IOMAA Chairman's Report 2011

The last year has been a very busy and successful year. We have outline reports from Trevor Christian, our Athletics Development Officer, Gianni Epifani, our Head of Performance, and Anthony Brand, our Island Games Team Manager to follow.

Despite last winter's bad weather, which led to the cancellation of the December 2010 Cross country event, the cross country league meetings, sponsored for the last time by Manx Gas, continued to attract a good number of entrants across all age groups.

However, perhaps the main focus for the majority of athletes had to be June's **Island Games** in the Isle of Wight.

The team, led by Anthony Brand, with assistance from Di Shimell, Danaa Callow and Richard Sille, with sports massage support from Andy Watson, and sporting their smart new kit, won medals in 16 out of the 35 events they were entered for: gold in 7 events, silver in 7 events, bronze in 2 events.

In other words, the 28 athletes selected exceeded all the targets set for them. They did the island proud. They showed great team spirit, and the mix of older and younger athletes worked exceptionally well.

I will leave Anthony to give more details in his report.

Our **Head of Performance**, Gianni Epifani, has continued to support athletes and coaches with a range of coaching courses and Strength & Conditioning sessions, and his part in their success throughout the season, cannot be under-estimated. Though delighted with the medal haul at the Island Games, Gianni has identified that some of our athletes under-performed, and is focussing on ways that they can achieve higher targets next season. That is what this sport is all about.

The third report, from **Trevor Christian, our ADO**, reveals the amount of work being done with coaches and athletes across the island. Most interesting for me, his report shows the ways we are targeting the younger athletes, who are the future of our sport. The Coaching Assistance course got under way late last year, and enabled clubs to offer greater levels of help to junior athletes. The SportsHall Athletics initiative has successfully attracted 8 more schools to take part in the IOM Primary SportsHall competition. There has also been an increase in numbers taking part in the HSBC Manx Youth Games, we now have two leaders in the Run IOM scheme, aimed at beginners in the sport....and so on. I will let Trevor elaborate further.

In September, the island played host to over a thousand young athletes from all over the world, taking part in the **Commonwealth Youth Games.** The weather tried its best to put a damper on the event, but the whole thing proved an enormous success. Visiting teams were impressed by the facilities we enjoy here and by the organisation behind the scenes. The "Orange Army" has already become legend.

Our two athletes, Andrea de Bruin and Reagan Dee, supported by Team Managers Hannah and Tom Riley, found the level of competition tough, but accredited themselves well in their events, and hopefully, the whole experience has whetted their appetite for more such competitions.

The legacy for the island's athletics community is immeasurable: improved facilities at the track, new equipment, more experience for coaches and officials, hundreds of volunteers, young and old, who are keen to support athletics events in the future.

Outside of track and field, the **Fell Runners** have enjoyed a successful year. The numbers taking part in their events continues to grow. In September, a team of runners represented the island in the Commonwealth Mountain and Ultra Distance Championship in north Wales.

In **Cross Country**, again, numbers are at record levels so far this winter, with all ages, especially the younger groups, well represented. We were delighted to gain a new sponsorship deal with Medis, who are supporting both the Cross country Championship and the SportsHall Athletics, and we look forward to many of those runners transferring their strength and speed onto the track later in the season.

And it is to the **future** we must look now. We have in place a system that is training more coaches and officials to help run our sport. That work must continue, and must be supported as best we can. We have courses set up to improve the strength and condition of our athletes, and that work must continue. We have a number of very promising young athletes coming through and they must be encouraged and catered for in every way.

We must build on the legacy of the Commonwealth Youth Games, and make sure we retain the interest and support of both the young athletes and the volunteers.

Three big issues remain:

1. The position of Trevor Christian, our ADO, is a concern. We currently have funding for another year, but we are in discussion with Government and clubs here on the island, to find ways to extend that period.
2. We are also in discussion with the UKA Northern League officials about entering a composite Team Isle of Man in next season's League, rather than individual teams from Manx Harriers, Northern AC and Western AC competing in 2 separate divisions.
3. There is an increasing need to find sponsorship for athletics events, because all aspects of the sport are currently facing rising costs and, in some cases, diminishing income.

Resolving these issues is, in my opinion, crucial to the future success and advancement of Manx athletics.

D Pryke

Chairman