

## ***National Championships? - What's all that about then?***

I've just received the final results for the British and English Championship and I'm pleased to see that Pennine have once again succeeded in producing medallists - well deserved congratulations to both Lucy and Alison. We also had some very good tries which landed a couple of our members just outside podium position in their categories, and I'm sure that both Rob, who is placed 4th in both English and British and Mary, who is 5th in the English, are both quite rightly proud of their achievements and also deserve our congratulations.

But the results which most amazed me were a couple of team positions. In the English Championship, our LV40 team reached 5th and our MV50 team reached 4th - both just outside medal positions.

Hang on, you say, do we have an LV40 team or an MV50 team? Well, that's my point - we don't. We just happen to have a club which is capable of this kind of result without even trying. So ... just think what we could do if we really tried!

Not everybody likes Championship races. They are very busy, with lots and lots of runners - a far cry from some of the local races like the Lamb's Leg or Herod Farm. You're also running against some classy runners, and your overall position is likely to be a lot further down the field. So why do people (who are unlikely to win) bother to do them?

Well fell running has always been a sport which is as enjoyable for the bloke at the back as it is for the winners. That's one of the many reasons why I take part in the sport, and that applies to all races, including Championship races. Why do them? - well I can only give you my reasons ...

- Despite the seriousness of the contenders, they are extremely sociable affairs. Start doing Championship races and you'll soon end up with mates in clubs all over the country. The only set-back is that it is sometimes difficult to warm up with all the meeting and greeting which is going on!
- They really get the most out of your performance. The atmosphere of a Championship race is amazing, and no matter how well you normally do in the race when it's not a Championship race, you will do better when it is.
- They make being a member of a club mean something more than just training. When a group of runners from any club turn up for a Championship race, each runner is part of the family, each runner is out to score points for the club, each runner counts - even if they don't score top points, because they force down the points of other clubs' runners behind them. Each runner will, by their very presence, support all the other runners in that club.
- They take you to different mountains and hills, to experience parts of the country you rarely (or even never) would visit otherwise. Next year I look forward to running in the Welsh Aran Mountains, the Mountains of Mourne, the "rolling hills" of the Borders around Moffat, the Cheviots, the Howgills, the South Pennines, the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales and the beautiful hills of the Long Mynd.

- It's interesting to see exactly how you match up in your own category. Now the English Championship has adopted the 5-year categories, there's lots of different lists which you can appear on, and, even if that's a lowly position, it gives you a challenge, at whatever level you normally run.
- The experience will help you to compete more efficiently in non-Championship races.

When it comes to *Team Competition*, you don't have to be a superstar to boost the efforts of the team. You just have to compete. Even those who don't make the actual team for a particular race contribute towards the ranking of the club's team by affecting the scores of other runners, and by simply supporting other runners by being there.

I wouldn't want anybody to do a race which they do not want to do, but I think that any runner who would like to run for Pennine in the British or the English Championships should be given every encouragement, and this is one of the jobs which I think the various team captains need to give more thought to. Reminders, encouragement, organising recces, discussing routes and tactics, sorting out lifts - even baking cakes! Captains don't need to do all of this - but they should make sure that it can happen. It's all part of being in a club, supporting each other and adding a whole extra dimension to running in the hills.

A long, long time ago, fourteen years to be exact, the Pennine Ladies were English Ladies Fell Running Champions - beating some very stiff competition, just by being there and running the races. In those days the FRA "Do" was in Morecambe, and what a night it was. Fourteen years is a long time, but, as this year's results show, and, indeed, as our mixed team proved at Brotherswater earlier this month, we have the talent to compete successfully against the best of them.

So what about 2011? Are you up for it?

***Alan Brentnall***