

Taking centre stage this week were the Congleton Harriers Women's Cross-Country Team. After three strong performances in the previous races of the North Staffs Cross Country League the team were sitting top of division 2 knowing that a score of under 111 from the first four members of the team back would see them finish the series as division 2 winners. The final race was being run at a new venue; Rodbaston Campus, Penkridge (way down by J13 of the M6). The new course, coupled with truly horrendous conditions which saw temperatures barely creep above zero combined with strong winds and freezing rain just added to the pre-race nerves.

They needed not have worried: Emma Weston was the first Harrier to finish crossing the line in 22nd place out of a field of 162 runners over the 3.12 mile distance in a time of 21.16. Following closely behind in 24th and 25th place were Jo Moss and Emma Taylor in 21:20 and 21:25 respectively and then Carol Bird in 33rd place in a time of 22:10 (Carol also finished 2nd in her age category). This gave the team a total score of 104, comfortably coming in under the 111 target and ensuring they finished first on the day out of the 13 division 2 teams competing and securing first place overall in the four-race series. Of the other Harriers competing Mel Worthington was 42nd in 22:49, Ellie Dick was 62nd in 24:02 and Camilla Wilmot was the final Harrier back finishing 86th in 25:33. The icing on the cake was that this was also enough for the team to pick up the overall 3rd place veterans prize.



Emma Weston, Carol Bird, Emma Taylor and Jo Moss:

Photo: J Moss

This was a fantastic performance for the Women's team and division 1 should hold no fears for them next year.

For the men, their race was a 4.74 mile course in a field of 254 runners. The Harriers knew that a strong performance on the day could see them push for a higher position overall and they didn't disappoint. The first four runners finished with a total of 311 points, easily their best score of the series finishing 4th on the day out of the 16 division 2 teams competing which was also enough to see them climb to a final position of 6th in the overall race series. The four scoring members of the team were Anthony Allen who finished 40th in 30:09, Bryan Lomas, 83rd in 32:25, Chris Moss 91st in 32:34 and Stuart Rider, 97th in 32:46. They were followed by Jason Jones in 155th in 36:27, Nick Budd 163rd in 36:56, James Yates 165th in 36:59, Paul Steel, 180th in 37:50, Jack Sargeant, 190th in 38:54, Paul Crean, 209th in 40:33, Nigel Poole, 213th in 41:04, Martin Sands, 221st 42:03 and Duncan Young, 234th in 43:49.

Sunday saw another social run outing. Being the festive season, the Harriers and friends decided to make use of a local race, taking the opportunity to dress up in full Santa and elf regalia. The runners joined in the South Moorlands Athletic Club Christmas Cracker which is normally routed over part of the Roaches. This year, however due to icy conditions, the race was switched to a safer 4.7 mile road route around Tittesworth Reservoir. Of the Harriers in the group, Gill Armstrong finished 80th out of the 189 competitors in 41:58 followed by Phil Dawson, 84th in 42:24, Debbie Hill, 106th in 44:46 (also finishing 2nd in her age category) and Dave Whittaker, 114th in 46:06.



Festive runners at the Christmas Cracker

Photo: Phil Dawson

The club welcomes new members with club training runs on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. If you are thinking of joining but are unsure of your pace and ability to keep up, then consider the Monday run which are now being tailored to accommodate new prospective members. You can find full details on our Congleton Harriers website: Congleton-harriers.co.uk. You can also connect with the club on Facebook where details of club activities are posted regularly.