

NEHL Gosforth

The Cross-Country season is now well and truly in full swing and it seems the weather has finally caught on as we awoke on Saturday morning to torrential rain and temperatures approaching zero. Normally such conditions would warrant a prolonged stay in bed, but we're a hardy lot here at Blyth RC and the conditions only appeared to harden that resolve!

The Harrier League was returning to Gosforth Park after a number of years and no-one really knew what to expect from the course; would it be like Thornly Hall Farm or Redcar? It turned out to be a bit of both, with the first mile taking you through the woodland and largely downhill, whilst the second was more undulating and exposed to the elements.

First off for the day was new Junior recruit Jess. This was Jess's first time taking in a Harrier League fixture and she lined up ready to go in the U11's. Unfortunately, Jess recorded a DNF but we can all applaud her bravery for looking to take a step up in what can appear to be a sometimes daunting event. I have no doubt Jess will take loads from the experience and only come back stronger!

Next up was Josh Fiddaman in the U17 boys in what was an extremely strong field. Josh ran a superb race to record a time of 15:43 for ~3miles, finishing in 6th place overall from the fast pack and recording the second fast time, being only 5 seconds behind Sam Charlton from Wallsend (15:38).

The final participant from our Junior section was Emily Brown who was tackling her first fixture of the season. Emily showed great composure and paced her race extremely well, managing to pass a number of athletes who had set off a little faster, whilst still having enough for her traditional sprint finish. Emily is continuing to return from an injury sustained in the summer and this result shows that her hard work in training is paying off.

Next up, the senior women, and we had 12 athletes all-ready to tackle the course. With whispers of a water feature the excitement in the tent was starting to bubble up. I will let one of the ladies give you their thoughts on the race but a huge well done should go to:

Sandra Watson	(113 th)	32:28
Gwen Forster	(129 th)	32:46
Lisa Scorer	(164 th)	33:25
Claire Mason	(266 th)	35:27
Gemma Harmon	(269 th)	35:39
Helen Morris	(277 th)	35:52
Clair Souther	(304 th)	36:31
Alison French	(340 th)	37:46
Anita Brabazon	(348 th)	37:55
Anne Craddock	(363 rd)	38:22
Ewa Johnson	(376 th)	38:44
Lynn Munro	(431 st)	43:29

Finally, it was time for the 15 senior men to tackle the course. As usual the start to the men's race was quite congested and the section through the woods meant you could only really run three abreast. Thankfully this helped play into my new strategy of taking it steady for the first mile before settling into a faster pace and hoping it would see me through to the end.

By the end of lap one I noticed that Steven French was only about 5seconds ahead and, whilst I wasn't catching him, he wasn't pulling away either. I'm not sure if this acted as some sort of motivation but

shortly after exiting the woods I pulled up alongside him. Steven obviously had enough of me during those few seconds and set off after Rob Sharratt with haste. My pace however, was set, and by the time we arrived at the start of the third lap I no longer had him in my sights.

Coming back through the woods for a third time I noticed another Green and White vest in Rob Sharratt, after some encouraging words to each other we both tackled the water feature and set about taking on the last mile of the course. Unfortunately, my back was in agony after taking on the sharp downhill and Rob was quickly back ahead of me. I managed to get back level on the last incline and it soon became a test of who felt stronger at the end. Alas that test was passed by Rob who went off like a rocket after the last corner and managed to put a couple of places between us.

Personally, my aim for the season is to finish the races and try and improve my strength ready for next season. So far 3/3 in the Harrier League is a vast improvement over my previous forays into XC!

A huge well done to the rest of the men's team;

Joe Wren	(17 th)	37:30 – promoted to medium pack
Rob MacDonald	(126 th)	40:06
Henry Madden	(198 th)	40:56
Steven Morrison Cairns	(233 rd)	41:25
Peter Holmback	(269 th)	41:54
Steven French	(322 nd)	43:06
Robert Sharratt	(367 th)	43:44
Craig Harmon	(370 th)	43:50
Steve Dobby	(439 th)	45:54
Richard Bickerton	(490 th)	47:14
Michael Ashby	(505 th)	47:52
Dave Bradley	(518 th)	48:18
David McGarry	(581 st)	52:02
Neil Marshall	(594 th)	54:15
David Stamp	(612 th)	57:46