



AIMS Association of International
Marathons and Distance Races

AIMS Celebrates Silver Jubilee

AIMS, the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races is celebrating 25 years of existence in 2007.

AIMS came into being at a time when marathon running was experiencing its first boom, with up to 15,000 people taking part in the biggest events. But perhaps more significantly it seemed as if every city in the world suddenly wanted a marathon, and many organisers responded to the demand. In doing so they soon came to appreciate the advantages of co-operating at an international level.

Present AIMS secretary Hugh Jones takes us back in a brief historical summary of the association's life...

The official foundation of AIMS was enacted at the Establishing Congress held in the Park Lane Hotel, London on 6 May 1982, attended by 28 Marathon race directors. At this stage it was called "The Association of International Marathons", and was the outgrowth of a series of meetings that had been held over the previous eighteen months in Honolulu, New York and Boston, mainly directed towards the establishment of a "World Circuit" of Marathons.



AIMS - Will
Cloney
(c)

Measurement

The Circuit idea eventually fell by the wayside but other reasons remained for Marathon directors to continue to meet, not least in order to formalise an administrative system for the measurement of marathons to ensure they were of the correct length. All members of the Association were to meet strict measurement criteria to prove that they were indeed of Marathon length.



AIMS - Chris Brasher
(c)

Boston Marathon race director Will Cloney became the first President of AIMS, with Chris Brasher of the London Marathon as Vice-President. Allan Steinfeld became Chair of the AIMS Standards Committee and worked tirelessly to help race directors learn the technical requirements to produce a good race -

“Exchanging information, knowledge and expertise” was one of the objectives enshrined in the Articles of Association adopted on foundation. The others were the overriding aim “to foster and promote road running throughout the World”, and a professed desire “to work with IAAF on all matters relating to international Marathons.”

Travel with confidence, race with enjoyment

A monthly Newsletter was produced from June 1982 to keep members up to date with AIMS business and record the results of member races. An AIMS Yearbook was published from 1985 allowing direct communication with the runners who participated in AIMS races. This opened the way for AIMS to establish a platform from which member races, through their joint efforts, could directly promote themselves to the running community.



AIMS - Bob Dalglish
(c)

The yearbook was one plank of this platform, but member races had already realised that sending their entry forms for distribution to runners at fellow members’ events was an effective way to attract foreign runners. Foreign participation was particularly valued not just for the international gloss it provided, but also for the impact it had on the local economy. The New York Marathon, the prototype of a big city event and a founder member of AIMS had already generated a significant “niche” tourist industry around its race.

Chris Brasher, whose term lasted from 1983-1987, expressed two of AIMS purposes, technical improvement and foreign promotion, in one phrase: “travel with confidence, race with enjoyment”.



AIMS - Andy Galloway
(c)

Embracing other distances

At the 4th World Congress of AIMS in Manila, at which Chris Brasher handed over to Bob Dalglish of the Glasgow Marathon, the Association expanded to embrace road races of distances other than the Marathon. The Berlin 25km and the Gothenburg Half Marathon were two of the first non-Marathon events to join.

Bob Dalgleish's Presidency of AIMS was cut short by his untimely death in October 1990 and Hiroaki Chosa, of the Fukuoka Marathon, was appointed as interim President. By this time AIMS had grown to include 87 members.



AIMS -
Hiroaki Chosa
(c)

Through the efforts of Allan Steinfeld as Technical Chairman, backed up by the General Secretary Andy Galloway, great progress had been made in developing a cadre of measurers around the world. The system of measurement developed by AIMS was officially adopted by IAAF in 1988, and enshrined in their rule book.

Coming closer together

This convergence between AIMS and IAAF was a welcome development, but it had not been typical of relations in the 1980s. The first decade of AIMS' existence was partly propelled by a feeling that IAAF had not ventured sufficiently far out of the stadium to address the problems and potential of road running. AIMS believed that some IAAF Member Federations saw road running largely as a mass tax base which could be exploited to support the activities of a track and field elite. The relationship between the two bodies was at times abrasive.



AIMS - 25
years
(c)

Hiroaki Chosa's assumption of the Presidency presented an opportunity to bring AIMS closer to the world governing body. As a member of the IAAF Cross Country and Road Running Committee, he was well placed to bridge the gulf which separated the two organisations. He received his mandate from the 7th World Congress of AIMS, held in Bangkok in November 1991.

Following this a significant transformation of the AIMS Yearbook took place. Since 1988 it had been published twice yearly, but the "yearbook" had been between 44 and 64 pages in A5 format and between the colour covers, entirely in black and white. The new magazine, titled Distance Running was in A4 format with more pages and much greater colour content.

Through the good offices of the new President the September 1992 – March 1993 edition of Distance Running became a joint publication of AIMS and IAAF, which it has remained ever since. Several Japanese sponsors were recruited and membership grew to exceed 100.

In co-operation with two of its main partners AIMS developed specific Awards. With ASICS, from 1992, a "Golden Shoe" was awarded annually to the most outstanding male and female runners of the year – and this award was made to a succession of the sports' household names. With Citizen, AIMS teamed up to recognise "World Fastest Times", at a time when IAAF was reticent about calling road performances "world records".

Transponders

AIMS has often acted as a channel for the diffusion of ideas and innovation within the worldwide running community. One of the most important such innovations was when the ChampionChip company introduced new technology to time races. A transponder worn on the foot was activated to record time as it passed through a magnetic field generated at the timing point. Despite, or perhaps because of, the initial difficulties with

the system problems were quickly rectified and transponders became the timing system of choice.

Organisers could now subcontract this race function to professional timing companies and save vast amount of manpower, allowing a less cluttered finish line and consequently better exposure for race sponsors. Individual runners could be recorded as they passed over the start line as well as the finish line, allowing them to know exactly how long it took them to cover the race distance. The need to cross the start line as soon as possible after the gun was fired was reduced (although race positions still depend upon “gun time”) and safety in such starts was enhanced. Timing points along the course could be used to identify those runners who had short-cut the course.

Museum

Also in Berlin at around the same time, the Berlin Marathon race director Horst Milde proposed the establishment of an AIMS Marathon Museum of Running. It took much longer than the chip timing system did to come to fruition, but after approval at the 9th World Congress of AIMS in Macau in 1994 the concept was pursued consistently over the years in partnership with the Berlin Sports Museum. After major reconstruction of the Berlin Olympic Stadium the AIMS Marathon Museum of Running has finally found a permanent home.

Membership increase

The 10th World Congress of AIMS, held in Barcelona in 1996, brought significant changes of personnel and redefined some of AIMS key functions. Andy Galloway, who had been the General Secretary since foundation, resigned his post, which was taken up by Hugh Jones. Hiroaki Chosa continued as AIMS President with several new Board members who subsequently played important roles in meeting the challenge posed by an increase in membership that by the turn of the Millennium had become something close to an influx.

Paco Borao, as Membership Director, oversaw this increase. Gordon Rogers, as Technical Director, dedicated great effort to generating a comprehensive database of course measurements, Accurate measurement has had always been a central tenet of AIMS membership, and this brought the organisation into an ever closer relationship with IAAF. At least partly as a result, in 2004 IAAF finally agreed that, subject to meeting certain criteria, road races at certain distance should be able to claim official IAAF World records.

Change of name

‘Distance Running’ grew to match the new size and reach of the Association. First in 2000, and then in 2004, it added new editions so that by 2005 each issue of the now quarterly publication had more pages than the old yearbook. Assisted by the advent of widespread digital photography it became produced in full colour on all pages. It also portrayed a more accurate representation of the sport of running than either AIMS or IAAF formally admitted. In belated recognition of this AIMS, at their 17th World Congress in 2007, undertook another change of name to the Association of International Marathons and Distance Races.

Alongside Distance Running the AIMS website - <http://aimsworldrunning.org/> - has

grown into a valuable source of information for runners and race organisers alike, and holds the potential to become an essential means of managing the Association.

Approaching the 25th anniversary of its foundation, AIMS had reason to look back at the past. In January and February 2003 the first two Presidents of the Association, Will Cloney and Chris Brasher, passed away. Sue Richardson, who had been deeply involved with AIMS from the days of Chris Brasher's presidency, died in September 2005. Even when she left employment at the London Marathon and took a position with IAAF, she still attended AIMS meetings and provided a valuable link between the two organisations. Her death left a gap in the ability of IAAF to deal with road running matters which was filled in 2007, with the appointment of Sean Wallace-Jones to the new position of IAAF Road Race Coordinator.

Development

In 2006 AIMS launched a Children's series, by assisting selected member events develop children's races as part of their programme. Also in 2006 AIMS introduce an award to recognise innovation in the organisation of road races, and in 2007 the inaugural AIMS Marathon Symposium was held in the town of Marathon – [click here for news story](#)

235 members in 85 countries and territories

Since foundation AIMS has burgeoned to almost ten times the size that it was in 1982, counting 235 members in 85 countries and territories throughout the world. Membership fees are the largest single contributor to the AIMS budget and the Association consequently remains a member-centred organisation, existing to provide a platform from which members can better develop and promote their events, especially on an international stage.

To mark the 25th anniversary of AIMS a Silver Jubilee brochure has been produced in which the story of the Association has been recorded. This can be viewed and downloaded through the AIMS website at www.aimsworldrunning.org

For further information, please contact:

<p>Peter McLean Director of Public Relations Association of International Marathons & Road Races PMPR, Windsor House, 15 Kirklee Terrace, Kelvinside Glasgow, Scotland Tel: 44-141-357-2516 Fax: 44-141-357 2516 Mobile: 0774-037-1909 petermclean@pmpr2000.fsnet.co.uk</p>
