

## **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 and are not 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 things for a young runner are that they enjoy running and competing, that they have fun, and that they make friends and enjoy being part of a club. When they 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 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 that important that it can't be missed or that a bad run is worth getting upset about.

However, it is great that at Helm Hill we have many good runners, who do well at a variety of levels and we have Cumbria, Bofra and FRA champions amongst our members.

We also encourage 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 one of the junior coordinators 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 our coaches will mention appropriate races at training nights.

The BOFRA series of races are similar in length, difficulty and standard of runners as the Kendal Winter League. Racing is taken seriously, but they are generally very friendly 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 £1 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 and are on the day of the first race. Details of the races and membership are on the [www.bofra.org.uk](http://www.bofra.org.uk) and details of the races are also given out at club nights. The first race this year is Sedbergh Gala on 21<sup>st</sup> May which always has a good turn out of Helm runners. There is no U9 race at this race and the

U12 course is long and steep for little ones, so best for U9's to give this one a miss and rest up for the next race at Coniston which is the first race in the U9's Club Championship.

The FRA junior championship is made up of 6 races, 4 to count in the championship. There are U8 and U10 races that are non championship races, and U12, U14, U16, U18; ages are on the 1<sup>st</sup> January. You must be 10 before the 1<sup>st</sup> January to compete in the U12 championship. Details are on [www.felljunior.org.uk](http://www.felljunior.org.uk) The fields in the FRA races tend to be bigger and with a greater strength in depth. You do not need to be a member to count in the championship. There are also lots of other races that are regulated and insured by the FRA and details of these can be found on the FRA website under junior races [www.fellrunner.org.uk](http://www.fellrunner.org.uk) There are guidelines on race distances for the different age groups that are strictly adhered to. The first race of the FRA Championship and the Helm Hill junior club championship is Pendle on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, when it is hoped that we shall have a good turn out of club runners.

There are also many other races that take place throughout the summer which are run alongside 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 age on the day.

This year the Helm Hill junior club championship has been designed to give our runners a range of racing experiences over a variety of terrain and in different locations. 5 races from 10 to count in the U12, U14 and U17 age groups. We are also hoping to encourage runners to take part in either the Bofra or FRA championships by giving an extra 10 bonus points for those that complete 8 Bofra or 4 FRA races.

The U9 have their own series of local races best 3 from 5 races to count.

From October onwards the club participates in both the Cumbria and Mid Lancs Cross Country leagues which develop speed and strength and many of our runners go on to represent Cumbria at County and School level through qualifying races.

We regularly update the junior racing calendar and highlight races on the club website. So lace your fell shoes up tight and get out and enjoy your racing and representing the club. It will be great to see lots of Helm vests on the fells this summer, parents and juniors.

Happy racing.