

Birmingham & District Invitation Cross Country League 2021/2022 Season

Division One Report

Saturday 4 December 2021

Host Club: Rugby and Northampton Athletics Club

Venue: Abington Park

The race was held in conjunction with the Midland Women's Cross Country League

Facilities

The venue has no changing facilities, but clubs were advised of this in advance and most will be aware due to this being a frequent venue for division one. Six porto loos were supplied and this seemed sufficient for both the men's and women's leagues. A catering van was on site to provide hot drinks to competitors and officials.

Car parking

The Park has a large permitter which provides scope for car parking, competitors were advised still of the limited extent of this and requested to take steps to share vehicles where possible. I saw no issues relating to parking on the day despite both leagues using this venue on this occasion.

Registration

Registration for officials for both races was held in a tent provided by Rugby and Northampton between the start and finish area, on the day athlete registration for the women's race was also held here. On the day athlete registration for the men's race was held in the adjacent tent marked by a league flag outside by Ray Morgan division secretary.

Weather

The weather was kind to us with only a mild breeze resulting in a not unpleasant temperature compared to other divisions venues.

Course 4 x 2.5k laps

I arrived early and walked the course with Bryan Acford who was the referee for the women's race and his assistant James Terry. The course on the whole follows the outline of the park, and is not as extensively marked as some courses as a result. As a result as we walked the course we made some amendments to more define the racing line and make it more obvious for athletes which was the next way point and the line we wished to follow when turning. Where the host club wishes to mark the outside of a turn, it is important that sufficient attention is first paid to the inner racing line so there is no scope cutting the corner and gaining an undue advantage. Previously identified hazards around point E on the map had been well marked with stakes, Bryan reinforced this with yellow paint as we passed through as well as marking tree routes around the course. There are three points around the course where athletes have to cross macadamised surfaces, these cannot be avoided but under rule 56, part 3.3 it would be advisable to cover these with either matting or wood chippings in the future, especially the path before point E which is much wider than the other two points.

Marshals

We discussed key areas for marshals as we walked the course and was assured marshals would cover these key points, an experienced league official doubled up to assist the marshaling of the split for the finish or further laps. There were no reports from athletes of any issues, so a job well done.

Start / Finish / Funnel

The start was adjacent to the finish area, Ray ensured the league flags were used to mark the start line, there was no assembly line, although we had sufficient start marshals to assemble the athletes a metre back from the line and to brief them.

The finish line was not clear, too wide and the funnel not sufficiently long enough when we arrived. We managed to rectify this well before the start of the race with the assistance of Bryan, although another 5 to 10m would have probably avoided the back of the funnel queue getting as close to the line as it did at one point.

First Aid

There were two first aiders in attendance, and there were not incidents they had to attend to my knowledge. They arrived at 2:15pm, 15 mins before the start of the men's race, I would have preferred them to be there before the start of the officials briefing and given, they should have been there to cover the women's race this is an area for improvement for the future.

Officials

The designated non hosting clubs all provided their volunteers who all signed in before the 2pm deadline. All volunteers carried out their duties as requested and we had a number of officials from the women's race who had volunteered to assist the men's race which help provide some experienced guidance on the results boards.

All appointed officials turned up and carried out their usual roles as requested by myself on the day with no issues.

Race

The race was won by George Beardmore for Worcester AC in 30:46 who managed to pull away and establish a clear lead on the last lap. Connor Bentley from City of Stoke was second, with the University of Birmingham doing a superb job of packing there scoring 6 close together with 4 in the top 10 and all within the top 20. There were 220 finishers with approximately 10 athletes pulling out as the race progressed. There were no reported incidents and I had no protests or disqualifications to deal with.

I would like to thank Ray Morgan for helping me get verified results so quickly, which I am sure all athletes appreciated.

Chris Hitchman
Division One League Race Referee

Birmingham & District Invitation Cross Country League 2021/2022 Season Division Two Report

Saturday 4 December 2021

Stratford upon Avon,

Venue and Facilities

The venue at the Welcombe Hills and Clopton Park was the same as used by the Leagues in recent years. There are no facilities at the course other than some hired-in toilets, a gazebo for registration and a refreshment van. There was an area set aside for club tents. Car parking for officials was arranged at a school about half a mile from the course but athletes had to use the town centre car parks and had a lengthier walk to the course. Clubs were warned of this in advance.

Prior Information

Clubs and officials were sent directions, car parking details, a map and brief description of the course together with a note about the lack of facilities. I was sent copies of the England Athletics Licence and the Risk Assessment.

Weather

It was dry, mainly sunny but with a cool wind which became stronger through the afternoon making it feel cold.

The Course

It was the same as in 2019: a tough course with two steep and prolonged hills for each of the approximately two-mile laps (three laps for the men; two for the women). It is rough open grassland with a small section through a wooded area. The surface was comparatively firm, though with a short section through a gateway which was muddy. The first up-hill section is close to the start – not ideal but there are no alternatives which do not have worse disadvantages. The main hazards are raised grassy hummocks on several parts of the course and rabbit holes. Little can be done to avoid these or to mitigate them, though they were marked by paint or stakes; runners were warned at the start of these hazards.

On inspection on the morning of the races the course had been well marked with stakes, direction arrows, tape and paint. The only adjustments needed were to add a few stakes where there was an undesirably long gap between them and to mark a few more of the previously mentioned hazards. Tree roots were marked by paint. During the races the course was well marshalled. I was not made aware of any competitors going off course. The home club, Stratford AC, had done a good job.

The start line was marked in paint and was adequately wide with an assembly line marked in its rear.

The finishing funnel fully complied with the Leagues' requirements as to length and layout; the only adjustment needed was that the finishing line itself had to be moved a few metres to avoid it being placed in a position where it would have been on a slightly downhill slope, which could have caused athletes to slip and fall as they decelerated beyond the line.

First Aid

Two qualified first aiders were present with a 4x4 vehicle and marshals had a `phone number to contact if a runner was injured out on the course. In the event there were no serious injuries, just a few of the normal soft tissue injuries of bruises and scrapes.

Officials

All League and club-nominated officials attended and we had some interchange of officials between the men's and women's races, which helped officials obtain more experience and was particularly useful for those hoping to be up-graded. All duties were covered and all officials performed well. I used Noel Butler, who was Referee for the women's event, as my Assistant Referee and Chief Judge.

One welcome touch was that Stratford AC provided a drinks voucher for all officials.

The Races

The race proceeded smoothly: no incidents were reported to me and I had no protests or disqualifications to deal with. The number of finishers was slightly up (222) compared with the first fixture (194) but slightly down on the corresponding fixture in 2019 (236). A group of four runners established an early break-away that they maintained to the finish with only 28 seconds covering them, Ian Allen (Spa Striders) was the winner. In the team event there were some changes from the first fixture with Royal Sutton Coldfield AC first, followed by Bromsgrove & Redditch AC and Halesowen A&CC, giving the overall positions of Kenilworth; Halesowen; B & R. At the tail-end of the field two competitors finished in over the hour with the final one finishing in fading light 17 min.27 secs behind the penultimate. Fortunately Stratford AC had a sweeper, so enabling officials to be aware of the final runner. The full results are on the web site.

The results process went smoothly except that the downloading of the times from the computerised watch failed and so times had to be entered into the results manually, delaying publication to later that evening. There was only one discrepancy between the Judges' A and B boards (well done to them!) and this was resolved quickly using the video camera evidence.

Rob Mulgrue

Referee3

7/12/21

Birmingham & District Invitation Cross Country League

Plock Court Gloucester 4-12-2021

Host Club Severn AC

Referee's Report

Pre-Event

The host club provided detailed travel instructions together with car parking arrangements and course maps/details, well in advance of the meeting. Due to another event taking place in the sports hall next door there were major concerns about car park spaces. Severn AC again provided detailed travel instructions for alternative car parking a short walk away from the venue.

On arrival

I arrived at approx. 12 (midday together with Noel Makakly (League President).

Weather conditions, the temperature was 5 degrees, overcast with a light wind.

The intention was to walk the course on arrival, but the marking out of the course had not been started. The delayed start had a knock-on effect with starting my other duties.

The course

It was 4 laps of a flat sports field plus the finishing straight, mainly short grass land varying from firm going to soft going (muddy).

Course inspection

The "marking out" was minimalistic. Finish funnel was of an adequate length but there was no exclusion zone for the protection of the officials, their duties were hindered to a small extent by spectators and team managers.

There were 2 health and safety issues highlighted, on reporting them to the clerk of course they were dealt with promptly.

Race HQ

This was at the Cricket Pavilion which had an elevated position with views of most of the course, the club tents being in front of the pavilion.

First aid

Was provided by St Johns Ambulance. The two first aiders had no uniforms to distinguish them from spectators.

The Clerk of the Course was asked if the course marshals had the first aiders phone numbers should there be a need to contact them. During the race Carolyn Franks spoke to 2 of the marshals, and they had not been informed about the phone numbers.

No issues were reported

Officials

Carolyn Franks volunteered to be the official's secretary for the day.

The league had nominated 4 officials for key positions, 3 of them arrived well in advance of the 45 minutes deadline for signing in. The 4th could not make the event, as he had to self-isolate due to covid guidelines.

Only 4 clubs had contacted the referee/league secretary in advance with details of their helpers/officials. A substantial number of helpers were still "signing in" close to 30 minutes before the start. Apparently, they were not aware of the league's rules regarding the timescale for reporting for duty. This made finalising the team sheet unduly testing due to the limited time available.

All clubs did provide a helper/official.

The race

The front of the race was dominated by Weston Tempo with 10 in the first 13 finishers.

No issues reported were about club vests or head phones.

The first 3 finishers:

Dom James 34.39 Weston Tempo

Dan Owen 35.53 Weston Tempo

Elliot Taylor 36.11 Weston Tempo

Last finisher 75.09

216 runners finished with one DQ due to only doing 3 of the 4 laps.

During the race a significant wind chill developed.

Many of the "first time helpers" were not appropriately dressed for the weather conditions, several started dance routines to try to keep warm.

All officials are to be thanked for their help in the testing conditions.

A good team effort

Glen lock

Referee