

Helm Hill guide to junior racing

When Paula Radcliffe was 12, she wasn't the best 12-year-old in her club; Steph Twell at 13 couldn't make her club's A relay team. Young runners mature and progress at different rates, and running repays those who train hard over a period of time without being put off by setbacks.



Some achieve success very young, whilst others progress year by year and often achieve greater success when they are older.

Winning is very enjoyable and should be celebrated, but the most important aspects for young runners are enjoyment of running and competing, having fun, making friends and enjoying being part of a club. When juniors have a good run they should enjoy the excitement and the joy that this brings. When they do not do as well as they had hoped, they should not worry about it and simply look forward to the next race.

Virtually every week throughout the year there is a race that a junior could run in; it is very easy for a young runner to over-race, get burnt out and perhaps get injured. It is important to think about which races or championships are important to the runner and have short, medium and long-term goals. Some of these may be achieved ahead of plan and others may not be reached at all; it is the lessons learnt and the fun that is had along the way that is important. If winning is the most important thing, then when that young person goes through a period when they are not winning then they are more likely to give up. For a young runner no race is so important that it can't be missed or that a bad run is worth getting upset about.

Nevertheless, it is great of course that at Helm Hill we have many runners who do well at a variety of levels! We have Cumbria, Bofra and FRA champions amongst our present and past (and, no doubt, future) Junior runners.



We are happy also for our runners to take part in a wide range of sports and other activities to develop coordination, strength and agility.

It can be very confusing to understand all the different races, the bodies that organise races, what the standard will be and to know what races are the most enjoyable and which ones are a good day out for the whole family. The easiest thing to do is to speak to the junior coordinator or one of the coaching team and they will happily point you in the right direction. We regularly publicise up-coming races on the Helm Hill website and Helm Hill members Facebook page, and our coaches will mention appropriate races at training nights.



The BOFRA series of races are similar in length, difficulty and standard of running as **the Kendal Winter League**. Racing is taken seriously, but the races generally have a very friendly atmosphere, with many of our runners taking part. There are 15 races in the series with a runner's best 8 results to count in the championship. Junior runners can participate in any of the races and it is normally about £2 to enter. To count in the series, you have to be a member of BOFRA which costs £7 and should be paid before the first race. Age categories are U9, U12, U14, U17 according to the date of the first race. Details of the races and membership are on www.bofra.org.uk . The first race is usually Sedbergh Gala in mid-May, which generally sees a good turn out of Helm runners. Just beware that not quite all the BOFRA races have an U9s category; sometimes U12s is the youngest category.

The FRA junior championship is made up of six races, four to count in the championship.

There are U9 and U11 races that are non-championship races, and U13, U15, U17, U19; your age category depends on your age at the end of the year in which you are racing. For example, if your 13th birthday falls during the year in which you are racing, you cannot be in the U13s category; you will be in the U15s.

Details are on www.felljunior.org.uk. The fields in the FRA races tend to be bigger and with a greater strength in depth. You must be a member of England Athletics to count for the Helm Hill team points in the FRA championships. In recent years, Helm Hill has often finished in the top five clubs within the FRA Junior championship team results. Points and prizes are awarded for individuals too.



There are also many other races that take place throughout the summer which are, for example, part of traditional Lakeland shows. These can range from the very low key to the prestigious Ambleside and Grasmere Sports. Many of these races are short and steep and are often entered according to age on the day.

From October onwards, the Cumbria and Mid-Lancs Cross Country leagues start as well as various cross-country events through primary and secondary schools. Cross country running helps to develop speed and strength. Many of our runners go on to represent Cumbria at County level through qualifying in races as part of the running club system, or through the school system.

For the Mid-Lancs cross country, Junior Helm runners compete as part of the Kendal-Helm composite team. Ask the Junior Co-ordinator or one of the coaching team for more information about this.

Many of the above types of races are included in the **Helm Hill club championship**. See the Races tab on the Helm Hill website for details of the club championship. Here you will also find information about **Club Colours** – we honour those who race for the club, regardless of finishing position, through presentation of club colours.



So, lace up your running shoes and get out there to enjoy your racing, and enjoy representing the club. It's always great to see a Helm vest on the fells!



Happy racing.