

Report: David Dibbon

Photos: Maria Norville, Charlie Macklin, Andrew Atkinson, Catrin Westerwelle, Phil Reay, Brendan Morris



Berks, Bucks, Oxon XC Championships 2017

ONCE again it was a case of 'the old ones are the best' as Reading Roadrunners bagged veterans' team prizes at the Berks, Bucks and Oxon cross-country championships on Sunday.

Our vets' men took the coveted shield for first place and their lady counterparts picked up the award for a highly creditable third.



The official BBO report after the meeting stated: "The sun was shining at Palmer Park in Reading." Fortunately it was also shining at Prospect Park, where the championships took place.

Our girls were in action first and were led home by the amazing Jane Davies in a time of 23:46 for 27th place over the 5k course.

Almost all of Jane's performances earn an age grading score of over 80 per cent, the benchmark of national standard, and this was another stormer.

Our second finisher was another of the WV55 group, the perennially successful Lesley Whiley, and their bling was clinched by a second club coach, Nicole Rickett, who still looks young enough to qualify for the juniors.

Roadrunners' ladies' performances: 27th Jane Davies 23:46, 38th Lesley Whiley 25:01, 40th Nicole Rickett 25:27, 48th Sarah Alsford 26:49, 50th Sam Whalley 27:04; 53rd Claire Seymour 28:32; 59th Charlie Macklin 31:18 and 65th Maria Norville 33:50.

In the women's vets competition Jane was 7th, Lesley 15th and Nicole 16th.



Roadrunners' men's plans were hit by absences and injuries before and during the race. Our biggest loss was also our biggest honour... Mark Worringham being chosen to represent England in the British and Irish Masters cross-country championship in Derry, where he was placed 36th (11th in the V40 category).

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Then our young star Rob Corney reported for duty with a tight hamstring after winning both the mile (in 4:49) and 5k (in 16:14) at the Palmer Park track meet on Friday night.

Next the on-form Andrew Smith, who also attempted the track double less than 48 hours before these championships, felt a niggle and was forced to pull out a mile into the race.

Nevertheless a clearly discomfited Corney still managed to be our second man home behind the fast-finishing Seb Briggs, who was rewarded with the team trophy thanks to the efforts of Lance Nortcliff, just recovering from injury, and Jamie Smith.

Roadrunners' men's performances: 20th Seb Briggs 35:19, 24th Rob Corney 35:24, 27th Lance Nortcliff 35:44, 29th Chris Lucas 35:36, 50th Jamie Smith 37:51, 62nd Brian Kirsopp 39:30, 74th Ian Giggs 41:17, 89th Colin Cottell 44:26, 90th Ivan Harding 45:26, 94th David Caswell 45:46; 105th Andy Atkinson 51:23, 107th Nick Adley 54:02 and 108th Peter Higgs 54:49.

In the mens' vets competition Seb was 4th, Lance 7th and Jamie 18th.



Due to the arcane rules of this competition, the first-six-to-score rule only stands up to scrutiny if a team can field 12 finishers, and this looked in doubt when team skipper Phil Reay was left scratching around at the last minute to put out a full side.

At moments like these the real heroes come to the fore, and David Caswell turned out and ran well after only a few hours' sleep following a night shift. Ivan Harding received a call late the evening before, heading to purchase a pair of trail running shoes on the morning of his debut team performance for the club.

The big names cannot pick up their gongs without the support of the back-up cast, so once again the toast was likes of Caz, Ivan and that great club servant Peter Higgs, as well as a brave effort by Maria Norville.

The men's race was won by Simon Millett, of Windsor, Slough and Eton, from the former Roadrunner Luc Jolly, who led Reading AC to victory in the team competition, although the Reading East MP, Matt Rodda (81st), was not one of their scorers.

Another Windsor, Slough and Eton athlete, Meg Ormond, won the women's race, but unlike Sam Whalley and our battling girls, WSE couldn't put out enough runners to contest that team award.