

November 19

EDINBURGH TO GLASGOW RELAY

THE last relic of a once-proud British tradition – point-to-point road relay racing – remains alive and well in Scotland, even if it has become an unhealthy monopoly which no club appears able to challenge. *Doug Gillon* reports.

Mizuno Racing Club won the 45.4-mile eight-stage relay from Edinburgh to Glasgow, the 62nd edition of the event, in a time of 3:55:45sec, completing a remarkable 10th successive victory. The Edinburgh team finished 2:12 clear of Ronhill Cambuslang, with Shettleston third.

Because of minor modifications on safety grounds, this will qualify as a course record, but is the slowest of Racing's 10 wins from 1991. It is also 1:38 slower than the inaugural winning time in 1930, when the route was little different, an eloquent commentary on current standards.

The event used to be backed by the *News of the World*, along with the Manchester to Blackpool and London to Brighton classics. Traffic concerns killed off the two English races more than three decades ago, but the 'E-to-G' with its 20 invited teams, remains the cherished blue ribbon of the Scottish road season, and is set to remain so.

A backer who wishes to remain anonymous ensured this year's event went ahead, but it was confirmed that a sponsor has designs on next year.

Cambuslang held the lead for the opening two stages thanks to Doug Runciman and Neil Wilkinson. That was before the contribution of Tom Hanlon, running just hours before boarding a flight to Japan where he competes for Britain in the Ekiden relay, in Chiba on Thursday.

Until his intrusion, just 94 seconds covered the first six teams, but the 1992 Olympic steeplechase finalist covered the 4.7-mile uphill stage in 24:15. This took him from fourth to first and was seven seconds outside the course record, set by Scott Cohen with a tailwind as fierce as the gale which blew in Hanlon's face. John Turner was next fastest at 26:08, and only two other men were inside 27 minutes. The race was effectively over.

Fellow UK internationalist Glen Stewart was the other significant contributor to Racing's success, 77 seconds faster than any rival on the sixth stage, 6.3 miles through bleak Lanarkshire farmland covered in 31:44, into the teeth of a biting wind.

Dave Ross returned after career-threatening injury to run the anchor stage to Crownpoint Stadium, having missed only one of the 10 victories.

Hanlon and Stewart are turning their attentions to the short race at the trials for the world championships providing training continues well. Sunday's clash with the Margate trial for the Europeans ensures there will be no male Scot in Malmö, unless selectors depart radically from the script.

Shettleston, with nobody under the age of 30, had clawed to within 28 seconds of Cambuslang with two stages left but a powerful finish from Charlie Thomson and Alan McPherson kept their Lanarkshire rivals at bay.

Irvine, 15th last year, finished eighth to beat Victoria Park for the most-improved team award. Former international marathoner Kevin Forster and son Kristian appeared for the latter, and Jack Knox, running for Gala Harriers aged 56, oldest ever in the race, was by no means slowest.

An 8.30am start was one of the new safety measures imposed, but the risks were chillingly brought home to the sport, for as Hunters Bog Trotters finished fourth, one of their members – Isabel Knox from Innerleithen – was on life support in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary after surgery on internal injuries.

She was struck by a car while training earlier in the week with club colleagues near Penicuik. She also suffered compound leg fractures.

Men

1 Mizuno RC 3:55:45; 2 Ron Hill Cambus 3:57:57; 3 Shettleston Harriers 4:00:48; 4 Hunters Bog Trotters 4:02:59; 5 Fife AC 4:05:01; 6 Kilbarchan AAC 4:06:47; 7 City

of Edinburgh 4:10:40; 8 Irvine AC 4:10:47; 9 Victoria Park AAC 4:12:41; 10 Dundee Hawkhill 4:13:49; 11 Inverclyde AC 4:16:13; 12 Law & District 4:20:14; 13 Lothian RC 4:21:03; 14 Falkirk Victoria Harriers 4:22:23; 15 Gala Harriers 4:22:36; 16 McDonald's Carnegie 4:26:27; 17 Greenock Glenpark 4:27:22; 18 J W Kilmarnock 4:29:18; 19 Kwik Fit Corstorphine 4:33:24

Fastest

Stage 1: D Runciman (Cambus) 27:59

Stage 2: T Hearle (Kilb) 30:43

Stage 3: T Hanlon (Miz) 24:15

Stage 4: R Quinn (Kilb) 26:58 – Stage record

Stage 5: I Harkness (HBT) 29:41 – Stage record

Stage 6: G Stewart (Miz) 31:44 – stage record

Stage 7: P Mowbray (HBT) 30:28 – Stage record

Stage 8: A McPherson (Cambus) 26:50

BRIGHTON REEBOK DMX 10km

DEBBIE PERCIVAL put a year of injury behind her with a breakthrough 10km victory on a windy Brighton seafront course that presented a difficult test for all but the brave. *Martin Duff* reports.

The 38-year-old had a knee injury that required surgery earlier this year then, just as the Medway runner was getting back into her stride, another injury, this time to the outside of her calf, laid her low. Thus a 34:18 victory after a month back in serious training represented something of a miracle for the former British veterans 10km champion.

With the opening 1500 metres of the course running downwind to Black Rock from the start near the main Palace Pier, Percival took full advantage to burst into a big lead that was never threatened. Last year's winner Lynn Williams, normally a notoriously fast starter, had planned a more conservative start and was 50 metres down as the race returned past the start line against the wind.

Ceri Diss and Alison Fletcher were running together another 100 metres further back, as Joanne Hinde and Sarah Cope followed. Percival was able to run strongly into the wind on the run out to Hove, but Williams lost contact and was clearly out of sorts on the day.

"I felt strong going out against the wind," said Percival. "I didn't expect it and I thought I would be nearer to 35 minutes." A run out in the delayed BUPA Great South Run this weekend is now pencilled in, before a holiday in The Gambia. "I had originally planned to do the Florida Marathon, but the injury put paid to that."

Diss and Fletcher nipped past Williams in the closing kilometre, but found some confusion with the women's finishing post as the lines on the road in the women's funnel were unclear.

The wind clearly affected the men's race, as there was nobody prepared to take on the challenge against the south-westerly. Former Brighton half-marathon winner Richard Szade, Alistair Moses, Daniel Hyde, Neville Adams and Frenchman Alex Vasseur were all grouped together at 3km, before Moses and Hyde eventually made some effort to break the impasse.

Finally Moses prevailed in a modest 31:49.

Men

1 A Moses (Rei PJ) 31:49; 2 D Hyde (Houns) 31:58; 3 A Vasseur (FRA) 32:27; 4 R Szade (Newp) 32:32; 5 N Adams (Bris) 32:54; 6 T Naylor (Phoe) 33:13; 7 P Stacy (B&H) 33:15; 8 P Froud (B&H) 33:19; 9 M Bristow (B&H, n/s) 33:21; 10 P Witcomb (B&H, M50) 33:25; 11 N Terrier (FRA, U20) 33:27; 12 H Ibrahim (B&H) 33:38; 13 G Hannaford (B&H, M45) 33:46; 14 R Shannon (B&H, M40) 34:07; 15 D Lear (Crown) 34:10; 16 J Jenkinson (Soton C) 34:16; 17 P Prosser (B&H) 34:23; 18 JR Bristow (B&H) 34:26; 19 D Sutton (B&H, U20) 34:27; 20 J Lowden (Worth, M40) 34:51; 21 D Knight (B&H) 34:56; 22 D Leduc (FRA) 35:04; 23 P Eccles (Hail) 35:05; 24 B Warren (Hail, U20) 35:10; 25 J Wallis (Hail) 35:10; 26 L Heath (Hast, M40) 35:21; 27 M Parry (Crown) 35:24; 28 R Hansen (Herne H) 35:27; 29 R Watts (Crown) 35:28; 30 J Larkin (Hast R) 35:29

M40: 8 M Brown (B&H) 35:31; 9 A Bontoft (Hast) 35:33; 10 P Morley (H'field) 35:37; 11 S Smythe (Camb H) 35:59; 12 C Bradley (Ton) 36:05; 13 G Stevens (Crown) 36:17; 14 D Rollinson (Seaf) 36:19; 15 P Saws (Hailsh) 36:24