

Kent Fitness League Race Report – Sevenoaks 21st February 2010

Paddock Wood registered a great team result on Sunday to ensure that the league championship remains in doubt until the final race. Going into the penultimate meeting trailing the champions Larkfield AC by three points, Paddock Wood headed the combined team table and clawed back one of those points leaving the competition to be decided at Swanley on 14th March.

Nearly 300 runners lined up in the picturesque surroundings of Knole Park on a cold, wet morning to face 5.7 miles of undulating, grassy tracks – many rendered slippery following heavy overnight rain. Thanet newcomer Abdi Madar was well to the fore at the halfway point followed by Anthony Jackson (Sittingbourne) and Clayton Barrett (Med & Maidst). The second half brought no changes to the leading three places, except that Madar extended his lead to finish with a winning margin of 46 seconds.

Further back, James Ridger and Gareth Robb (Paddock Wood) moved forward to take top 5 places on the second lap displacing Ashley Howes (Larkfield) back into 6th place. The return of Steve Roberts (12th) to serious competition and a solid run by Malcolm Martin (44th) ensured that Paddock Wood had highly placed individuals in the over 40 and over 50 categories.

With Tina Oldershaw absent from the starting line up, the ladies' race was destined to produce a new winner; Oldershaw's 100% record in the first 5 races ensuring that she has already secured the individual championship. Nicola Groom (Larkfield) took full advantage and sped away from the field early in the race to finish almost a minute clear of Lara Hawkins (New Eltham) – her first win in this competition despite struggling with a knee injury during the winter. Laura Burton came home in third place to secure the points for Paddock Wood in Tina's absence.

It is worthy of note that in both the men's and the ladies' races, there were no less than 7 clubs represented in the top 10 finishers. Some years ago, there was concern that one or two clubs were dominating the competition – this is clearly no longer the case.

Congratulations to Rob Carr who organised a highly successful event and grateful thanks to all the marshals and officials from Sevenoaks AC who stood around the park getting very wet and cold. Thanks also to the team captains for keeping their team sheets dry and correctly completed – this makes the results processing much more straightforward.

We have one more race to come – we return to Swanley Park on 14th March to finish off our seven races (this replacing the Minnis Bay race which was cancelled). This, I'm told, will be a different route to that which we used last November, just over 5 miles in length. It will also include a junior race thus completing the junior league championships and we will have our pre-planned social event in the Alexander Suite to follow (free food) so hope to see a good turn out.

Rob Bright