked, so more accommodation became available closer to the event. Some left it very late and reportedly stayed in Carterton, Pahiatua or Palmerston North. Several highly complementary comments about the standard of accommodation and friendly hosts, one comment that it would be great to have more accommodation in the north end of the town, closer to the Track.

Outside of the survey mechanism, an 'accommodation coordinator' role was suggested.

Enquiry determined that while the available accommodation was well booked, there will still be beds available in Masterton. However, if a block booking was required, this was not available.

Recommendation

- That the organizing committee form a strong link with 'Destination Wairarapa' to promote the accommodation facilities to team managers in Term 3 2013.

Question 7

How easy was it to find the venue?

81% said it was easy, 19% said it was moderately easy. None found it hard.

Discussion

Signposting near the site and maps on the website both appear to have worked well. However, the all weather track does not yet have permanent signage from state highway 2.

Recommendation:

- That the Track Trust pursue funding options to provide highly visible signage to the new track.

Question 8

How would you rate the parking facilities

For 23% they exceeded expectation, 64% met expectation, and 13% they were below expectation.

Discussion

Parking and security were 'contracted out' to parents fundraising for a school exchange trip. Only one person complained via the survey about having to pay parking charges at the patrolled Lansdowne School site (\$2) though some others commented to the parking staff. Most thought it reasonable, some chose to park further away to avoid the charge.

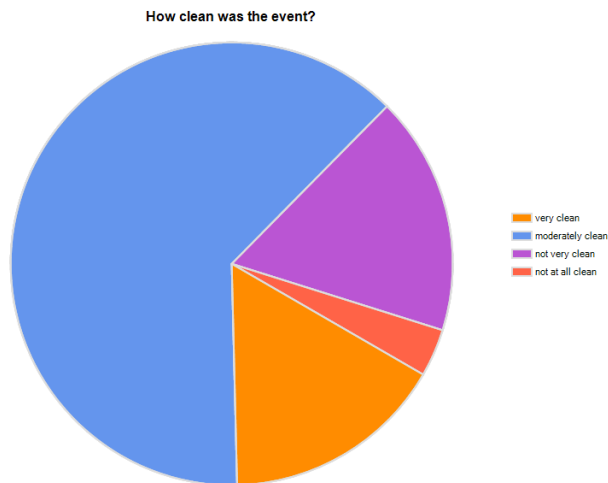
At the event, many people queried the lack of track-side parking, but the organizing committee had designated this for officials only to avoid unnecessary traffic which would compete with athletes moving between the track and warm-up area.

Question 9

Free entry to pools with entry band.

Only one respondent has taken up this offer. The late finish on Saturday may have adversely impacted on this result.

Question 10 How clean was the event?



16% very clean, 63% moderately clean, 17% not very clean, 3% not clean at all.

Discussion:

Once it was clear that the late completion of the track and drought conditions would preclude trackside surfaces to be grassed in time for the event, arrangements were made for old underlay to be used to create paths in high-traffic areas. This was to keep dust down as a minimum, and mud if it rained (as it did). Visually, this was not very appealing, but the alternatives were worse.

One ladies toilet had a leaking hand-basin pipe, which combined with a lack of toilet roll holders and mud being tracked in, became

very unsightly in a short space of time. Once cleaned it was clear it was not a leaking toilet and the pipe leak was contained in a receptacle.

Recommendations

- That the District Council be approached to upgrade the toilet facilities with fresh paint, new rubbish bins, installation of toilet roll holders and dedicated sanitary bins in the female toilets.
- That the Track Trust consider the installation of permanent paths in high traffic areas, where grass cover may be insufficient.

Question 11 Were there enough toilets?

61% said yes and 39% said no.

The industry standard is 1 pan per 100 people, though the Council recommends 1 per 50. The organizing committee budgeted for 5-600 athletes, plus up to 100 officials and helpers, and 400 -500 others. There are 12 pans and 3 urinals under the clubrooms, and a further 4 pans upstairs that were reserved for the officials.

10 days before the event, enrollments stood at around 860 athletes and 7 extra portaloos were arranged.

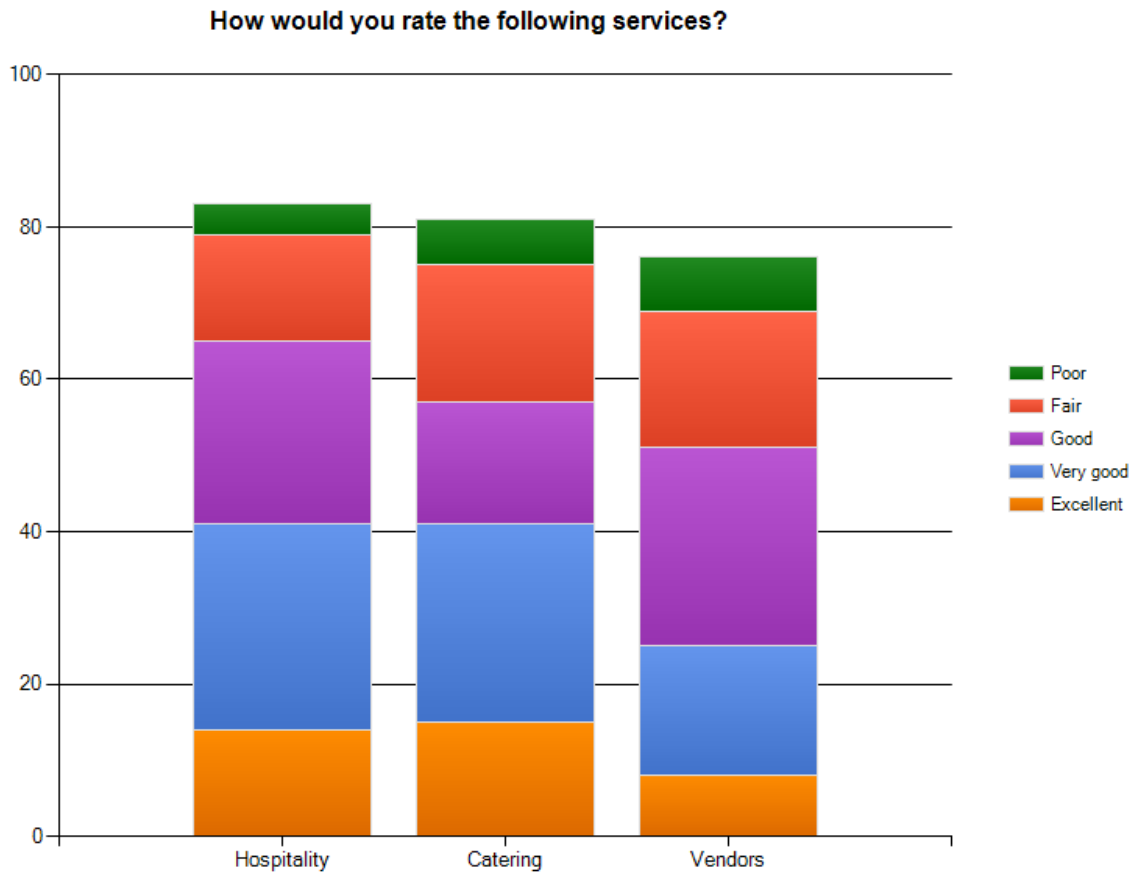
Discussion

Toilets were cleaned and restocked regularly during the event. The 3 portaloos adjacent to the call area were little used, perhaps because they felt too public. The 4 portaloos in the warmup area were well used, as were the built-in facilities. Little evidence of queuing was observed, but when it rained, many people made their way to the shelter of the overhanging balcony, making access to the toilets congested.

Recommendations:

- If the same location is used for the call-tent toilets next year, some form of screening should be investigated.
- That the District Council considers removal of centre ramp in front of the club rooms, which is no longer needed as the gear is now housed in the new gear shed. This will enable unimpeded foot traffic at ground level in front of the clubrooms and will improve access to ablution areas.

Question 12



Discussion

10 people commented on the slow service from the coffee cart

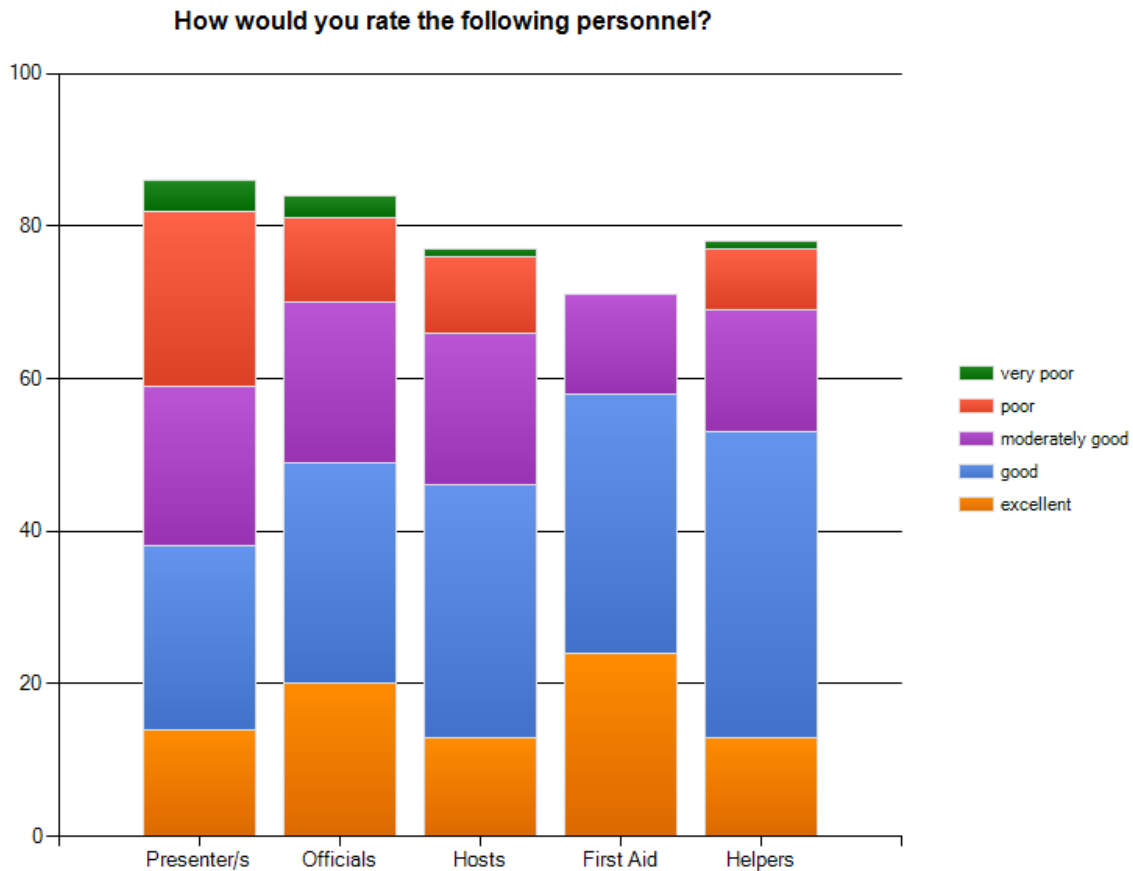
6 people commented on the hot food van, 2 in favour, four against.

7 people commented very favourably on catering for the officials and the friendly hospitality

Recommendations:

- that a second coffee cart, or larger vendor be available next year.
- that the hot food van, if used, be sited further from the call tent as the generator noise was annoying
- that the refill station for water bottles is better marked and more accessible
- that similar catering for the officials and canteen be employed next year.
- that consideration is given to providing space for a 'sports vendor'

Question 13



Presenters

There were 16 comments on the presenters. The Hammer presenter on Sunday morning received 4 compliments. 6 respondents suggested more use of athlete's names in the track commentary, and several others suggested more background on the events and 'people to watch'. Some critical comment was made on a perceived 'track' bias in the commentary. A suggestion was made that the commentator be located in the clubrooms.

Officials

There were 12 comments on officials. Worked very hard and worked well with helpers, lag time between events, unsure of hurdle heights. Too few officials, one field referee was not sufficient, some comment on delays with start officials.

Helpers

There were 8 comments on helpers. Impressed with their enthusiasm and willingness of others to help. Too few helpers.

Discussion

With hindsight, it would have been useful to have more than one presenter, as the track presenter had the greatest knowledge of Sportscore and those skills would have been of real use in the results room. It was very difficult for the track presenter to give names in the track events because the timing and seeding issues meant confirmation to him of event participants was not timely.

There was a more relaxed and enthusiastic tone with the Field presenter, to which the audience responded well.

There were 44 officials organized for the event, and several others who were available for time-limited periods over the two days. Given the larger than expected enrollment, this was recognized as being an issue. Further officials in the 'audience' were generally generous with their time.

Athletics Wairarapa had hosted several officials training workshops to enhance the local supply and this was the first major event officiating for some. Some did not yet have their badges or uniform, so had difficulty being recognized by other more experienced officials, especially younger members. Outside of the survey mechanism, it was reported that some officials are reluctant to travel to this particular meet, as it comes hard on the heels of another major event and is after the 'season' has finished. It was suggested that schools be approached more directly to solicit officials.

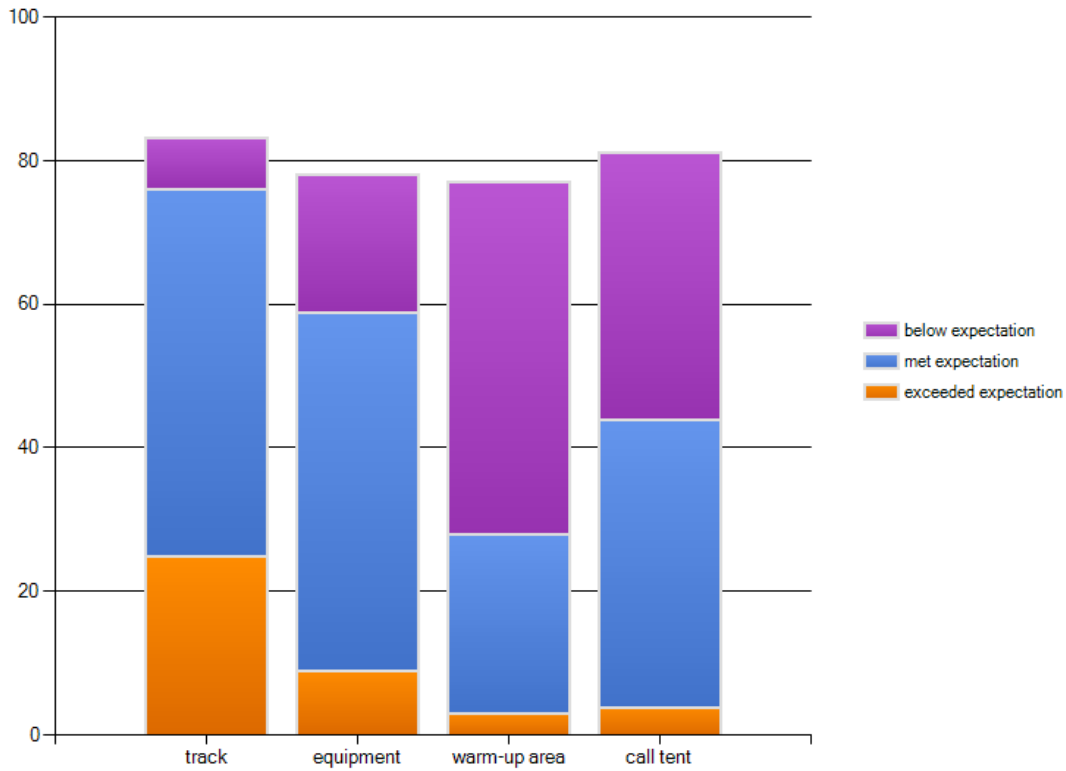
Daily management of helpers and volunteers is an area that would benefit from better organization next year. This was one of several roles held by an individual who was absent from the meeting point in the canteen at times (carrying out other duties) when the Rathkeale volunteers presented. Not all volunteers reported to the canteen. A designated waiting area for volunteers was not set up and it was not made clear to volunteers that they needed to remain in one place until dispatched, so there were times when volunteer helpers could not immediately be supplied and others when volunteers were waiting around to be dispatched to their next task. The mechanism for requests for assistance was not clear to officials, and there was no radio contact with the volunteer manager / canteen unless the Site manager was present.

Recommendations:

- That the organizing committee invites the Field presenter to return and investigates using more than one track presenter.
- That team managers are asked to highlight to the organizers potential record breaking attempts, and presenters make better use of names and biographies.
- That more local officials courses are hosted and subsidized by the club, and local officials supported to attend centre events to gain further experience.
- That the club ensures all their officials have the correct badges and uniforms.
- That commitment is sought early from travelling officials and the high standard of catering for them is maintained.
- That the volunteer coordinator has this as a sole role, there is a single place for all volunteers to congregate and wait for assignment, and requests for assistance to be dispatched come via radio from the commentator, or site manager.

Question 14
Rate facilities

How would you rate the following facilities?



Track

Item	No of comments	Themes
Track issues	2	Hardness of track, suspected bubble on home straight
Track surrounds	7	Grandstand/cover, Unfinished ground, mud

Equipment

Item	No of comments	Themes
Various	9	Age and amount of borrowed equipment, training javelin in competition, equipment good, pole vault bases, protection for finish line equipment.

Warmup area

Item	No of comments	Themes
surface	10	Grounds rough or uneven, lane markings requested
designated area	8	No on-site throws warm up area
management	8	Improved supervision and audio communications

Call tent

Item	No of comments	Themes
Location	8	Suggested alternatives - warmup area, beyond 100m startline, dispense with call tent and marshall at event
Size / crowding	10	Overcrowding, difficulty hearing megaphone, cold
Organisation	12	Separate track and field can have two call tents, adverse effect of timing issues.

Discussion

Issues raised with the track have been dealt with in earlier sections. The home straight has been thoroughly inspected and no bubble found. However, a recent patch was noted which had not faded to the colour of the rest of the track.

Issues with equipment will be migrated over the coming months with arrival of more new equipment. Permanent cover for timing equipment will be dealt with as part of the investigation into the purchase of a timing system for the Wairarapa.

It is clear the warm-up area requires better preparation and supervision next year. There was some suggestion that some lanes be marked, although this is not a feature at many other equivalent events.

It's also clear that most of the issues with the call tent and overcrowding were the result of the delays and rescheduling. This was compounded by having many non-athletes present in the call tent. Contingency plans for next years should include better screening on 3.5 sides of the call tent area, consideration of a dedicated sound system, and possible relocation of the call tent to the warm-up area.

Recommendations

Warm-up area

- Have the ground rolled and possibly marked before the event, as well as mowed (as done in 2013)
- Fulltime supervision, with supervisor in radio contact with the call tent.

Call tent

- Consider relocation to the warm-up area
- Include call tent capacity in contingency planning

Question 15

Were call times sufficient for your preparations?

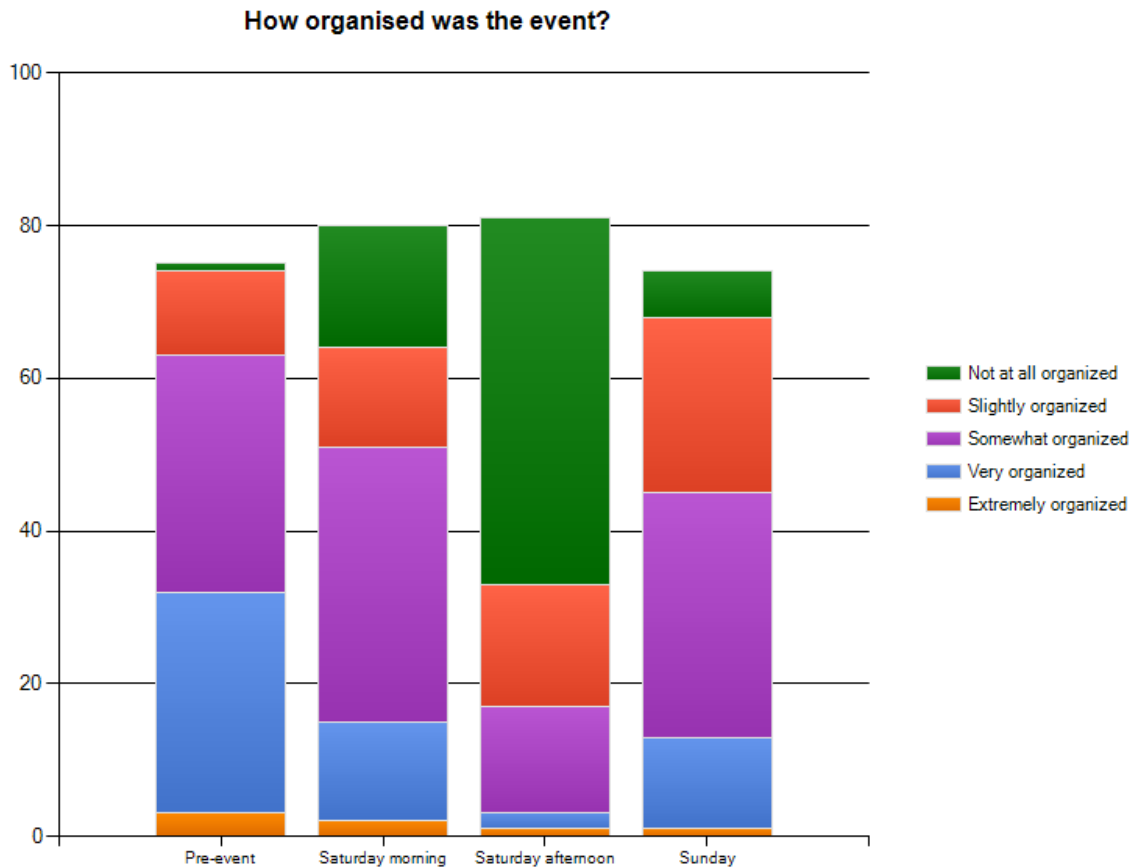
37% yes, 63% no.

Item	No of comments	Themes
Too short	3	Pole Vault need and hour, Field events need 40 mins
About right	7	Would have been fine if events running to time
Too long	38	Scheduling changes, recalls, information to athletes and team managers, effect on warm-ups and managing food intake

Discussions

Most of the feedback on call times related to rescheduling. Some officials found the entrants arrived in a timely manner, others did not. Useful guidance was given on call times for pole vault and field events.

Question 16



Discussion

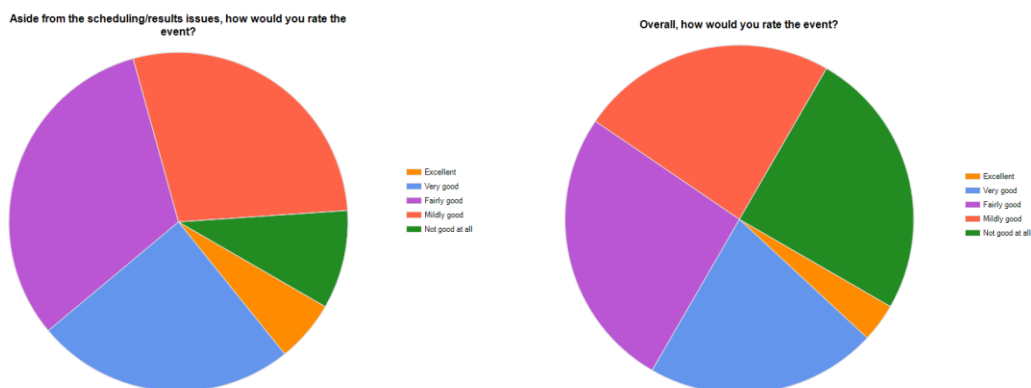
Of the 27 comments received, only 3 had insight into the nature of the problems, the rest were expressions of frustration and regret. One quote summed up the general feeling - 'if timing issues weren't present then nothing would have been an issue'.

Of the comments with insight into the issues, it was noted that Finish Lynx continued to perform independently and some ideas were given as to possible reasons for the malfunctioning connectivity with within the network and Sportscore. It was also noted that an inordinate amount of time had to be spent trying to 'match' data between the two systems, that should have been done by automatic feed. This issue is dealt with in more detail in appendix 2.

There was some comment that further advice could have been sought regarding event planning. The organizing committee were particularly grateful for the site visit and advice from Mr Alec McNab in October 2012, where he highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the facility and event and advised on steps to assist with organization. The recommendations he made on the day and in a subsequent email (Appendix 3) were all implemented.

The committee will certainly again be actively drawing on the experience of others to peer review plans for the 2014 event and thanks the individuals who offered help and support during and after the event, including offers through the survey mechanism to assist at the 2014 event.

Questions 17 and 18: Approval rating without and with consideration of the timing issues



Discussion

Without the timing issues, 63% of people rated the event fairly good, very good, or excellent. When timing issues were included, approval rating dropped to 54%

However, the biggest differential occurred in the 'not good at all' rating when people were asked to put the timing issues aside. Without the timing issues, 9% thought the event was not good at all, when the timing issues were considered, this rose to 25%.

With hindsight, this was not a particularly useful question to ask, as few people had an understanding of the issues being grappled with – they just experienced the resultant delays.

Given the inherent bias of a self-selected range of respondents, it is useful to balance this result with a recall of one of the final relays on Saturday night, where the audience demonstrated just how engaged they still were by setting up a 'let her run' chant for an athlete who false started from a hand clap.

Conclusion

Staging an event of this size and stature is a considerable undertaking, involving long hours from many dedicated volunteers. While many athletes, officials and participants enjoyed the event, camaraderie and location, the difficulties created by the malfunction of connectivity between Finish Lynx and Sportscore cast a very long shadow. In conjunction with the weather, this considerably dampened the level of enjoyment for many and damaged the confidence in the organizing committee to create a successful event.

Athletics Wairarapa accepts overall responsibility for the quality of the event. The recommendations of this report will be implemented and where shortcomings in planning and execution have been identified, they will work with others to ensure mitigations are in place within 6 months. They are aware that the reputation of the track, club and region is on the line, and will use all possible means to ensure a thoroughly successful event in 2014.

Finally, thanks must go to all those who worked so hard before, during and after the event to keep the event running and reconcile data so the results could finally be posted.

As advised, this report will be circulated widely so that lessons can be shared, and thanks given where this is due.

30 April 2013

Appendix 1: List of all recommendations

- That the organizing committee investigates the feasibility of temporary canvas awning over part of the stands.
- That landscaping around the track is completed as per plan
- That location of shade/shelter tents is revised for minimum impact to viewers
- That the organizing committee considers using the gate by the swingbridge for spectators, reserving the gate in the carpark for athletes and officials.
- That the Track Trust and Athletics Wairarapa pursue purchase of a new timing system for use in the Wairarapa.
- That the Track Trust and Athletics Wairarapa investigate permanent housing for the timing equipment
- That the knowledge of how to avoid data-entry errors into Sportscore is widely shared
- That more local and regional people are upskilled in both Sportscore and Finish Lynx, and that each key position has at least one understudy.
- That the organizing committee
 - Seek further input into and advice on their plans from areas which have already hosted this event
 - Work with the NISS committee to develop an event handbook based on their own experience and the experience of others to aid planning for themselves and other areas new to hosting this event
 - Split roles so that individuals have fewer tasks and clearer delegations
 - Develop and peer review contingency plans
- That the organizing committee form a strong link with 'Destination Wairarapa' to promote the accommodation facilities to team managers in Term 3 2013.
- That the Track Trust pursue funding options to provide highly visible signage to the new track.
- That the District Council be approached to upgrade the toilet facilities with fresh paint, new rubbish bins, installation of toilet roll holders and dedicated sanitary bins in the female toilets.
- That the Track Trust consider the installation of permanent paths in high traffic areas, where grass cover may be insufficient.
-
- If the same location is used for the call-tent toilets next year, some form of screening should be investigated.
- That the District Council consider removal of centre ramp in front of the club rooms, which is no longer needed as the gear is now housed in the new gear shed. This will enable unimpeded foot traffic at ground level in front of the clubrooms and will improve access to ablution areas.
- that a second coffee cart, or larger vendor be available next year.

- that the hot food van, if used, be sited further from the call tent as the generator noise was annoying
- that the refill station for water bottles is better marked and more accessible
- that similar catering for the officials and canteen be employed next year
- that consideration is given to providing space for a 'sports vendor'
- That the organizing committee invites the Field presenter to return and investigates using more than one track presenter.
- That team managers are asked to highlight to the organizers potential record breaking attempts, and presenters make better use of names and biographies.
- That more local officials courses are hosted and subsidized by the club, and local officials supported to attend centre events to gain further experience.
- That the club ensures all their officials have the correct badges and uniforms.
- That commitment is sought early from travelling officials and the high standard of catering for them is maintained.
- That the volunteer coordinator has this as a sole role, there is a single place for all volunteers to congregate and wait for assignment, and requests for assistance to be dispatched come via radio from the commentator, or site manager.

Warm-up area

- Have the ground rolled and possibly marked before the event, as well as mowed (as done 2013)
- Fulltime supervision, with supervisor in radio contact with the call tent.

Call tent

- Consider relocation to the warm-up area
- Include call tent capacity in contingency planning

Appendix 2: Finish Lynx and Sportscore

Sportscore is a Microsoft Access based software.

Step 1: Create the database to hold the information

Step 2: Set up the competition

- Create new competition (or select it if you have already created the competition)
- Amend any competition details if they change along the way
- Select the divisions that operate for the NISS (for this event they would have needed to be created)
- Select the events that are run at the NISS
- Set the programme schedule for the events to be run including timing of events and giving each event a race number

Step 3: Manage the entries

- Import the entries which must have the following information:-
 1. Athlete Name
 2. Gender
 3. DOB
 4. Age (as a cross reference for the DOB)
 5. Team
 6. Race Number (this is extremely important and essential that this is unique to every athlete as this is how the results is allocated to the athlete from the timing system)
 7. Event
 8. Division (as a cross reference to the DOB and Age)
 9. Seeding (if supplied)
- You can Add / Edit / Delete athletes from the database leading up to the event, but should not be done once the event commences and lane draws have been made for events
- **You cannot have duplicates of the athletes name and info in the database** and there is a process to fix this if it occurs.

Step 4: Run the competition

- You set the rounds and advancements
- Ensure that the programme schedule is correct
- Then control the events by seeding the races and saving them and printing out the reports. Once this part is done you cannot add or delete names from the database otherwise this can cause issues for finals if they exist for the event. If an athlete scratches, then there is a process for this to occur which does not interfere with the event.
- When you have the event that is to be run, correct and correctly seeded, you then press the button that says **update Finish Lynx** and this sends a file to the computer managing the timing camera to ensure that the camera records the correct info against the correct athlete. **This is done solely by the athletes race number as this is the link between Sportscore and Finish Lynx**

Email from Murray Anderson, developer of Sportscore.

From: Murray Andersen

Sent: Sunday, 21 April 2013 12:27 p.m.

Subject: North Island Schools T&F Championships

I understand there has been a lot of speculation as to what has caused the problems that occurred at the NISS Championships.

When there was a delay in producing the results on Saturday morning I was asked to assist to see if I could help solve the problem. Initially the results were coming up from the camera with a lane and a result only. To enter the results into Sportscore Mhyre and her crew had to look up who was in each lane then try and match up the lane with the athlete then record the time and then manually enter that time in Sportscore. This obviously took considerable time and the potential to make errors. I produced a new lynx schedule and gave it to Peter to load into Lynx. From there on the results came up to the results room with a name, race number and time which made it much faster to manually enter the results.

The problem was that any time there was a change in a laned race the lynx files had to be updated and taken down on a memory stick to Peter to manually load into Lynx. The potential danger was that unless a new lane draw was passed onto the starter the athletes may have not started in their correct lanes as per the lynx files... no doubt that probably happened on some occasions. While a little cumbersome the procedure would have worked fine, albeit a little slow but with the pressure that had built up with the initial delay in producing results there may have been a breakdown in that procedure at odd times during the day.

I thought Mhyre did a great job under extreme pressure, especially considering her limited previous knowledge of Sportscore. Peter was obviously flat out and under the same pressure. Ideally it would have been good if he had had the time to spot check that the correct athletes were in the correct lanes but I don't know that he fully appreciated what was going on with the manual transfer of data and therefore maybe concentrated on capturing the races.

In essence I believe the sole problem that existed was because THERE WAS NO COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE LYNX CAMERA AND THE SOFTWARE. Neither the camera nor software was to blame and the operators did their best under difficult circumstances. Other problems that existed all stemmed from the lack of communication between the camera and software. Had electronic communication between the camera and software existed accurate and timely results would have been able to be produced.

Hope that is some help for you when putting together your report.

Cheers
Murray

A timeline of events

In February, Athletics Wairarapa purchased new computers and Sportscore software and associated hardware to ensure they had their own system setup in the Wairarapa. The hardware was set up so that they had a functional Wairarapa network to provide a higher level of guarantee that nothing would go wrong from the NISS results process. This also meant there were people with the knowledge to run the network in the Wairarapa if for any reason it failed. The network was successfully used every day leading up to the event.

Discussions were held with the creator of Sportscore to check that the set up would work, including the linkage with Finish Lynx. He indicated this should be fine as Finish Lynx was a free download to run the timing system.

The set up was tested locally with no issues running the programme in both Finish Lynx and Sportscore. The cameras were not available for inclusion in this test.

A request to test the Wairarapa setup in Wellington was refused, though the centre was advised that Athletics Wairarapa had purchased new computers and software and wished to run the NISS event on these. Subsequent enquiry indicates that this request/ advice may not have been widely understood.

In the local test runs leading up to the NISS, the Athletics Wellington setup was used. Part of this agreement was to train two local operators so that there was local expertise but the training offered was very limited.

The SportScore system used at the Wairarapa Secondary School Champs worked flawlessly on the Wairarapa network.

On the Friday night before the event, the locally organized set-up plan for the timing system, which had been tested, was not followed. Instead, the Wellington computers and system were again installed. The major differences between the systems were the length and age of cabling, adding two more Ethernet junction boxes and extra cabling and trying to put the extra camera on the terraces. The previous times the system had been set up locally used a simpler setup on the inside of the track.

A compromise was made and it appeared that this worked on the Friday for the camera situated on the inside of the track, but would not work for the one on the outside of the track.

This point appears to be the start of the connectivity issues. Assistance to reconfigure the Wellington computers to link with the local network was declined. The power cords and cables, including the main Ethernet 100m cable were left out overnight.

On the Saturday morning at approx. 8.15am organizers were advised that the network was not working. At approx. 8.30am the computer operating the camera was disconnected from the network to see if this would resolve the problem but the results team were not informed of this action.

Several of the Wellington cables were replaced and the system started to work but it was still not connected to the network and the results team remained unaware of this for the next 120 minutes. The computer operation was shifted to track-side, meaning less interaction with the rest of the results team, however, the camera system continued to work.

The disconnection from the network created the following issues:-

- No results had been analysed and saved ready for Sportscore to import
- The results team had done multiple updates to the Finish Lynx file which superseded the information that the camera operator was using. This therefore meant races had been reseeded and when results were loaded into Sportscore athletes received results that they should not have. This then had a profound effect on published results and meant all results had to be cross referenced with start sheets and manually imported. A very challenging task.

At approx 12.30pm the long 100m network cable was checked by a specialist who confirmed it did work but replaced the plugs to make sure.

Errors with athlete database entered into Sportscore compounded issues.

- Duplications of athlete names in the database had the effect of creating multiple races with the same names for the same event.
- The track-side staff needed to see the printed start sheets to know who was in which lane, but these may not have been delivered because of the compounded issues as noted above.
- That lane draws may have been updated but if lane sheets are not printed it stalls the process and finals can't be produced.
- That the camera potentially had incorrect information due to updates made with Sportscore but because they were not networked, cross referencing could not be carried out.

Feedback suggested some mitigation that may have helped speed things up on the day, given that the major connectivity problem was not able to be resolved:

- Designate one person to deal with parent and coach enquiries at the door
- Separate results staff from officials and other activities happening in the clubrooms

Appendix 3: Supporting documents

Report on Site Visit from NISS representative, 1 October 2012

Alec McNab did a site visit and a subsequent report (see below) on 1 Oct 2012. Stephen Brown was in attendance. All points raised in the report and verbally on the day were addressed.

Points mentioned verbally but not included in the report:

To have Murray Anderson (creator of Sportscore) involved from a results point of view.

- Initial contact made, and Murray not available, but his plans changed and he was in attendance for the Saturday only. A results team had already been put together, but his input on the day was invaluable (See Murray's email in appendix 2).

That we talk with Ngaire Drake (Wellington Secondary Schools Sports Council).

- John Tylden as used as the major 'sounding board' but plans were reviewed with Ngaire on 6th March in person at the NZ Masters Champs and she was asked to provide any info she felt we may have missed or needed to know. Several information emails were received from Ngaire over the month leading into the event and she indicated we appeared to have most bases covered.

To ensure we had a couple of practice runs before the NISS.

- This was undertaken with the Centre Meeting on 12 Jan, NI Interprovincial on 26th Jan, Wairarapa Secondary Schools 5th March and the principal event organizer ran the NZ Masters in Wellington 1 – 4 March and assisted run the Capital Classic on 25th March

That the perimeter fence be modified to allow for greater spectator viewing which was undertaken.

- Actioned by the District Council

Site Visit report from Alec McNabb (via email)

Thank you for showing me round last week and for answering my many questions. I am envious of you about what you are going to have in Masterton. It will be a wonderful addition to the New Zealand athletic scene.

I arrived with a number of questions and your answers were most helpful.

The track although only 75% completed will be excellent and provided no unforeseen problems arise should be completed soon. There is a two lane run up for Horizontal Jumps which will mean at North Island some events will have to be competed into the wind. There will be good Pole Vault facilities (two directional), 2 shot circles, a good high jump fan, Javelin from both ends and one Hammer/Discus cage.

The building of a purpose built gear shed is a wise investment, often overlooked on tight budgets. You are fortunate to have good club rooms available that can provide for the Control Room, an Officials area and TIC. There are good toilet and changing rooms and additional hire is probably not necessary or at a minimal level. However the camera (hired) will be away from the control room at a remote location and networked.

I raised some concerns about the perimeter fence. It is part of the development plan but I believe additional thought is needed about its placement. The ground lacks covered area but has good space for tents for Team groups. These areas I believe need to be inside the ground and not outside the fence. The wide flat area at the top of the excellently tiered terraces on the home straight under the present plan will be outside the perimeter fence. As I said on Tuesday this is "prime real estate" for your ground. Not only would groups appreciate the ability to have gazebos in the area the wide area at the top would be important for the flow patterns within the ground at larger Meetings such as North Island Schools.

Grants have been received to purchase equipment but you will find that \$30,000 although sounding a lot will leave a shortfall. We estimate our equipment in Wanganui to have a replacement value of over \$100,000. Any shortfall for NISS will have to be covered by borrowing from neighbouring Centres. This of course entails additional work above any cost.

As mentioned earlier there is no cover but the terraces on the home straight are good and the ground has already been used for major events with large crowds. The North Island Schools relies on what is taken in at the Gate which further emphasises the need for a fence to maximise this vital area.

Entries are done by NZSS which is one big headache removed for an organiser. A quick decision is needed about who will operate "Sportscore" or "Meet Manager" at the Championships and whoever is going to be responsible needs to be contacted very soon and included in the Meet budget.

Like many smaller Centres (and even larger Centres) lack of Officials is a very real problem. You have already appealed for wider officials and as I recommended you should pencil in some accommodation for such officials. I am a little concerned that College Sport and their link through Ngaire Drake to Wellington Athletics has very little knowledge of your plans and their requirements.

There is good accommodation in Masterton for a Meet the size of NISS. Larger Meets would stretch resources as we found in Wanganui for NZSS with every bed in town booked and late arrivals were as far away as Palmerston North and Hawera. We catered easily with 3 NISS events.

In summary your facility has great potential with the North Island Schools an excellent Meeting to hold for the size of ground and town. There is obviously some distance to go to complete the facility and there are issues to be addressed in the months ahead including securing funding to cover equipment that needs to be hired and officials recruited.

The Inter Provincials become a vital Meeting in terms of trial of systems. I gather via Alann Potts that the 3rd Round of the League in late November will not be in Masterton which is a pity as that would be a good additional Meet over and above Wellington Centre Meetings which you have scheduled in Masterton. These tend to be smaller and easier to control Meets and would not stretch you in the way the League will.

I share John Tylden's view that you can run the NISS in April but there will be very real pressures over and above the usual ones associated with such Meetings. The hireage will need to be funded as I mentioned the NISS has potential to make money if you maximise the money raised at the gate but by the same token you cover all of the cost. There is no bail out available from NZSS for this Meet. NZSS provides support in terms of the entry procedures and as I said to you I and others are apply to help in any way possible.

Our offer to run NISS in Wanganui for one year only stands (the last thing I need in a busy year) with Masterton taking two years in 2014 and 2015. This would give you valuable time and the likelihood of maximising the success of the Meet over two years with many of the teething problems solved. That is over to you and your colleagues. At present the NISS is in Masterton unless you take up the offer mentioned above over the next fortnight.

Thank you again for giving up your time. I enjoyed by day in the Wairarapa.

Regards

Alec

Alec McNab
Senior Master
Wanganui Collegiate School