

Scottish Cross Country Championships
Falkirk 18/2/2012
Referee's Report
Ron Morrison

The stability of staging the Scottish Cross Country Championships at Callendar Park, Falkirk for the 7th consecutive year has many benefits – athletes, spectators and officials alike are familiar with the environment, promoting efficient racing tactics, viewing strategies and optimum course design respectively. The increase in entries and finishers year on year clearly shows the venue is popular with athletes and clubs.

Last year I commented that I could not remember such an incident free Championship. This year had even fewer incidents. The day, however, was not without its challenges given the very high winds and 2 snow squalls. Generally the weather was dryish and even the sun appeared at times during the Championships. The going was at best soft turning muddy in the latter races. Despite an overcast day and the temperature remaining at about 2C it was still a great day for cross-country running.

Pre Race Action

- 1 The entries team have their job down to a fine art ensuring that all athletes are members of SAL and that all are running in the correct age group. This year they picked up the following anomalies.
 - 727-771 Thomas McDonald was entered as an individual for Bellahouston H and in the team race for Kilbarchan AAC. SAL has no record of a change of club and his entry for Bellahouston was disallowed
 - 118-126 Ronhill Cambuslang H entered two Niamh Brown's in the U13 Girls race. There are two of them, fortunately with different DoBs. Only 1 was eligible to compete in the team race. This was picked up and reported to the results team.
 - 282-379 Luke Foss and John McLean were entered initially as "unattached". However "unattached" runners are only allowed in a cross country Championship if they are in their 1st year of competition. Luke Foss is a member of Law and District and was moved to that team entry and John McLean was found to be entered for Moorfoot Runners (360).

All requests to run in an out-of-age race were handled by the entries team and refused. Furthermore 2 athletes who were 11 on the day were refused entry according to the SAL variation of the UKA rule.

The scrutiny of the entries is always difficult particularly with the checking of SAL membership. The team is efficient but could be further helped by some technology. There were no scrutiny errors reported on the day.

- 2 The pre(and post)-race publicity was much improved this year and fitting for the major event of the cross country calendar. Peter Jardine and his team are to be congratulated for this.
- 3 Entries for the Championships were the highest (1905) since 1996-7 with the highest number of finishers (1343) since 1994-5. In some of the younger age groups the entries were down but interestingly the number of finishers up.

Particularly pleasing this year is the record senior women's field with 323 athletes entered and 234 finishing.

On the Day

- 1 Assistant Referee David Cairns walked the course while I concentrated on the start/finish area. We both agreed that the course set up was excellent. The SAL staff, led by Ross Cunningham, are to be congratulated for the slickness of this operation. The members of Falkirk Victoria Harriers who set and marshalled the course are to be singled out for congratulations on the excellence of their course setting in the face of tape snapping in the high winds. Again Jim Young and Bob Reid were available for the setting of the start/finish area.
- 2 It was good to see the SAL CEO, Nigel Holl, and Board member Alex Barr in attendance for the whole day.
- 3 The start/finish area worked very well. We have a very experienced collection of officials who operate very efficiently. Despite the number of finishers only the senior men's race required 2 funnels.
- 4 An athlete from Hunters Bog T wearing number 474 Eilidh Wardlaw attempted to start the senior men's championship. Having the wrong number (and gender) and being an inflatable doll I disqualified it immediately and it withdrew.
- 5 There were no recording anomalies reported by the teams.
- 6 The experiment of using 3 announcers on the day again worked well. One announcer covers the start with the referee and the starter, the second concentrates on the presentation on the field and the third on the finish and the on-course commentary. The announcers introduced a new presentation format that worked well. Pre-race announcements also improved the presentations. However the schedule is such that the use of the announcers was unbalanced and we should consider moving all the pre-race announcements to the starting announcer.
- 7 The doctor at the First Aid tent reported that there had been no serious injuries during the day and only a few people (12) treated for minor complaints.
- 8 At one point Beth Potter was distracted by a dog in the U20W race.

Post Race

- 1 The results team have stopped selling results on the day because they can put them on the web almost instantly. This is very efficient and looks very professional.
- 2 The race report was comprehensive and placed on the web site in a timely fashion.