

ATHLETICS PNG ANNUAL REPORT 2011

This report covers the period since the Annual General Meeting in Lae in 2009.

Office bearers during this period were

- President: Tony Green
- Vice President: Gordon Kapak
- Secretary: Philip Rehder
- Treasurer: Stephen Mombi
- Committee Members: Sophia Marai, Philip Kamane & Geoffrey Bai

The Executive met in November 2009 in Port Moresby, twice in Lae in 2010 and twice in 2011. The key focus of our attention in 2010 was the Commonwealth Games. PNGNOC was keen to send a large team to the Games and we took advantage of this by sending the biggest PNG athletic team ever to a Commonwealth Games. Our plan was to use this as a platform for 2011 as we knew that if the core of our team was in peak form at the end of 2010 this would benefit immensely our preparations for 2011. In contrast Fiji were not allowed to compete at the Commonwealth Games so we had a head start on them in terms of preparation for Noumea 2011. With the support of the National Gaming Control Board which contributed a total of K 178,000 in 2010 we were able to send a good number of athletes to the Asian Grand Prix in June and to the Oceania Championships in Cairns which was the last competition for us before New Delhi. Nelson Stone, Toea Wisil and Salome Dell were all outstanding in New Delhi, setting National records in the Games and especially Toea who made both the 100m and 200m finals. During 2010 new national records were set in eight different events

- Women: 200m, 400m, 800m, 1500m and 4*400m relay
- Men: 200m, 400m and Half-marathon

For a long established National Federation (50 years) this was a great achievement in itself. Much has been said and written about the success of our team in 2011. However as with the Commonwealth Games we need to keep our results in perspective and not get carried away because a small number of athletes did very well. There is a lot of room for improvement in our men's sprints, middle and long distance events, women's long distance, and of course the jumps and throws. We need a strong all round team to improve our medal tally at the 2015 Games, not just six to eight very good athletes.

National Championships

Both the 2010 and 2011 Championships in Lae were well attended, with over 350 participants in both years. It was good to see New Ireland and East Sepik back this year for the first time for many years. Officiating continues to be a problem and we still rely on a core group of the same people with assistance from inexperienced college students. Most Pacific Games in recent years have been run by officials from Australia and New Zealand with only a few local officials. A lot of work needs to be done in this area if we are to reverse this trend and be able to stage the 2015 Games with a good number of PNG officials.

Overseas Competitions

John Rivan attended the World Junior Championships in 2010 and appears set to enjoy the rare distinction of second appearance in this event in 2012. Venessa Waro attended the 2011 World Youth Championships. We sent several athletes to the 2010 Asian Grand Prix in India and a smaller number in 2011 to China.

We sent a large team to the Oceania Championships in 2010 and a smaller team to the Oceania Regionals in 2011. We have also sent athletes to the Gold Coast Marathon series of road races and to a number of events in Australia, including the 2011 Arafura Games.

Elite Programme

Following their success in 2009/ 2010, three PNG athletes were awarded two-year training scholarships commencing September 2010 leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games. These athletes are Toea Wisil, Salome Dell and Nelson Stone. Toea Wisil has recently relocated from Brisbane to the Oceania HPTC on the Gold Coast where she is training with World Champion and IAAF Athlete of the year Sally Pearson.

Oceania Athletic Association

New initiatives are being made by the Oceania Athletic Association to boost its High Performance Training Centre on the Gold Coast. Responsibilities are now shared between the Executive Director (Yvonne Mullins) and the newly appointed RDC Manager Cherry Harvey. A new Council of Oceania was elected in February 2011. Bill Bailey has stood down and been replaced by Geoff Gardner of Norfolk Island. Other committee members are Titaua Maurin (Tahiti) Dallas O'Brien (Australia) Trevor Spittle (New Zealand) Albert Miller Fiji Robin Eugenio (NMI) Jim Tobin (FSM).

Kids Athletics

Geoffrey Bai, Naomi Polum, John Baining, Alkan Mararang and Philip Kamane have attended courses at the Gold Coast in connection with the delivery of this programme. However, there has yet to be implemented any rollout of the programme, except in a very limited form.

50th Anniversary

Due to heavy commitments in 2011 relating to Pacific Games preparations we had to defer the Anniversary celebration. The incoming Executive will agree a programme of events which may perhaps include the launching of our 5-year plan in conjunction with an anniversary dinner. This will be held in Port Moresby in late March

Sponsorship

Athletics does not have a major sponsor at this stage but negotiations are ongoing, and we will seek our own programme sponsors when we have finalized the 5-year strategic plan.

Digicel have been sponsoring our group talk plan for about 18 months now. Following a recent meeting with Digicel, some changes have been made to reflect current development in the sport. Phones with email access are being issued to a small number of users in the rural areas.

Communication between centres has improved considerably as a result of the Group Talk plan. Main funding sources for our programmes in the last two years have been the National Gaming Control Board, PNG Sports Federation/National Olympic Committee and the IAAF/Oceania Athletic Association. Currently however there is a lot of interest in supporting athletics because

of the success in Noumea and due to the 2015 Games being in PNG. It is up to us now to devise a range of new programmes which can deliver what sponsors require as well as meet our own objectives.

USA Scholarships

In 2011 a new initiative was launched by the Oceania Foundation in conjunction with Iowa Central Community College in the United States. Under this programme which is funded jointly by the College and the Oceania Foundation, there will be an intake every two years in August to coincide with the start of the US school year. Three PNG track athletes (Wala Gime, Sharon Kwarula and Cecilia Kumalalamene) and two PNG swimmers (Judith Meaurio and Ian Nakmai) were included in the first intake in August this year. Iowa coach Dee Brown visited PNG in April 2011 and was able to meet PNG athletes who were interested in the programme and answer their questions.

Summary

As the 2015 Games draw closer there will be more and more people coming forward to assist, which is a great opportunity to take our sport to the next level but let us not forget the group of people who have kept athletics alive over the past few years when there has been very little support.

Special thanks to Naomi Polum and Sophia Marai who have both been involved continuously with the sport in PNG since well before I became involved. I would like to thank Philip Rehder for his invaluable support over the past eight years, particularly in the area of logistics. It's a huge task organising a national championships and Philip has done a lot of valuable work behind the scenes. Morris Manai and Philip Kamane (Goroka); Bernard Manau Kalistus Luaina, and Lazarus Bureng (ENB); Maryanne Salameng (Karkar and Kavieng); Otto Wafia (Bulolo and Wewak); and Paul Komba (Simbu) have also been promoting the sport of athletics for many years.

Written by Tony Green, December 2011