

President's Report

This report was drafted during the first weeks of being confined to barracks during the Coronavirus crisis. The worst situation we have witnessed during our 21st century lives. I mention this partially due to the fact that the B'ham league season started in a similar vein.

My plan for the season was to start off with the Big Guns of Div.1, who were competing at Malvern hosted by Worcester A.C. This is a super course on the side of the hills which I myself have run several times previously and I wanted to see how Div.1 runners would cope on this terrain. Next up would be a visit to Droitwich to view my own club Dudley Kingswinford in Div.3, followed in January to see Div.2 at Coundon Coventry, rounding off with Div.1 at Newbold Comyn to help hand out some well-earned medals.

As they say the best laid plans don't always happen and this was one of those seasons when the weather (rain) in particular was to cause much disruption to host clubs, race organisers, referees, secretaries, team managers and runners a-like. At this stage I would sincerely like to thank you all, especially course organisers and race referees for your unstinting efforts in the days leading up to races to make the season so successful and my experience so enjoyable.

Now back to venues. It was sometime early in the week leading up to the race at Malvern when the e-mails started flowing thick and fast. It finally transpired that the hills had been washed away and the flat lands of Coundon Park, Coventry had risen above the waters to host the Div.1 race at 11.30, followed by the Midlands Ladies League and finally the Div.3 race. It was therefore an early rise on the morning of 9th November to reach Coundon Park by 10.30ish. The course was easy to find with a Satnav and I duly parked up on the grass perimeter of the park. The course was excellently laid out and marshalled, with the undulating wooded section being removed due to a mini lake forming in this area. One of the advantages of this course is that it is spectator friendly and it is easy to see the runners from almost anywhere. The Div.1 race was well contested and took place in reasonably dry conditions with Will Richardson and Omar Ahmed of Birchfield keeping pace with each other for the whole of the race, with only 2 secs separating them at the end. I had the honour of starting this race as I did also the Ladies and Div.3, getting three for the price of one on my first Presidential outing.

By now my plans were changing, I had seen Div.1 and 3 at Coundon Park so it was off to Stratford for Div.2. I set off from home with some hours to spare not realising it was Christmas Fayre time in Stratford. I did, in the end, manage to arrive well in time for the start but not early enough to walk the course, which I usually like to do. Therefore I decided to walk the whole course while also watching the race. The course itself is very demanding, requiring runners to either be going up, down, through heavy mud or contouring on a slope. On the plus side though, for spectators, if you go that far, it is probably one of the most picturesque courses in the league. Unfortunately for the athletes themselves they don't see much of the view. The marshalling was excellent, with many individuals far out on the wilder parts of the course. Many thanks go to Stratford A.C. for putting on such a demanding and technical course.

As I mentioned earlier my original plan was to visit Coundon Park for Div.2, but now that I had been there earlier in the season and also seen Div.2 at Stratford I decided on a visit to Abington Park home of Rugby and Northampton. Arriving early I was not disappointed, I was able to walk the course before most runners arrived. The ground was again boggy underfoot but a strong wind

blowing kept the course reasonably firm during the race. The course consisted of long uphill and long downhill stretches with several undulating areas through the woods. It is very spectator friendly with only a short walk from the start / finish to see all aspects of the race, and also a good test of all runners' ability.

Finally to Leamington, with the famous hill and water jump. The sun decided to make an appearance after the rains of the last four months and all seemed well in the world. Leamington C and A.C. had other ideas though, cunningly finding a whole new course, well one that I had never seen before. Luckily for the runners there was still "The Hill". This, however, on the new course was not quite such a horror as the athletes arrived at a much higher point on the hill after a very muddy and undulating section. I myself saw only one faller at the water jump, there may have been more. Omar Ahmed of Birchfield was the winner of this race and also had the lowest total score from the best of three races. I had the honour of presenting his shield and the many other rewards at Leamington Leisure centre later that day.

I would like to thank all those associated with the League for my most enjoyable year as President. Would I do it again, yes! I now pass the baton on to Noel McKakly and hope you enjoy your year off from being Race Referee!

Richard Sannwald.