

After 81 victories in 88 starts, a club comes to the end of the road

DAVID COLLON

With outstretched arms, like a winged angel on a valedictory flight from Concorde, Stuart Campbell headed the finishers in the Allan Scally Relay on Saturday.

Yet another Racing Club triumph, their 81st in 88 relay starts in the near 13-year history of the club. And also the last.

Just 24 hours earlier, founder Alan Robson had e-mailed the national governing body, telling

them that as of October 31, the club had ceased to exist. The decision stunned some members of what has arguably been the most successful road-running club in the history of Scottish athletics.

Disillusioned by the sport's organisation, lack of progress in Scottish endurance running, and by the loss of their latest sponsor, Robson has had enough. Yet four diehards refused to lie down, made a last outing together, and remark-

ably pulled off a final coup. Obligated to enter as Racing Club unattached, since their club no longer exists, their name will not go on the trophy. Shettleston, the organisers, acknowledged their performance, but Fife, who crossed the line second, half a minute later, were declared winners. It was a bizarre finale for a club which has been almost universally reviled in five different guises since their launch.

They have campaigned as

Reebok Racing Club, Racing Club Edinburgh, Leslie Deans RC (backed by the former Hearts chairman), Mizuno RC, and Favorit RC. Promised backing from the last of these did not materialise, and that proved the final straw.

"If we'd signed that deal, and got the support, we'd have been obliged to carry on," said Robson yesterday, "but the real clincher was the decision to axe the eight-stage Edinburgh-Glasgow relay."

The blue riband of the road season has been transformed into what many regard as a meaningless event, starting in Edinburgh and finishing at Falkirk. Racing Club have won the E to G an unrivalled 12 times in a row. "We were formed in an attempt to win it, and to improve standards," said Robson. "Nobody but us has won it since."

In that time they won the national road relay title nine times in 11 attempts, and lost

the national cross-country relay championships only once, to Cambuslang. They missed one edition to contest the English six-stage championship in which they were fifth, a record for a Scottish club. They won the national cross-country title only once (1996), routinely forced to defer to Cambuslang. Their last official appearance was the East district cross-country relay at Kelso, which they won by two minutes.

The Scally's course is

unchanged in its 35 years, a yardstick to measure past against present. Nat Muir holds the course record at 21:26, from 1985. In the past 10 years only Racing athletes have come within 48 seconds. Fastest in good conditions on Saturday was AC Muir, of Edinburgh University, with 22:46.

Racing's rump played down their achievement. Seventh after the opening leg, from Dave Gardner, they moved to fifth (97 seconds behind Fife)

after Max Colligan had picked off two places, and to second, just 13 seconds down, when Campbell took over from Davie Ross. "That we could win with none of us breaking 24 minutes tells how poor standards are now," said the 34-year-old Gardner. Colligan is 35 next week, Campbell 36, and Ross was 38 yesterday.

Fife's winning time, 97min 25sec, was the slowest ever.

Results, Digest 10

8.07. Pott (born). R. McGehee & J. Gordon.

Allan Scally 4 x 4.8-mile relay. Shettleston

Men 1 Racing Club Unattached (D Gardner 24.02, M Colligan 24.26, D Ross 24.13, S Campbell 24.15) 1hr 36min 56sec, 2 [official winners] Fife 1:37.25, 3 Shettleston 1:39.06. Veteran: Ronhill Cambuslang 1:44.41

Scottish Universities road relay ch'ships

Men 1 Aberdeen (G Dee 24.26, M Paddon 25.38, R Wainford 26.11, D Burlton 25.20, 7th overall) 1:41.35, 2 Edinburgh 1:42.52, 3 Strathclyde 1:48.45

Women 1 Strathclyde (M Sandison 29.38, N D'Silva 32.18, B Philips 28.08) 1:30.04, 2 Edinburgh 1:38.19, 3 St Andrews 1:40.32

Women's 3 x 4.8-mile 1 HBT (M Clark 27.44, J Clua 29.44, M Jeffrey 32.27) 1:29.56, 2 Bellahouston RR 1:32.01, 3 Bellahouston RR B.1:41.44

GOOD SHOW FROM HARRIERS IN RELAY

Shettleston team takes second spot in Allan Scally memorial race

Road runners... Seniors in the Allan Scally race A squad featured Billy Coyle (pictured right) and Martin Graham (far right). The team came in second overall. They put on a great performance under difficult conditions.



THE weekend's bleak wintry conditions did little to dampen the enthusiasm of some of Scotland's best athletic clubs from competing on East End roads in Shettleston Harriers' 35th hosting of the Allan Scally Memorial relay race.

The 4x1 man relay challenges athletes with one of the longest relay stages of 4.75 miles, and saw Racing Club Edinburgh clock the fastest time of 1hr:36.56.

Racing Club however have recently disbanded and hence were running under the title Racing Club "unattached", meaning that the club in 2nd place, Fife AC, lifted the Allan Scally trophy as victors with Shettleston Harriers 'A' team second overall in a time of 1hr:39.06.

The 'A' squad times were John MacKay 24:30, Adrian Callan 25:32, Billy Coyle 24:36 and Martin Graham 24:28.

Five ladies teams competed this year, with three stages per team.

Hunters Bog Trotters ladies were first home in 1hr:29.56.

Anyone wishing to train with the young athletes this winter should note that training commences at St Mungos Academy on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7.00pm to 8.30pm, full details can be obtained from John McLaren on: 0141 556 4509.

Hill running, track & field, road or country — Shettleston Harriers compete at every level — anyone wishing to join us for competition or just to get fit, contact us via our website at www.shettlestonharriers.org.uk.

