

## **2018 Lancashire County Cross Country Championships**

Once again I am grateful to Nick Hume for supplying the statistics for the championships, which show that the total numbers participating was 563, an increase of 40 runners, something that pleases me. However, I still feel that there is room for further growth and I'd be grateful if everyone continued to promote our fixture within their clubs so that it continues to be a major event on the calendar. In that respect I'm very grateful for everyone who worked hard on the day to make the championships a success and particularly to ensure that the organisation was smooth and efficient. Our hosts, Blackburn Harriers, as usual supplied some great courses for all the age groups, all the marshals who stood out in the cold for over three hours and the hospitality for the officials and athletes, so my thanks go to George Davies and his team there as well as Richard Taylor who planned the courses.

Thanks also to our Jim Kerrigan who recruited the officials, without whom we couldn't hold the event and to the officials themselves who cheerfully and efficiently carried out their duties.

We have some very worthy champions and in some cases we enjoyed some fascinating races, particularly the Senior Men's race in which there were five athletes locked together until the final climb up the saucer before a sprint finish to the line. I'm a little concerned with low numbers in the U17s and U20s, which make my job as team manager difficult but, as we are aware, this is a trend in the sport in general. The Plate Awards went to the Manx Men's team and the Women's Ribble Valley Harriers team.

There were twelve complete Senior Women's teams, with three to count and only eight complete Senior Men's teams, with six to count so I'm contemplating changing the women to four to count. If we had had that requirement in place this year there would have been eight complete teams and Manx Harriers would still have won. With rising numbers in the Women's race I think it would be fairer but it would affect the smaller clubs.

Registration continues to be very busy with both the collection of pre-entered race numbers and entries on the day. Other than having more volunteers on Registration I can't see an obvious solution but we can at least look at this and hopefully improve things for the future. We took 152 entries on the day which was around the same number as previous years and we had a record number of entries since 2002. The total number of runners was 563, which was approximately the number of pre-entries so 152 represents a significant proportion of the total.

We've had several discussions about this and, although it means extra work on the day I'm firmly in favour of continuing with our present system. It helps that we use Sportsoft results who are there on the day of course. For whatever reason people pre-enter and then don't turn up on the day and some people don't plan ahead and pre-enter. I suppose if we went to pre-entry only people would have to think ahead but I wouldn't want to make that decision.

I have to thank our Pete Bland Sports who supply our race numbers and also Alden Green, Red Rose Mediation and Fogartys Insurance Services who place adverts in our programme and enable us to produce a quality product and memento of the day. Thanks also to our Chairman, Tony Wood who has written his fascinating History of Lancashire Cross Country which we publish in instalments each year and thanks are also due to Gary Priestley and Emily Japp who both shared their insights into the championships from their athletes' perspective.

Steve Duxbury