

Scottish Cross Country Championships
Callendar Park, Falkirk 24/2/2018
Referees' and Event Convener's Report
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For the 13th consecutive year Callendar Park, Falkirk played host to the Scottish Cross Country Championships. Located centrally within Scotland the venue provides good parking, a nearby school and a park that facilitates imaginative course design. Athletes, spectators, volunteers, course designers and officials alike are familiar with the environment, promoting efficient racing tactics, viewing strategies and optimum course design. The number of entries clearly shows the venue is popular with athletes and clubs. The number of finishers this year is a record since the formation of the SAF/SAL at 1733. The continued increase in senior women participation is both welcome and remarkable. This year a record 271 finished. For the first time the Championships achieved equality with male and female athletes of the same age group running the same distance. Overall the Championships indicate that it is an event in which athletes like to participate. Furthermore the number of spectators is consistently remarkable and enhances the festival atmosphere for the Championships.

This year we were blessed with a beautiful day in Falkirk which may account for the good number of spectators. Generally, the weather was sunny and dry cooled by a sharp but moderate wind with the temperature remaining at about 2–6C. The going was, at the start of the day, hard but turning soft in the latter races. In all it was a great day for cross-country running and the SAL events manager, Alasdhair Love, has to be congratulated, not for the weather, but for yet another excellent promotion of the Championships.

The RR&CC Commission's approach to promoting all Championships is that of incremental improvement. As with every year there were no major incidents but some surprises in the presentation of the Championships and this report merely concentrates on the highlights to be retained and some aspects that could be investigated to continue the incremental improvement.

1 Pre Race Action

The entries team ensured that all athletes were members of SAL and that all were running in the correct age group as well as entered by their 1st claim club. As of last year they used a spreadsheet based system that allows the production of a programme and input into the chip timing system. It uses data from the SAL membership database that has to be set up manually for each Championship.

Entries for the Championships were slightly down at (2231) but not significantly so in any age group. The entries were put on the SAL website in good time for scrutiny. There were no scrutiny errors reported before the event or on the day.

An printed programme was issued to key officials before the race with a full electronic one recorded on the RR&CC Archive. There have been programmes for the men's version of this championship since 1886-7 but none are sold now. Using the Archive to record the programme preserves the tradition and records the event for posterity.

The pre(and post)-race publicity was fitting and excellent for the major event of the cross country calendar. Peter Jardine and his team are to be congratulated for this. The expansion of the video presentation both for results backup and separately for web presentation of the event itself is a great addition. Athletes, coaches, parents etc. use the video to study the race. This year's innovation was the introduction of drone technology in filming the races for even greater coverage.

2 On the Day

2.1 The Course

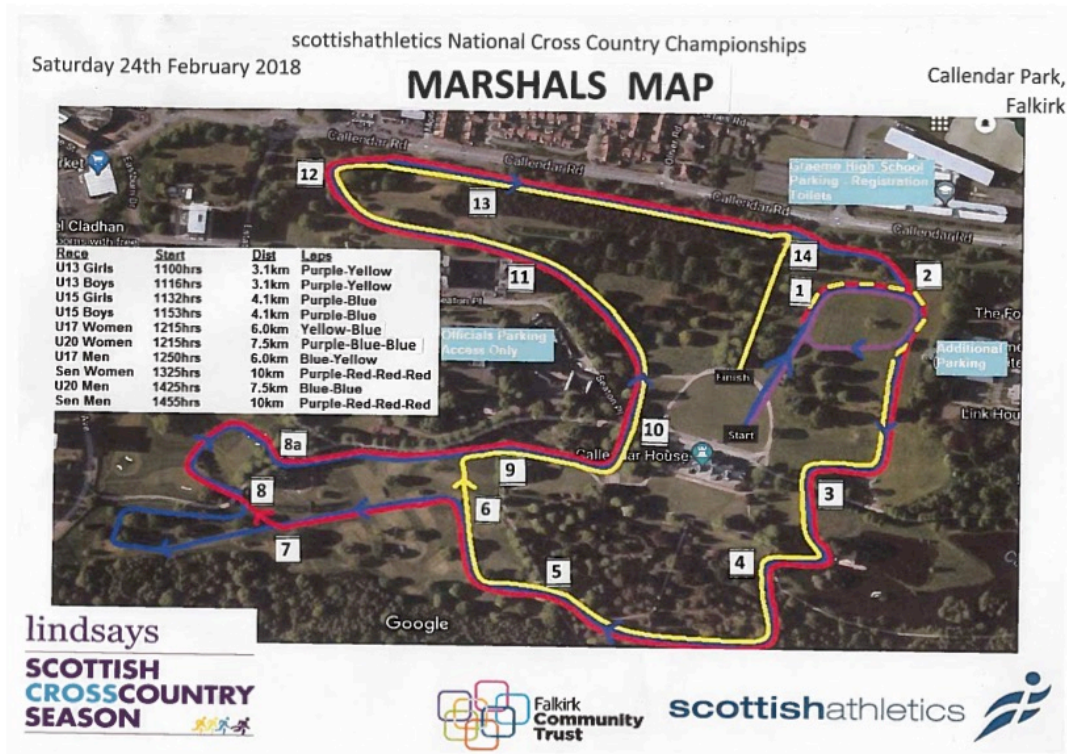


Figure 1: Course Map and Marshal points

Andy Stevenson and Dave Lothian together with their Falkirk Victoria H team did an excellent job in setting up the course and are to be congratulated for the slickness of this operation. The design of the course was particularly challenging this year due to restrictions being placed on the racing line by Falkirk Community Trust.

The Assistant Referee walked the course before the event and ensured that the course marking was first class and there were no issues or adjustments. Despite concerns about the purple loop lanes (inner crossing to outer) they operated as designed and adequately accommodated the senior men's field with no major incidents other than a report of the last senior man "jumping the tape" when the leading runners passed him on their second lap). Between marshal points 2 & 3 there was a course change from the advertised map but this did not impact significantly on distances and it avoided manhole covers, etc. There was some erosion to the path by the lake at marshal point 4 but Dave Lothian managed to get some orange barrier "fencing" to highlight and keep the competitors clear.

The lack of fencing in the finishing straight allowed the crowd to close in on the racing line.

The mild weather contributed to the lack of damage to the course.

2.2 Marshals

Through pre-race publicity and direct approaches 22 Clubs volunteered marshals. They were Bellahouston Road R, Cambuslang H, East Kilbride AAC, Edinburgh AC, Fife AC, Falkirk VH, Garscube H, Irvine AC, Kinross Road R, Lasswade AAC, Linlithgow AAC, Perth Strathtay H, Pitreavie AAC, PH Racing Club, Springburn H, Stirling Tri Club, Strathearn H, Teviotdale H, Westerlands CCC, Carnegie H, Edinburgh and Glasgow Fronrunner, Harmeny AC plus volunteers via Falkirk Community Trust. There were two call offs on the day that were covered by Central AC and Ayrshire club members.

The Event Convener organised the marshals into two shifts giving adequate cover according to the marshal's map shown in Figure 1

The marshals were briefed and given written instructions as to their duties before taking up position. The instructions are given in the Appendix.

There were some reported problems with marshals using the radios that has been put down to inexperience and some faulty apparatus. Sue and Ken Walker who were at road crossing 3 (late shift) set up a stake one side of path and taped across path (2 people one of each side) similar to the system for path crossing at 10 as well for both shifts in future.

2.3 The Start

The start position reverted to its pre 2014 position with a straight run up the hill as per Figure 1. This adjustment worked successfully and there were no major incidents or collisions observed. Indeed each of the starts worked well.

Pre 2016 the UKA rule on race announcing the start of a race is to have a 5 mins call up followed by a 2 min call up. This was adhered to by the race announcer but often not by the athletes who tended to gather well before the start of their race.

Since 2016-7 the UKA rule 250 (5) has "In races which include a large number of athletes, five-minute, three-minute and one-minute warnings should be given". The problem is that this rule does not define large.

There are two persistent problems with the start. The first is lining up the athletes behind the line. This year a rope was used to keep athletes about 3m back from the start line and that worked successfully.

Furthermore the new rule also states "Departure boxes shall be provided for teams races and the members of each team shall be lined up behind each other at the start of the race. In other races, the athletes shall be lined up in the manner determined by the organisers."

In the younger age groups we do have the problem of clubs with large numbers of inexperienced and excited entrants dominating the start line. The start officials sort these out manually. In the senior age groups the athletes are well behaved.

2.4 The Finish

Concerns were raised by the Referee and the Events Manager with the chip timing company (FRS) relating to the spacing of the timing mat set up and the consequent delay between chips firing solely on the second mat and any interpolation of the time differences. We were assured that all the chips would fire on the first mat. What he did not tell us was that there was no other backup plan and in particular that the video camera was not being used. However we did see both mats being tested before the first event with the mats responding to the handheld tester.

Given the problem that we had in the U15 boys Short Championships the Assistant Referee was deployed to judge and record the 1st three in each race and another judge stationed to take spot places.

The FRS chip timing system used disposable chips this year making the need for a de-chipping team unnecessary and allowing the finish area to clear quicker. However in the senior races a lot of athletes did not get this message and took time to remove their chips before leaving the finish area.

2.5 The School

The school used to be the focal point for the last 3 team presentations. Now we use the school as a car park and declaration point.

2.6 Timing, Recording & Results

The biggest failure of the day was that the FRS chip timing system worked randomly in the first race, the U13 Girls Championship. Of about the 160 finishers only 71 chips fired leaving us without about 90 missing randomly distributed times and places. The wealth of experience of our officials was demonstrated by the quick thinking of the spot place recorder, Ian Mann, who realised that not all the chips were firing and managed to record the 1st 59 places before the density of the finishers became too great. From this recording sheet John Rodger and Elaine Mackay managed to calculate the 1st 3 teams in the certainty that no other team could overtake them. Thus the presentations were able to take place.

While the lack of backup results from FRS systems cannot be excused the recovery was reasonably impressive. Once these systems go wrong it is complex to know what to correct but he did it with only the loss of 8 mins on the start of the U13 boys race. All other races started on schedule and the chip system worked for the rest of the day.

As per UKA rules, every individual and team result was checked and approved by a Referee in the presence of the Event Convenor before presentation.

At the end of the day the results were produced by FRS on a usb stick and were on the SAL website by 6.00pm. The results, programme and championships' analysis are now on the Archive.

Neither the AT Mays Trophy for the Aggregate men's team nor the Pat Spence Trophy for the Aggregate women's team was awarded on the day. The latter could not be calculated as it requires a full set of results and the U13 Girls was incomplete.

All presentations were made on the field.

2.7 Announcing & Presentation

Over the years we have refined the announcing duties in the Championships. As of the last few years there was one announcer, Bryan Burnett, for the on-course commentary and finish, another, Graham Bennison on the race introduction and the start and a third, John Wands, on the presentations. This worked extremely well again this year.

2.8 Medical Issues

The First Aid team reported that there had been no serious injuries during the day although there was a number of minor complaints. We were advised that they did not have staff to cover first aid requests at point 11 at top of the hill. We also learned that on the information received over the radio priority was being given to athletes already at the van.

4 first aiders were deployed at the first aid van and 2 at point 8a although it is not clear that this second group treated anyone. Both marshal shifts at point 11 reported calling a number of times.

2.9 Race Timetable

The new race timetable accommodates the new race distances and simultaneously avoids the announcers competing with one another for air space.

3 Post Race

3.1 U13 Girls results

The Referees and the Event Convenor undertook the task of trying to construct as accurate as possible an U13 Girls results. General appeals were made to send information that might be useful to the Events team who forwarded it to the Referee. We did not get a lot of useful information but did identify one missing athlete.

The result that was eventually constructed was produced by the following process:

- The 59 hand recorded places and the 71 chip results were merged. This was not easy since the chip order and the recorded order were different. The recorded order had a duplicate error and another wrong position that both had been identified from the general appeal. The recorded order was taken as the correct order and within the first 59 places there were 29 chip times. In some cases the chip times were out of order with the recorded placings and these had to be resolved.
- At this point it was not known if the chip results were accurate and that the recorded places were taken without the use of a funnel so may also be inaccurate. These results were placed on the SAL website for feed back.
- The second phase consisted of using social medial (photographs) to estimate the finishing order after place 59. The website at <https://makeitlastalifetime.smugmug.com/Scottish-Cross-Country-Championships-2018/> was particularly useful. Again however the photographs were not taken on the finish line and have to be regarded as at best estimate. This group were then merged with remaining 42 chip results and threw up some more anomalies about the finishing order. These were published with the following caveat:
 - **“Caveat:** During the U13 Girls Championships there was a chip system failure. The manual recording listed the first 59 finishers and that was enough to calculate the team result with the certainty that no other team could score less than 88 points. The times are the ones that the chips recorded.
 - The results from position 60 are a best estimate from merging the chip system results and photographic evidence. The team results from position 5 onwards are again best estimates based on the calculated individual positions. “

So far we have had no complaints from clubs.

We did get a complaint from a parent who after the first publication of the 59 finishers accused us of giving the results to the Po10 and that his daughter was not allocated a time. This he regarded as unfair and that we should remove all the times. Of course we did not give results to anyone and had them marked as provisional. Interesting Po10 had them marked as provisional as well. Furthermore the particular athlete could be identified within a 12 sec interval.

4 Appendix I

4.1 Marshal Points

Position	Place	Radio	Description of Duties	Name
1	On Plateau at top of hill after start.	No	Ensure runners take inside lap for Purple route & Outside lap for both U17 Races. Move gate once all runners are in the inside lap. Reset gate for next race.	Early Mike Newton (Kinross RR) Late Gavin Orr (Harmeny AC)
2	On Plateau where runners come up slope on completion of first lap	No	Guide runners on to route heading down to lake.	Early Tim Jones (Kinross RR) Late Lesley Mealing (PH Racing)
3	Road Crossing on to Red Ash path	No	Keep crowds off the course and guide runners across path on to Ash path. (2 marshals required here)	Early Gordon Morrison & Iain Thomson (Strathearn H)+ 2 police cadets Late Ken Walker and Sue Walker (Carnegie H)
4	Foot of Nature Trail	No	Keep crowds of the course and point to your right sending runners up the nature trail hill.	Early 2 police cadets Late Megan McLeish (Falkirk VH)
4b	Top of Nature Trail	Yes	Guide runners to your left across the path, runners head towards Golf Course. Where possible radio back leading athletes number and position.	Early Alan Wylie (Cambuslang H) Late Willie McRuary(Cambuslang H)
4c	Top of Nature Trail at Golf Course end	No	Guide runners down slope towards gate at Golf Course	Early Neil Anderson (Linlithgow AC) Late Ann White (Garscube H)
5	Nature Trail path as it turns to cross path into GC	No	Keep crowds of the path. Send runners into the golf course through the gate.	Early Nicki Imrie (Glasgow Frontrunners) Late Michael Lancaster (Bellahouston RR)
6	Control Gate for Yellow Lap	RADIO	For those doing Yellow lap guide runners down gully. For those doing Red and Blue laps guide runners Left.	Early Linden Nicholson (Lasswade AC) Late Izzy Menzies (Edinburgh AC)
7	Control gate for Red Laps	RADIO	Guide runners to your left sending them to gate exiting large Golf Course for Red lap. Where possible radio back leading athletes number and position	Early Pauline Walker (Teviotdale H) Late Rob Halliday (Teviotdale H)
8	Path at gate exiting Golf course	No	Keep crowds off the path. Guide runners on to small grass area.	Early Adrienne Dowds (East Kilbride AC) Late Alan Reid (Teviotdale H)
8a	Path at opening in hedge entering into Golf Course	No	Keep crowds off the path. Guide runners towards into Golf course.	Early Kirsty McAnemy (East Kilbride AC) Late Gillian Banks (Stirling Tri Club)

9	Path at Golf course gate	No	Keep crowds off the path. Guide runners towards Crazy Golf area.	Early Andrea Gavin (Edinburgh Frontrunners) Late Maureen Soar (VAMOS 14)
10	Road Crossing beside the Mound and House	No	Keep the crowds and any traffic off the course and guide the athletes up the hill towards the High Flats (2 marshals required here)	Early Margaret Daniels and Janette Green (VAMOS 14) Late Margaret McLeod and Fiona Bogie (VAMOS 14)
11	Path at High Flats crossing to grass area.	RADIO	Keep crowds off the path at crossing at High Flats. Guide runners Left after crossing path.	Early Mairi Fraser (Perth Strathtay H) Late Charles Deehan (Westerlands CCC)
12	Furthest out point at grass next to Callendar Road	RADIO	Keep eye on runners. Where possible radio back leading athletes number and position.	Early Alastair Douglas (Perth Strathtay H) Late Tom Gillespie (ex HBT)
13	Path from Callendar Road heading to High Flats	No	Keep crowds off the path at crossing to grass area at Callendar Road side of trees. Guide runners up hill.	Early Julie Jenkins (Perth Strathtay H) Late Helen McPherson (Westerlands CCC)
14	Gate at start of Red Blaze	RADIO	Keep crowds and people entering the park off the course. Either guide athletes to your left down the Red Blaze or continue lap to Plateau.	Early Ken Morris (Fife AC) and Dave Campbell (Irvine AC) Late Sandra Ross (Pitreavie) and Geraldine Gallagher (Springburn H)

4.2 Marshal Instructions

- Ensure runners keep to the course
- Ensure spectators do not impede runners
- Wear bib whilst on duty, and endeavour to answer questions from runners/spectators from the course map you will be provided with
- Call for First-Aid on radio if required
- If you have a radio instructions will be given as to how to use it
- If you don't have a radio but have a mobile phone call the Chief Marshal Ian Hislop on 07711 673000
- First Aid will be close to point 8a on the course map and close to the finish
- Marshals with radios once in position should check in with the Chief Marshal
- Drone footage will be taking place, if any marshal spots an issue with the drone they should report it immediately to the Chief Marshal

4.3 Marshal Set up Instructions

Dear Marshal

Thank you for volunteering to marshal at Falkirk this coming Saturday Find attached

(1) Marshal's Map

(2) Marshal's Points and allocations

(3) Marshal's Instructions You have been allocated either an early (10.30am to 1.00pm) or late (1.00pm to 3.30pm) shift. Marshals for early shift should report to Chief Marshal, Ian Hislop near the finish at the front of Callendar House by 10.30am (First Race 11.00am) Marshals for late shift should also report to Ian near the finish by 12.45pm Ian's mobile is 07711 673000.

They will be given

(1) Marshals bib

(2) Drink/Food voucher up to value of £4, use at Angus Burgers Van(with healthy options) near Callendar House. Marshals can go to the front of any queue

(3) Radio (not all marshals) (4) Marshals Map It would be appreciated if marshals on the late shift were able to take down stakes and tape near them after the last race and leave it in an orderly pile in that area. This helps Falkirk Victoria Harriers to take course material in at the end of day. Scissors will be provided to cut the tape. Please return bib and radio when you have finished your shift. If you are unable to do the shift allocated please let me know. Any questions, please ask.

At present forecast looks quite good for Saturday. Many thanks and hope you enjoy Saturday

Alex Jackson

Event Convenor