For Birmingham & District Invitation Cross-Country League Executive Committee

Midland Women's Cross-Country League AGM

Report on the Appointment of Technical Officials for the Leagues, 2024/25

Introduction

The 2024/25 season was the second in which the Technical Officials for League fixtures were appointed by a Joint Committee (Mary Hodges for the Midland Women's Cross-Country League; Rob Mulgrue for the Birmingham & District Invitation Cross-Country League). A number of issues with the new system were identified in the previous season, so we thought a report on the 2024/25 season was appropriate.

Background

The reason for the leagues deciding to act together in this way was it was seen to have the following advantages: Referees would know in advance who the Technical Officials would be for each fixture and so would be able to deploy them to best effect; the Referee would have to do only one briefing; officials could be developed by giving them experience of different roles.

The Joint Committee's objectives by appointing individuals to different roles were to enable them, if they so wished, to seek up-grading and to give them opportunities of working in more senior roles under a more experienced chief official. Thus in making the appointments we also had to take account of the levels of officials and their prior experiences. Clearly, some duties (e.g. Timekeeper, Line Judge) require particular qualities and experience and this also influenced our decisions.

It is often not appreciated how many Technical Officials are required for cross-country races in order to ensure that UKA and League Rules are enforced and that the results are accurate and complete. The roles needing to be filled are: Referee, Assistant Referee, Chief Judge, Chief Timekeeper, Starter (those being the chief officials), Line Judge, Judges, Judges' Recorders, Timekeeper, Timekeepers' Recorders, Start Marshals, Funnel Stewards. If there are insufficient officials to fill all of those roles separately, then some duties can be combined, e.g. a Start Marshal might also be a Funnel Steward or the Assistant Referee could also be the Chief Judge. The above roles are in addition to those of Course Marshals, which the host club provides, though sometimes, when we had a surplus of club volunteers, we were able to offer the host club some help.

The Appointment Process for 2024/25

We found the process much easier and quicker than in the first year. We found it necessary to have only one main meeting (against two in 2023/24) and that was completed in a shorter time. We also had a further brief meeting to finalise officials for the last round of fixtures. Of course, there were many e-mails and `phone calls to sort out issues that arose during the

season. One main factor which made it easier was that an Officials Co-Ordinator was appointed responsible for all communications with Technical Officials and club volunteers. Mary Hodges took on this role. We hope that this change from 2023/24 made it a more certain process for individuals and took work off Divisional Secretaries and their equivalents for the Women's League.

In the Report for 2023/24 we noted some major issues that arose in that first year: the Duty Lists were sent out a few weeks later than was desirable; lack of clarity over responsibility for contacting officials; there was no unified list of officials in the leagues; clubs having different volunteers for the women's race from the men's race.

We dealt with all those issues. A unified list of endurance-qualified Technical Officials was compiled making contacts easier. The Duty Lists were circulated about 4 weeks earlier (in late September for the first round of fixtures) and, as noted above, Mary Hodges took on the role of Officials Co-Ordinator responsible for all communications with Technical Officials and with clubs providing volunteers.

We appointed 7 different Referees and 13 different Assistant Referees during the season, thus achieving our aim of giving opportunities to as many individuals as possible to gain experience of senior positions. We have also had qualified Endurance Officials from outside our Leagues offering to help, thus increasing the profile of the Leagues.

Clubs required to provide volunteers have been prompt in notifying the names, so enabling Referees to be assured of who was coming and enabling them to allocate their duties appropriately. This was already the case in previous seasons for the Women's League but for the men's races hitherto Referees would only have known on the day.

Feedback from officials has been positive, especially on the use of only one e-mail address for communications.

As always, the bottom line is that throughout the season races were conducted fairly and accurate and complete results were produced, so thanks to all the various officials who made this possible.

Mary Hodges
Midland Women's Cross-Country League

Rob Mulgrue
Birmingham & District Invitation Cross-Country League

28/2/25