Fantasy XC League 2017/18 – Race 7 Blog

The Kent Champs took place at the weekend with surprisingly benign conditions at the Brands Hatch course; the third edition on what is a deceptively leg sapping course. There were a record 112 finishers topping 100 for the third successive season plus N Taylor winning the SW race in the Sussex equivalent.

So just a few days after I thought I could predict Fantasy League, I am proved wrong; the season’s 100% list has fallen to 7 – O Breed, B Heslop, F Gordon, S Puxty, J Stoney, D Seagrove, and J Keywood and so I now confidently predict that this group ***might*** see out the year. D Seagrove extends his streak to 14 to retain his position as Mr Consistency . Steph Puxty extends her FL record to 24/25 record closely followed by Bede P-K & L Kingston on 23/25 and JT on 22/24; although O Breed in fact has a 100% record based on eligible races.

Ben Cole makes a welcome return to the podium as leading scorer with 236 points; closely followed by G Duggan, C J-A and L Reid. Best average was recently poached, err sorry, recruited, T Oldershaw (VetW) with 105ppm to qualify for Bullseye Club private dining. She was closely followed by B Reynolds (VetM) on 102ppm. Days like this are of course great displays of character from the junior athletes, but interestingly the day was also a fantastic advert for masters athletes. I noticed that John Gilbert the winner of the SM race is now M35 and 3 of the top 6 in the SW race were masters athletes including Tina as noted above and the phenomenon that is Maria Heslop who seems to be able to run 8km at my 800m pace. I can’t mention everyone but other athletes that caught the eye: G Hopkins (U13B) 76ppm who my scouting network completely overlooked at the start of the season; A Hales (U13G) 40ppm who is improving with every race; L Miller(U17W) 24.7ppm from a welcome return to form; E Heslop (U17W) 14ppm rising up the batting order; J Kingston (U17M) 23.6ppm with 1st place from a very gutsy run; K Marsh (U20W) 76ppm running up an age group and coming 5th in the SW race; and Cameron Payas (U20M) 30.8ppm also upsetting the established order to win.

There were 11 more FL3 debutants this week taking the total to 216 so far for the year which is still ahead of the same time last year and one short of last year’s record of 217 for the whole season. However, despite a record entry list for the Nationals, I have to confess I am a little concerned about my 230 season target.

A whopping 16 athletes joined the Bullseye Club taking the total to 52 compared to 48 this time last season. This total includes 9 athletes on 100+ppm compared to 7 last year; with G Hopkins, A Hales, S Jeddo (VetW), Ben and Tina all being dined in this week. 37 athletes have qualified for bonus points for reaching or exceeding 5 qualifying races this season with 6 reaching 7 races. I am confident that we will exceed last year’s total of 72 by the end of the season, not sure about reaching the 100 mark though.

Now on to the money. This week’s victor in the A team category (6 athletes; one athlete from each age group) was J Watts’ Value Added TACs comprising M Clark, M Taylor, J Kingston, Bede P-K, G Duggan and M Heslop with a massive 652 points surpassing the previous record for the Kent Champs. In the B team category (6 athletes from any age group) the best score of the day was from Harry Paton’s Pedigrees Three team of B Cole, L Reid, C Payas, S Crick, C Crick and R Driscoll with 549 points. The best Player Manager was M Dubery with his A team comprising himself, H Crush, J Kingston, A Kinloch, B Cole and L P-K with 535 points. And finally the best Bargain Team, with 118 points was JT’s Sloggers comprising D Brown, A Roeder, M Dubery, J Bingham, G Hopkins and A Thompson. At the other end of the table a few zeros again this week including one of last week’s stage winners J Bryant.

This week’s win was enough to keep JT’s Sloggers, like a group of chimpanzees, at the top of the tree with 2,960 points. This season’s increase in points for unused budget from 50 to 70 per million seems to be keeping the bargain teams in the hunt for honours, but a few of them are beginning to drop through the floor faster than the dancers at the weightwatchers Xmas Disco. Seriously can any of them take it all the way to the end.

Now when is a race not a race? The answer of course is the South of England Champs. As far as Fantasy League is concerned there will be a paper race with places and resulting points being determined by a panel of experts. Each athlete will be included based on the likelihood that they would have run, taking into account: racing plans submitted at the beginning of the season; fitness/injury status; indoor competitions; race record this season; participation in previous season’s S of E Champs; and geography (students at northern university’s may have been put off by the travel). Athletes may make representations for inclusion, indeed I have already had one from an athlete who fails on at least one of the above criteria but I shouldn’t mention Michael’s name. Race place and TAC place will then be determined based on form, record this season and any previous SofE record. Rather like a North Korean court, there will be no right of appeal, but plenty of old potatoes.

Finally, the 7th nomination for the season defining, Terrible (or Brilliant) Team Names prize, is Toby Emm’s Tomo=God. It wouldn’t be the same without one of Toby’s creations and it is good to see that he is still living in that surreal teenage twilight zone that many of us barely remember.