

2009 Melbourne Congress

2009 was a very exciting year with the Berlin World Championships and some exciting results from our athletes. Many coaches came into the Congress on a 'high' and looking for something special that they could take away and work with their athletes on. I hope that the many coaches that attended were not disappointed. With the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010, World Championships in Daegu 2011, and then London in 2012. What an exciting and busy run into the Olympics.

Tom Tellez delivered what he said he would – he was available at all times to discuss everything. In his mid 70's no one could question his fitness or his passion. I can only hope that I am still that passionate at his age, and as fit. On every occasion I had to wind Tom up as he had so much to say he often went over the time frame set. On the Saturday night after our dinner, he organised for another session to be held for those coaches that wished to 'pick his brain'.

Pauline brought a different approach to the Congress. It was a refreshing, honest and practical approach – one that she had lived and still prescribes to all of her athletes. Both Pauline and Tom did not deliver their messages through formal powerpoint presentations or lectures. Much of what was said was expressed through passion, experience and from general discussion and questions. On numerous occasions it was apparent also, that Tom and Pauline were giving differing views. This led to some very productive discussion between sessions and in the evenings.

Whilst our keynote speakers Tom and Pauline delivered their messages, the Congress also offered many other messages from Nutrition, sports psychology, podiatry, management and other event groups to name a few. Overall, the Congress had 26 different presenters offering delegates the best information possible. The opportunity to network and discuss the various topics and views was evident during meal times. The Saturday evening dinner also gave delegates an opportunity to sit and enjoy a meal and informally mix.

The Congress opened on Friday morning with a short welcoming address by our President, Peter Bowman. As in previous Congresses, two outstanding coaches were then introduced to the audience as recipients of the prestigious Henry Schubert Award for 2007 and 2008. Peter Lawler from New South Wales and Eric Brown from Queensland have contributed on all levels of track and field from coaching world class athletes to mentoring to coach education and administrative jobs. Both have contributed extensively to the athletic world in their respective areas. Whilst Peter was able to respond, Eric was in Townsville at a multi event competition.

The weather in Melbourne was challenging, overcast and on occasions dropping the odd shower. All in all, the Congress was an enjoyable and worthwhile collection of presentations. Held now every two years, the next one is scheduled either for Sydney or Canberra.

One of the major criticisms of the Congress was that delegates had to travel from the theory venue at the Jika to the practical venue which was provided to us by the Ivanhoe Girls Grammar School and Brad Carter. Unfortunately there are not many Conference venues that are able to offer suitable rooms along with Track and Field facilities. I am happy to listen to anyone that can offer a suggestion and also offer suggestions of accommodation with meals that is either at the venue or close by. Please keep in mind that the costs must also be affordable.

Another criticism that I would like to highlight was one that a few delegates made which was in reference to the crowded meals area and main conference room. In answering this, I make no apology saying that if I had closed the registrations off earlier, many of the people that

attended would not have been able to come to listen to the great number of presenters that we had in Melbourne. At one point, I was debating whether it was viable to hold the conference then everyone sent their registrations in. Then I had too many. It is either a drought or a flood – seems to follow our weather pattern.

For those that stayed at the Jika – it was clean, comfortable and affordable. The meals were excellent and freely available. The staff were incredible – just too willing to help in any way possible. Their service could not be questioned in any way.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those delegates who returned their evaluation forms. We need to know your thoughts to make sure that the next Congress meets the needs of the delegates. The following are some of the thoughts of the coaches who attended.

Feedback from Congress delegates:

High Jump sessions were really informative and well organised. There was some invaluable and interesting material offered.

The sessions challenges what I thought was practical. The variety of topics was good but lacked distance running. Some of the thoughts from the main speakers challenged the more experienced coaches, let alone the less experienced. It was great to see some of the younger breed of coaches attending. Keep up the great work.

Tom's passion was overwhelming. I missed having the opportunity to be involved in practical sessions. I learn from doing and joining in so would have loved to be part of the presentations. Enjoyed the conference but think it would be hard to beat Ian and his police Academy from 2007. It was great to be part of the 'vibe' and socialise with people with like interest.

Kevin Sheedy was great. Hit some key points about recruiting that maybe we should really think about. Fantastic for a beginning coach – keeps us motivated and searching for new ideas.

It would be good to ask delegates prior to the congress if they are willing to supply email address and a full list of all delegates to be distributed. I met some great people and would love to keep in contact.

Program was great, variety of topics great. Tom was old school and some of his presentations were a little hard to follow. Pauline's presentations and experiences of being an athlete gave a new perspective to the congress. I think I am approaching overload with the amount of information that I can take in.

I would love to see older athletes being introduced at future congresses who are now working and coaching with athletes. It would also be interesting in seeing a Masters element introduced – there are more older athletes involved these days.

The main room was a little small for the whole group. It was great to meet the ATFCA staff and put faces to names. The product display and protein drink was fantastic. It was really

good to have the chance to look through all the books available. All great and will certainly attend the next one. Where will it be??

Dining room was a little small – certainly made it easy to talk to others – just a little hard to stand and eat. The interaction between coaches was a good opportunity to share ideas and discuss thoughts on presentation.

Would like to see more of the presentations offered again. There were a few that I just had to choose between and it would have been great to have the chance to attend those at a separate time again. I am grateful for the invaluable information given and just want more that will help me grow my knowledge.

Great service at the Jika. Food was incredible and certainly no shortage of it. Some more room in the lecture rooms would have been good, but realise there were a lot of people there. There were some lectures where it would have been good to have more time for the presenter to extend their thoughts. Tom especially. He has unbounded knowledge.

I felt that there were very few soft spots in the Congress program. Loved Peter Lawler, Tom, Anthony Klarica and Emma Poynton. Fantastic.

Days are a little long but the variety is good. Need to ensure that there is a good quantity of sessions for the developing coach and those only with young athletes. This might attract a wider audience. Very interesting and entertaining though.

As members of ATFCA did you know that your State Branches are conducting seminars throughout the year to help you with your coaching? Did you also know that your State Branches have a fund that enables their members to apply for a grant for professional development? If you don't, then you need to get in touch with the branch to find out what you are missing out on. Check the website and contact your local state branch to see how you can benefit.

A word from the organisers – I thank you for your feedback. I would really appreciate any advice on where we are able to hold the next Congress. Please remember that we need to be able to offer it at an affordable cost, have access to accommodation and meals, have lecture areas and track and field facilities at the venue or close by. While many think that this might be easy – it is very difficult. Would love to hear from you if you have any suggestions.

Glynis Nunn-Cearns