

# Centre Programming Workshop

LAQ Conference

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (330pm – 500pm)

Facilitator: Shaun Lethem

*The following information is from comments made by those in attendance at the workshop*

## What Makes a Good Program? *(responses from the group)*

- Flexible
  - Socialising (don't want to rush if socialising)
  - Group sizes
- Efficient
- Time in between – waiting time
- Scheduling of events
  - Movement times
  - Events that take longer (e.g. High Jump)
- Diversity
  - Spread of events
- Skill acquisition
  - Not results based
- Fun / Enjoyable
  - Interaction with athletes as well as parent helpers
- Provision of equipment
  - Set up and Pack Up
- Concise Information
  - Let everyone know what, where and when
- Variety
  - Something for everyone, every week

All of the written responses made (Q: what makes a good program?) were collected, collated, sorted and placed into broad categories. The results from the group are as follows:

Variety / Diversity <i>Achievable, engaging</i>	34%
Time <i>Short waiting time, start / finish on time, organised</i>	23%
Flexibility / Adaptability	11%
Communication <i>Concise, transparent and explicit to all</i>	8%
Skill Based	7%
Equipment <i>Alternative, amount of, setup / pack up</i>	5%
Fun	5%
Age Appropriate	3%
Inclusive	3%

No one program suits everyone. Suits the needs of those running the program at that particular time. This may change from Centre to Centre and within Centres from year to year.

### **Waiting time / transition time**

- “Chill Out” zone – make it a “coles” chill out zone (use / support the sponsor). Have an area set up with an activity so that if a group is waiting they can go and either chill out and have a break, or have a skill / development activity with the equipment and details of the activity there ready to go.
- Gladstone – have a “spare” factored into their program, particularly useful for the younger age groups so they can just go and switch off, top up their water / food, recharge themselves and head back out.
- Bracken Ridge – have a “games while you wait” activity in the age group folder. If waiting, age managers can use it.

### **Positive Aspects of current Centre Programs**

- Set rotating program that is well published and shared
- Using the older athletes to help with the younger age groups (warm up / skill development)
- Tablets for recording
  - Through results HQ
  - Second hand IT (company – follow up with Lisa)
- Bar codes on registration numbers
  - Scan (hand held scanner) athletes as they cross the line.
- Run (pun intended) two straight
  - Utilise both straights
- Inter-Centre communication / sharing of ideas
- “On Track” / skill development activities incorporated into warm up.
- Stagger start times of age groups. Younger groups start earlier
- Stay on program
  - Not jumping ahead – use waiting areas
- Combine age groups
- Pack up programs
  - Last event, bring the equipment back to the shed
- Full season program
  - Know what events each week and when so the focus at training each week can be tailored

### **Additions liked to be see in a Centre Program**

- Technology that actually works!
- More facilities
  - More areas (e.g. circles) to do more events
- More parent helpers
- More training for age marshals / managers
  - Less info than an ITC

## Training Days / Skill Development

- General observation for most Centres about 10% of members turn up to a training session. This does fluctuate during the season, it starts off well and then dwindles off as the season goes on.
- LAA survey done many years ago found that the top reasons for kids wanting to do Little Athletics:
  - Have fun
  - Be with their friends
  - Learning a New Skill
- Option of having 4 “events” and 1 coaching activity at your weekly meet – to allow all members to access development activities.
- Granite Belt – started with FAST program and then created a Centre, which was Development / Skill focused with a little bit of competition.
  - Most Centres have a competition focus and a little bit of skill development.
- At a training day – focus on the skill that they will practice at the next meet.
- If doing the skill development at the meet then the skill focus this week is put into practice the following week.
- Offer a “Masterclass” at the start of the season. The first 3-4 weeks have specialist coaches take the athletes through specific events and also show the parents how to “run” the events too. New athletes to the sport or new age groups entering into new events (e.g. javelin, triple jump).
- Upskilling coaches to accommodate the learning needs of the athletes.
- Create a coaching clinic with own (or imported) coaches. Have a focused program of events to offer and have it as a user pays system (i.e. charge the athletes to attend). This may give the perception of value for money.

## Centre Programs

- North Mackay – a Centre of 150+ has, over time, reduced to a size of about 80-90, yet still running the same program they did for 150+. Changes they looked at included:
  - Reducing the number of events offered from 5 to four.
    - Helped alleviate pressures of already stretched volunteer workforce.
    - Allowed to run the meet a little more quickly – using 30 minute rotations for each event and adjusting on the go.
  - Removed some events from the program altogether
    - Nobody skilled in coaching / officiating the events
  - Adding elements of upskilling the athletes, officials and committee members
- Investigate other venues and alternatives for wet weather programs and activities.
- Wet weather – try to never skip a week if rained out.
- Try to get out and look at other Centres / programs, even if only once in a season.

## Program Change / resistance to change

Why do we do five events?

- Usual reply is “because that is the way we did it last year.....and the year before that....and the year before that....”
- Parents often complain about length of time spent at a Centre meet, yet some Centres still try and push through five events because that is the way it has always been done.

- Centre times vary – most discussion had the times of the Centre programs between 2 – 3.5hrs depending on the numbers of athletes and the facilities available.
- When a reduction of events offered / addition of a skill development activity is attempted, complaints of “not good value” then arise.
  - Coaching / Skill Development is value adding. It needs to be “sold” to the parents as better value.

### **Ideas for helping run Centre Programs**

- Photo finish / timing gates / technology to assist.
- Hurdles – start at highest height / age groups and work down to the bottom. That way they are at the lowest height to pack and stack.
- Tap into the athletes to help out. Help with set up and pack up. Older ages to assist with warm ups and younger ages.

### **Challenges to Centre Program**

- Resistance to change – members not willing or wanting to change.
  - Small changes, often.
- Not “value for money”.
  - Sell your coaching sessions as “value”.
- Other “outside” coaches poaching athletes via social media.
  - If there are poaching issues, this needs to be addressed through the Accreditation Provider (Athletics Australia).