



Oxfordshire Cross Country League

ESTABLISHED 1987

sponsored by

Oxford Mail

Equal Gender Race Distances Working Party Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday, 26th June 2019

Time: 19:30hrs

Venue: Small Hall, Exeter Hall, Kidlington

Present:

League Officers:

Dene Stringfellow (*League Manager*)

Ros Kelling (*Treasurer / Banbury Harriers AC*)

Emma Gould (*Sponsorship / Bicester AC*)

Richard Gould (*General Committee Member / Alchester RC*)

Dan Wymer (*General Committee Member / Witney RR*)

Club Representatives:

Abingdon AC: Gary Richards

Alchester RC: Sarah Rendell

Bicester TC: Lucy Davidson, Stephanie Harrison

Cherwell Runners & Joggers: David Coates

Didcot Runners: Robert Dalgliesh, Sarah Rogers

Headington RR: Madeleine Ding, Kit Villiers

Hook Norton Harriers: David Bannister

Kidlington RC: Liam Hosier

White Horse Harriers AC: Simon Leech

Woodstock Harriers AC: Neil Preddy

Voting Members: 13

1) Welcome

The meeting opened shortly after 19:30hrs and those present were thanked for turning out to represent their clubs. The following research documentation was provided before the start of the meeting:

Equality in Distances (*Supporting Data*) – Lucy Davidson (*Bicester TC*)

RaceTimes/Pace Aggregates for Men & Women and U15/U17 Boys & Girls (*OXL*)

2) Apologies

The following apologies were recorded:

Radley AC: Rose Webb

Team Kennet T&AC: Colin Price

3) Purpose of Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was initially set out as follows:

- To establish a working party to review and resubmit a proposal for equal gender race distances on the basis of the discussions and issues raised at the 2019 AGM.

The intention was to avoid lengthy discussion/debate on the subject that would be delegated to the Working Party volunteers to investigate and address.

The purpose was given greater clarity in the light of the ensuing discussions following queries raised by Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*) in terms of the target delivery timescales for the Working Party:

- To establish a working party to review and resubmit a proposal for equal gender race distances on the basis of the discussions and issues raised at the 2019 AGM.
- To investigate and review the options available for implementing equal gender race distances and to present a maximum of three alternative proposals plus the option to reject the proposal at a formal presentation meeting to be scheduled for early September.
- The voting on any proposals will take place either at an AGM or EGM (*receipt of a signed request is required from 5 member clubs followed by 4 weeks' notice to all member clubs as stipulated in OXL Constitution*).

4) Summary of Original Proposal

Below are the pertinent points presented at the 2019 AGM in favour of the original EGRD proposal.

- The vast majority of running events are raced over equal distances irrespective of gender (*essentially just cross country leagues similar to the OXL that are not due to historical reasons*) including the world cross country champs, parkrun, 10ks, marathons, etc.
- It is harmful to juniors to allow them think boys/men are able to/should run further than girls/women.

- Although not included in the original proposal, equal distances for the junior female athletes could be achieved by either meeting-in-the middle or by setting the female junior distances to the same as the male junior distances. At one fixture, there is only 200m difference anyway. There is no reason why the girls cannot be asked to race the same distances as the boys.
- Realistically, if the fixtures were designed from scratch today, it would be very surprising for a decision to be taken to set race distances based on gender alone.
- Although it is true that some women would prefer not to increase their distance, **distance should not be gendered. It should just be personal preference.**
- There are also men that would prefer to run a shorter race and some that do not take part because of the distance.
- Equality is achievable and important for everybody, not just the women that would choose to run further.

5) Summary of Original Proposal Issues

Below are the relevant points raised at the 2019 AGM that the assembly of that meeting determined would need to be investigated before a more clearly defined EGRD proposal could be presented to member clubs for voting.

- The Alchester RC, Newbury AC and Woodstock Harriers AC clubs all stated their adult female members were against the proposal on the grounds such a move would inevitably discourage participation among female club members leading to lower athlete turnout for those clubs.
- The implication that male athletes appear to have no say on the matter as to whether or not their current race distances should be shortened.
- Insufficient consideration has been given to the U15/U17 athletes or the transition process required to achieve equal gender race distances.
- If the adult race distances are increased to 8-9km, the graduation of the U17 athletes to the senior ranks could be enough to destroy the confidence of the young athletes and take them out of the sport entirely.
- It was evident that some clubs had neither taken into consideration the implications of the proposal for clubs with junior sections nor the issues that would need to be addressed in order to implement equal gender race distances effectively.
- Other cross country events/leagues where equal gender race distances have already been introduced ought to be contacted to learn how the transition to equal gender race distances was achieved as well as the issues the events had to address to effect the transition.
- UKA Rule 250 currently still advises different gender race distances to be set for U20 and U18 age category athletes at *IAAF World Cross-Country Championships as well as for other International and National competitions* and there is a current review process that has been ongoing for some time.

6) Further Points Raised & Ensuing Discussions

Input from both Liam Hosier (*Kidlington RC*) and David Coates (*Cherwell Runners & Joggers*) both helped to ensure the meeting maintained its focus on the target to establish the bullet points to be reviewed and investigated by the Working Party (*to be formed later in the meeting*). The following further points were raised:

- The impact on older veteran athletes, both men and women does not appear to have been taken into consideration – if the race distances are increased the option for veteran athletes to run shorter distances should be made available, possibly in conjunction with younger age groups.
- Team Kennet T&AC have no objections to equal gender race distances and willingly comply with the findings of the working party.
- Hampshire Cross Country League also having the same discussion and vote at their AGM scheduled for Friday, 28th June.
- Abingdon AC also stated that their female members were very much against the proposal.
- Still no news forthcoming from UKA regarding their deliberations on the subject.
- As it stands U15/U17 run together and separately the two age groups are small.
- If the U15 and U17 age categories were to run separately then any team competition would be redundant.
- Would combined/mixed boy's and girl's races be viable?
- Senior and veteran athletes to be able to have option to run either 5km or 10km (*same gender*) races, as preferred.
- Senior and veteran athletes to run different race distances each race.

7) Working Party Volunteers

It was proposed that at least 8 and no more than 12 volunteers should be required to form the Working Party. That proposal was unanimously approved by the assembly. The following attendees volunteered to serve as members of the EGRD Working Party:

- *Alchester RC*: Richard Gould, Sarah Rendell
- *Banbury Harriers AC*: Ros Kelling
- *Bicester AC*: Emma Gould
- *Bicester TC*: Lucy Davidson
- *Didcot Runners*: Robert Dalgliesh, Sarah Rogers
- *Headington RR*: Madeleine Ding
- *White Horse Harriers AC*: Simon Leech
- *Witney RR*: Dan Wymer
- *OXL*: Dene Stringfellow

8) Working Party Actions Summary

It was confirmed that the Working Party would aim to present a maximum of 3 alternative proposals for the implementation of equal gender race distances in addition to the standing option for clubs to reject the proposal.

The actions to be investigated and reviewed by the members of the Working Party were agreed as follows:

- **Other Events/Leagues**
 - Contact other cross country leagues that have already implemented equal gender race distances.
 - Check the outcome of the Hampshire League AGM.
 - At senior competition level male and female athletes already run equal race distances.
 - World XC Championships
 - Scottish National XC Championships
 - Inter-Counties XC Championships
- **General Considerations**
 - Harmful to female athletes to reinforce gender inequality.
 - Most races are gender equal.
 - U9/U11/U13 race distances are the same for boys and girls.
 - Impact on younger age groups.
 - Female athletes being “dragged” along by male athletes.
 - Longer race distances may discourage athletes.
 - Shorter race distances may also put athletes off.
 - Should any change apply to all age groups?
 - Should participants be polled?
- **U15 & U17 Athlete Specific**
 - U15/U17 combined fixture – *big increase in race distance for U17 athletes graduating to senior ranks.*
 - Can the U15 and U17 boys and girls races be combined – *i.e. combined U15 boys and girls race and combined U17 boys and girls race?*
- **Senior & Veteran Athlete Specific**
 - Long and short race distance option for all senior and veteran athletes.
 - The potential impact on older female athletes of longer races means should there be the option to run a shorter race distance – *an option that some veteran male athletes might also welcome.*
- **Changing Race/Competition Formats**
 - Splitting age categories – teams issue, some clubs would struggle to raise scoring teams.
 - Combined age groups – could mixed teams be an option?
 - Mixed gender races – What impact would this have on the arrangements for officials and volunteers at fixtures and the finish area organisation for the host club(s)?
 - Impact on finish line celebration for female athletes in combined age/gender races.
- **Fixture Organisation**

- Were the current race distances set based upon "Time on feet"?
Madeleine Ding
- What are the upper race distances for each age category? – **Ros Kelling**
- What are the Inter-County race distances – *bearing in mind likely future tie-in for County Championships distances?*
- What impact would there be on the day of the fixture for the race day schedule?
- Can each fixture determine the race distances? – **Note: DS pointed out that host clubs already effectively determine the race distances due to the limitations and restrictions of the venues.**
- **Trial Fixture Options**
 - Round 3 combined fixture – *possibility of using the fixture as a test fixture.*
 - Feasibility of trial at combined Round 3 /Oxon XC Championships fixture using Inter-County Championship distances.
 - If there are 3 alternative voting options and they would all require trialing, how should that be dealt with?
 - What alternatives are there?

9) Forthcoming Working Party Meetings

The following initial meeting dates were agreed:

- Next Working Party Meeting
 - Wednesday, 17 July 2019 – *time and venue tbc* – **action DS.**
- Working Party Presentation of Options to Member Clubs for Review
 - 4th or 11th September 2019 – *date, time and venue tbc* – **action DS.**

In addition, there are the following targets to be borne in mind:

- The intention is to have an internal Working Party review meeting by 1st September 2019 to prepare for the presentation to member clubs.
- If a trial is to go ahead, a concrete trial proposal needs to be agreed by the end of September 2019.

10) Close

The meeting was closed at 21:00hrs.

Dene Stringfellow
League Manager

28 June 2019