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Keep in touch!

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Essex AAA Road Rant

www.essexathletics.org.uk

Issue 1

Welcome

In an effort to improve and co-ordinate communication within the Essex road running community, Essex AAA (road running dept) is setting up a section on the Essex AAA website dedicated to road running in the county. We have also issued this newsletter, hopefully, the first of many, which we hope will offset the barrage of track and field information that you receive from 'above'.

The website is currently at the address shown on the left, but will soon migrate to the Essex AAA website (above). We're keen to get a full Essex calendar of events on the site so please make sure your races are added by emailing the details (address left). It's possible that you can see other uses for the website and this newsletter, for instance to advertise trips to distant (foreign ?) races where you can't quite fill a coach. Let us know.

As with all newsletters, it's only as good as the contributions it receives, so if you have a story to tell, a race to promote or anything of interest, send it in. A copy and paste from your own newsletters would maybe be easiest. Letters also acceptable, but space will be limited usually to a double-sided A4 or two depending upon what's received. We hope to include some information from eastern and London regions next time. The newsletter is also available on the website. Photos for the site gratefully accepted.

Affiliation Scheme

The outcome of the 2004 Foster Report was a shake up of the structure of the governing bodies. The AAA of England has been replaced by England Athletics and the SEAA (territory) now only provides competition through the SEAA championships. The other territories in the North (NEAA) and Midlands have gone too. In place of the territories, England Athletics now governs nationwide through its nine regional hubs. Most of the Essex AAA clubs are in the Eastern Region, but those within the M25 are in London Region.

A major impact on clubs is the imposition of a membership scheme. Clubs have to pay £50 p.a flat rate and £3 per competing first claim member for 2007/08. How this will be collected is still unclear, but it will be an extra burden on membership secretaries. The method by which race organisers are supposed to check that a runner is affiliated before giving out a race number is even muddier. The scheme has been presented as a fait accompli and the cheap sport of road running just got a bit more more expensive for the athlete.

However, it's worth noting that other sports have such schemes and other countries already have membership schemes. Here's an account from Dirk Voorzitte of Pitsea RC who is from Belgium.....

When changes are made in someone's life the, the human reflex is to resist it. People find themselves uncomfortable when changes occur. The change in the way England Athletics will

Forthcoming races

Road

Feb 18

Essex AAA 20m

Feb 25

Roding Valley
Half Marathon

March 25

Brentwood Half
Marathon

Trail

April 1

The Blackmore
Plod from
Blackmore Village
Hall over 10m,
12m and 22 miles
(Springfield Striders)

April 6

Essex Eggstravaganza
Trail race (1)
7 or 14 miles
Braintree Area
(Mid Essex Casuals)

operate from the 1st April onwards and the way it will be funded is indeed a very big change in how things used to be. The new affiliation fee per active athlete (£3) on top of the fixed club fee might be new and seems revolutionary to the UK, but it is not new to other countries in Europe. Being Belgian and involved in athletics over there for many years I can give you an overview how it works over there.

The overall organisation (called VAL in Belgium) recognises 2 types of athletes

Active athlete: is an athlete who competes at track races (in and outdoor) and cross country races. For these competitions he is issued with a license number, renewable every year at the start of the season. Losing it or forgetting it will result in not being able to enter these competitions and in a penalty to be paid by the club, who in turn can claim it back from the athlete.

Recreational athlete: is an athlete who only takes part in road races, fun runs or does not compete at all but trains with the club. He/she does not take part in track races of cross country races. Road races can also include non-affiliated runners, but there will be a difference in entrance fee to pay. The affiliated runners pay less.

The affiliation fee for these 2 types of athletes are approx. (converted to pound): £10 per active athlete and £2.50 per recreational athlete. On top of that comes the insurance fee, which for both types is £5. The money coming in from the affiliation fee only is purely for running the organisation (VAL). Subsequently the membership fee in a club is much higher. For example in the club I'm a member of, the membership fee for adults is £67, youngsters (under 19) £53 recreational athletes £39.

This fee might look like very high at first sight, but in this club everybody can train 3 times a week, coached by qualified people, and use the facilities of the club: changing rooms, showers, etc. If, for instance, you take up a membership of a gym it will cost much more. In the Netherlands they even differentiate in membership fee based on using the showers or not. Compared to an average football club's fee in Belgium (between £100 and £150) athletics is a still considered to be a "cheap" sport.

The big difference between Belgium and the UK is the existence of Road Running clubs: clubs who's (majority of) members only consists of people taking part in road races. In Belgium these clubs are very rare. Belgium consists mostly of "main stream" athletics club as you know them in the UK.

For me, road running clubs and "mainstream" clubs are not competitors. They are very complementary as the Belgian model shows. Virtually every athletics club in Belgium has a "road running" section in his organisational structure. It seems to me, looking at the Belgian model, that there is a lot to be said for granting road running clubs a smaller fee per athlete or even exempt them from paying the affiliation fee. It is up to these Road Running clubs to make a unanimous stand in the various committees and try to get this point of view shared.

There is some interesting stuff on www.sandhurstjoggers.org.uk

Race Calendar and Articles for Future Issues

Please send details of any forthcoming road or trail races, for inclusion on website to the address shown above. Any ideas for the website to the same address please.