

DEVELOPMENT IN THE CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGION



Development, a key priority for the Central American and Caribbean Athletic Confederation.

Victor Lopez, Technical Director and Chairman of the Technical Committee of the Central American and Caribbean Athletic Confederation, illustrates the coaches' education system in his region. The article includes details on the syllabus of the three-level Coaching Certification Programme as well as the priorities of the development programme and the progress to date.

By Victor López

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

It is only since 1982 that development has been the number one objective in the Central American and Caribbean region. Before that time, the major priority was the staging of Junior and Senior Championships. Unfortunately for the countries of the region, only a few development measures were taken, and these were not systematic or coordinated. Courses were held at the

Olympic Solidarity Centre in Mexico City and clinics were given in various countries around the region. The Cuban development programme, although one of the best in the world, benefited only their own coaches and a few individuals from other countries studying on scholarships. Outside Cuba, the levels of coaching and officiating expertise, as well as the standards of performance, were falling ever further behind those in Europe.

In 1978, the Technical Committee of the Central American and Caribbean Confederation (CACAC) conducted a study and found that, while many coaches in the region had taken courses at the Mexico City Centre, few were returning to their countries and making use of what they had learnt. For example, while 35 coaches from Guatemala graduated from the Mexico City programme, no athlete from that country was sent to the CAC Championships and only one or two were present at the CAC Games. Of course, this is only one example of one country, but a similar trend occurred in most of the other countries of the region.

Although a number of countries had staged clinics, there were no guidelines or directions regarding their type or content. In many cases, the information presented was not what the coaches were expecting and the level of the clinics was either too high or too low. It was not normal for these clinics to be conducted formally and sometimes the coaches did not even get a hand-out or information sheet. There was also a tendency for the lecturers to overlap previous clinics by presenting the same material as previous experts had. On a number of occasions, the lecturer did not display a familiarity with the culture, nor even speak the native language of the coaches attending, creating identification problems and limiting the students' questions and other participation. Not surprisingly, for the time, money and effort expended, very little was accomplished by these clinics.

The leadership of the CACAC elected in 1982 committed itself to a strong functional organization with development as its top priority. In the autumn of that year, at the new CACAC Executive Committee's first meeting, a long-term development plan for the region, proposed by the Cuban Federation, was adopted. This plan included the educational and professional preparation of coaches, officials and leaders ; the production of technical and statistical documentation ; and the staging of more championships, including cross country, age group and multiple events.

With no full time personnel in the region outside Cuba to devote themselves to these projects, such a major task was to prove difficult. The Cubans took the lead and presented a programme for the education of coaches, scheduling a course for September 1983 in Havana. Unfortunately, in spite of a great deal of effort and expense, the course did not take place. Since then, all the authorities involved, the CACAC Executive Committee, the Technical Committee and the North and Central America Area Representative, Amadeo Francis, have been determined to develop athletics in our region in a planned and systematic way.

1.1 EDUCATIONAL MEASURES

Research into various coaching education programmes around the world was undertaken. The systems studied included those in the USA, Canada and Great Britain. In addition, we had knowledge of both the Cuban and Spanish systems. From this information we were able to design a three level development programme specifically for our region. Section 2 of this report contains details of the curriculum for the three levels of the programme. As Technical Committee Chairman, I was responsible for setting the curriculum for the Level I courses, based on the experiences I had gained as a consultant to the Curriculum Development Committee with TAC-USA Coaching Education Programme.

Our first Level I course was held in Nassau, Bahamas in April 1984. Though the majority of the 27 participants were from the host country, Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana and Suriname were also represented. In addition to myself, the instructors for the course were from the Bahamas, Bermuda and the USA. In June of that year, we offered our first Level I course in Spanish in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The 82 participants represented the host country, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela and Mexico, while the instructors were from Puerto Rico and Mexico. One of the major tasks of this period was the translation of course material from English to Spanish so that the content of both courses would be the same.

IAAF TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR COACHES

A number of Level I courses, in both languages, followed in various countries during the next year. In 1986 our first Level II courses were offered at the Albergue Olímpico, the training centre of the Puerto Rican Olympic Committee, located in Salinas, Puerto Rico. The English Language courses utilized instructors from the highly recognized Canadian National Coaches Certification Programme, who adapted their material to suit our region, while the Spanish language courses utilized instructors and materials from Cuba and Spain. To date, two Spanish and three English Level II courses have been held.

We are justifiably proud of the progress that our education programme has made. A total of 406 coaches in the regions have successfully completed the Level I course, while 147 have passed the Level II. Our first Level III course, to be held at the Albergue Olímpico, was proposed for December 1989. We have also been able to offer courses for officials, starters, walking judges and federation leaders.

In fact, officials courses are now held prior to every major championship in the region. Clearly, the educational objectives for our region which were set in 1982 are being accomplished.

1.2 DOCUMENTATION

Our efforts towards achievement of our objectives in the area of documentation are also progressing. The magazine "Pan Athlete", published by the Pan American Athletic Commission, serves the region by giving the performances lists of most countries in the region as well as other important non-technical information pertinent to athletics. In an attempt to cover the technical aspects of the sport, we introduced a regional "Technical Bulletin" in 1986. Unfortunately, lack of problems kept us from producing a second issue until 1988. Printing of a much better quality publication will now take place in Mexico, under the supervision of Cesar Moreno Bravo. All coaches certified under our system will receive the "Technical Bulletin" and arrangements are being made so that "New Studies in Athletics" will be available to coaches of the higher levels of qualification.

Under the direction of Carlos Uriarte (PUR) and Jesus Arguelles (CUB), a book to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the CACAC was published by the Statistics Committee. This major work is invaluable as it contains all the results of all past senior championships for our region.

1.3 CHAMPIONSHIP PROGRAMME

The CACAC region has been able to incorporate both cross country and age group championships into the calendar. Five editions of the cross country championships have been held, with the sixth scheduled for Jamaica. Two editions of the age group championships have taken place and the third will be held this summer in the Cayman Islands. Only the multiple events championship is still in the planning stage. Hopefully, we can offer our first edition in 1990. All other championships events have been awarded, including alternate sites, for 1991.

Table 1

Certified level I coaches by country, March 1989	
Puerto Rico	90
Bahamas	50
Barbados	37
Costa Rica	31
Dominican Republic	30
Netherlands Antilles	28
Honduras	21
Grenada	15
Jamaica	17
British Virgin Islands	12
St. Vincent	12
Antigua	12
Dominica	100
El Salvador	9
Guatemala	8
US Virgin Islands	8
Montserrat	5
St. Kitts	4
Guyana	2
Turks & Caicos	2
St. Lucia	1
Suriname	1
Anguilla	1
TOTAL	406

Table 2

Certified Level II coaches by country, March 1989	
Puerto Rico	38
Bui	2
Barbados	10
Bahamas	7
Turks & Caicos	1
Antigua	5
Costa Rica	15
Honduras	9
Dominican Republic	4
Colombia	4
Mexico	8
Guatemala	4
El Salvador	1
Jamaica	12
Trinidad	3
Ahd	8
Grenada	4
Montserrat	2
St. Vincent	3
US Virgin Islands	2
USA	1
Guyana	1
TOTAL	147

2. COACHING CERTIFICATION PROGRAMME

2.1 LEVEL I

A 21 hour course is designed to offer participants a basic knowledge of the rules, techniques, auxiliary sciences (i.e. physiology, biomechanics, nutrition, psychology and training planning), training methodology and teaching progression of all events, excluding the walks. At the start of our programme, this course was only 16 hours long, but, responding to feedback from the participants, it has been expanded to include practical sessions as well as theory.

The text for the course is "Track and Field Athletics — A basic Coaching Manual" by José M. Ballesteros but for each event our instructors have developed an outline based on their experiences.

The courses have been given in many countries in the region and they are often attended by coaches from neighbouring countries. The participants are required to attend all sessions and to answer a 150 question open take-home test, which must be returned within eight weeks. Coaches who achieve an 80% mark on this test receive a Level I Certificate from the North Americas Central America and Caribbean Area (NACAC) office in Puerto Rico.

2.2 LEVEL II

This two-week course is designed to give the participants a specialized knowledge of one of four event groups : a) Sprints and Hurdles, b) Middle and Long Distance, c) Jumping, d) Throwing. Between 110 and 120 hours of instruction are offered at the Albergue Olímpico in Puerto Rico.

Originally, the material used on these courses was taken from the Coaching Association of Canada's syllabus for the English language courses and from Cuban and Spanish sources for the Spanish language courses. Now, material produced by the instructors on the early courses is used. We still benefit from the experience of

coaches from Canada, the USA, Cuba and Spain, as instructors from these countries are normally used on Level II courses.

Participants are required to attend all sessions, including six hours of each of the following sciences : physiology, psychology, training theory and planning, biomechanics and nutrition. They also must attend conferences on drug abuse and the rules, and organization of athletics as well as panel discussions on other special topics. Successful completion of the course, and Level II Certification, are achieved by scoring 80% of marks in each of the following four areas — a) a written test covering the sciences, b) a written test on the theory of their particular event group, c) participation in practical sessions and oral presentations, d) a practical project. The practical project consists of the preparation of an annual training plan including all periods, phases, volume and intensity curves, and examples of a week's training from the general preparation, special and competitive phases. These examples must include the methods and means used, prescribed dosage and all





Puerto Rico's 'Albergue Olímpico', a training centre for the whole region.

demands and details, including the strength programme, for each particular day. The participant must use the programme of a real athlete which he or she has been coaching in order to prepare the project.

2.3 LEVEL III

The top participants from the Level II courses were invited to our first Level III course, scheduled for December, 1989. The course has been designed to offer a higher level of specialization in each of the events or event groups. It includes the most advanced theories and techniques of each event or event group. In order to cover these areas as thoroughly as possible, we will only schedule four or five events or event groups per course. Therefore, we must identify the events which are in demand and in which our coaches need further specialization.

The participants will be required to interpret and apply the latest research concerning energy systems, training methodology, periodization and biomechanics to their event or event group. They must produce a long term periodization of at least a four year plan for a real athlete. They will make oral presentations of their own interpretation of the IAF/IAAF Scientific Project

Reports and turn in a problem-solving project set by their instructors. Because this project will involve sophisticated research, it will be completed at home and mailed to the instructor for grading.

The syllabus for the course will be produced by the instructors and the participants will be required to review the following literature : "Track and Field" by Schmolinsky, "Principles of Sport Training" by Haare, "Fundamentals of Sport Training" by Matveyev, "Training Theory" by Dick, "Theory and Training Methodology" by Bompa and "Mechanics of Athletics" by Dyson. In addition, specific literature for each event and the IAF/IAAF Scientific Project Reports will be available.

3. THE IAAF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

A major step forward in the development of our region has been the designation of the Albergue Olímpico in Salinas, Puerto Rico, as the IAAF Regional Development Centre (RDC) for the CACAC countries. This beautiful and completely equipped centre will be an ideal site for the focus of our region's development programme and the co-operation between our region and the IAAF Development Department. For the first time, there will be full-time professional staff who will be able to deal with the great amount of work involved in development matters, such as communication with Member Federations, organization of courses and production of our technical Bulletin. Such staff will be invaluable and are a major requirement for future progress.

Within the framework of integrating activities at the Albergue Olímpico with the IAAF RDC programme, we will be reviewing, in conjunction with the Development Department, the content and format of all our courses and rewriting the course manuals. Together with the department, we will also organize a course for instructors, which will cover teaching procedures, the teaching of adults, didactic and pedagogical principles and the design of lesson plans and modules.

4. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that there has been tremendous progress made towards the realization of the development objectives for our region set out by the CACAC Executive Committee back in 1982. Most of this is due to the voluntary work performed by ourselves and our collaborators from Cuba, Canada, USA and Spain. In addition, the leaders of our sport devote great amounts of time, effort and sometimes their own money towards assisting youth and athletics in the region. Our Area Representative, Amadeo Francis, has also provided invaluable support and brought increasing co-operation with the IAAF. This co-operation, and especially the establishment of the RDC in Puerto Rico, will provide additional needed resources and expertise for achieving our development aims.

However, there is still much more to be done. We are fully aware that our region is composed of developing countries and that many have big problems such as wars, poverty, drugs and poor economies. Reaching the level of the most advanced countries in athletics will not be easy, and it will take a long time, but the tremendous strides that have been made and the momentum that we have built up are indications that we are going in the right direction. We hope to continue the trend until our objectives are met.

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Enabling athletics to reach the levels of the most developed countries.