Pendle AC – Chairman’s report 2012

This is my 5th and final report as chairman so I will spend some time looking back over that period. As usual I won’t focus on club achievements over the past year, not because that isn’t important – it is, but because it is in the secretary’s report.

Essentially the Club is the same size as it was 5 years ago and still predominantly a junior club. This is different to what it has been in the past. There has been an increase in the younger age groups and more of a push for younger athletes to get into senior squads perhaps to the detriment of the older athletes?

During my five years we had some good early successes in obtaining small grants and working closely with the School Sports Partnership (SSP), England Athletics and Pendle Leisure Trust. This was followed by achieving Club Mark status, mainly thanks to hard work by Christine.

The links with schools boosted numbers particularly at primary ages and we lowered the starting age to 7 years old. We then reinstated Wednesday sessions for the young athletes and a new intermediate squad on Monday evenings. This was all in line with good practice from UK Athletics in running age groups based on train for fun, train to train etc.

A number of these athletes are starting to make their mark in the specialist squads and hopefully have a long term future in the sport.

Since obtaining ClubMark though we have not received any grants, the only ones on offer seeming to be for flying coaches. Also weren’t invited to join the Lancashire Athletics Network even though we tried hard first time around. In most counties all ClubMark clubs are members of a network. We have very little involvement with England Athletics these days.

Coaching wise we have a small group of very dedicated people who spend a significant amount of time coaching and officiating. However we have few new coaches and don’t have junior coaches coming through like some clubs

Competition wise we have had a few individuals who have represented the country disproportionately compared to the size of the club. However whilst we win many events we lack numbers in all competitions, and have age group “gaps”.

As a Club we continue to remain reliant on Christine as secretary, membership secretary, welfare officer, team manager, meeting organiser, sandwich maker …. During my time as chairman we have had a reasonably strong committee but we are down to the few at the moment.

The Club is a community club and does provide a safe environment for local youngsters to get far fitter than most of their peers and to enjoy themselves.

So what do I see as the challenges for the new chairperson and committee going forward.

Firstly we need to get reaccredited with ClubMark. This is a bureaucratic exercise and everyone needs to help by attending the mandatory courses and getting their paperwork to Christine. ClubMark will help with any future grants and is now the accepted standard in most sports involving juniors.

Secondly we need to sort out the squads and ages. Is it right for a ten year to be in a specialist squad either for themselves or for other older members of the squad! Much of this is parental pressure but I have always said that any moves must be by agreement with both coaches and this doesn’t happen. I have some experience of swimming and woe betide any parent who tries to move their child between lanes.

Thirdly we need a much bigger pool of helpers both in committee roles and helping out at events as officials or even making the tea. Christine does too much. We also need some new coaches and must recognise that most cannot commit the time that Noel, David and Derek do. The squads should have a level 2 or higher in charge but a pool of more junior coaches delivering more often.

Fourthly how do we grow the club in size and avoid the massive loss of talent between the young athlete group and other squads. This means making the training more approachable to what I call an average Club runner as compared to someone with county potential. Apart from anything else we need to generate income at the track for repairs and maintenance.

There is a lot to think about but I am sure that it is all achievable but it does need a group of people focussing on the medium/longer term not just delivering coaching.

I stand down as chairman and am not seeking to join the committee. However I will continue as a coach one night per week, continue with the website and help with the Open meeting. Please can I have more articles for the website – but many thanks to my sole contributors – Lynn, Bryan and Richard.