

Helen Mackle
Chair,
NZSSAA Local Organising Committee

John Tylden,
Chairperson,
New Zealand Secondary Schools Athletic Association.

Dear John,

Our Local Organising Committee would like the NZSSAA Executive to consider running the National Secondary Schools Athletic Championship over three days this coming December, instead of the normal two, competition to begin at 9am on the Friday. If not a full three days, then we definitely would like the committee to consider at least a half day on the Friday with competition beginning at 12noon at the latest.

We would like to hold the Pole Vault and Hammer on the Friday. With the Pole Vault we should easily be able to fit an Open Girls and Open Boys Pole Vault in over the day or the afternoon, and if we did this we could have the Pole Vault set up where our Long Jump area is. This gives a bit more flexibility as the run up can be either from North or South, depending on the wind factor.

Hammer always poses a bit of a problem on our grounds as we do not have a warm up area separate from competition area, and would therefore like to see the Hammer on a day where there is no other competition on the inner field. The Hammer throwers would be able to warm up on the inner field before the competition. The Hammer would take quite a bit of time out of the day, so we would be looking at starting this at 12noon at the latest, to finish at a reasonable time. It would be better to have a full day on the Friday and provide a bit more time between competitions for the officials to have a break.

Long Jump is an extremely popular event and it would be ideal if we could hold the preliminary rounds (for the age groups needing them) on the Friday, fitting in around the Pole Vault times, and then have the final rounds on the Saturday and Sunday. This could easily be done with a full day on Friday.

With some long distances races requiring heats, there is a possibility of having the heats on the Friday as well, with the finals Saturday or Sunday. These track events can be worked around the Hammer times.

Two very full days demands a lot from everyone involved. Early starts and late finishes can be a bit of a strain on all involved, the organisers, officials, and athletes. Whether we like to admit it or not, the majority of our officials are getting older, many being retired, and I noticed that the late finishes at Whanganui were quite a strain on some of them. Earlier finish times in the latter part of the afternoon would be welcome, and with the competition spread out more, a bit more time to rest between each event. Athletes and team managers also tire as the day goes on, and it seems some just do not give their best performances when tired at the end of the day. Work in the control room starts long before the events and finishes long after the events, especially with getting programmes out for the next day. If we aim to finish all events by 6pm each day, then the stress is a lot less. I noticed that the control room / photo finish is not quite as efficient as it should be when people start

getting tired, mistakes are more prone to be made. This can probably been said for the track and field officials as well and it is not fair on all concerned.

We are aware there could be a problem with getting some Officials for the extra day, in that some may have to take time more time off work, and there will be increased accommodation costs. This is something we will work on. If a decision on three days is made early enough, officials can be warned by the end of this season and will have plenty of time to think about whether they wish to attend and officiate over three days. Some officials might have a bit more flexibility and be available only for two days, but have a bit more choice on which days they will be.

An early decision would be preferable for the schools, they will have plenty of time to arrange accommodation and transport, and organise fundraising for the extra night.

This is the largest event on the athletics calendar in New Zealand. Even the ANZ National Championship, with fewer entries, takes 3 days. Having an extra half or whole day would lessen the pressure on facilities at most grounds and would overcome the programming problems that have arisen over recent years.

Yesterday I spoke to Michael Sharapoff of Athletics New Zealand and he reiterated that recently the ANZ Officials Association have expressed concern with the competition being over two days, and he is pleased that our Local Organising Committee are applying for the event to be run over three days.

We would be grateful to your committee to give this some very serious consideration, and we look forward to your answer in the near future.

Regards,

Helen Mackle
Chair.