

Magnificent 1,2 for Walton

Saturday 15th October saw the much-anticipated return of the Surrey cross-country league. The first match took place at Priory Park in Reigate, a tough course to start the season and an even tougher occasion for those cutting their cross-country teeth.

Men's race

In very mild conditions, **Duncan W** romped home as the overall race winner, nearly two minutes ahead of the next M40. Second across the line overall was another Walton athlete, **Craig J**, in what I believe is the first ever Walton 1,2 in Surrey League history. Congratulations Duncan and Craig, excellent runs from both of you.

The next Walton athletes to cross the line were further back in the pack. **Robert S** (63rd scorer) and **Jamie M** (65th scorer) were followed a few seconds later by **Chris N** (74th scorer) and **Jonathan H** (77th scorer). Solid running from Jamie, Chris and Jonathan, well done guys.

Next in, we had two athletes representing Walton in cross-country for the first time. **Bruce F** (85th scorer) and **Ollie S** (87th scorer) both had good runs on their first outing. We are looking forward to seeing them on the trails a lot more in the future.

9th Walton scorer and 89th scorer overall was **Martin W**. Martin ran well despite a lack of distance training in the weeks leading up to the event, having been hampered by injury. Thank-you Martin!

Unfortunately, despite some very good individual performances, we were penalised heavily for not being able to field a full team of 10. Because of this, and a lack of athletes in the top 50, Walton finished the day in 9th place overall.

We can get ourselves out of trouble if we can field full teams and have more athletes higher up the standings. It is a participation sport, and I am very keen to get everyone involved, no matter individual ability, but we need our stronger runners and mid table runners if we are to stay in division 2.

Women's race

This season, we have the luxury and pleasure of having both men's and women's teams running at the same location, which is great for team spirit.

Hayley C had a very strong run and finished 5th overall and 1st W40, making a great start in defence of her W40 title that she shared last year. **Mandy R** had a good finish, showing the distance strength she has gained from her recent marathon training (breaking the W40 Walton club record for the marathon just 2 weeks prior to this race), making up a good number of places on the second lap and finishing 55th from 199 runners. Great running from both Walton women!

We have a very small women's team at the moment, something I am trying to address as a priority. I hope to have more women running for Walton in cross-country very soon.

Thank you to all the athletes who raced, despite the team result, it was a good day out and I hope everyone enjoyed it as much as I did. And thanks to **Alex K**, who, despite being injured and unable to run, turned up to show support and take photos. Team photo below.

See you at the next one, Robert

