

The Oxted Runners Winter Handicap Competition

A guide for newbies, and a reminder for the old lags..

The Winter Handicap is a competition to liven up winter's procession of weekly circuits of the famous Winter Route. It is three competitions in one, with end-of-season prizes for the Handicap, the single best time, and the single best age-graded time, with separate competitions for men and women. The good news for newer runners is that the Handicap Prizes (nice shields you get to take home and show off to your family and friends) are normally won by improving runners who speed up over the season. The speed-kings, for whom handfulls of seconds count, don't get a look in. Read on to find out why and what you have to do.

Handicap races are held on five Tuesdays over the season – 24 October, xx November, xx January, xx February, and xx March.

When you arrive at the Tennis Club (at the usual time – 7:15), go to the Registration Desk in front of the entrance where Alan Hills will sign you in and give you your start time.

Your start time derives from an agreeably intricate formula which is based on your previous time around the course and which is explained in detail below. The start times are the handicapping system, which means that the slower runners start first and the fastest runners start last. If everyone runs exactly in line with their handicaps, everyone will arrive at the finish at exactly the same time.

If you haven't run in the competition before, you will get a notional start time – your run will not count for the Handicap Competition but will count in the 'fastest time' and 'fastest age-graded' competitions. Your start time for the next race will be determined by how fast you are in this first race.

At some point the Timekeeper (Pete Gibson) will start The Watch, and it all happens. If your start time is 9 mins 30 seconds, you will start 9 ½ minutes after Pete has started The Watch. Be ready to go. Frances Gibson will organise you and get you lined up in your start position. Do not trifle with Frances: just do what she tells you to do. When you get to the front of the queue of starters, Pete will count you down 5-4-3-2-1-GO. And off you go, clockwise around the Winter Route.

Now it is just a question of how many people you catch and overtake (good) and how many people catch and overtake you (bad). Normally there is a lot of catching and overtaking in Park Road, which is rather more than ¾ of the way around the course.

The finish is at the entrance to the Tennis Club, where you will see Pete 'The Watch' Gibson and Frances. Pete will click the watch to record your time, and Frances will give you a finishing number. If you get number 1, congratulations: you have won the race. Take your number back to the Registration Desk and give it to Alan.

Your work is over. A bit of stretching, a cup of tea, and chat to the others about how well you did (or about how you ran like a camel with an extra hump...).

But for the organisers, the fun is just beginning. When the last runner is back, Pete 'The Watch' Gibson will stop The Watch. We will then marry up the finishing times with the finishing numbers, and work everything out for next time... Results published as soon as we can work them out. Details on the next page...

We do the maths...

Each runner has a *TargetTime*, which is the time which they are expected to take to complete the course.

The runner's *Start Time* is calculated by subtracting the runner's Target Time from 50:00 mins. Thus a slow runner, with a target time of 48:30 will have a start time of 1:30. This means that the runner starts when The Watch shows 1:30.

The timekeeper records (once the times and the finishing numbers have been reconciled) when each runner finishes. Suppose that our runner finishes with the watch showing 47:45. This means that the runner has completed the course in a time of 46:15, and improvement of 2:15 relative to their Target Time.

For the 'fastest time' competition, the runner's result will be recorded as 46:15. For the 'fastest age graded time' the runner's time will be recorded as 46:15 adjusted by use of the age graded calculator on the OR website.

For the Handicap Competition, points are awarded according to finishing position only, with the first runner home getting fifteen points, the second runner getting fourteen points, and so on. All finishers get at least one point. There are separate competitions for men and women. If the first woman home is in, say, fourth place and the second woman gets home in sixth place then the first woman gets 15 points and the second woman gets 14 points, and so on. The man who got home in fifth place is the fourth man home and therefore gets 12 points. The end of season trophy will be awarded to the runner with the most points, with the best four results out of a possible five to count.

For the next race in the series Target Times are adjusted as follows:

-For runners who beat their target times, their new target time will be the time they actually ran, rounded to the nearest quarter of a minute.

- For runners who ran slower than their target time, their target time will be increased by half the difference between the time which they actually ran and their previous target time, with the result rounded to the nearest quarter of a minute. The maximum increase in the target time will be capped at one minute.