

Derbyshire Athletics Technology.

The History:

Derbyshire Athletics Technology is a Sub-committee of Derbyshire Athletics which was set up in 2016

During late 2015 the Derbyshire Athletics Committee were moved to investigate the possibilities of using modern technology to improve the Athletic performance and experience of Athletes of all ages in Derbyshire and to improve the experience of supporters of these Athletes (Parents, Coaches and Spectators) at Athletics events and also the development of Technical Officials.

The Technology investigated was initially a 'Basic' Photo-finish (PF) system and Electronic Distance Measurement (EDM) It was quickly realised that this was going to be an expensive project if Technology was going to be introduced in this way, as the PF system alone would cost somewhere in the region of £18,000 to £20,000 and EDM would be in the region of £3000 to £5000. It was also soon obvious that a 'Linked' electronic 'Wind Gauge' would be of great benefit. Two members of the Committee persisted with investigating further, the ways that this could be 'Funded'. It soon became apparent that there was some 'Funding' available from 'Sport England' and other sources, so a plan was formulated which would involve the Track & Field clubs in Derbyshire (Chesterfield & District AC, Amber Valley & Erewash AC, Derby AC,) and Derbyshire Athletics forming a consortium and becoming partners in the project. Sadly Chesterfield & District AC declined the invitation. The project was persisted with and an agreement between the 3 'partners' was formulated with the sum of £1500 each being donated to the project with 'Grant' Funding of £10,000 from Sport England, £750 from East Midlands Airport Community Fund and a donation from the Derbyshire Area Network (DAN) sufficient funds were raised to purchase the system in early 2016.

A Formal agreement was drawn up between the partners and was duly signed off. The 'Derbyshire Athletics Technology Sub-Committee' was formed around the same time, to oversee operations and investigate and plan 'Further Improvements' to the Technology portfolio.

After some initial 'Teething' troubles the system was Up & Running by June 2016 and some hire bookings were taken to raise funds for Operational costs (Insurance, Replacements for damaged parts, Consumables, etc.) and funding future improvements. The system became more used by the Partners at as many meetings as was possible in which there was any participation by our Athletes and the private hire was raising some very useful income during 2016 & 2017

During 2017 a series of 'Flat Track' race meetings was instituted at Moorways Stadium in Derby with any profits from these meetings for that year being 'Earmarked' for improvements and enhancements to the Photo-finish system.

It had quickly become apparent that the basic system (including Wind Gauge) had its 'Short comings' and in early 2018 the possibility of buying a 2nd (Head-on) Camera and a 'Track-side' time display clock was investigated. The price quoted in the first instance was over £6000.

A scheme for funding was drawn up with the money coming from the money in the Technology account £3000+ and either 'Loans' from the clubs with the money raised from the 'Flat Track' meetings in 2017 or from this 'Flat Track' money plus the 'Residue' of the funds in the DAN account being either loaned or donated. Happily the money from the DAN account and the Flat Track meetings was donated to the scheme in May 2018 so it was not necessary to ask the partners for the loans.

The new equipment was delivered to the hands of Derbyshire Athletics in the middle of July 2018 and after further successful testing it became available for use at the end of July.

The Present.

The Photo-finish System is currently stored securely and is managed by Mike Heffernan who is currently the only Technician capable of full Installation, Set up and use of the system. Mike also has other Athletic commitments as a Level 4 Technical official and needs some support if the equipment is to be used to its fullest capability to generate income.

The main camera should be serviced every 3 years and a certificate of calibration issued to comply with IAAF standards, this is for record purposes, should anyone set a new National or International record at a meeting where the camera is in use. This also costs around £500

The Future.

With the Track Athletes being taken care of we must now look to Field Technology. Whilst some of the 'Money earned' by hiring out the Photo-finish system will be needed for maintenance, repairs and replacements of the system it is hoped to generate a surplus income annually which can then be used to fund the purchase of an Electronic Distance Measurement (EDM) device. These can cost anything from £1500 to £3000 second hand with Athletics software installed depending on what type and where purchased. Brand new can be in excess of £5000.

Second hand EDM units are usually redundant Surveying equipment which has been superseded by more modern equipment. Refurbished and with up-dated 'software', these are perfectly adequate and fit for purpose in the Field Athletics environment. One big 'Draw back' is that the Unit needs to have its' calibration checked annually, this is at a cost of around £500

All of the above relies heavily on one or two people giving up their time voluntarily to set up and operate the equipment then dismantle and return to safe storage. Unless more volunteers come forward soon to learn and assist with Set-up etc. the whole Technology Project will founder and £26,000.00 of investment will go to waste.

Hire documentation is available on the Derbyshire Athletics Web site along with this document and other equipment hire.

Derbyshire Athletics also manages the Hire and storage of a separate '10 Hour Endurance' Race clock which is owned by Northern Athletics. Many of you will have seen this 'Race Clock' in use at many of the local 'Road' races over the last 20 or so years. This too can be hired out please contact County Rep Ernie Cripps. **Email:** ernie.cripps@talktalk.net

For further information on Photo-finish hire contact Mike Heffernan:
michael.heffernan3@hotmail.co.uk

All Hire Documentation is available at <http://derbyshireathletics.org.uk/EquipmentHire>