For consideration by the AGM of the Birmingham Invitation Cross Country League

Subject: Online Entries and results

At the start of the 2022-23 season, the Midland Women's Cross Country League (MWCCL) switched to taking entries on line using the RyderHQ system. Previously they had handled entries in much the same way as we do - team managers send lists to the Divisional Secretaries (DS) then lots of cutting and pasting. The change had a couple of little glitches which were fixed very quickly, and I believe that the new process has been very well received by athletes and by team managers. Obviously, there is a lot less work for the DS too. Sarah Bland negotiated a deal with RyderHQ such that their system is free to the MWCCL but, at some point in the future, they will have to levy a charge.

Inspired by what MWCCL had done, and bearing in mind that I am one of the men's League DS who must manually process a lot of entries, I have looked into this subject myself. Rather than reinvent the wheel, I contacted a few leagues up and down the country who also take entries on line and asked them who they use and if it has been successful. It is clear from their feedback that none who have moved on line would go back to manual entries.

I spoke to some software suppliers for background information then I wrote a specification of what we currently do and sent it to a number of companies to see if they could provide an online service and at what cost. Importantly, I think that we should also consider outsourcing our results as well as our entries and if at all possible engage with a company that can handle what we do now and some future improvements if we want something.

I have been in touch with SportsSoft, FR Systems, StuWeb, RyderHQ, AVTiming, Race Sign Up, Run Britain, Roster, Tempo, RaceTec, Entry4Sports and Open Track.

Most companies can handle entries, and most can handle race results but very few can handle league results which involve adding several races together. Some of the companies did not reply and some were vague. Some could do everything we want if we give them time to develop functions that they don't currently have. I have ended up with a short list of three.

AVTiming. This is Andrew Vickerman who we used at Betley for chip timing. That wasn't a roaring success, but I am sure that most of the issues were because we had not worked together before. Andrew has switched to working full time on race entries/results. He can handle entries, chip timing and results. Andrew already provides a full service to the Staffs XC League which operates much as we do.

Open Track. This company does entries and league results for the Surrey and Oxfordshire League. They can handle entries and results but not chip timing. They are a significant supplier to Athletics in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and when I spoke to the three Country Associations they all gave a glowing report on the company.

TempoEvents. This is Sarah Bland's company. Sarah is a key member of the MWCCL and was the inspiration behind that League's move to on line entries. She has the advantage that, more than any other company, she very much understands the requirement and is already providing the entry service for MWCCL. Tempo Events can provide a chip timing service itself, but Sarah would use RyderHQ for entries and somebody else for results. In all three cases (entry, results, chips) we would deal with one person/company to cover however many functions we buy in.

There is a fourth option.

DoNothingLtd. We don't have to change because our current processes work very well, but they rely on the DS goodwill and effort and their IT knowledge. The DS are extremely cheap but they are harder to come by than money!! If we do change to use one of the three companies above, then we should assume that it will cost somewhere in the order of £1,500-£2,000 per annum.

I recommend this approach.

(1) Meet with the MWCCL to confirm that on lines entries has gone very well and check that the MWCCL will stay with on line entries even if RyderHQ start to levy a charge. We can then decide in principle to follow suit or not. Note that we are not trying to fix a problem because what we have works well, but rather we are trying to improve what we do and make life easier for our volunteers.

(2) The next decision is how far to change and how to implement it. I suggest we do entries only and once we are happy with that then add results. We should start with just one Division until we are happy with it. Question? Do we ask athletes to enter themselves or ask team managers to enter a team or cater for both?

(3) The next decision concerns how to fund the extra cost which is likely to be in the region of £1,500 to £2,000 per annum for the whole League. This is a lot of money for one league but quite small amount if spread per athlete so should we switch to a charge per athlete and reduce the League affiliation fee – or - fund it through an affiliation increase?

Ray Morgan

17th May 2023