



# SOUTH CHESHIRE *Harriers* Newsletter

August 2009

## YOUR Running Club needs



# YOU

(but strictly on a voluntary basis)

**A**t the Harriers, we realise that not everyone joins the club in order to race, and there's no pressure to do so – you may just want to improve your training times, or simply have a bit of company and encouragement.

However, among those who do race the attitude is very much 'the more, the merrier' and anyone who does want to give it a try will be made very welcome. This is especially true of our female runners – all the team competitions listed below run separate men's and women's competitions, and while we have

some very committed lady runners, we often don't have enough to build up a competitive points tally in team standings. So simply by turning up to compete, you will automatically be making a big difference.

Also, one or two newer members, reading the various tortuous analyses of current points standings on the forum and elsewhere, have expressed an interest in how the different team and individual competitions we take part in work.

So here follows your (hopefully not very tortuous) guide to racing with the Harriers...

# Racing with the Harriers

## Club Championship (Road).

This in-house competition begins when Simon Walker uses his skill and judgement to nominate around 20 races across the calendar year, ranging from 5k up to marathon distance, which together comprise that year's champs.



The specific races vary from year to year, but typically begin with the Four Villages Half Marathon in January and the Alsager 5 in February, and conclude with races like the Helena Tipping 10K or Cheddleton Christmas Pudding Race in December.

Runners' scores are based on their time for the race expressed as a percentage of the world best time for their age – in other words, the younger you are, the faster you have to run to rival the score of an older competitor. Your total score is an average of your eight best percentages across the season (you don't have to run all the races, in other words), and anyone with eight races automatically beats someone with seven or fewer, even if the latter has a better average percentage.

It is a club tradition that Mike Hatton wins the men's every year, but the women's is far more open and anyone who gets in eight races gives themselves a fighting chance of a prize.

Our Current Champion is Carol Godfrey.

## Club Championship (Off-road)

Currently in its first year, this was devised by Steve Whincup, partly to give someone other than Mike Hatton a chance of winning. This hasn't worked out however, as Mike is probably going to win this too, but Rich Baker has pushed him very hard and there has been plenty of healthy competition.

The scoring is simpler here – at all races in the off-road champs, the first Harrier home gets 25 points, the second 24 and so on. There are 12 races, and the men have to complete six (of which one must



be one of the three nominated long runs) to qualify.

The women take just their four best scores – and there is no obligation to do one of the long runs. Nicky Lowe and Lorna Fewtrell are current leaders.

With both the road and off-road champs, the full calendar of races is listed on the club website - you need to enter (and pay for) each race individually, but you are automatically included in the championship competition.

## North Staffs Road Runners Association (NSRRA)

This is our main external competition, based on 20 races across the calendar year (some of which coincide with our own club champs races, but by no means all of them).

This competition is based on your score over your best 12 races. It operates on a handicapping system – you compete in groups based on ability. If you join for the first time, you submit some sample race times from the last year, and the organisers put you into a group signified by a letter (A-E for the men; L, M and W for the women) along with other runners of similar ability. (You can still enter if you've never raced before; in this case, the organisers will assign you to an appropriate group after about three races.)



At the relevant races, the first runner in your group gets 50 points, the next 49 and so on. In theory this continues down to 1pt, but in practice even the last person in the group will tend to get 30 points, and often more depending on the size of your group. (Remember, lots of people doing the races will not be members of NSRRA so they don't count as far as the points are concerned.) The beauty of this is that because you are competing only against those of a similar standard, you may find yourself leading your group and bound for end-of-season glory even if you don't think of yourself as a particularly fast runner.



# Racing with the Harriers cont



Also, because it's the 12 best races to count, the competition rewards durability – a whizz kid who does four great races then stops coming will be well beaten by a steadier competitor who does their full 12. (Certain hardy souls like Martin Stirna have even been known to do all 20.)

In addition, at the end of the season, each club's eight highest individual points tallies are added together and the highest cumulative score wins the team prize. The Harriers men's team are the current champions and are leading the competition again this year.

All this, and it only costs £5 to join! (Note: as above, you still also need to pay the race entry fee for each race you want to do.)

More details at [www.nsrra.org.uk](http://www.nsrra.org.uk)

## Cheshire Grand Prix series

Back in our own county, we have also been featuring prominently in this series of road races. In this one, open to all Cheshire-based clubs, the first runner back gets 100 points (for points purposes, runners from non-Cheshire clubs are disregarded), the second 99 and so on down to 1.

Prizes are awarded for individuals in different age groups, and to teams. Men's team scores are based on their first six finishers and women's on their first four. There are eight races in the series, and teams count their best six totals from the eight races. The individual competition takes the best five scores.

Currently, the men's team are in a three-way battle for 2nd place, with the final race of this series being the Sutton 6 on Sunday, 20 September.

If this sounds like a lot of races over these various competitions, there is also a lot of overlap – as with



the NSRRA competition, many of the Cheshire Grand Prix races also feature in our Club Champs. So, for example, if you run the Four Villages, the Alsager 5 or the Sutton 6, you will score for yourself and the club in the Cheshire Grand Prix, and also get a score in our own Club Championships.



## North Staffs Cross Country League

If you prefer to spend your time getting muddy, the cross-country season will soon be upon us, and we enter this league each year, with the men's team having won promotion from the second division to the first last year.

There are four races, all taking place on Saturday afternoons (details at: <http://domain1998670.sites.fasthosts.com/>) on

3 October, 7 November, 14 November and 12 December.

Again, as well as competing as an individual, you accrue points for your team, but in this series the winner gets 1 point, second place 2 and so on – so the team with the lowest total is doing best. Individuals and teams need to get a score in all four races to be eligible for prizes.

If you do get the cross-country bug, then the first few months of the new year give you extra chances to give it a go with the Cheshire Cross Country Championships, Northern Cross Country



## Racing with the Harriers cont

Championships and National Cross Country Championships – none of which you need qualify for as they are open to all of us at the club.

There are also the Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships, for which you do have to qualify (by doing well in the Cheshire championships), with Mike Hatton and Nicky Lowe both making the reserve list this year, and Nicky subsequently called up to take part.

Note: the club pays for entry to the North Staffs Cross Country League – you just have to turn up and run - but you have to pay individually for the other cross-country championships.

### Plus...

There are plenty of other team and individual competitions throughout the year – for example the Shugborough Relays near Stafford, Staffordshire Moorlands AC's off-road 'Summer Series', the

Spring Treble off-road series near Stone, and the City Parks 5k series in Stoke-on-Trent - but space does not permit further detailed analysis!

And remember, if you fancy trying a race but want to do it away from the prying eyes of your clubmates to begin with, there are any number of races out there to choose from. Try an events search at [www.runnersworld.co.uk](http://www.runnersworld.co.uk) (some of the details are listed as 'subscriber only' but if you find the name of an event you might like, you can then just search for it on Google – most races have a website of their own) or <http://www.ukresults.net/>.

*Pictures (c) Bryan Dale*

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Lesley Oldfield is currently putting together a 'starter pack' of useful information for new members and would like your suggestions on what should be in it. Suggestions so far include how to get club kit, how to register on the forum, who to speak to when you first arrive, forthcoming social events, and so on. If you're a new member - or a long-standing one who can remember what it was like to be new - contact

[lesley@melvyncole.co.uk](mailto:lesley@melvyncole.co.uk)