

Scottish Cross Country Relay Championships
Cumbernauld 24/10/2009
Referee's Report
Ron Morrison

What went well

- 1 One of the most important aspects at Cumbernauld is the weather and in this respect we were very lucky. The forecast of very bad rain held off until the last person had finished with only a few light showers and even a little sunshine breaking through the overcast at some stages during the day. As at all our championships there is little protection from the elements for athletes and officials should the weather be bad. **It is time to rethink our provision here.**
- 2 The course was soft but fair and well marked. Even so one isolated runner on the Senior Men's last leg managed to take a short-cut which I saw through binoculars. He was so far back in the field that I took no action except to point out his meandering to him. I received no complaints about the course and am not aware of any injuries due to the course. **This is an excellent course that we should retain if possible.**
- 3 All races started on time as advertised on the programme although the start times sent out to officials were slightly different. This was spotted early and easily fixed. The announcers, marksmen and starter combined well. The starts themselves caused no problems as the starting grid was large enough.
- 4 The recording of results was excellent both in times and places and coped well with the 16 team overlap at the end of the 3rd leg with the 4th leg finishers in the Men's race.
- 5 The on-course catering was very good and served cheerfully.
- 6 The first-aid team were well placed for action and easily contactable.
- 7 The results were produced efficiently and available on the SAL website early in the evening.

What did not go so well

- 7 The most difficult part of these Championships is the take-overs. Over the years we have devised a method of separating the incoming and outgoing athletes. This allows efficient recording and avoids the two sets of athletes getting in each other's way. However the method is complex, especially in high volume, short races where many runners come in close proximity, and requires both officials and athletes to be aware of the system and alert. Since we only use this procedure three times per season it is often forgotten from year to year. This year the 1st change over in the YAM race was chaotic and the 1st change over in the Men's race little better. The system can work well and did on the other 7 changeovers during the day.

The consequences of the ill working changeovers were many athletes missing their departure slot and some others seeing the chaos departing too early.

The operation is that athletes are assembled in the starting zone and called into the starting funnel as their incoming runner approaches. Quite a few missed this call. They are then held by the starting official until their incoming runner finishes and then released. More missed the release call. I had to release many outgoing runners who had missed their call. The starting official does not have time to compensate for an athlete missing the call.

Finally a number of athletes mistook the call into the starting funnel as permission to start and started too early. None of this affected the medal teams as it is a facet of the large numbers and lack of concentration on the part of the athletes.

I noticed that team 86 took over from team 85, both Inverclyde AC, and visa versa on leg 2 and reversed the procedure on leg 3. I mentioned it to the Team Manager.

One of the Edinburgh University runners (leg 2 team B) on realising that he had missed the change over stormed away angrily blaming the officials and leaving his teammates on legs 3 and 4 stranded. Several other team managers shouted abuse at the officials wrongly placing the blame on them for the late start of their athletes. They ran away before I could get to them.

Other issues

- 8 Over the years we have adopted a mechanism to allow athletes who are entered but for one reason or another cannot run in a complete team to take part without counting in the race. For example an U15 may turn up but the U13 they have to take over from does not. It also covers outgoing athletes where the athlete coming in drops out or becomes injured.

The procedure is that the athlete reports to the Referee who instructs them to remove their number and to report to the start official who will set them off in a position that does not interfere with the race. They are instructed to drop out before the finish. A number of athletes, around 10, were allowed to run on this basis. Only 1 forgot to finish but the recorders knew not to record him since he did not have a number.

Variations this year were that Sarah Kelly turned up to run only to find out that Dundee Hawkhill had filled their two teams. Lily Partridge, also Dundee Hawkhill, was also allowed to run a 2nd leg on the same basis. They complied with the Referee's instructions.

- 9 There is an increasing fashion for Clubs to complete team on the day with runners running a second leg. UK RULE 511 states that "In cross country relay races where a team includes a runner who has already run a stage of the race, that team shall not, subject to the entry conditions of the race, be included in the results." This is very difficult to spot except where the outgoing athlete is high profile. I pointed the rule out to Phil Mowbray, HBT, who accepted that he should not run a second leg even although he had done it many times in the past and we both knew that there were many others doing it on the day. **The Commission should take a stand on this – either for or against.**
- 10 Allied to the above is the increasingly bad habit of team managers allowing non-entered athletes to substitute for an entered one. If the athlete is not entered

then they are given a number of someone who is but has not shown up. **I think a review of how we do entries, declarations etc would be useful to change this.** The results as an historical record are not accurate.

- 11 Perhaps the worst and certainly the most original error was by Cameron Rochette running as the sole runner is the St Andrews University 3rd team. On completing his 1st leg and being time recorded he ducked under the tape and took off again for the 2nd leg. We now had a time for a runner who is not recorded as a place since that is done at the end of the funnel that he dodged. As he finished the 2nd leg I instructed the time recorders to ignore him, told him he was disqualified and that he would not appear in the results. He then asked if he could run the 3rd leg. I said no!
- 12 In the presentation of the event the announcers are at a disadvantage in that at present they do not have a running order of the athletes. **This should be rectified.**
- 13 Finally I just wonder if we could use some technology to aid our problems here. If the athletes had electronic chips then Clubs would only need to enter the correct numbers of teams and no individual names. At the declaration the tag is presented to make up the teams and immediately checked for eligibility by the computer. The lists can then go to the announcer.

The timing and recording can be done by the chips and the changeovers controlled by the chips. Anyone starting before the incoming runner finishes is simply disqualified. **We should consider this option.**