



Liam Kelleher
Editor

MARATHON

IRELAND'S COMPLETE ATHLETICS MAGAZINE

Vol. 24. No. 6. SEPTEMBER 1986. £1 (incl. Tax)

EDITORIAL

CORK CITY SPORTS

Don't blame Ovet, blame the "box"

Even the late entry of superstar Steve Ovet could not provide the mass injection of cash at the turnstiles that the Cork City Sports needed to offset the massive outlay incurred in staging the 1986 version of the renowned Cork City Sports. Indeed it is a tribute in itself to the dedicated organisers that the Sports went ahead with as many stars as previous years despite the withdrawal of major sponsorship from a company which shall be nameless, which was indeed surprising considering the great publicity "mileage" it must have got from its previous involvement.

Such is the fickleness of Irish businesses, particularly some that would make us believe that they have almost limitless resources. Not so discouraging though was the fact that smaller individual concerns were prepared in a limited way to bridge the gap and the organising committee must be particularly grateful for this. They must be grateful too to our National Sports body Cospoir who came to the aid of Cork Promotions for the 2nd time this year by injecting a reported 5 figure sum. There could be many arguments used to debate the merits or demerits of spending Government money in this way for the promotion of Sport but one thing is certain, such a prestigious Sports Meet cannot survive on such tenuous support.

Certainly from the spectator point of view the attendance was nothing short of appalling, and the question must be asked why on a fine night was spectator support lacking. We can't blame Ovet and company, we can't blame the media, we can't blame the weather, we can't blame the organisers, who or what then can we blame beside the public who did not support it.

I have no hesitation in blaming the "Box". Most people now, whether legally or illegally, enjoy the privilege of multi-channel viewing and the fare served up by our neighbours across the water allied to the new found interest of our national network with the help of the EBS must give the most demanding viewer a saturation of top class athletics viewing during the peak summer season.

There is one major difference though between ITV and RTE and that's where the kernal of the whole issue lies.

ITV are prepared to pay a massive sum for what they screen in Britain, while RTE to my knowledge pay little or nothing for the privilege of screening the few Irish meets, the Cork City Sports and the National B.L.E. Championships that they reluctantly condescend to cover.

It's a vicious circle really. Why, you might ask, cannot the Cork organisers, like their British counterparts, demand a fee for the televising of their event? The truth is that if they demanded a fee they would probably get no coverage at all. Then without the TV coverage they would most probably lose the limited amount of sponsorship that they have. Surely with the popularity of athletics worldwide that the time has come for our National Network to recognise this and start at the right end of the scale by supporting a big meet here financially, whether in Cork or Dublin or wherever, bring in the top stars and then sell a package of the event to other TV networks. This seems the local and practical thing to do. We are all well aware of the massive amount of money involved in the Budd-Decker-Slaney re-match or should we say mis-match at Crystal Palace last year.

There is little doubt that the Cork organisers, despite their expertise, could not cope on their own on anything like equal terms with a situation like that without the help of massive sponsorship and more importantly without the help of real support from RTE. They have little less than a year now to make it work. Let's hope for the sake at least of our home based athletes it does work.

SPACE PRESSURE

Due to an unprecedented shortage of space we are forced to hold over some very important items, including the full B.L.O.E. results, national relay and combined events, A.I.B. league finals, Donegal feature, until our next issue in mid-October which will also be a double issue with full European results and pictures and a preview of the R.T.E. 2 Dublin City Marathon.

Liam Kelleher.