



No Winter Blues For Purple Posse

IT'S DEFINITELY winter! You can tell - it's dark when you wake up and dark again about an hour after lunch. But do difficult conditions deter Scotland's finest club runners? Certainly not, because the ever eager boys and girls of Bellahouston Road Runners have a full calendar of events to keep them on track until spring.

Our top notch band of coaches - Messrs Slow, Wild, Kennedy, Millegan and McNally - have already issued full winter training schedules and their programme of track, hills, steady mid-week runs and long weekend runs have been created to ensure that we reach Training Camp time honed and sharp for spring Marathons and the big programme of 10ks in the first part of 2008.

Not that those with the competitive urge have to go without their fix - there are regular events from December through to February that will keep you race sharp. And in fact the club's Winter Handicap series has been designed to keep people involved during the colder months. Up and coming events in the Winter Handicap are the Ayr Turkey Trot 10k (Dec 26) which always attracts a big Bella turnout, the Nigel Barge 10k (Jan 5), the Jack Crawford 10K (Jan 12) and the Renfrewshire 5M Road Race (Feb

3). The finale to the Winter Handicap is the Balloch-Clydebank Half in March.

The great thing about the Winter Handicap is that it is a ... Handicap. This in theory gives runners of all abilities a roughly equal chance of winning the competition.

Points in any race are calculated on the basis of your previous year's best 10k time. Your four best performances (from 8 races) count towards your final total. The series also aims to introduce Bellas to other race surfaces and a number of cross-country and hill races are included on the Winter Handicap list.

The series kicked-off with the Tinto Hill race and a couple of Bellas, Raymond Farrell and Louie Plenderleith, made their hill debuts. Raymond posted a colourful report of his experience on the website and was recently spotted in huddled conversation with Andy Birnie. The words were 'Carnethy 5' were overheard, so good luck Raymie!

The full Club Championship is now in full swing and during the winter months includes the five races listed above. Club captains Nick Reid and Claire Thompson would love to see big Bella turnouts at these events.



Bella Ladies (Elke Schmidt, Emma Birnie and Claire Thompson) picked up team silver at the Renfrewshire Cross Country C'ships in October

Although it's some way off make sure that you get the Training Camp weekend into your diary as soon as the dates are published. For those who've been at a camp before then no sales pitch is required, for those that haven't then don't miss the 2008 event. A return to Aberfeldy seems favourite for this great mix of terrific running in fabulous Perthshire scenery, various treasure hunt/quiz competitions, surprisingly good food (we cook it ourselves!) and the occasional shandy.

On that social note there are two big events just round the corner - the Bella Christmas night out on Thursday December 13 at the Thistle Hotel, Glasgow and a sledging/ tubing session at the Ski Club after training on Wednesday, December 19. There are still places available for both dates and they promise to be memorable occasions.



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Babes In Vest Shocker



ADVENTUROUS BELLAS, Carla Deans and Lynne Andrew took part in the Toronto Half Marathon in October. Both girls were delighted with their substantial race medals and happy with race conditions - cold and cloudy, and enjoyed the cosmopolitan race route.

One note of controversy. Carla and Lynne decided they wanted to play the Scottish card during the race and ran in Scotland tops instead of the internationally-renowned BRR purple. Shame!

Lynne did report that the Toronto prizes are within reach of Bella's finest with the men's Half Marathon winner on 1.08.49 (women - 1.20.04). Marathon times - 2.21.58 (men) and 2.58.47 (women).



Cam's 2nd Nevis Run

EBULLIENT BELLA, Cammie Taylor is looking forward to his second attempt at one of Britain's toughest hill races in 2008. The Largs man completed the 4409ft climb of the Ben Nevis Race in 2005, in a time of 2:51:32, and has already secured a coveted place in the line-up on September 6.

Cammie told the **BELLA BLETHER**: "It's tough on the way up but fortunately a lot quicker on the way down. If any other Bellas want to join me on the start line, get your entries in soon as places always fill up well in advance of the race."

Bella Takes On The Best Of British



Bella Ladies celebrate after fell relay glory

THE UK ATHLETICS British Fell & Hills Relay Championships 2007 is one of the most prestigious club competitions in the race calendar. So it was with great anticipation and some trepidation that a Bella contingent headed south to Lancashire for this event in October.

Success at the Devils Burden Hill relays in February when the girls team of Helen Stuart, Iona Robertson, Helen Palmer, Elke Schmidt, Joe Jefferies and Emma Birnie, overcame the mighty hill running clubs such as Carnethy and finish in glorious gold medal position inspired the girls to go for a rematch and up the stakes against the best of the British clubs.

The Devils Burdens 6 made the trip to the Forest of Bowland and were joined by a Bella mens team consisting of Matt Williamson, Dougal Ross, Ken McMahon, Andy Birnie, Rich Wild and Colin McGill.

Race day dawned misty with the low cloud and drizzle that you dread when there's navigation involved in a race. At the start we looked towards Parlick hill where the legs were to be run. Not much to see just a cruel blanket of mist and cloud.

The race ran as follows: Leg 1 (Pairs) 8.25 miles/2,900' (Helen S & Emma / Matt & Dougal); Leg 2 (Solo) 4.5 miles/1,900' (Elke / Ken); Leg 3 (Pairs) 6.5 miles/1,800' - navigation leg (Helen P & Joe / Andy B & Rich); Leg 4 (Solo) 3.5m/1,950' (Iona / Colin).

Helen and I set off through the mud, passed all the spectators, out of the field and into the mist. Thinking back over our grueling leg of the race all I seem to remember is crawling about

through numerous deep muddy peat bogs and helping to pull Helen out of one of them. The final downhill to the finish was a fabulous site with our team mates cheering in true Bella style all the way to the changeover area. Having enthused over our part of the race to those still to run we headed to the food tent for a welcome bowl of pasta and hot tea.

Elke finished her speedy (third fastest) leg having picked up a few positions for the girls and handed over to Helen P and Joe. It was only then that they were handed their map and found out where their leg would be taking them. An excellent 'eyeballs' out performance by these two brought us home in 5th position and with Carnethy ladies 10 minutes ahead Iona set off up the hill with a mission in her mind.

Would she get past Carnethy's last leg runner? With bated breath we waited for the figures on the horizon. Would it be a red or purple vest first? Iona had timed her run to perfection and came down the final hill before her rival. Needless to say she was encouraged all the way to the line.

With so much coming and going we weren't sure of our final position but we heard rumours that we daren't believe, that we were third. The prizegiving confirmed our hopes and we collected our bronze medals and a bottle of locally brewed beer each! The Bella boys performed valiantly and finished a very respectable 36th out of 117 teams.

A truly wonderful event which left each one of us on a high for ages after we finished. One definitely NOT to be missed next year.

CONTRIBUTORS WANTED: The editorial team here at the **BELLA BLETHER** have noticed the high quality of personal website and blog information written by a number of Bellas. Any potential contributors to the **BELLA BLETHER** can contact PR convenor Terry Brennan through the website.

the nick of time

I DON'T WANT to kick off my first column whingeing but this committee lark is tough. I realised that a lot of work went on behind the scenes and that events like the Awards night, the Bella 5k, the Xmas Night Out and the training camp didn't just happen, people actually organised them, but my first couple of months has been an eye opener.



I'd expected to be busy in September/October as captain because of all the relay and cross-country events but that's been good fun. I'm maybe a bit disappointed that we haven't had more teams in events like the Renfrewshire County Championships and I think Claire and I have a bit of a job on our hands to persuade members that these events aren't for the top half of Group A but rather for everyone at the club.

We all get a huge buzz out of seeing a big Bella turnout at the events and it really marks us out as a club on the rise. So I'm giving some consideration to how we can get more people involved.

So how did we do in the autumn events. A dozen Bella guys made the trip to Houston on Saturday, September 29 for the George Cumming relays. Team A (MacLeod, Dougal Ross, Birnie and Conway) finished a respectable 13th, Team B (Sanz, McMahon, Moriarty and Reid) came in 22nd and Team C (Glendinning, McGregor, Goudie and Robinson) were 39th.

Another great performance from Alistair MacLeod after a cracking run in the GSR half marathon. And there's more to come from this promising runner with more consistent training over the winter. Same could be said of Marcus - the man from Barcelona has loads of ability and with just a bit more self-belief he can become one of the club's top runners.

The following week Alistair was prominent again at the McAndrew Relays running with Ian Goudie and Dougie McGregor who flew the Bella flag that day.

There was better representation at the West District Cross Country and a Richmond, Sanz, Conway, Reid foursome finished 9th out of 35, while Craig Ross starred for the B team.

Next up was the Renfrewshire County Championships which Bella hosted at Pollok Park. We were lucky to get a fine autumn day and good support from club members who came along to marshal and officiate. A special mention to Ken McMahon who did a great job setting out an excellent course. Oh, and we had 3 teams out - 4th, 5th and 9th.

The National C/C relays followed and an A team of Richmond, Willaimson, Reid and MacLeod finished in 17th place while a B side of Sanz, McIndoe, Whittington and Kennedy took 37th spot. Both solid performances in a 100 strong field.

An event to get into your diaries - the Renfrewshire County Road race on February 3. It will be run at Greenock and is an individual event. Let's get a really big purple turnout on that date.

Finally a reminder that both the Club Championship and the Winter Handicap are up and running. Myself and Claire Thompson have shaken things up a bit this year. Definitely no 'status quo'. The Winter Handicap gives Bellas of all ability an equal chance of glory while the Club Championship has various categories (Men/Women, Senior/Vets) so lots of opportunities for Awards Night fame.

Nick

I TOOK A sharp intake of breath when it was suggested that I might be nominated as Women's captain for 2007-2008. Part of me was pleased that people thought I was up to the job yet the prospect was daunting. Still I'd had such a great time since I joined Bella 18 months previously and had received such a warm welcome that I thought I liked to put something back in. So I agreed to take on the job and was voted in at the AGM.

It was baptism of fire. Much of the captain's work takes place during the autumn months when there's a busy period of relay races - both on the road and cross-country. I'd just got used to the idea of being captain when I had to harangue people to take part in the George Cumming relays. In the end we entered three teams at Houston and finished 6th, 12th and 17th which given that there were lots of big names in the field like Kilbarchan and City of Glasgow was pretty respectable.

Then it was into the cross country season with the National, West and Renfrewshire championships in close succession. The West event clashed with a major hill running race but we still fielded two teams who finished 10th and 12th.

Next came the Renfrewshire County Championships which the club hosted at Pollok Park. Thanks to all the volunteer race officials and marshals who did a long shift on the day and made sure everything went ahead smoothly. Our three ladies teams finished 2nd, 5th and 7th with Emma Birnie, Elke Schmidt and myself picking up the silver medals. Elke incidentally was the fastest runner on the day with a flying final lap.

There are still a few cross country and relay events to come and I'd encourage anyone thinking about doing some of these events to take the plunge. The cross country races are awesome - childhood revisited. There's no need to worry about being good enough or thinking this is just for the club speedsters. It's not, it's for everyone at the club. It's a great way of meeting other club members, of varying your running and most of the c/c and relay events are free!

If you don't believe me ask Jackie O'Grady who joined the club last year. Jackie was a bit reluctant to sign up for the first relay but she was persuaded, loved it and has kept coming back for more.

As we all know Bellas get everywhere and we had a big turnout at Berlin for the marathon - Lorna Canning, Shona MacLeod, Jane Galt and Liz Blair were the purple finishers while Linda Kennedy and Jackie McGuire put in sterling performances at the Dublin Marathon.

Possibly the stand-out achievement over the last few months was our third place at the British Fell Running Association relays. Congrats to Elke Schmidt, Helen Stuart, Emma Birnie, Helen Palmer, Jo Jeffries and Iona Robertson. More about this race elsewhere in the Blether.

And finally. Can I urge all Bellas to take a look at the race programme for both the Club Championship 07-08 and the Winter Handicap. A bit different from last year but we - Nick Reid and myself - hope that there's enough interest and variety to increase the numbers who qualified for the final table last season.

Enjoy your winter running.



Claire

cap'n claire's soapbox



THE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

RACE	DATE	TYPE
Millport 10M	Sun 9 Sept	L
St Andrews Hospice 10K	Sun 23 Sept	M
Glasgow University 5M	Sat 17 Nov	S
Ayr Turkey Trot 10K	Wed 26 Dec	M
Nigel Barge 10K	Sat 5 Jan	M
Jack Crawford 10K	Sat 12 Jan	M
Renfrew AAA Road Champs 5M	Sun 3 Feb	S
Arbroath Smokies 10M (W)	Sun 2 Mar	L
Balloch to Clydebank HM	Sun 9 Mar (prov)	L
Clydebank 5K	Sat 15 Mar	S
Tom Scott 10M (M)	Sun 13 Apr	L
Troon 10K	Wed 7 May	M
Ladies 10K Glasgow (W)	Sun 18 May (prov)	M
Polaroid 10K Clydebank	Thu 29 May	M
Polaroid 10K Dumbarton	Thu 5 Jun	M
Mens Health 10K (M)	Sun 15 Jun	M
Jog Scotland Glasgow Green 5K	Tue 17 Jun	S
Diet Coke East Kilbride HM	Sun 22 Ju	L
Bella Presidents Cup 5K	Wed 25 Jun (prov)	S
Helensburgh HM	Sun 3 Aug	L
Bella 5K	Sun 17 Aug	S
Mull HM	Sun 10 Aug	L
Great Scottish Run HM	Sun 7 Sep	L
Great Scottish Run 10 K	Sun 7 Sep	M
Other Scottish Island HM	various dates	L
Marathons	various dates	L

Club Championship races in each category:

Short: Clydebank 5K, Jog Scotland 5K, Bella Presidents Cup 5K

Bella 5K Road Race, Glasgow University 5M, Renfrew AAA 5M Road Champs

Medium: St Andrews Hospice 10K; Ayr Turkey Trot 10K; Nigel Barge 10K; Jack

Crawford 10K; Troon 10K; Ladies 10K Glasgow (W); Polaroid 10K Clydebank;

Polaroid 10K Dumbarton; Great Scottish Run 10K; Mens Health 10K (M)

Long: Millport 10M; Arbroath Smokies 10M (W); Tom Scott 10M (M); Balloch/

Clydebank HM; Diet Coke East Kilbride HM; Helensburgh HM; Great Scottish Run HM;

ANY marathon*; Mull OR any other Scottish Island HM*

W - only a champ race for women; M - only a champ race for men

*Your race times for these events MUST be submitted to Andy Birnie for inclusion

THE WINTER HANDICAP

RACE	DATE
Tinto Hill Race	Sat, 10 Nov
Renfrewshire XC Championships	Sat, 24 Nov
West District XC Champs	Sat, 8 Dec
Ayr Turkey Trot	Wed, 26 Dec
Nigel Barge 10K	Sat, 5 Jan
Jack Crawford 10K	Sat 12 Jan
Renfrew AAA Road Champs 5M	Sun 3 Feb
Balloch to Clydebank HM	Sun 9 Mar (prov)

title hopefuls



How long before emerging young Bellas start to challenge for championship places?



Will Robert McEwan's form see him challenge for a Vet mens place?

top quotes

You can have everything in life that you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want

Abraham Lincoln

Get back under your stone, Shoddy!

Claire Thompson

photos in this edition: courtesy
Brendan Moriarty, Elke Schmidt &
Terry Brennan