

Race organiser's report, South Cheshire 20, 10 May 2009

Having had a couple of days to read feedback on Runners World and our own website, and to wait for reports of any significant problems that weren't apparent on the day to come to light, I think it's now safe to file a few thoughts on Sunday's race.

Firstly, thank you to competitors for your overwhelmingly positive, complimentary remarks on the race, both in person on the day and subsequently. As a club, we put on three races a year, partly because we feel if we're going to take advantage of other people's efforts in putting on races, we need to do our bit for the running community and – perhaps more selfishly – because we want to further the good name of South Cheshire Harriers so we can continue to thrive as a club. Your feedback suggests both ambitions were fulfilled on Sunday.

Thank you also for turning out in such numbers. Some of you have commented on the small field for the race. Relative to a good many races, this is perfectly true; in fact, however, the 160 finishers this year represents exactly double the finishers of 12 months ago, and more than double the number in 2007. This turn-out means we will be able to write a much bigger cheque to Virgin Trains' designated charity CLIC Sargent, probably entailing the entirety of the £500 Virgin provided in sponsorship plus more on top. (We will have to sit down now and go through the accounts to determine exactly how much.)

Your feedback suggests the closeness of the Edinburgh Marathon played a big part in this, but we also had runners preparing for, among others, the Cork City Marathon and, even further afield, the Midnight Sun Marathon and Ironman Switzerland. Next year, we will again look to schedule the race to offer good preparation for the greatest number of big distance events, with Edinburgh clearly a prime consideration.

As to the race itself – many congratulations to all the prize winners. Reports from marshals were soon feeding back to race HQ that “that lad from Tipton is on his own already”. While Martin Williams' devastating course record run did rather turn the lead bike into a personal escort, as he won by more than 10 minutes, it should be noted that Gareth Briggs' excellent time in second place would have won the race two years ago and been within a minute of the winner in each of the two years prior to that.

I'd like to congratulate the men of our own South Cheshire Harriers and the women of Stone Master Marathoners for their team wins, the latter successfully defending the prize they won last year. Also (and I promise I intend not a hint of condescension in this), a word for those further down the field. No one actually came close to troubling our 4-hour limit, which we would generally try not to enforce if at all possible anyway, and our final finisher, Denise Rogers, collected first prize in her group in the local North Staffs Road Runners Association. Just like the leader, reports filter back to HQ of the back-marker, the general tenor of which was “the lady in Group W has just passed [such-and-such a mile] – but she's *definitely* going to finish!” Not everyone makes it as far as the start line; those who make the finish line on that course deserve every plaudit going.

Finally, finally, thank you to all the 70-plus volunteers including club members, their friends and families, including lots of very patient, helpful young kids, and to the businesses that supported us – Virgin Trains our main sponsors, Fayrefield Foods who supplied the goody bags, Chatwin's bakery

and Mornflake Oats who supplied extra items for the bags, and Asda who kindly gave us 2,000 plastic cups free of charge.

Look forward to seeing as many as possible of you next year.

Charlie Rowlands

Race organiser.