

Congleton Harriers Race Reports.

Last Saturday saw the final race in the North Staffs cross-country league season. It was run in appalling conditions, driving rain, strong winds and deep, deep mud! The race was run at Westbourne High School Leek and the course was taxing in the extreme. The men's race was run over three laps and the women's race over two laps. Of the four races in the series this was, by far, the hardest course with a series of hills to be climbed on each lap.

Due to the adverse weather and the proximity to Christmas numbers were down but, nonetheless the races were extremely competitive as runners endeavoured to hold on to their league positions and stay amongst the prizes.

The Harriers ladies teams were holding 5th place before the start of the race and at one stage it looked as if this position would be lost as only three runners were on the starting line prior to the race. Judith Newham, who had been working, managed to make the team numbers up, arriving just as the other runners were setting off-not the best preparation for a race! Debbie Hill was 1st Harrier finishing in 25th place in a time of 27.26. Debbie held her position as 1st Lady V45 and was awarded a cup for her efforts. Jude Newham made her way through the field to finish a fine 47th in 29.32. Judith Ceuppens ran herself to exhaustion and was pleased with her 71st position with a time of 32.38. Caroline Partner, who has been improving all year, came in as the teams 4th point scorer in 80th position and a time of 36.26. Despite fielding a weakened team the ladies held on to their 5th position, a magnificent achievement. In all 10 ladies turned out for the Harriers over the four races with Debbie Hill and Caroline Partner competing in all the events.

After the first three races the men's team were standing in 3rd position, just ahead of Newcastle who were only 35 points behind. Every position counted and the team pushed as hard as they could to maintain their slender lead. Bryan Carr achieved his highest position in the race series by finishing 15th in a time of 31.28 and for his efforts over the four races he achieved 2nd place in the V40 category. Just behind was the fast improving James Wood who also had his highest finish in 21st place in a time of 32.45. Wood was in a hurry to get round the course, as he is due to become a father at any time and was eager to get home! The ever consistent James Pearce was next in with a time of 34.25 (36), closely followed by Pete Newham 35.00 ((42) and Simon Jackson 35.32 (54) Jackson finished 3rd in the V40 section. The final team scorer on the day was Andy Roberts in 43.52 (58). This consistent packing allowed the team to hold off the challenge of Newcastle and fully deserved their highest ever position in division one of 3rd place.

Just behind the team scorers were Alex McCormick 37.06 (69), Chris Moss 37.15 (71), Chris Tanner-Tremaine 43.52 (139), Tony Smith 45.48 (152), Harold Pinkney 46.06 (154) and Dave Taylor 46.11 (155).

Without the support of the non-scoring runners the club may not have achieved 3rd place therefore thanks are extended to all 21 members who took part over the four races. Five Harriers raced in all four events, Bryan Carr, Pete Newham, Simon Jackson, James Wood and Harold Pinkney.

The week before saw the running of the very popular Cheddleton 10k, known as the Christmas Pudding race as each finisher is awarded a pudding for their efforts. Run over three hilly laps of Cheddleton village this race has always been well supported by the Harriers and this year was no exception with 13 runners taking part.

James Wood had the honour of being 1st Harrier home in 38.16 and his 19th position won him a socket set. Pete Newham was just outside the prizes in 21st place with a time of 38.27 followed by Alex McCormick 41.48(52) and Seaton Kennerley 45.27 (94). Gill Armstrong ran strongly to finish in 105th position in a time of 45.55, she was chased home by Debbie Hill in 46.02 (109), Rob Parkin 47.33 (133), Derek Dale 49.11 (161) and Dave Taylor 50.02 (173). It was good to see Mike Laurence running after a long lay from racing and he finished in 42.42 (226) just ahead of Shirley Spratt 53.15 (235), Margaret Fox 59.17 (307) and Caroline Partner 60.05 (318). There were 391 finishers.

Forthcoming events.

Sunday 16th December Roaches Christmas Cracker race (fancy dress optional)

Boxing Day. Club run up the Cloud. All members and non-members welcome. This is a social run not a race. 10.00am from Leisure Centre.

Saturday 5th Jan 2008. Cheshire Cross-country championship. Pre-entry essential. Names to Derek Lucas before 23 December.

Runners have now been notified if they have been accepted for the London Marathon next April. If you are planning to run and would like to train with the Harriers please see club web-site for details. A long steady run (currently 10 miles but increasing each week) takes place every Saturday from the Leisure Centre at 8.30am.

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