

Hooligans take the shine off Haining's sparkling display

ATHLETICS

THE fireworks prematurely ignited in Glasgow's East End during the 4 x 4.8-mile Allan Scally Memorial Relay set sparks flying among competitors, and were as welcome as the accompanying abuse and harassment of female athletes which bordered on assault.

Harriers of a certain age, whose formative years were in an era when running on the public highway was generally regarded as an esoteric pursuit for eccentrics, were accustomed even to hooligans deliberately obstructing their way, for the perverse pleasure of forcing them off the pavement and into the traffic. More robust runners often dropped the shoulder,

rugby-style, barging through, and were fast enough to escape retaliatory wrath.

Mass participation road-running made attitudes more tolerant, and unsavoury incidents less commonplace, but not around Baillieston and Barachnie, it seems.

Pyrotechnical warfare appeared to have been declared by local yobs on Saturday. Several women were victims of this, as well as verbal abuse. Among them was City of Glasgow's Hailey Haining, the Great Britain internationalist and former AAA track champion, who nevertheless smashed what had been perceived as a tough course record, with a time of 25 minutes 16 seconds.

This was 89 seconds inside the

mark set by her international club-mate Lynne Macdougall – and here's the rub – Macdougall has since refused to run because of the sexual innuendo to which she was subjected that day. Although Haining's team were first across the line, they were not official winners.

City of Glasgow arrived with only two runners instead of three, and a composite, non-counting team were formed. Having athletes at the Reebok event in Birmingham, and others preserving their powder for yesterday's meeting at Girvan, contributed to the club's plight, but Glasgow official Tom Daly confirmed that when he phoned Macdougall, she cited her previous experience as the clinching factor for declining to run.

"Yes, I got the treatment," confirmed Haining, who said she was verbally harangued and had her path obstructed. "I guess I was lucky, though. Because I ran the first stage, there were still men racing around me, so I didn't feel so vulnerable. Later in the race, when the field is more spread out, the girls are often alone, and quite nervous."

Haining, in fact, completed the course in thirteenth place, ahead of 42 of the male teams who started. It was, by any standards, an exceptional run by the Glasgow vet. Such has been her catalogue of injuries over the years, however, she is reluctant to regard it as lighting the fuse for a winter of personal fireworks. "I'm trying

not to look too far ahead, because I always seem to be disappointed or frustrated," she said.

Last year she ran for Britain in both the European and World cross-country championships. "I asked too much of myself, and had gone off form by the time the worlds arrived. If I just run on roads, I seem to minimise injury risk. I won't attempt the Europeans, but if I hold together, I'll hope to make Britain's world team in March."

European and world selection must also be within the grasp of the rejuvenated former Olympic steeplechase finalist Tom Hanlon, who logged the fastest time of the day, 22-11, helping Mizuno Racing Club to victory for the seventh

time in 10 years, and a monopolistic fifth relay win of the winter season.

Shettleston led after the opening leg through Graham Wight, with Racing's B team second, and their A team back in fifth, but Hanlon made the selection vagary academic, giving them an unassailable lead.

First-year junior Andrew Lemoncello showed his maturity with an excellent third place on the opening stage, to which his Fife elders doggedly clung on, while the former Glasgow Marathon winner Peter Fleming, back from the US, was an impressive third-fastest of the day on his return to his former club, Bellahouston, at the age of 39. Details:

MEN: 1, Mizuno Racing Club (D Gardner 24-03, M Colligan 23-58, T Hanlon 22-11, G Stewart 22-35) 1hr 32min 47sec; 2, Shettleston (G Wight 23-38, B Coyle 23-50, J Mackay 24-05, A Callan 24-11) 1-35-44; 3, Fife (A Lemoncello 23-54, O Greene 24-08, J Cunningham 24-12, S Moss 24-36) 1-36-47; 4, Mizuno B 1-37-13; 5, Shettleston B 1-39-12. Fastest laps: 1, Hanlon 22-11; 2, Stewart 22-35; 3, P Fleming (Bellahouston) 22-54; 4, N Gunstone (Dundee Hawkhill) 23-22; 5, J Heap (Hunters Bog Trotters) 23-26; 6, Wight 23-38; 7, A Robson (MRC B) 23-49; 8, Coyle 23-50; 9, Lemoncello 23-54; 10, B Scally 23-56.

Scottish Universities Championships: 1, Edinburgh (sixth overall - J McDonald 24-15, J Mclock 25-39, A Mendes 26-01, T Bracegirdle 24-53) 1-40-48; 2, Aberdeen (twelfth) 1-42-51; 3, Edinburgh B (seventh) 1-49-08; 4, Glasgow (twenty-ninth) 1-52-33; 5, Aberdeen (thirty-first) 1-53-34.

WOMEN: 1, Shettleston Ladies (E McBrain 29-03, P McKay 31-19, L McNeill 27-21) 1-27-43; 2, Falkirk (J Stevenson 27-51, M McCormack 34-10, C Lawless 32-19) 1-34-20; 3, Giffnock North (M McVey 32-34, L Prinson 31-05, D Galbraith 30-31) 1-34-39. Fastest laps: 1, H Haining (City of Glasgow, composite) 25-16 (course record); 2, V Gill (Hunters Bog Trotters, composite) 26-57; 3, McNeill 27-21; 4, Stevenson 27-51; M Linden (City of Edinburgh) 28-02.

DOUG GILLON