



ATHLETICS
FEDERATION OF INDIA



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WORLD ATHLETICS PRESIDENT COE ATTENDS LARGEST ONLINE SEMINAR OF ATHLETICS ANNOUNCERS

World Athletics President Lord Sebastian Coe said the entire track and field fraternity has to work very hard to engage new, especially younger, audiences to attract them to the sport. Opening a seminar for announcers and event presentation managers in the modern era, he underlined the importance of holding the attention of the audiences in a cluttered landscape.

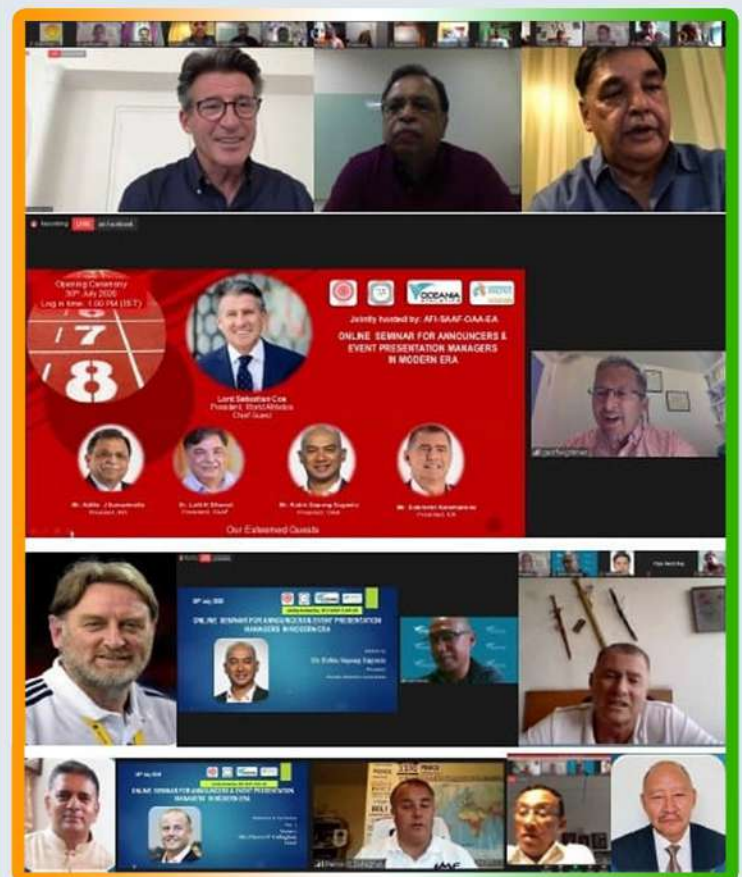
The seminar, being conducted by the Athletics Federation of India in partnership with the South Asian Athletics Federation, the Oceania Athletics Association and the European Athletics, has drawn more than 1500 announcers and event presenters from 42 countries. It has been designed to ensure that fans get a good impression of the sport even at the grassroots level.

Lord Coe pointed out that one of the important elements of early research, commissioned by World Athletics, was the finding that 75 per cent of fans wanted a change and a three-quarters of those specified change around the event presentation in stadiums and television and on other screens that they engage.

"It made me realise that it is probably more important now than has even been to deliver young fans quality information in a consumable way, whether they are on hay

bales at the side of the grass track or whether they're sitting in an international stadium. The speed with which you can convey that information and bring humor occasionally are pieces great of human interactivity," he said.

"If the experiences we provide them is anything less that they expect, they move on very quickly. Not just to another sport but also out of sport, to music, films and other things," Lord Coe said. "Consumption practices of young have become a-la carte. The entertainment landscape is so complicated that everybody is fighting for a few minutes of their attention."

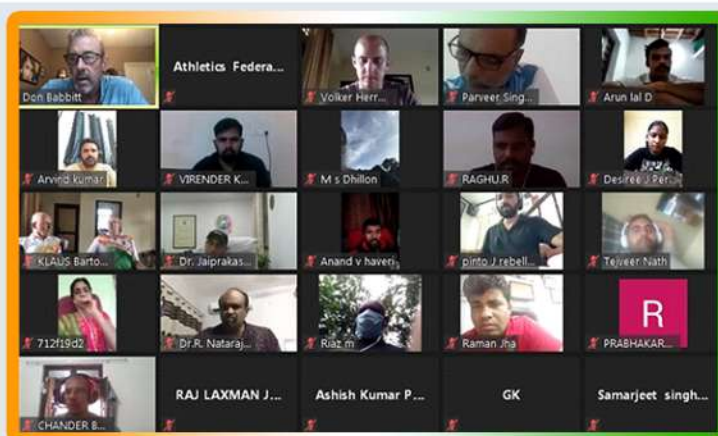


AFI ROPES IN LEADING THROWS GURU TO SHARE EXPERIENCE WITH INDIAN COACHES

One of the world's most renowned throws coaches, Don Babbitt, has made his experience available to India at a three-day online coaches' workshop, organised by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI). From his base in the University of Georgia in the United States of America, he shared a detailed presentation on shot put in the first webinar on Friday.



AFI President Adille J. Sumariwalla, who welcomed Babbitt, said the throws coach was the perfect role model for coaches' education. "It is amazing that Don is in his 37th year of coaching and is eager to learn and share. We are privileged that he has agreed to conduct the online workshop for our coaches. I am sure they will be richer for the experience of listening to him," he said.



Babbitt guided shot putters like 2007 world champion Reese Hoffa, 2004 Olympic Games gold medallist Adam Nelson, US record-holding javelin thrower Breaux Greer, 2003 Pan-American Games discus throw winner Jason Tunks and Croatian hammer thrower Andras Haklits among countless throwers.

He has also been involved with a number of projects in the throwing world, including in Japan where he is leading a rotational shot put project and working with legendary Koji Murofushi to research specific strength exercises like 'hammerobics' besides analysing throwing development in the United States of America.



GOPAL SAINI LAUDS AFI LEADERSHIP FOR TAKING INDIAN ATHLETICS FORWARD



Former Asian Champion and 1981 Arjuna Award winner Gopal Saini, now Rajasthan Athletics Association President, has expressed delight at the growing influence of sports science on Indian athletics. "We are still not 100 per cent in terms of adopting sports science, but I can see that it has helped India a great deal," he says.

"The Athletics Federation of India's leadership, especially Dr. Lalit Bhanot, deserves praise for lifting the profile of athletics in our country. We were not exposed to such facilities, be it the range of international competition or scientific training by coaches from abroad," he said, pointing out the vision of the AFI and the team-work by everyone concerned has helped the sport in India.

"I wonder what would have happened if we had this kind of support in our days. Some of us may have produced better results at the highest level," says the 1980 Olympic Games steeplechaser whose National record stood for 38 years before young Avinash Sable claimed it. "I am sure the likes of Sriram Singh and Shivnath Singh would have finished on the podium."

For the record, Sriram Singh finished seventh in the 800m and Shivnath Singh 11th in the marathon in the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal. "Both of them were out of gas in the end. Sports science could have prepared them better for the challenges," says the Rajasthan Athletics Association President who has had a successful banking career.

"As for me, I would clear each hurdle by stepping on it. There are times when I look back and think if I could have slashed 15 seconds from my time for the 3000m steeplechase had I cleared the hurdles. Ken Bosen and (JS) Saini sir were good coaches but they did not have the kind of support staff that today's coaches have been able to use to help our athletes," Gopal Saini says.



Mention of Bosen takes his thoughts back to Tokyo and June 1981 when he won the 5000m gold a day after letting the 3000m steeplechase gold slip from his grasp by relaxing his pace over the last 50m when Japan's Masanari Shintaku dashed past him in the Asian Track and Field Championships.

"Bosen told me immediately after the steeplechase that he was sure I would not make the same mistake in the 5000m. I also remember Sardar Umrao Singh telling me to relax when he found me pacing up and down a corridor late in the evening as I was unable to come to terms with the loss of the gold medal," he says, saying that he was largely a self-made runner and steeplechaser.

He is a two-time Asian Games steeplechase silver-medalist, making it to the podium in both Bangkok in 1978 and New Delhi in 1982. In 1979, he had claimed bronze medals in the 5000m and the 3000m steeplechase events. He wears the achievements lightly on his shoulders, stepping out each morning to help young athletes pursue their distance running dreams.

"My vision is to help Rajasthan bring more middle- and long-distance runners to the fore, but yes, my eyes will be on Avinash Sable. I am sure he will continue to remain grounded and keep making the improvements needed to win a medal at the highest level," he says. "Most athletes tend to get distracted or lose focus of the larger goals, and I hope Avinash works harder to realise his dream."



STEEPLECHASER AVINASH SABLE AIMS TO BE IN THE 8:10 BRACKET IN TOKYO



Steeplechaser Avinash Sable feels no pressure of holding the pride of place as the country's highest ranked male athlete with 1238 points in the World Athletics list. Not only is he aware that javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra is not ranked at the moment but also is grounded in the knowledge that he has to focus on performing well in the Olympic Games in Tokyo next year.

He is World No. 19 in his event but that does not weigh on his

shoulders. Instead his mind is trained on shaving off crucial seconds off his national record time and be in the 8:10 region next year. "I know I can do that in the Olympic final for sure," he says. "I may need to clock a time between 8:15 and 8:20 to make it to the final, depending on the race pace."

Avinash Sable, the 25-year-old son of a farmer from Beed district in Maharashtra, qualified for the Olympic Games by clocking 8:21.37 in the final of the World Athletics Championships in Doha in November last. The earlier National record was set by Gopal Saini (8:30.88) in June 1981 when he won silver in the Asian Athletics Championships in Tokyo.

"When I went to train in Rabat in Morocco in January this year, I had only a few months left to make improvement," he says. "But now there is more time for me. And I intend to make the most of it by training well in Ooty (Uthagamandalam) and Bengaluru."

A Naib Subedar, he felt bad initially when he heard that the Olympic Games had been postponed. "Now, I have come around to thinking that it is for the best and that I can sharpen my skills and aim for significant improvement in my time. After a short off-season, I am back in training in Ooty now. I have to plan and prepare well for Tokyo," he says.

He draws confidence from his World Athletics Championships experience where he finished 13th in the 3000m steeplechase final after having been given a berth in the start line after a successful protest by the Athletics Federation of India in the wake of his being impeded during the heats by the World Junior Champion Takele Nigate of Ethiopia.

"The Doha experience helped me understand what I need to do when I have to compete in the heats and in the final a couple of days. A few weeks later, I had a similar experience in the World Military Games in Wuhan where I did not finish the final after being injured by a stumbling athlete. Now, my training is aimed at two races in three days," he says.

Having transitioned to steeplechase in 2017 after a couple of years as a cross-country runner, Avinash Sable does not regret that he did not have a career in athletics as a junior. "Who knows, I may have stopped chasing larger goals after winning some medals. I am happy I discovered running when I did," he says, drawing on the discipline learnt in the challenging environment in Siachen, said to be the world's highest battlefield. "Steeplechase seems way easier."



WORLD ATHLETICS: MAKING THE RIGHT NOISES



World Athletics introduced an atmosphere creation system at the Monaco Diamond League meeting on August 14. It was used to enhance the experience for the athletes, spectators and broadcast audience in the absence of a full crowd. The technology, developed specifically for athletics, will compensate for any lack of stadium atmosphere in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Herculis meeting in Monaco usually features a capacity crowd of 16,000 but this was reduced to a maximum of 5000 this year to assist the organisers to maintain health and safety protocols in the Stade Louis II. The system will also be in use at the Wanda Diamond League meetings in Stockholm on August 23 and Brussels on September 4, which will both be held without spectators.

World Athletics' event presentation team worked with the Australian designers at aFX Global, and their unique audio effects engine, to develop an integrated hardware and software solution tailor-made for athletics, to create the typical crowd sounds heard at athletics meetings, at the right moment.

An extensive database of sounds from various World Athletics Championships and Wanda Diamond League meetings is the backbone of the system and feeds the audience response, creating new sounds rather than looping old audio samples.



ROAD RUNNERS MUST BE GUARD AGAINST INJURIES ON RETURN TO TRAINING

It has become commonplace to see athletes, young and not so young, male and female, back on India's roads, resuming their romance with the wonderful sport of running. Like all Indians, road runners were indoors during Lockdown, sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and have eagerly got back to their preferred health and fitness routine.

With three phases of Unlock announced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, athletes are eager to return to training. It is obvious that they would have lost quite a bit of time and will need to train carefully on their way back to peak workloads.



It is important for runners to not try to pick up right where they left off, intensely training for previously scheduled events. For, they are vulnerable to injury because of inadequate training over the past few months. Enhancing workloads in training can place a strain on the body that it may not be ready to deal with.

Mistakes when returning to running training can lead to injuries. It must be remembered that such sports injuries can take away crucial medical resources from diseased patients who need them besides increasing the risk of runners being infected by Covid-19 when they enter the medical system.

Keeping all this at the back of its mind, Athletics Federation of India has compiled a few pointers for their benefit.

- Maintain physical distance – resist the temptation to click group photos after group runs
- Listen to your body and enjoy your running
- Start with slower, shorter runs
- Increase mileage only gradually to avoid injury
- 12 weeks to regain muscle strength
- Healthy diet to boost immune systems
- Get adequate sleep
- Change routes or direction to avoid bumping into other runners
- Practice relaxation to aid recovery



AFI ULTRA RUNNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN IAU VIRTUAL GLOBAL SOLIDARITY RUN

A team of 18 ultra runners will represent India at the International Association of Ultra runners (IAU) Virtual Global Solidarity 6 Hour Run to be held on 29th August 2020. The ultra running committee of AFI will organise an AFI Virtual Solidarity 6 Hour Run on the sidelines of the global event. A team of eight ultra runners will participate in the AFI virtual run. The committee selected the runners on the basis of their results at various events from the period of 28th February 2019 to 16th July 2020 for which applications were received online on AFI website.

TEAMS

IAU Virtual Global Solidarity 6 Hour Run

Women

Anju Saini,
Aparna Choudhary,
Ashwini Ganapathi,
Bindu Juneja,
Darishisha langjuh,
Deepti Chaudhary,
Hemlata,
Nupur Singh
Shyamala S

Men

Abhinav Jha,
Amit Kumar,
Binay Sah,
Geeno Antony,
Hemant Singh,
Pranaya Mohanty,
Sunil Sharma,
Suraj Chadha
Tlading Wahlang.

AFI Virtual Solidarity 6 Hour Run

Men

Ajit Singh Narwal,
Badal Teotia,
Manoj Kuthupady Bhat,
Nishu Kumar,
Sandeep Kumar,
Santhosh Gowda,
Sikander Lamba
Velu Perumal.



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