Who Governs a Movement? The IAAF and Road Running - Historical and Contemporary Considerations

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Abstract

During the 1970s and the 1980s, road running experienced an extraordinary growth in terms of participants and running events. Even though the runners mainly participated for reasons of wellbeing and fitness, and less for competition, the world governing body of athletics, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), attempted to govern and profit of the running movement from the end of the 1970s onwards. This paper utilizes previously unexamined historical sources such as IAAF Council and Commission minutes to analyze the IAAF's approach to road running movement against the background of elite sport's increasing commercialization and professionalization at the end of the amateur era. It will be demonstrated that the Federation did not understand road running on its own terms as a mass health and fitness movement but approached it as if it was a track and field discipline. These misunderstandings led to friction with many road running stakeholder groups.

Key Words

Road Running; International Association of Athletics Federations; Association of International Marathons; Running Boom;

Introduction

> Running is something you just do. You don't need a goal. You don't need a race. You don't need the hype of a so-called fitness craze. All you need is a cheap pair of shoes and some time; the rest will follow.[1]

This "philosophy of running", stated by Ted Corbitt, often considered the father of long distance running, encompasses the recreational motivation of those runners who were part of the so-called running booms of the 1970s and 1990s. Rather than as any form of organized sport, the participants were not bound to specific training times in sport halls or stadia but rather ran on public roads and in parks, according to their own needs and motivation. Indeed, many identified themselves as "joggers" rather than runners, setting them apart from the more competitive runners traditionally associated with the track.[2] Jogging and road running were attractive to those seeking to improve cardiovascular health, a growing concern as more workers became desk-bound and sedentary, and the simplicity of the exercise and non-competitive nature made it easily accessible for vast numbers of people.[3] In fact, essential books, capturing the essence of the running movement, such as James Fixx´s *The Complete Book of Running* or George Sheehan´s *Running and Being*, were published during the first running boom.[4] These books highlighted the benefits to physical health and overall well-being that could result from regular running. Niche print media also targeted runner's in this era, with *Distance Running News* launching in 1966, becoming *Runner's World* magazine in 1970.

Within the context of fitness and running booms, many researchers have contributed to the growing body of literature on the history and philosophy of running that Corbitt and others have shaped. However, there is a research gap on the institutional dimension of amateur road running in general and in particular the role of the world governing body of athletics, the

International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). Research on International Federations is scarce and there is an incomplete understanding of the historical development of the IAAF´s policies regarding recreational running.[5] The central research questions in this study are therefore: how did the IAAF approach the running movement from the 1970s until the end of the amateur era in the mid-1990s, and how did it attempt to govern both elite and fun runners? To accomplish this task, this study draws on previously unexamined historical sources from the *IAAF Archives* in Monaco and the *Carl and Liselott Diem-Archive* (CuLDA) in Germany.[6] Comparing documents from different archives allowed for an investigation from multiple perspectives and a verification of our results. This paper focuses on Western countries where the amateur running boom was most prominent.

As we will demonstrate, the IAAF had limited success in its attempts to govern and profit from road running. We argue this is a result of the IAAF's unwillingness to understand road running on its own terms as a mass health and fitness movement rooted in values of fun, wellness, and personal achievement. Rather, the IAAF approached road running as if it was a track and field discipline where elite competition, regulations, and professionalization were the central concerns. This article closes at the end of the amateur era, when athletics and other Olympic sports began allowing professional athletes and the direct payment of appearance and prize money to athletes. Because of the changes this shift would bring to stakeholders across the world of athletics—including the IAAF dropping "Amateur" from its name,[7] a new viable path to professional running careers on the track and the roads, and the influx of sponsorship money from shoe companies—this was the logical juncture to conclude.

The Emergence of the Running Movement and its Concept

Due to the longevity of the IAAF as the world governing body of track and field, the sport has had regulated standards for distances, timing, and record keeping for more than a century. In

fact, the foundation of the IAAF in 1913 can be linked to controversies about track and field rules at the 1908 and 1912 Olympic Games.[8] Track and field is one of the original sports of the modern Olympics and remains one of the most popular Olympic sports, using the event to showcase the best international elite athletes. IAAF officials have always been closely linked to the *International Olympic Committee* (IOC) and conservative attitudes have shaped the decision-making processes in the Federation. The IAAF´s handling of challenging issues such as amateurism, doping and female participation is evidence for this.[9]

Despite this quadrennial popularity, track and field receives far less attention from television and global audiences at other major events since the "golden era" of the 1970s and into the 1980s when some runners became household names.[10] The IAAF became more commercial and increasingly independent from the IOC during this time. For this reason, it desired to get potentially profitable athletic disciplines under its umbrella. Track events retain a high level of competitiveness even as the sport has declined in popularity with spectators. Track and field (athletics) was traditionally a highly competitive and exclusive sport, with prospective athletes joining the sport through organized clubs, and school or collegiate teams in the Western world.[11] With a limited number of athletes competing at any event participants are often seeking a place in the finals, if not on the podium. The "performance ethos"[12] of track and field may act as a barrier to non-competitive participation.

Road running turned what was a "sport" into a broader "movement". In contrast to track and field, road running does not have a long Olympic legacy—the marathon being the exception—nor does it share a performance ethos. Road running does have some roots in pedestrianism, foot racing that was a popular 19th century spectator pastime, including in both the United States and the United Kingdom.[13] These events began in outdoor settings, including roads, before eventually moving to outdoor and indoor tracks, limiting the number

of participants.[14] While running was allowed in some events, most pedestrianism events were based in walking with the inclusion of rules regarding foot strike and contact with the ground at some events.[15] Though they could draw thousands of spectators, large events were limited to a relative few competitors Racewalking as it became known, was first included in the 1904 Olympic Games as part of the decathlon.[16] While the oldest recognized running race in the world is more than 500 years old,[17] many road events are much younger. The Olympic marathon has been run since the modern games began in 1896, the same year the Buffalo YMCA Turkey Trot—the U.S.'s oldest road race—and the Boston Marathon began.[18] However, these events differ dramatically in scale from the current mass participation events that can see tens of thousands of participants from around the world. For example, the prestigious Boston Marathon had fewer than 300 participants until 1964 when 403 ran; just four years later there were more than 1,000 participants.[19] The race broke 10,000 participants in 1997 (excepting only the 1996 100th anniversary running in which 38,000 took part). However, in the early years road races tended to host only a handful of elite runners.

Beginning in the late 1960s road running quickly became a mass participation sport.[20] Rather than focusing on competition, running and jogging from the 1960s was often viewed by doctors and runners, especially in the U.S. and Europe, as an aerobic tool to promote cardiac health.[21] During the 1970s the running movement shifted from 'running for hearts to running for minds'[22] and wellbeing became the foundation for a popular running movement. Rather than being confined to the track, these runners took to the roads and logged miles at paces of their choosing. Road running has seen sustained growth among amateur competitors over the past six decades, punctuated by two boom periods.

The first running boom brought running from the confines of competitive track teams to the wellness-seeking masses. This era saw millions taking up non-competitive running or jogging

and arose in the US from a confluence of events beginning in the late 1960s that continued until the mid 1980s: the 1966 publication of what would become *Runner's World* magazine; the televised Olympic Games marathon in the 1972, won by an American; the passage of Title IX in 1972 that expanded opportunities for women in sport within educational settings; 1977 publication of Jim Fixx's book *The Complete Book of Running* that outlined the health benefits of running; the first women's marathon at the 1984 Olympic Games. Running became a popular activity through its link to promoting overall health and wellness and the low barrier to participation. Jogging was 'invented' in the U.S. in the early 1960s as a way to counter increasingly sedentary lifestyles and fend off cardiovascular disease.[23] The simplicity of the exercise and ease of taking part—using roads or park spaces—coupled with the endorsement of medical professionals made jogging a popular habit to undertake.[24] The running boom also encompassed both solitary and community aspects, becoming a way to gain individual health benefits as well as a way for increasing visibility and connections for some marginalized cultural groups.

It was during this period that fitness running began to emerge in force in Europe with the proliferation of city marathons beginning in earnest in the mid-1970s.[25] In Germany, this development built on the so-called "Volksläufe" (people's runs) that had emerged already at the beginning of the 1960s and had a clear health agenda.[26] As a result, the running magazine *Spiridon* was founded in West Germany in 1974 and had a big effect on the spread and popularity of the running movement in Europe. For example, the Berlin City Marathon started with 3,486 participants in 1981 and drew 11,814 participants by its fourth edition in 1984.[27]

The shift from a focus on national health to personal wellness coincided with the realization of running as an individual pursuit—one that could be on individual terms and for personal reasons.[28] Growth slowed in the late 1980s and early 90s but by the mid-1990s running once

again took off as a fitness endeavor during what is arguably the second running boom. The running movement and distance running were traditionally viewed as "white spaces" and it was in the mid-1980s that anxieties around the dominance of elite African-born runners began to emerge, at times resulting in the deployment of race-based myths to explain the success of black runners.[29] National running federations in North America and Europe were dismayed at the dominance of African athletes in distance and road events through the 1980s and 90s, even limiting some races and prizes to citizens.[30] As road events gained in popularity, a continuing focus for organizers, federations, and sponsors would be commercializing elite black athletes in ways that appealed to white audiences.[31]

Besides being bigger—in terms of both the number of people running and of available races at all distances—the second boom differs from the first in that it is more inclusive in many ways by welcoming participants of any ability level, being driven by increasing women's participation, and the proliferation of events focused on participation instead of finishing times or competitiveness. The boom in women's participation occurred following the first women's Olympic marathon in 1984.[32] As running became more inclusive and more acceptable for women, it got a further boost from the "Oprah Effect" after television personality Oprah Winfrey encouraged all women—regardless of previous experience—to take up running after she successfully trained for and completed the 1994 Marine Corps Marathon.[33]

IAAF Attempts to Govern the Road Running Boom – Discussions and Integration

The IAAF´s attempt to govern the sport of road running is linked closely to the Federation´s take-over of cross country running. The International Cross Country Union (ICCU) had controlled cross country running on the international level since its creation in 1903 and had organized the International Cross Country Championships.[34] However, at the beginning of the

1970s, the IAAF increasingly pushed for integration of the sport as the Federation sought control over all athletics disciplines.[35]:

It is important to highlight that the IAAF had very little experience in organizing cross country competitions because the Federation's main focus was on track and field events inside a stadium.[36] Nevertheless, the ICCU was also interested in this move as it suffered from a restricted membership and integration into the IAAF allowed participation of IAAF member nations. Consequently, the ICCU dissolved in 1972 and the IAAF founded a Cross Country Committee to handle all aspects of cross country running, including the organization of the newly named IAAF World Cross Country Championships, staged annually from 1973 onwards.[37] The case of cross country running is an example for the IAAF´s attempt to unify all athletics disciplines under its umbrella. But there was interest from the cross country running scene, too. It is also important to note that cross country differs from road running as the former is much more focused on competition. Nevertheless, within the framework of this paper it is necessary to address cross country because eventually road running was integrated into the IAAF´s Cross Country Committee.

The IAAF Congress first discussed road running in 1976 when the topic was put on the agenda by the US member federation.[38] In light of the rapid expansion of road running in the US, it is understandable that the proposal came from the US. Against the background of the rapid development of road running, which had already begun by the end of the 1960s, the late discussion is surprising but can be explained by the Federation's understanding of its role dealing predominantly with elite sport. As in the case of cross country running, the main concern of IAAF officials and the member federations was formalizing rules and avoiding the creation of splinter groups that might present a challenge for control of road running. Thus, the IAAF approached the issue merely from an elite sport perspective without discussing the

recreational and fitness agenda of the running movement. Moreover, it appears that the IAAF Congress saw no urgency in dealing with road running as a separate discipline as it defeated the US member federation´s proposal by a large majority.[39]

Other groups did understand that leadership and organization within road running was both necessary and urgent. Modeled on the Road Runners Club of the United Kingdom, the Road Runners Club of America (RRCA) was formed in 1958 to support the development of local road races.[40] Largely ignoring or circumventing rules laid out by the Amateur Athletics Union (AAU) for running events, local RRCA affiliates began holding non-competitive fun runs in the mid-1960s as a way to encourage participation. The "Run for Your Life" theme was both an acknowledgement of the health and wellbeing focus of the runs and encouragement for running at any age. Other runners became unwitting race founders and organizers during the 1970s and 80s when the lack of high quality races put on by the AAU led them to start their own.[41] As these events developed under local leadership, road running continued to grow independently of strong national or international governance.

In contrast, the debates about road running in the IAAF Council continued to focus on aspects of control as members remained largely uninterested and postponed detailed discussions until 1979. This is despite the fact that individuals such as West German delegate Otto Klappert and the West German sport physician and editor of *Spiridon*, Ernst van Aaken, repeatedly brought the road running movement to the IAAF Council´s attention.[42] Only the prospective creation of an independent International Road Racing Union, which aimed for a unification of the road running movement and the standardization of regulations, eventually triggered action from the IAAF.[43] Again, rather than allowing a separate organization to deal with road running, IAAF President Adriaan Paulen pushed for integration "to bring the mass running movement within the confines of the IAAF, so that it assists the general movement of

athletics".[44] Such intentions to benefit from the popularity of road running were in line with the Federation´s desire to become increasingly financially independent and install its own international events such as a World Championships.[45] Even though there was beginning to be some appreciation for the fact that the road running events consisted of 'serious competitors' and "fun runners",[46] the IAAF Council saw itself only responsible for the elite level. It also continued to reject the installation of a separate committee for road running. Rather, it recommended integrating road running with the IAAF Cross Country Committee, to be known under the name "IAAF Cross Country and Road Running Commission" (IAAF CCRR Commission) from 1980 onwards.[47]

The focus of the Federation quickly turned to attempts by management organizations such as the *International Management Group* (IMG) and individual race promoters to exploit the financial potential of road running.[48] In contrast to the still somewhat unclear amateur regulations in the IAAF, road-racing organizers awarded prize money and requested entry fees for participation. At the beginning of the 1980s, the IAAF regarded such common practices as still against the Federation's rules. Thus, even though the IAAF had initially hesitated to govern road running, its inclusion with the Federation led to an immediate quest to submit road running to the IAAF's core principles. There was no attempt to understand the different dynamics of the road running movement. Rather, the IAAF CCRR Commission became "increasingly concerned at the influx of professional entrepreneurs and the illegal payments to top athletes" and argued that these development required "full control" by the IAAF.[49] The fact that individual race organizers had deep roots in the road running scene was simply disregarded as the Federation did not initially realize that it risked losing control over the movement without links to race organizers. Curiously, at the same time the IAAF began to attribute the "phenomenal" development of road running to its own efforts despite the fact that it had barely been active in the scene.[50]

There were three main developments in the early stages of the IAAF´s emerging interest in road running. First, leading IAAF officials did not consider the Federation responsible for the road running movement. This attitude can be attributed to road running´s difference to the disciplines of track running, the former far more recreational and often done for fitness, rather than as any form of organized sport. The IAAF ignored the phenomenon and pace of the running boom until individuals from member federations where road running was very popular began to bring the issue to the IAAF Council´s attention. Second, once the IAAF began to debate the inclusion of road running its attention remained on elite sport aspects, such as the standardization of rules, though it regarded the mass sport aspect of road running as an integral part of the movement. This elite focus led to a marginalization of running as a physical activity that could have a health- and fun-focused agenda. Third, the authorization to the IAAF CCRR Commission to govern road running appears to have had two objectives: the IAAF wanted to control the threat of a potential professionalization of road running; and the IAAF positioned itself to profit financially through the newly integrated discipline. These themes remained the main concerns of the IAAF in subsequent years.

Failures to Understand the Movement

The second phase of road running´s institutional integration into the IAAF coincides with the rapid commercialization and eventization of international sport in the first half of the 1980s.[51] Within the context of road running, the establishment of the Association of International Marathons (AIMS)[52] in 1982 is evidence of these developments. Twenty-nine of the world's leading marathon race directors founded AIMS with the aim of improving participation in individual marathons.[53] Amongst them was also Tom Sturak, Director of Running Promotions for *Nike* who organized the Oregon Track Club Marathon. His involvement points to the commercial tendencies of road running. The emergence of AIMS was a result of the IAAF´s

neglect of the mass marathon movement as the road directors took the initiative to exchange information, knowledge, and expertise by forming their own organization. This did not mean that the two organizations did not cooperate. For instance, AIMS and IAAF representatives met in July 1982 to discuss road racing regulations and the installation of a one-year marathon circuit.[54] The IAAF CCRR Commission felt that it needed the expertise of the AIMS directors because it did not have any previous experience in organizing road running races as it had only previously focused on cross-country running with considerably fewer participants.[55] Primo Nebiolo, who became IAAF President in 1981, welcomed this initiative as it was in line with his strategy to increase IAAF-sanctioned athletics events to generate income for the Federation.[56] The IAAF CCRR Commission and AIMS also jointly published the "Guidelines for the Conduct of Road Racing" to set global standards for organizing races.[57]

Discussions of 'control' of the elite road running scene continued throughout the 1980s. While it is clear from the debates in the CCRR Committee that individual members were very aware of the importance of the individual race promoters as key agents within the international road running movement, they were very skeptical about awarding AIMS any official status or recognition.[58] Such attitudes reflected the opinion of the IAAF Council members who criticized the reliance on external consultants.[59] Thus, the IAAF decided to consult AIMS representatives on relevant topics, but not to include the organization permanently on its CCRR Committee. In 1986, two AIMS representatives were selected to join the Working Group on Road Running, a body that had no voting power.[60] This was a strategic decision allowing the Federation to maintain control over key decisions but still access the much-needed expertise of AIMS. Moreover, the IAAF could keep its focus on elite sport, which differed from AIMS's approach. This was made clear by Chris Brasher, founder of the London Marathon and second AIMS President, at a CCRR Committee Meeting in 1983 when he argued that

> "AIMS represented the mass of athletes, whereas the IAAF represented the elite. Therefore AIMS was needed to bring "the mass" to Road Running events."[61]

The first World Cup Marathon[62] in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1985 demonstrates the IAAF's determination to keep control of decision-making processes. The installation of the event was a response to Serge Arsenault, race director of the Montreal Marathon, who wanted to connect the major marathon races into a World Championships series.[63] According to Nebiolo, the event "gave the IAAF the opportunity to control the phenomenon of world-wide road running".[64] Thus, rather than embracing initiatives and ideas from the running scene, the IAAF opted for own events. However, press reports about the 1985 World Cup Marathon reveal that elite runners remained skeptical about the IAAF event. Many athletes stayed away because the timing of the event during the main marathon season and the prize money to be won at these independent events.[65] Moreover, the Federation´s awarding of the event to Hiroshima caused controversy with AIMS. On proposal of Nebiolo, the IAAF had handed the staging of the 1985 World Cup Marathon to Japan to access the Japanese market for sponsorships.[66] The IAAF Council did not consider the other six applicants,[67] which caused significant concerns from AIMS because of the lack of a transparent selection procedure. Some AIMS members even suggested leading athletes boycott the 1985 World Cup Marathon if not given a detailed explanation from the IAAF.[68]

Discussions in the IAAF also reveal that there was an increasing awareness of the scale of the running boom and its mass participation dimension. At the 1982 IAAF Congress, Nebiolo highlighted the significance of the running boom to member federations:

> "[He said that] 10 years ago when he had travelled to many parts of the world, he had watched many youngsters playing with a football; now, everywhere that he

went, he saw thousands of people running and we [the IAAF] should do everything possible to encourage this boom."[69]

In contrast to the Federation´s attempts to control the elite aspects of road running, this strategy intended less to govern the mass sport than to profit from the number of participants. In short, road running was considered "a good promotion vehicle for athletics", according to IAAF Council member Hasan Agabani.[70] In particular, the growing interest in road running of television audiences was identified as a strategy to advertise all athletics disciplines and IAAF-owned events. Another commercial development was the involvement of long-term name sponsors for IAAF running events, such as *Avon* for the 10,000m Road Race World Championships.[71] Efforts also included Nebiolo´s proposal to stage a relay race between Seoul, South Korea, and Pyongyang, North Korea, within the framework of the 1987 World Marathon Cup.[72] This idea was never realized.

The discussions on the selection of the host for the 1987 World Marathon Cup illustrate the IAAF's skepticism of mass marathons. Brasher, who was a member of London´s bidding committee, proposed that the World Marathon Cup be linked with the traditional London Marathon that included both, a race for elite athletes and a race for fun runners.[73] However, IAAF Council members did not welcome this idea over fears that potential lead runners in the mass field would receive financial rewards for their participation. The discussion of different road running formats in the IAAF was thus still linked to the unclear regulations on payments for participating athletes. Athletes fought the restrictions on direct payments under amateurism rules by forming the Association of Road Racing Athletes (ARRA) following the 1980 Olympics. Many of these runners were racing veterans and well aware of the under the table payment system of appearance and prize money.[74] Wanting to formalize payments and bring the system into the open, these runners organized a road series beginning in 1981 with

prize money offered by *Nike* at the inaugural Cascade event.[75] Following this event, The Athlete's Congress (TAC), the American governing body for athletics that would later become USA Track and Field,[76] suspended all competitors. The athletes were only reinstated after agreeing to place their winnings in trust accounts, which, against ARRA's opposition to anything other than direct payments, worked as a temporary solution to the question of athlete payment.[77] While the IAAF officially ended its amateur restrictions in 1982 and introduced its own so-called Athletes Trust Funds in 1985, the eligibility rules still had significant restrictions. For example, direct payments to athletes remained forbidden.[78] In 1991, the concept of the Athletes' Trust Funds was eventually abandoned on proposal of TAC and replaced with open professionalism.[79]

In contrast, Brasher did not regard financial rewards for elite runners as a main problem, but saw the merging of the two events as a chance to draw more elite athletes to compete. According to him, many elite runners had not participated at the 1985 World Marathon Cup and at the 1983 IAAF World Championships.[80] Similarly, Brasher argued in his capacity as AIMS President that "running was at present the biggest mass participation part of athletics" and called for increased attention to those runners who participated for alternative reasons.[81] His appeals remained largely ignored in the IAAF in the 1980s as the Federation continued to strive for its goal of health promotion by staging elite-focused IAAF events rather than through the promotion of sport for all.[82] As a result, the IAAF CCRR Committee demonstrated its success on the road running scene through the increase in nations and competitors in the IAAF-organized road running events.

Internal concerns about the Federation´s ability to govern road running remained a constant topic in the mid-1980s. At the 1986 IAAF Congress, the IAAF CCRR Committee reported:

> "The Committee is aware that road running has grown more quickly than any other branch of the sport in recent years. They are aware that some problems exist, which require quick action, if control of the sport is to be maintained by the IAAF and its member Federations."[83]

By 1987, it emerged that the IAAF wanted to control the road running scene by imposing mechanisms of stadium athletics events on the races. The main areas of concern were the introduction of world road race records, binding methods for road race measurement, and compulsory doping controls.[84] Whilst such changes did not have an immediate and direct impact on mass runners, the focus on regulations was in stark contrast to many of the participants' health and fitness agendas. That mass participants were looking for something beyond high-level competition was once again not lost on race organizers. As founder of the New York City Marathon Fred Lebow noted, "The marathon is a charismatic event. It has everything. It has drama. It has competition. Every jogger can't dream of being an Olympic champion, but he can dream of finishing a marathon".[85] The IAAF's anxiety about ceding too much control was clear in its fears that road running races would potentially rival its stadium events. As such, it limited the organization of mile road races to the period immediately after the track and field season.[86] Such concerns echoed the continuing challenge of attracting world-class runners to the Marathon World Cup, which struggled due to other major marathon events taking place simultaneously and offering appearance and prize money.[87]

Again, we identified three processes in this second phase. First, the IAAF, obviously still inexperienced with road running, focused on technical aspects in an attempt to impose stadium event-style organization onto road running. The Federation's intent is clear as it aimed to make road running attractive for television broadcasters and sponsors through more comparable results. The IAAF needed AIMS to implement the technical requirements due to

the organization´s vast experience in staging road running events of all lengths. Second, the IAAF increasingly pushed for more control over the increasingly diverse elite dimension of the running movement. This development was linked to the still "out-of-reality payment" regulations of the Federation. In contrast, the race organizers practiced an open professionalism with direct payments to the main runners and pace-makers, often with support of running shoe companies seeking marketing opportunities with the mass participants. Third, there was still strong reluctance to deal with mass marathons and runners with a health and fitness agenda. This is a likely result of IAAF President Nebiolo's strategy of professionalizing and commercializing athletics in the 1980s.

Expansion and Professionalization of Running as an Elite Sport

It is possible to sketch a third phase of the IAAF´s approach towards amateur road running that begins at the end of the 1980s and lasts until the mid-1990s. With commercialization increasing rapidly, the IAAF also had to deal with a growing number of financial and organizational issues, focusing on the professionalization of its working processes. By the 1989 Congress, the IAAF Council presented a plan for structural reform that foresaw increased coordination of IAAF competitions, mainly in the field of road running.[88] Such developments were also a result of the IAAF´s close relationship with exclusive world-wide sponsors that required a protection of the exclusivity of its marketing rights. The most significant administrative change was undertaken in 1993 when the IAAF moved its headquarters from London to Monaco.[89]

Various examples show how the IAAF continued to impose stricter regulations on affiliated road running organizations in an attempt to maintain control over the entire running movement. It considered unapproved events a "threat" and attempted to stop running events that were organized without their approval.[90] In 1988, ultra distance running and mountain

running appeared on the IAAF agenda. In both sports, international organizations, the World Mountain Running Association (WMRA) and the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU), had been established in 1984 and now sought official recognition from the IAAF. The WMRA and the IAU applied for the usage of the word "world" in their main international events.[91] The IAAF rejected this request in attempt to protect the prestige of the IAAF-organized events and its marketing rights. Instead, the Federation discussed the integration of these events into its own pool of events.[92] Eventually, the international ultra distance running and mountain running organizations accepted to refrain from the usage of "world" in their events when they started to receive financial and organizational support from the IAAF in 1993.[93] The term "under the patronage of the IAAF" was added to the events in order to emphasize the link to the Federation.[94] Such developments contributed to the IAAF's self-image as the "only body controlling the sport"[95] or "sole governing body for world athletics"[96], phrases that constantly reappear in the discussions on any form of running events during this period.

Another attempt to govern the emerging race formats comprised of the installation of new IAAF competitions such as an IAAF Road Relay World Championships (annually) and an IAAF World Half Marathon World Championships (biannually).[97] The latter event was combined with the World Women´s Road Race Championships. It is clearly stated in the official minutes that the new events aimed to ensure that only the IAAF controlled major road running competitions.[98] Despite these efforts, the leading figures in the CCRR Committee still saw that a clear strategy was needed from the IAAF Council in order to govern the continuous expansion of the road running movement. For this reason, Klappert contacted Nebiolo personally to discuss a comprehensive strategy paper for road running. Klappert argued that road running – in terms of events and participants – constituted at least 50% of the IAAF´s activities, "without the IAAF being seriously involved or sufficiently controlling it".[99] Such

concerns also related to the African continent on which it had proved impossible to stage national championships despite the fact that most elite road runners came from Africa.[100] Hence, the IAAF's strategy of focusing on establishing competition formats and integrating organized road running into track and field´s high-performance reality remained the dominant theme until the mid-1990s.

IAAF sponsors and the marketing firm *International Sport and Leisure* (ISL) also had an increasingly bigger say in the IAAF´s handling of road running by the end of the 1980s. ISL had acquired the IAAF marketing rights and acted as an intermediary between the Federation and companies seeking sponsorship opportunities in track and field.[101] On suggestion of ISL, the IAAF staged the World Championships every two years from 1993 onwards in order to further benefit financially from the event.[102] This decision caused additional concerns from the IAAF CCRR Committee as the IAAF World Championships now clashed with the year of the World Marathon Cup.[103] Against the prospect of additional revenues, however, the Committee's fears remained unaddressed. ISL's concept to sell the IAAF events in packages to worldwide sponsors resulted in conflicts of interest with sponsors of individual races. For example, the London Marathon's title sponsor since its inaugural edition in 1983 was *Gillette*, which paid £75,000 for the right.[104] When London bid for the 1991 World Marathon Cup, the London Marathon's new sponsor *ADT* had made additional payments of £2 million in order successfully secure the staging of the event.[105] The focus on commercialization is clear in the decision to call the race the IAAF/ADT World Marathon Cup. Another issue involved *Reebok*, traditionally heavily involved in the running movement,[106] which had been the clothing supplier for London. But for the occasion of the 1991 World Marathon Cup, IAAF sponsor *Adidas* became responsible for the official clothing. The organizing committee and the IAAF downgraded *Reebok* to the role of souvenir clothing provider in order to protect the interests of the global IAAF sponsor.[107] In other incidences, the IAAF was less successful in

protecting its sponsors as individual competition organizers made unauthorized decisions. In 1992, the inaugural World Half Marathon Championships at South Shields, United Kingdom, were held with the title sponsor *Diet Coke*, much to the concern of the IAAF Council.[108]

The IAAF also attempted to continue its strategy of imposing punishments on those athletes who refused to participate in IAAF competitions. In 1989, the CCRR Committee suggested that such athletes should be banned from participating in other events for ten days prior and ten days after the IAAF event in an effort to protect all IAAF competitions from rival competitions.[109] Such discussions provide further evidence for the IAAF's attempts to secure the exclusivity of its own elite road running events and the perceived threat of major races around the world. They also attempted to keep a hand-on approach with athletes' agents, who needed official approval from the IAAF and the respective national federation.[110] That said, there was a first attempt to combine the mass participation dimension with an elite event under IAAF patronage in 1991, which aimed for the inclusion of more leading runners and an appropriate consideration of fun runners.[111] This was the above-mentioned 1991 IAAF/ADT World Marathon Cup that the Organizing Committee convinced the IAAF Council to combine with the traditional London Marathon as intended in 1985. Again it was Brasher, who presented the concept to the IAAF and who continuously highlighted the significance of the event:

> On April 21st 1991, history would be made with the staging of a prestigious world cup event together with a popular road race. No other sport in the world could unite thousands of aficionados with the world elite runners in the same sporting event.[112]

Brasher also emphasized that the London Marathon aimed to raise money for charity and an understanding of the different approach of fitness and fun runners seems evident. In contrast

to this, the IAAF officials appear only concerned with the television coverage of the elite run, the sponsorship revenues surrounding *ADT* and *Adidas/Reebok* as discussed above, and the participation of elite runners to mark the event as the world's most important marathon race. Regarding the latter, the London Marathon's Organizing Committee showed its closeness to the world's best athletes when it was able to convince Olympic champions Rosa Mota, Portugal, and Gelindo Bordin, Italy, to compete in the World Marathon Cup.[113]

The identified processes highlight that the IAAF was not ideally positioned to deal with the second running boom of the 1990s. Overall, the IAAF did not receive much support to get involved in the mass participation dimension of road running through either its market partner ISL or its sponsors. ISL's expertise was in the marketing of elite sport events such as the Olympic Games, the Football World Cup or the IAAF World Championships. The sponsoring of mass participation events was not an ISL priority and the recorded discussions highlight that the main focus regarding road running was securing the exclusivity of the IAAF's high-performance running events. It was only through the continuous involvement of AIMS and individual race organizers that those runners with health and fitness agenda were brought to the attention of the IAAF.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the IAAF´s approach to the amateur running movement analysed in this paper outlines IAAF failures that facilitated friction with many road running stakeholder groups. We identified three main phases in the period from the end of the 1970s until the mid-1990s. First, the IAAF did not regard the first running boom worth consideration and maintained a distance from the road running movement. It appears that the Federation failed to recognize the size of the movement until the mid-1970s. The IAAF´s initial approach to road running came through a perceived threat of professionalism in and through road running. This was in line with the

overall challenge to the entire Olympic Movement through its clinging to conservative amateur principles until the beginning of the 1980s. Second, the IAAF´s focus remained solely on technical aspects of the road running competitions once it became integrated. As the Federation´s officials had little experience with the organization of mass sport events and only had expertise in track and field competitions inside the stadium, its cooperation with AIMS became crucial for governing the elite aspect of road running. In the 1980s, little attention was given to those runners with a health and fitness agenda, despite the fact that the IAAF under President Nebiolo aimed to capitalize financially on growing public interest in running. Third, the increasing professionalization of athletics is evident in the IAAF´s further dealing with road running from the second half of the 1980s onwards. Ironically, financial flows – that the IAAF originally wanted to prevent in road running – become the main focus. This development can be attributed to the commercially driven decision-making processes under Nebiolo. As a consequence, the IAAF failed to connect to those runners of the second running boom in the 1990s.

Hence, we argue that the IAAF failed to govern the running *movement* but was more successful in ruling over road running as a *discipline*. Yet, even in the latter approach it had to make significant compromises due to road running´s specific history and the independent race directors, organized through AIMS, which emerged on the back of the running boom. Looking broadly at the road running landscape in subsequent years, road running has maintained its independent character. Many races are not sanctioned by the IAAF or national governing bodies, organizers focus on offering mass participants a "running experience" at events—sometimes with, but often without elite participants—and premier elite races offer appearance and prize money in the tens of thousands of dollars paid directly to runners. The IAAF may be the official body for athletics, but it's the organizers, local groups, and the everyday runners who continue to be the face and heart of the running movement. Therefore,

the historical development outlined in this study contributes to the understanding of the current organization of road running. The contextualization of the IAAF's initial institutional strategies highlights the difficulties of the Federation to approach the movement.

We close at the end of the amateur era due to the significant shift that the 1990s would bring to the world of athletics. Nevertheless, follow-up studies should focus on the organizational structures of road running within the changed, professionalized environment. This is a challenge because the IAAF has a 30-year embargo on its official files – with the exception of the IAAF Congress protocols. Therefore, we would encourage researchers to investigate the "other" perspectives of those runners and race organizers who were involved in the second running boom and their experiences working with the IAAF.

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