Fantasy XC League 2017/18 – Race 10 Blog

Just finished watching the videos of the Nationals. Although I was sat at home resting it looked like the sort of crisp, bright winter’s day that makes you glad to be alive. And what better way to spend it than in shorts and a vest running round Parliament Hill with the wind in your face and the sheer exhilaration of stretching your legs as you strive to be faster than ever before. After I saw the entry list I felt that the SM result was on the cards but there is many a slip b’twixt cup and lip and no-one could predict how emphatic the victory would be. To emphasis the point, the second six would have come 8th . The rest of the team results were perhaps a little disappointing on the whole, perhaps because the number of entries and hence the level of competition was high. However, within all races there were minor triumphs as many athletes surpassed expectations. And it is the actual exceeding the expected that is the essence of Fantasy League both for individuals with their averages and teams; where managers have to predict who they believe will beat their handicap over the course of the season.

However it is probably fitting to start with participation. The Nationals tally of 150 finishers (28 up on last year) included 15 making their 17/18 FXC debut; which brought the total to 235 for the season (18 up on last year). Within this there was a select group who completed all ranking events: O Breed, B Heslop, F Gordon, J Stoney, D Seagrove and of course the FL most consistent runner – S Puxty. Not surprisingly all but one averaged over 100ppm.

C Olley was the leading scorer with 1,261 points with L Reid leading lady with 567 for the day and 1,138 for the season – all records. Ben Cole returns as leading scorer for the season with 1,794. O Breed and F Gordon were the first junior athletes ever to score 1,000 points for the season. Best average on the day was 294ppm from A Lopez-Caseras. Best average for the season was 574ppm from G Hopkins (U13B) - an astounding score. Other mentions in despatches today –there could be lots but I have to limit it- S Brown who to most people’s surprise topped the batting order in the U20M race coming in 25th, thus proving that beer and skittles in the Loughborough Dog and Duck trumps hard miles any day; the U13G team, 3 of whom have next year in the same age group to look forward to; J Kingston (U17M) who has gone from strength to strength this season, this team is looking exciting for next year also; U17W team who have been such a consistent and dedicated bunch for the whole year; and of course the Masters athletes who again turned out in record numbers with several earning severe cuts to their handicaps next year.

The Bullseye Club expanded to a record 131 including 58 athletes on 100+ppm. With hindsight the pricing looks slightly on the generous side, but higher participation particularly in the Nationals contributed to higher scoring than expected and indeed the top 10 averages were from unknown athletes or those not expected to run. Enough excuses, note to self – must do better.

This week’s victor in the A team category (6 athletes; one athlete from each age group) was Alex Hookway’s Olley Olley Olley Oi Oi Oi team of S Slack, K Goodge, T Hall, C Payas, C Olley and S Houghton with 1,992points. In the B team category (6 athletes from any age group) the best score of the day was from M Ellis’ Kenya Run Any Faster team of R F-R, H Pearce, C Olley, K Marsh, O Breed and M Heslop with 2,639 points. The best Player Manager was also M Ellis with his Got the Runs team of himself, B Cole, R Driscoll, C Payas, A Roeder and J Keywood with 2,110 points. And finally the best Bargain Team was A Roeder’s Budget team of himself, R Driscoll, L Reeves, L Slack, R de Munck and C Lee.

Which brings us to the results for the season. As usual the Nationals result has brought new teams to the fore and seen some slip down the table. The delay in these results is because I have been over the numbers several times looking for mistakes to invalidate this result; but to no avail. So, the winner is my training partner and TAC’s answer to Geoff Capes – A Hookway with his appropriately named Peaking for the Nationals team of H Paton, G Cole, K Reilly, D Brown, R Driscoll and J Bryant with a record 5,253 points. So the answer to the question I posed last week is “No”. In second place and leading Player / Manager team is M Ellis’ Got the Runs team (as above) with 5,062 points. And third and leading ‘A’ team is another track legend, Iain Presnell with his Sprint Finishers team of O Breed, F Croll, D Schofield, J Puxty, R Driscoll and M Heslop with 4,994 points. Finally in the Bargain basement section JT’s Sloggers team of A Roeder, D Brown, J Bingham, A Thompson, M Dubery and G Hopkins hangs on to win with 3,695 points and takes the prize for best team average of 164ppm. Hopefully there will be no Tears on the Telephone over these results!!

And finally the Name of the Season is The Hills are Alive With the Sound of Asics – Amber Crush. It’s just so good!!

PS. On a sad note, it was a bit of a struggle raising interest for Fantasy League this year – I had hoped for 3 times as many entries as were eventually received. Therefore unless there is a groundswell of popular support for this at the beginning of next season I will not be running the competition next year. I may however keep athlete scores going just because I don’t get out that much and it keeps me amused.