



Midland Counties Endurance Newsletter

January 2010

Welcome to the second Midland Counties Endurance Newsletter, I hope you managed to have sight of the first one, if not it can be found on the Midland Counties website

www.midlandathletics.org.uk.

In this addition you will find a couple of pleas for help, an article about course measuring and a short note from the joys of being an endurance official. Whilst I am on the subject of endurance officials, there is a course planned for Saturday 6th February, read on.

The day in the Life of a Course Measurer



“After completing the edf half marathon on Sunday 11 Oct i would like to point out for anyone that was disappointed with their finishing time that according to my very accurate FORERUNNER 50 RUNNING DEVICE i measured the course at 13.60 miles which is a whopping half a mile longer....this at least may put your mind at rest as to why your time wasn't quite the time you were hoping for.. “

This is, verbatim, a copied blog from the Birmingham Evening Mail's website! It demonstrates only too well what problems exist around course measurement. As a course designer for the event in question and having (solo and jointly) measured it on several occasions, I am content that the blogger was wrong and that I and two Internationally accredited measurers were right! I did post a response but the objector wasn't convinced.

My role in this is as an employee of event organisers Birmingham City Council, having been competing in and organising (at a low level) running events since the early eighties. My professional role is in Transportation and Highways and, with this experience also in mind, I was asked two or three years ago by colleagues in the Events team for views and ideas on a half marathon event. This led to a number of options being developed, which were then discussed with various experienced race

promoters. When a final preference was arrived at for the 2008 race, I was asked to accompany the official course measurer, former London Marathon winner Hugh Jones, to carry out the measure. The details of this process were unknown to me beforehand, as they probably are to nearly all race competitors!

The system used is to measure the course using a “Jones counter” (named after an American measurer, not Hugh) on a bicycle wheel. This sounds very basic, and it is, but it has the advantage of simplicity and, used properly, great accuracy. The device measures approximately one “count” per 10 cm.

The first step is to calibrate the counter, which involves setting out a very accurately measured straight flat line of at least 400m. It's done with a steel tape and the readings are adjusted for temperature, to allow for expansion or contraction. This calibration line is checked several times. The bike is then ridden along the line twice in each direction and, providing the readings taken are very close, an average count is derived for use in the measurement. This value is also adjusted by 0.01% (the “Short Course Prevention Factor”) to ensure that the distance will never be short. (I asked our land surveyors to check the 400m length that Hugh and I set out for the EDF race and was pleased to find that modern electronic equipment confirmed its precise accuracy – a surveyor's wheel, on the other hand, was found to be more than 1 metre out in 400, which would correspond to over 100m for the marathon distance.)

The route is then measured by riding the “racing line” and, again, there are standards to observe on corners and other deviations such as parked vehicles or other temporary obstructions. It's essential to record frequent permanent checkpoints to establish mile and/or kilometre markers and to allow for future adjustments or alterations to be “stitched into” the course if needed. Depending on the characteristics of the course and the presence of dual carriageways or one-way streets, it may be necessary to measure some sections in the reverse direction in order to obtain the correct running line. You obviously need some common sense and arithmetic for this and it does help to know the course well, by driving and cycling it first, preferably with the race director or course designer.

After the measurement, a report has to be written by the measurer and submitted for approval by the area measurement secretary before a certificate for the course can be issued.

Having measured the 2008 course (for any readers who ran this race, the 2008 course wasn't my choice – the 2009 course was), Hugh suggested that I might be interested in becoming an accredited measurer and he recommended me to the UK Measurement body, at that time loosely affiliated with the UKA. The process of accreditation involved an online course and submission of my reports to the local secretary. I also had to attend a practical measuring course that took place over a day in Abingdon. As a result of all of this, I became a listed measurer and my name now appears on the measurement website.

The measurement of courses is shortly to be more formally administered by UKA Run Britain and a constitution for the new body is currently being agreed but for anyone interested in further details of the process, then you can visit <http://www.coursemeasurement.org.uk/> or contact me if you wish.

Returning to my first point about perceived accuracy, results from GPS devices used on known-to-be-accurate courses have been compared and have been found to over-measure by around 2%. This could be for a number of reasons, including the devices' own imperfections, loss of satellite accessibility, runners not using the shortest possible route or, and I hope rarely, inaccurate course measurement! You can find more about this on the website and I trust you'll be satisfied that the bike is best!

Doug Hyde



Endurance Course on 6 February

Following two successful Pilot Level 2 Endurance courses in the South of England, there is now a pilot in Birmingham (UKA Head Office) on Saturday 6th February, 10a.m. to 1.00pm. The course is **free** and the attendance is limited to a **max of 15**.

Course Tutor: Graham Heeley

Venue: UKA Offices, Blythe Valley Business Park, Solihull, West Midland B90 8AJ

If you are interested please send your **Name, Address, Contact no and Email** directly to Manjinder Singh msingh@ukathletics.org.uk

Following attendance, applicants will receive a UKA attendance card – and be in the system as working towards being a Level 2 A (club)

The Joys of being an Official at the World/Birmingham Half Marathon

What a SHOCK it was for a group of Midland Endurance Officials to be asked to officiate at the World Half Marathon in Birmingham on 11th October 2009. Not only did we have a job at the start, we also had one at the finish. It was an experience not to be missed.

At the start not only did you have to control the warm up, but TV required the top ten runners to line up in order on the start line, which was interesting, especially as not all spoke English.

Then a quick change to be on the finish line for the World Championship, shortly followed by the mass finish of the Birmingham Half Marathon, which included a marriage proposal made and accepted almost on the finish line!! After a long, busy, informative and interesting day, we all made our weary way home.

Just out of interest and to show that there are many jobs at many events that need help. Some of the team had earlier that week worked at a County round of the English Schools Cross Country Cup, with some about 30 youngsters in each 4 races.



Alton Towers 2011

The English National Cross Country Championships are again visiting Midland Region in 2011. After the super event that Staffordshire Moorlands AC organised in 2008 the ECCA were more than happy to revisit Alton Towers for the 2011 event. The venue has everything needed for a successful event, adequate parking, lots of local accommodation and picturesque course which is a proper cross country course.

What lots of people don't realise is that these events don't just happen. There is a lot of work behind the scenes, some of which has started already. The organising committee are already in full swing even before the 2010 event has taken place.

As we get closer to the date and particularly the week of the event the organisers would like members of local running clubs to help out in some way on the day. Course construction, car parking, marshalling the course and lots of other jobs on the day require more personnel than Staffs Moorlands AC can manage.

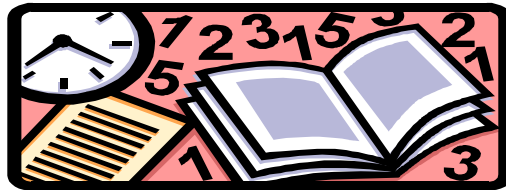
So look out for appeals closer to the event for any clubs in the Staffordshire and Derbyshire area to spare a few bodies to help out. Without grass roots members helping out at these events they would not go ahead so club secretary's and team managers please hear the plea when it is made.

MIDLAND COUNTIES CROSS COUNTRY ASSOCIATION

The Midland Cross Country Association are currently seeking offers to promote their three main competitions for the 2010 / 11 season these are.

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| 2 nd October | - | Midland Cross Country Relays |
| 27 th November | - | Midland 7 + Ladies 5 mile Cross Country |
| 29 th January 2011 | - | Midland Counties Cross Country Championships. |

If your club would like to host please contact Rita Brownlie 01564 824358.



The Annual General Meeting for the Midland Cross Country Association is planned for Monday 13th September 7.30pm. All Welcome.

The 2010 National Cross country Relays are scheduled for November 6th at the traditional Mansfield venue

E.C.C.A Annual Open Meeting.

On the 15th May at the European Hotel, Derby (adjacent Rail Station) the English Cross Country Association will convene the Annual Open Meeting at 12 noon. This is an opportunity for club delegates to speak directly to the Officials who head our sport and discuss the issues of the meeting.

UK Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships – 13th March 2010

Noel Butler has been asked to be Clerk of Course for this event and is looking for help with setting out the course on the days leading up to the event, on the day and dismantling the course at the end of the day. If you would be willing to help at this prestigious event please contact Noel, via email noel.butler@talk21.com or on his mobile 07500121381.

Thank you for taking your time in reading this Newsletter, if you have anything to contribute to the next one, please email the Midland Office athletics@mcaa.org.uk Remember this is your newsletter, so all contributions will be gratefully received.