

Blyth Running Club Grand Prix

Outcome of Review by Working Party, February – June 2012

Summary

All aspects of the club Grand Prix have been reviewed and some changes are to be made for the years 2013 onwards. The details are contained in the corresponding sections of this document but some of the main decisions are listed below: -

- Remains based on a calendar year
- Season to consist of 12 races divided into three categories, with 2 from each category to count
- Categories are up to 10km, up to 10m and above 10m. Where possible there will be some variety within each category
- Grand Prix calendar to be set before taking other events into account
- Grand Prix races for following year to be announced by early autumn at the latest
- No more than four (preferably three) races per season based more than 70 miles from Blyth Sports Centre, and no more than two from any category
- Club to put on a bus for all races based more than 40 miles away. Also for point-to-point races
- Single bus pick-up point – Sports Centre
- Number of divisions can be varied to fit best with the entry for each year

Background

The future of the Grand Prix was the subject of some discussion at this year's AGM, where it was decided to set up a Working Party to consider all aspects of the Grand Prix for the years 2013 onwards. The aims and objectives of the Working Party were: -

To review and make recommendations as to all aspects of the club Grand Prix, with particular emphasis on the nature and composition of the Grand Prix from 2013 onwards.

Members of the Working Party are: -

Robby Barkley
Heather Barrass
Heather Christopher
Mal Darbyshire
Aynsley Herron
Julie Lemin
Dave Roberts (chair)

This document summarises the conclusions of the Working Party.

What is our Grand Prix for?

Blyth Running Club has built itself up over the years on a culture of distance running and continues to thrive through attracting new members who want to run distances, typically of 10km or above, on the roads and other surfaces in this part of the world – and then encouraging those members to participate in a wide range of such events alongside their club-mates.

To meet this need within the club, the Grand Prix should remain one of the main events / competitions. As such it is considered that the purpose of the Grand Prix can be stated as: -

1. To find the best all-round distance athlete, regardless of age or gender, within an approximate standard (as historically represented by the leagues / divisions).
2. To build on the strengths of the club at road races in the region, i.e. turning out in numbers at targeted events and building on the camaraderie that gets such positive comments from other clubs

'Distance' in this context should cover the full range of distances from (approximately) 5km to (approximately) half marathon.

It is also important to strike a balance between having enough races in the Grand Prix to give people choice and flexibility but not having so many that we dilute the camaraderie that we get through high turnouts at races .

The Grand Prix Season

The Grand Prix should remain based on a single calendar year. Not only is this a 'natural' fit organisationally and psychologically, but as December and January are more difficult months to find appropriate races that will attract substantial numbers of members, these months tend to form a natural break in the racing calendar.

There is a balance to be struck between having enough races in the Grand Prix to provide a range of tests for competitors and allowing for people to miss some races due to illness, injury or holiday, yet not having so many races that the Blyth 'presence' at Grand Prix events becomes diluted. To get this balance right it has been decided that the Grand Prix season will consist of 12 races divided into three categories, with 2 from each category to count for all Grand Prix entrants. The three categories are: -

- a) Up to and including 10km (notes: (a) where possible these will **not** all be 10k's; (b) anything even 'just over' 10km is **not** in this category)
- b) Above 10km and up to 10 miles (note: where possible these will **not** all be 10 mile races)
- c) Above 10 miles (note: where possible these will **not** all be road half marathons)

Choice of Races

Reflecting the far greater participation rate for the Grand Prix than for other events at which the club is represented, events for the following year's Grand Prix should be fixed before any other events are taken into account. The list of races for the following year should be published by early autumn at the latest (typically September). The precise dates of some events will not be known at this point, but this will give members a chance to plan their racing season, holidays, etc.

Certain constraints have been agreed as to which types of race can or cannot be included: -

- a) All races should be open equally to all senior club members
- b) Specifically, races with 'ballot' entries or very limited time-frames for entry (e.g. the Blydon Race, Coastal Run, Great North Run, Brass Monkey Half) are not suitable for inclusion
- c) We should try not to have the same races in for too many consecutive years
- d) The number of races with significant travel should be limited and also be spread out across the year (see 'travelling' below)

Whilst the above takes precedence, those selecting the Grand Prix races should take into account where possible the likely timings of local 'event' races (Blydon, GNR, Coastal, North Tyneside 10K), cross-country events and track-and-field meetings.

Travelling

The policy for the amount of travel that should reasonably be involved for those participating in the club Grand Prix has been reviewed. The new policy reflects not only feedback from the membership but also takes into account the location of races that might be considered suitable for inclusion and the expectation that most Grand Prix entrants will not necessarily feel the need to compete in all twelve races, as only half will count at the end of the season.

The policy for 2013 onwards consists of the following: -

- There must be no more than two races per category that are based more than 70 miles from Blyth Sports Centre. The expectation is that all of the races in the 'up to 10km' category will be fairly local, so there should be no more than four (and ideally three) races per season over 70 miles away.
- Any 'long' journeys must be scattered at intervals across the year, e.g. not all Feb – May.
- The club should commit to putting a bus on for any race that is (a) based more than 40 miles away from Blyth Sports Centre, or (b) a point-to-point race. (This being subject to the obvious proviso that there be sufficient take-up of each bus, although it ought to be feasible to assure this by having alternative bus sizes)
- In order to reduce journey times, improve fairness for those living further away from the chosen races – as well as potentially to reduce costs - it is proposed to operate for at least 2013 a change to the policy for bus pick-up points. For the outward journey, the bus will pick up only from the Sports Centre. For the return journey, drop offs could be more flexible.

League Structure and Decision Making

The principle of having a number of divisions is consistent with the stated purpose of finding the best athlete within an approximate standard. The number of divisions in the league should not be fixed but instead be allowed to be whatever number the body organising a given year's Grand Prix feels best fits that year's entrants.

It is expected that each seasons Grand Prix will require two key decisions, i.e. which races to include and composition of the leagues. The former decision will be taken by early autumn at the latest and the latter before the first race of the season (early February will usually be suitable). The expectation is that each process will require one meeting of potentially up to 2-3 hours in duration, probably on a Sunday evening. All members of the Grand Prix Working Party have expressed a willingness to undertake these responsibilities if the wider membership, via the Club Committee and the AGM agree (although it would be healthy for the composition of this group to evolve over subsequent years).

Appendix

The Working Party has 'road tested' the conclusions laid out in this document to check that they can be used to generate both a workable Grand Prix and options for variety in different years, and is satisfied that this is achievable. By way of illustration only, an example of a Grand Prix season consistent with these principles is shown below

Example Grand Prix Season (Not next year's races)

Snake Lane 10m	Pocklington, Yorks	Late Feb
Northumberland Half Marathon	Wallington, North'd	Late March
Run Northumberland Cragside 10K	Rothbury, North'd	Mid April
Druridge Bay Half Marathon	Druridge Bay, North'd	Mid May
Allendale 8	Allendale, North'd	Early June
Bridges of the Tyne 5M	Newcastle Quayside	Early July
James Herriot 8.7M	Leyburn, North Yorks	Late July
Darlington 10K	Darlington, Co Durham	Early Aug
Watergate 5K	Lobley Hill, South Tyneside	Late Aug
Tees Valley Half Marathon	Redcar, Teesside	Late Sept
Jedburgh Half Marathon	Jedburgh, Scottish Borders	Late Oct
Brampton-Carlisle 10M	Brampton, Cumbria	Mid Nov