

JOEL DUBOW RESPONDS REGARDING MASTERS ENTRIES AT PENN RELAYS

A few weeks back I had the dubious honor of being featured in the lead story on mastertrack.com titled "*Philly not City of Brotherly Clubs; PMTC prez tried to bar GPTC.*" The article addressed the initial denial of entry of the Greater Philadelphia Track Club teams into Penn Relays followed by the subsequent acceptance of their entries.

I am grateful to Ken Stone for including in that article the full text of the two emails that I sent to GPTC. Read in their entirety, they pretty well describe the circumstances.

However, Ken's commentary prior to the insertion of the emails contained some inaccuracies that tended to distort the situation. What is problematic is that later information tends to be interpreted in the context of the framework set by earlier information -- especially when the basis for the earlier information has been supplied by someone with an agenda -- so it is uncertain to me that mastertrack.com readers came to fully understand the circumstances. And, given the length of the emails I had sent, they may not even have read much beyond Ken's opening. [Unfortunately, I will not be brief here, either; I seldom am.]

Following the receipt of comments from some of his readers, Ken emailed me with an invitation to respond. There followed a (very) long telephone conversation between us regarding both the immediate circumstances and some of the history leading up to them. (At Ken's suggestion I am omitting the deep history. That is an issue that I may eventually address only where it belongs -- within the confines of the USATF Mid-Atlantic Association Masters T&F community.)

What I will address here are: (Part 1) corrections/clarifications to what Ken reported and to some of the "info" offered by those who chose to comment; (Part 2) the larger issue of "perceived entitlements" by some who seem to think that there ought be no restrictions to their entry in any meet -- let's call it the Peter Pan Syndrome -- and how that relates to Penn Relays, Philadelphia Masters T&F Association, and GPTC; (Part 3) a response to some of the comments made to Ken's article -- in a way that will address some aspects of Part 2.

Part 1 – Corrections/Clarifications

PMTC prez tried to bar GPTC: This is not true; there was no attempt to "bar" GPTC. What occurred was that GPTC did not meet the entry requirements we had established six months earlier for Masters T&F clubs registered in MAUSATF. Had they met those criteria they would have been accepted from the git-go.

The Jimmy Carter analogy: This was a poor analogy. Jimmy Carter kept *his own athletes* from competing, while Philly Masters has facilitated its own competitive team members' entry into Penn Relays. And, again, we did not bar GPTC from applying to enter; they simply did not meet our acceptance criteria for MAUSATF-based Masters T&F clubs.

“A day later, Joel reversed himself”: This is inaccurate. I did not reverse myself. What happened was that at the 11th hour, due to the efforts of several players, GPTC sufficiently fulfilled a *quid pro quo* requirement that we deemed necessary for their acceptance into the meet.

Wrong people credited: Ken credited Chuck Shields, Lorraine Jasper and Phil Felton with sorting things out. He was 2/3 right in that list, but another 60% wrong – missing three other players. Chuck was not involved in the sorting out process. Here’s what happened: (1) **Patrick Good** (Philly Masters VP) called me asking if there was “anything we could do.” (2) I proposed two options. (3) I contacted **Phil Felton** to verify that there was still time to include GPTC if they complied. (4) I spoke with **Lorraine Jasper** and relayed on to her (a) that it was not too late and, (b) what the two options were. (5) Lorraine contacted **Ray Parker** of GPTC. (6) Ray contacted GPTC members and in less than three hours rallied six of them to help as volunteers at the Philly Masters Throwathon Meet on June 5-6. [FYI: Chuck Shields was not among the initial six, but I am told that since then he has added his name to the list.]

The muzzling of Kevin Forde: Kevin Forde has commented about attempts to “muzzle” him – but that did not keep him from raising the issue on his blog, and I assume it was Kevin that called the issue to the attention of masterstrack.com. Let me make clear, it was neither I, nor Philly Masters, that asked Kevin to refrain from speaking out; it was his own club members at GPTC! Shows what a fine team player Kevin is, doesn’t it?

[I will respond to another comment sent to masterstrack.com by Cheryl Bellaire and to Kevin Forde’s later blog entry at the end of this response.]

Part 2 – The “Entitlement” Misperception: Penn Relays, Philly Masters, GPTC and TNT Racing International

One element of this Penn Relays affair that surprises me is the assumption among some that entry into masters meets ought to be unfettered – that there is an assumed entitlement to compete in any meet labeled “Masters.” Folks, there’s no such thing as a free lunch. You may not pay for it, but someone, in some way is picking up the tab – through their labor or their cash.

Depending on whom the event organizer is, entry “entitlements” vary. For instance, where an event is underwritten and/or organized by a USATF entity at the National, Regional, or Association level, any dues paying member of USATF is entitled to enter within the geographical limits of the USATF entity. And note this: In USATF Association level championship meets, the sponsoring Association is not required to allow members of outside USATF Associations to compete – though they almost always do. Note, too, that even if a USATF sanction applies to the meet, that does not make the meet automatically open to all USATF members; entry conditions are determined by the event organizer. For instance, a dual meet may be sanctioned but not open to all.

Call it the Peter Pan Syndrome. Most T&F athletes began in Youth Clubs or public or private school systems. From the athletes' perspective it was a given that they could participate gratis; someone else did the work while they played. For those that went on to the collegiate level, once again others were doing the work while they played. Free rides! Well, folks (and I realize most among you know this), once you become a masters T&F athlete you are 30 years old and it's time to grow up.

[Do you recall the first four words of the theme song to the Disney movie, "Peter Pan"? They were "I won't grow up..."]

T&F, unlike road racing, is not a sport with sufficient demand to offer fund-raising opportunities to the point where there are multiple racing opportunities in any major city on every weekend. T&F meets require dedicated groups of volunteers working within organizational entities. In most cases there is little or no profit to the meet organizing party; when there is it is relatively small in proportion to the effort it takes to conduct the meet. The organizational work before T&F meets is complex and the operational work on the day of the meet is taxing. There is a lot of "burnout" among the people that take on these responsibilities

Within the extended Philadelphia area Philly Masters has long been the Club doing virtually all the work of providing competitive T&F opportunities for Masters athletes. It was complex, taxing, and over time we experienced a fair amount of burnout. In fact, in 2007, we faced the issue of possibly having to dissolve the club. Instead, we decided to focus our attention on forming a competitive team in the hopes that would draw in more members and encourage a sense of club team spirit. Our agenda called for that effort to come about in 2009. [FYI: It worked!]

Penn Relays is not an "open" meet. Though USATF-sanctioned, Penn Relays is conducted by a private university – the University of Pennsylvania. And it is interesting to note that acceptance into Penn Relays is much like acceptance into the University of Pennsylvania: many apply (and pay an application fee to do so), but not all applicants are accepted. That principle holds for both the main portion of Penn Relays and the Masters events. A difference, though, is that there is no follow up entry fee for Penn Relays, while there is many a cost to those that are accepted into the University of Pennsylvania.

As a private institution, U. of Penn. is quite free to choose who to accept based on any mix of criteria they choose – including, say, candidates' public service record. Penn Relays is also entitled to determine its own criteria, and not necessarily based up some automatic formula.

Philly Masters is the gatekeeper for the Masters track events at Penn Relays. Why? Simple; we put up the cash and we do the work. The Masters track events at Penn Relays are there because of prior lobbying efforts made by Philly Masters. Penn Relays agreed to allocate time and heats to Masters events on a flat fee basis, and on a risk/reward basis to Philly Masters, in return for \$2000 per year. Philly Masters was given the right and the responsibility to manage the application and entry selection process. And, just as with the

main portion of Penn Relays, there is a nonrefundable *application* fee, but no followup *entry* fee to those accepted.

FYI: In the early years Philly Masters lost money on Penn Relays. Only in the past several years have we enjoyed a net gain – which seems to have stabilized as a result of about \$4000 in application fees, minus \$2000 paid to Penn Relays, and minus about \$1000 in expenses incurred by our Penn Relays coordinator, Phil Felton; net to Philly Masters is about \$1000 – which helps fund other activities of our 501 (c) 3 organization.

The entry criteria for Masters in the Penn Relays were based upon our original purpose in lobbying to include Masters events. We wanted to give our members the opportunity to compete in Penn Relays and bring other clubs from around the country to compete against us. At the time we were the only Masters club in the Philadelphia area; being a Masters T&F athlete largely meant being a Philly Masters member – although, space permitting, we did accept entries from non-member groups.

[Now before I continue, I am going to request this of you: As you read on, ask of yourself this question -- If you were in the situations that are being described, if it was you doing the work, how would you feel? What decisions would you have made?]

In 2009, things changed. Just as we had decided to revitalize our Club (whose serious membership had been attriting) by emphasizing our competitive team, two new Masters-oriented clubs appeared. GPTC formed as a spinoff from Philadelphia Athletic Charities, and TNT Racing International formed out of a group of track-oriented athletes that had belonged to the Pike Creek Valley club. Certainly, people are entitled to join up with other folks they choose in order to form clubs. But, what we in Philly Masters saw happening was that both GPTC and TNT were taking athletes from the Mid-Atlantic Association pool who, had those two teams not emerged, would have probably competed for us.

As noted above, up through 2009 Philly Masters was the Club that was doing virtually all of the work of organizing Masters T&F events in the extended Philadelphia area. But now there were three groups enjoying the fruits of our efforts, yet Philly Masters was still doing all the work.

[Ask yourself here, how you would feel about this were you in our place?]

In response to this situation we came to feel that if other club's were *taking athletes* from the Mid-Atlantic masters pool, they ought to also *take responsibility* for conducting a fair share of Mid-Atlantic masters events – or at least meaningfully assist us in our efforts.

Into mid-2009, in my role as President of Philly Masters I engaged in conversations with representatives of GPTC and TNT about their sharing some of that burden. I received quite different responses from the two clubs.

TNT was positive to the request and friendly in their manner.

GPTC, however, was negative and even a bit hostile. From their Treasurer/Team Captain I heard:

“We are not an event organizer,” and, “We just want to run.”

From their President I heard:

“We just want to help people have fun.” And (not exact quotes), “It’s none of Philly Masters’ business what we do or don’t do as a club,” and “It’s inappropriate of you to even ask us.”

And what did they do for fund-raising? Did they organize T&F events? No, they threw parties. Duh!

They were functionally defining themselves as a Peter Pan club.

We determined what we would do about the situation at a September 20, 2009 meeting of our Executive Committee. Though we were not happy to have to make the decision, we ultimately decided to use Penn Relays as a *reward* to the teams that joined us in sharing the burden. This is the description of our decision that we published in a widely disseminated email:

We will accept team and individual entries from the MAUSATF-registered Clubs that compete against us in T&F *only from those clubs that demonstrate a significant amount of reciprocity in making T&F opportunities available for Masters athletes within the MAUSATF geography -- in due proportion to their MAUSATF presence.* They may do so either by conducting relevant events on their own accord, or by assisting Philadelphia Masters in its operations.

[If you were in our place would you not have felt justified in adopting this position?]

As it occurred, the TNT team was very understanding of our position and met this requirement by scheduling a 3-meet summer all-comers series for 2010 – *scheduled for just that time when we had decided we would drop our summer all-comers series.* In our judgment, that represented a “significant amount of reciprocity.” Accordingly, we facilitated Penn Relays entry for all TNT teams and athletes that applied in 2010.

At one point Chuck Shields did (in an email *not* sent to me) say that GPTC might or might not conduct an unspecified event, specifically saying, “It may or may not happen, but I refuse to discuss it with Joel.”

Chuck Shields did speak to our VP, Patrick Good, about the event, indicating it would be a Runners’ Pentathlon and a Throwers’ Triathlon. And, he indicated to Patrick that GPTC would like to compete in Penn Relays. But by virtue of his refusal to speak to me, he did

not ascertain whether the event would represent “a significant amount of reciprocity...in due proportion to [GPTC’s] presence.” I will explain below, in my response to Cheryl Bellaire’s comment, why it is not in “due proportion.”

The net of all this is that GPTC’s leadership did a poor job of managing the interests of their members. I’m unsure of the dynamics within GPTC between what its members were willing to do vs. the posture its leadership told them their club would take. From more than one source I am informed that Chuck Shields seemed to stake out the issue as a Chuck Shields vs. Joel Dubow issue. But, in doing so it is clear that he did a poor management job in advancing his members’ interests. The proof of that is this:

What Chuck Shields was unable to accomplish for his members in 6 months, Ray Parker (a non-officer of GPTC) was able to accomplish in 3 hours! And the fact that six members were so quickly willing to sign up to assist us at a one of our upcoming events says that they did not buy into GPTC being a Peter Pan club!

I realize that the GPTC members that signed up to help at our June 5-6 Throwathon may have felt that they were unduly pressured into doing so given the very tight deadline for their GPTC teams’ acceptance into Penn Relays. *To those GPTC members that stepped up*, let me note that, based on your taking action you have explicitly endorsed the idea that your club ought to participate in contributing your efforts to Masters events in the MAUSATF geography. And, *had your Club’s leadership been more communicative with us/me*, we could have made that request of you much earlier so that you would not have felt pressured. Don’t blame me!

Part 3 – Responses to Comments

There are two people who offered comments to the mastertrack.com article that I feel require a response.

The first was Cheryl Bellaire. At the outset, let me note that I was told that Cheryl is one of the GPTC members that stepped forward to offer assistance at our Throwathon – even though she was not a member of a team initially denied entry.

I will use my response to Cheryl to explain why GPTC’s scheduled event was deemed to not be sufficiently reciprocal to merit Penn Relays entry -- but first I am asking Cheryl for an apology.

Cheryl indicated that in the past she had tried to mend relationships between GPTC and Philly Masters. Indeed she had; what she did involved communicating with both sides, and that was appreciated. This year, however, she has publicly passed on a lie about me without first checking whether what she passed on was true. It was the sentence in her comment that said, “Joel last year apparently kept TNT out of racing at Penn Relays.”

That statement is absolutely, positively false! Cheryl could have verified it by contacting Phil Felton (or Kyle Lanier at TNT), but she negligently did not. One TNT team was

indeed denied entry last year because, of the 16 teams applying for a 4x100m relay race, they were not one of the top nine that could be fit onto the track. That was standard operating procedure as managed by Phil Felton and Phil will back me up on that.

To Cheryl: First contact Phil Felton to verify this. Then offer up the public apology you owe me for passing on that slander.

There are a number of other slanderous things that I have heard being said about me within the GPTC community. (I have a growing collection of copies of emails that have reached me. FYI: Whenever I have mentioned Chuck Shields in an email, I have had the courtesy to copy him on it. Chuck has had neither the courtesy nor courage to copy me when the roles are reversed – but many of them get to me.) For instance, I again refer to something Cheryl alluded to: My attempt last year to pull the Mid-Atlantic clubs together into a single unit that could have competed against (and, if you check the team point totals, beaten) the SoCal team at the Indoor Masters National Championship Meet in Landover. What I hear is being said about me is that my motive for denying GPTC entry into Penn Relays is to “get even with GPTC” for not going along with me.

Anyone who believes that is ignoring the elephant in the room – the TNT club. Last year the TNT people (while still with the Pike Creek Valley club) had at first indicated they would indeed join with Philly Masters for the national meet, but then reversed themselves and formed the TNT club. If I were being vindictive, would I not be even more antagonistic to the TNT club for reneging? The difference is that TNT readily jumped in with a significant reciprocal effort – and was rewarded with entries into Penn Relays for all teams/athletes they wanted in. And as far as how the TNT club feels about me, I have a standing offer from their President to join their club and competitive team. TNT and GPTC have quite different club personalities; local word has it that even some of its own members have become dissatisfied with GPTC’s.

This brings me to relate why the GPTC Runners Pentathlon/Throwers Triathlon is deemed not to be sufficiently reciprocal in proportion to GPTC’s presence within MAUSATF. In contrast to the five indoor all-comers meets, the one outdoor pre-Championship developmental meet, the two MAUSATF championship meets, and the Throwathon we conduct, and in contrast to the three outdoor all-comers meets TNT will conduct, the GPTC event is a very meager event in both size and appeal. Entries are capped at a total of 86 athletes: 54 runners and 32 throwers. (The full track meets we have conducted last year and this have attracted between 100 and 180 athletes each.) Furthermore, the character of the GPTC event places its focus on distance runners. Few sprinters have ever entered prior versions of the event a decade ago -- when Philly Masters conducted a similar meet and eventually decided it was a failed event not worth resuming. And, it offers nothing at all to horizontal and vertical jumpers. So to consider the event to be proportionately reciprocal is a bit of a sham.

But wait, there’s more! In actually conducting the event, GPTC has asked to borrow a piece of Philly Masters timing equipment – which will also require a Philly Masters member (in fact a member of our Executive Committee) to serve as head timer for the

Runners Pentathlon portion. Furthermore, another one of our Executive Committee members, Ray Feick, will be fully in charge of the Throwers Triathlon portion. I daresay that on meet day, Philly Masters people will be doing at least half the physical work, while GPTC volunteers attend merely to shuffling runners around at the start line, pressing a few timer buttons, and entering data into a laptop. Why is this considered a GPTC event and not a shared GPTC-Philly Masters event?

So, while it is a sham to consider the event to be a proportionally reciprocal contribution to the MAUSATF T&F community, it is a scam for GPTC to take full credit for the event when Philly Masters people will be doing so much of the work. It is practically a theft of services.

Now consider this scenario had the GPTC members not stepped up to agree to help at our June 5-6 Throwathon as a quid pro quo for Penn Relays entry:

Had the GPTC members not stepped forward, Philly Masters would have conducted the Throwathon without a single GPTC member helping. But come the GPTC event, Philly Masters members would have been doing about half the work.

The reciprocity condition that we initiated was intended to bring the other MAUSATF clubs to help share the burden and lighten the load that we alone had taken. If they were taking athletes from the Mid-Atlantic pool, they ought to also take a fair share of the responsibility for conducting Masters-beneficial events in the area. But it looks like what GPTC did would merely add to the burden taken on by our members.

[So let me ask each of you, and especially the members of GPTC, to answer this question: How fair is that?]

While the reciprocity requirement was a Philly Masters Executive Committee decision, I will accept full administrative responsibility for the decision that GPTC had not met the reciprocity criterion. What I have said above explains why I reached that decision.

My second response is to Kevin Forde's articulate contributions:

1. Being called an "arse" by Kevin Forde is like being called ugly by a 'possum;
2. I may owe an apology for having said that – to the 'possum;
3. Have any of you that have seen Kevin Forde ever noticed that he actually looks like a 'possum? How about all of us honoring Kevin in the future by giving him the nickname 'possum?