

Report of the Honorary PRO 2002/2003

It has been a good year for the IUAA on the PRO front. Results and articles appeared in the national media. Increased awareness within athletics circles was also evident as one toured the athletics races throughout the season. The following report may come across as a bit staggered but in it I outline what was achieved and learnt this year and how best, in my opinion, the IUAA should proceed.

Over the last number of years various people have made strides towards launching the position of PRO and define its position within the IUAA and the media at large. Regrettably a lack of continuity within the position has stunted the hard work of these individuals. The position of PRO is a job that I have never attempted before and I learnt a lot in the last twelve months about the position of athletics in Irish media, the attitude towards Intervarsity athletics and the strategies used to efficiently publicise the IUAA ideals.

The Irish Runner Magazine could be considered as an ideal platform in which to publish an article, results and photographs after each of the IUAA championships. It is widely read by the athletics fraternity within Ireland and offers a glossy print at an affordable price and is widely available throughout the country. Much progress was made with the Magazine this season, with articles appearing after the Road Relays and the Cross Country. However articles on the Indoors and the Outdoor T&F were not published and those that were only came after significant pressure was applied. In a recent meeting with the magazine I was informed that they were interested in the articles if space permitted. Unfortunately this is of no use to the IUAA and despite still considering the magazine as the best media platform for the IUAA I regrettably can't see an arrangement being reached that would be of mutual benefit to both parties. Alternative glossy media are currently being looked into, including the Northern Ireland based but Irish marketed *Fair Play* magazine. Hopefully some positive news will be reported on this front in next years report.

The T&F results were published in the Irish Times and the Irish Independent. This is the first time in a number of years that the two biggest national broadsheets have carried the results and their publication was welcomed by the IUAA. However their publication was down to a lucky break as opposed to an eagerness to publish them on the part of both papers. It should be pointed out that a contact has been made and attempts will be made to progress the situation in the interests of getting results published on a consistent and hassle free basis.

Articles and results in the national media contribute slightly towards raising the public awareness of intervarsity athletics, but can only go so far. In today's Information Technology World the Internet provides the best means of putting our message across to the largest possible audience. Ongoing promotion of our website within our organisation will, over the course of a number of years, increase awareness of our organisation. Hits to the IUAA website have continued to climb over the last number of years and hits to the home page have risen by 53% over the twelve month period from October 2002 through September 2003. This significant increase has been attributed to increased awareness of our site generated through the IUAA race

numbers and improved site content. In particular the new image links on the home page and the implementation this season of the *results up by 9am Monday* policy.

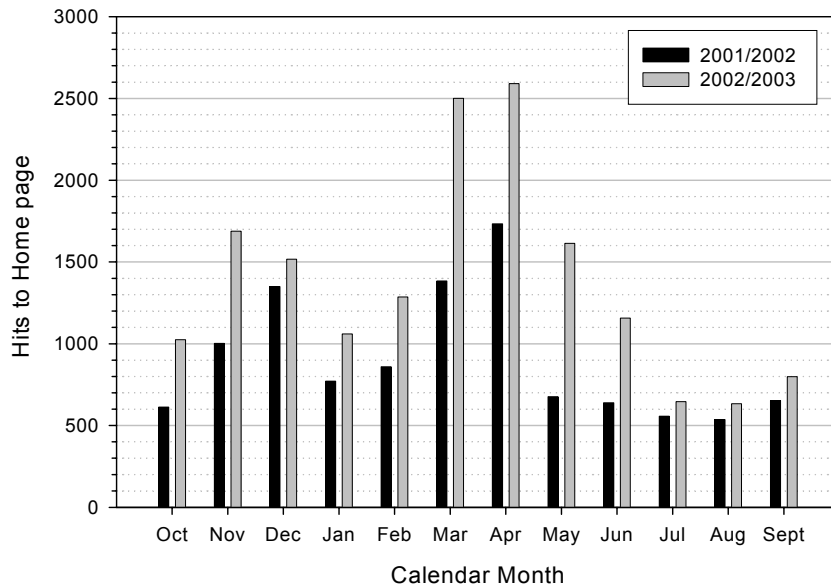


Figure 1: Monthly hits to the IUAA homepage for 2001/2002 (black) and 2002/2003 (grey).

The geographical separation of the IUAA membership provides logistical challenges that the World Wide Web has contributed significantly to resolving. It provides a very effective means of getting information to the entire membership and not just the person who opens the letter sent by the secretary to the College Captain. This has been shown over the last number of years with the now standard championship website for the Cross County and T&F. These sites have significantly reduced the confusion that used to surround the championships and lead to a significant reduction in the number of queries prior to a championship. This can only be to the advantage of everyone involved.

In summary I would recommend that the IUAA continues to use the World Wide Web as its main platform for getting its message across, while continuing with attempts to get results consistently published in the national broadsheets with occasional articles appearing in the glossy sporting media. However I would caution that too much awareness could also lead to problems that the IUAA isn't in a position to deal with at present. These are problems that I am all too aware of and some have already begun to surface and I am actively trying to put the necessary infrastructure and procedures in place in time to deal appropriately with these issues.

Yours in sport

Stephen Lipson
Acting Honorary PRO 2002-2003.

Report proposed by

Report seconded by