

SPENCE OF SPANGO IS FASTEST

(Report by DEREK PARKER)

SOUTH WEST CROSS-COUNTRY RELAY CHAMPIONSHIP AT LINWOOD, RENFREWSHIRE, 2 NOVEMBER, 1974

THE soft, green fields of Linwood Moss made a picturesque setting for the South West cross-country relay championships on November 2, and although it had been wet and windy in the morning, the weather cleared by the afternoon, allowing the races to take place in warm, autumn sunshine. The main event of the day was the senior contest held over four laps of approximately two miles, and right from the start it was obvious that competition was going to be keen. Before long, the representatives of some twenty teams were strung widely out across the countryside as the fast, flat course began to take its toll, and excitement was heightened by the fact that spectators were able to watch the entire race from several points of vantage. The man who made the early running was Dick Hodelet of Greenock Glenpark, and the former Scottish half-mile champion showed that he has lost none of his zest for the sport by recording the third best time of the afternoon and giving his club a good lead at the end of the first stage. Next to hand over was young Alan Gourlay of Beith Harriers, whose 11.17 clocking was only nine seconds slower than Hodelet's, and he was followed by Gerry Gaffney of Wellpark and Jim Swindell of Ayrshire AAC, who both stopped the watches at 11.38. Beith's Tom Cochrane quickly set about overtaking John Hoey, and the former Scottish cross-country international revealed some of the form which earned him seven South West district championships between 1960 and 1969 by passing his Greenock rival and building up a big lead for his club. Meanwhile, further back, Ayrshire's Jim Golder was also gaining ground on athletes ahead of him, and by the end of the second lap the first four past the post were Cochrane (11.12), Golder (11.10), Cameron Spence of Spango Valley (10.40), and David Stoddart of Wellpark (11.15). Spence's time, in particular, was one for the connoisseur, and proved to be easily the fastest of the day. Up front, the race was really coming to the boil, with a mighty tussle developing between Beith's Jim Sloss and Ayrshire's Ian Kerr. At one stage, it seemed certain that Sloss would have to give way to his younger opponent, but gamely he resisted the challenge and drew steadily away over the last 100 yards to hand over a slight lead to colleague Kenny Phillips. Former Scottish marathon champion Willie Stoddart had brought Wellpark back into contention with a good lap lasting 11 minutes 24 seconds while further back Spango Valley and Glenpark were fighting it out for fourth place. With only one lap to go the race was building up to an exciting climax, but with former South West junior champion John Ferguson running the last stage for Ayrshire, the outcome of the contest was never in doubt. It took the Ayrshire man only 10 minutes 57 seconds to complete his circuit and anchor his team to a well-deserved victory in 45 minutes 3 seconds, giving them the South West relay title at their very first attempt. A fine run by Tommy Anderson clinched second place for Wellpark in 46 minutes 19 seconds while Beith, who had two former members competing for the newly-founded victorious Ayrshire squad, had to be content with third place in 46 minutes 50 seconds. Fourth were Ayrshire's 'B' team, fifth Paisley, the holders of the title, and sixth and seventh respectively Spango Valley and Glenpark. Ayrshire's youths' side won the 3 by 1½-miles' championship, while Greenock Glenpark provided the winners of both the senior boys' and junior boys' team titles.

Results: Senior 4 x 2½ Miles 1. Ayrshire AAC 45.03 (J. Swindell 11.38, J. Golder 11.10, I. Kerr 11.18, J. Ferguson 10.57); 2. Wellpark 46.19 (G. Gaffney 11.38, D. Stoddart 11.15, W. Stoddart 11.24, T. Anderson 12.02); 3. Beith Harriers 46.50 (A. Gourlay 11.17, T. Cochrane 11.12, J. Sloss 11.33, K. Phillips 12.48). Youths 3 x 1½ Miles 1. Ayrshire AAC 28.33 (R. Thomson 9.34, G. Grant 9.24, B. Aird 9.35); 2. Eastwood High School; 3. Greenock Glenpark. Senior Boys 3 x 1½ Miles 1. Greenock Glenpark 30.43 (A. Black 9.58, T. Black 10.33, E. McDonald 10.12); 2. Paisley Harriers; 3. Eastwood High School. Junior Boys 3 x 1½ Miles 1. Greenock Glenpark 35.53 (J. Reddie 12.27, R. McDonald 11.19, G. Wohlgemuth 12.7) 2. Ayrshire AAC.

THE SILLY SEASON

(Following a recent all-eclipsing report in the national press and television that an attractive young lady from Australia has entered the New Year Professional Sprint at Meadowbank in January we report another first - this time in Women's athletics)

A Handsome male athlete, Rocky Smash, may become the first man to contest the Scottish Women's Amateur Athletic Association 100 metres hurdles at Meadowbank next year. It will be the first time that "a mere male" has invaded this traditionally women's preserve.

Rocky, a rugged shot putter/pole vaulter, whose Grecian features have graced many athletics meetings up and down his native South Ronaldsay, told our society editor (during a TV press conference) that he can scarcely contain himself until the great day. He stresses however that he will only compete if he can shed the few extra stones he has put on since becoming addicted to Mistress Brown's home baked bannocks last year.

He said "I wrote to the race organiser, Hilda Hurdle, enclosing a recent Daguerreotype to ask if I might compete. To my intense delight she replied that, after considering the publicity potential, the answer was in the affirmative".

When informed of Rocky's intentions, current champion Racquel English who is way out in front of the others said, "What a lovely surprise for the girls. We will give Rocky a real Meadowbank welcome. He can certainly share my soap in the showers afterwards".

A top official of Meadowbank Shamrock Football Club said that his players had no objections to the race taking place, as long as it is run in a month without an 'R' in it and before 6 a.m. on a Friday.

Rocky, whose great-grandmother won the "Throwing the Donald Dinnie Stone over the River Dee" at the Aboyne Games two years ago, plans to intensify his already rigorous training schedule. In addition to running up and down hills with a sheep under each arm he will add hurdles to the ten mile route.

Yes, here is a remarkable man who will add lustre to the SWAAA Championships.

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