

Meeting of UK Course Measurement Working Party

11.15 Saturday 18 September 1999

City of London Fruit Exchange, Brushfield Street, London

MINUTES

1. Present

John Disley (Chair), Martin Dyde (Wales), Phil Holland (MCAA), Raymond Hutcheson (SAF), Alan Ritchie (NCAA), M.Sandford (SEAA & acting as secretary for the meeting), Hugh Jones (AIMS), Jack Selby.

2. Apologies

Max Coleby, Roger Gibbons, Paul Hodgson, Mike Tomlins.

3. Report from Chairman

John Disley, in the Chair, welcomed those present. He noted that a letter had been received from Max Coleby explaining that he was unable to attend through the absence of funds also compounded by domestic issues. Max felt that as a matter of principle national funding should be available for the CMWP. There was general sympathy for the point Max made.

John noted the minutes of the last meeting held in November 1996, towards the end of the BAF. The minutes had been prepared by Paul Hodgson, BAF measurement secretary, who had organised the last meeting. He had resigned and had not been replaced during the subsequent national reorganisation.

John said that the measurers throughout the UK had shown a remarkable loyalty over the last three years when the National Athletics Body, engrossed in its own reorganisation, had left Course Measurement entirely to its own devices. The system based as it was on a strong, well worked out structure had not broken down. He wished to congratulate everyone involved.

Measurement world wide, just as important, was operating under rather better organisational conditions, and the Technical Chairman, Gordon Rogers, in Vancouver was very active in ensuring the remeasurement of international races. AIMS have had 15 new member races in the last six months. Under the AIMS rules courses are remeasured after 5 years or when a change is made if earlier.

Appointment of IAAF measurers continues in many countries, including UK which now has 4 or 5 grade A IAAF measurers appointed as a result of John's recommendations. More grade B measurers will be recommended in October.

Although the IAAF road race measurement capability has been greatly strengthened over the last three years, the subject has yet to become a major topic on the agenda within the IAAF hierarchy.

4. Reports from Area/Regional Measurement Secretaries

4.1. Athletics Association of Wales – Martin Dyde

MEASURERS

We are now in the position that we have a good pool of efficient course measurers since having a successful training seminar in Cardiff which was lead by Paul Hodgson and assisted by Phil Holland and myself. Thanks to both of them.

The new measurers have not only replaced those who have retired but filled our ranks where we had short falls. At present I am the only Grade 1 measurer in Wales, but I have 2 measurers ready for upgrading to level 1.

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES

Since the last meeting in November 1996 of the Course Measurement Working Party there have been several major changes in the Principality, most notably the reorganisation of its staffing and the re formatting of the County structure into Regional area's known as "RABs" (regional athletics boards). The former Road Running Committee was at this point disbanded and along with other committees such as Cross Country & Fell were represented on an all encompassing Committee.

CERTIFICATES

As from the start of the millennium the Certificates of Course Accuracy will indicate the new Regional structure as will all course listings published.

An additional service recently introduced (approx. 12 months ago) is the Certificate of course accuracy for Multi Terrain events and is slowly being adopted by organisers. The certificate does state quite clearly. *"This is to certify that the distance of the above Multi Terrain race has been measured as accurately as possible by a graded UK Athletics course measurer given the conditions of the course surface at the time, but this is not a guarantee that the course is exact"*. This certificate does not apply to cross country courses.

I have been considering for some time now to follow Mike's lead with regard to having courses either re-measured or checked if over the age of 10 years. Although there are very few that fall into this category, probably only 12 or less. But the points raised by Mike are very valid and I believe we should follow his lead.

NEW CERTIFICATES & RENEWALS

1997-110, 1998-107, 1999 to Sept-70.

When I first took up the role of secretary in 1996 there was at that point no provision for renewals. Since introducing the renewal system there are very few event organisers who now fail to re-apply for a renewal. Those who do forget are usually quite prompt in applying when reminded. This improvement has come about largely thanks to the help of the Permit issuers through out Wales and at this point I would like to voice my thanks to them all. Especially Eric Bailey who has now got one of the biggest areas with regard to number event's and has had to put on the most effort.

4.2. Midland Counties Athletics Association – Phil Holland

STATISTICS

Courses measured 1997 - 54 (27 new); 1998 - 42 (18 new); 1999 to 15/9 - 36 (25 new).

Certificates issued (incl above) 1997 - 243; 1998 - 263; 1999 to 15/9 - 168.

The certificates issued figures for 1998 include 18 off-road and 10 walking events, and for 1999 include 13 off-road and 20 walking events. The increased numbers for 1998 are largely due to a determined effort to catch all races. This may account for 50 certificates. Some of these have failed to appear in 1999. The general trend is a steady reduction of about 10% annually.

OFF-ROAD EVENTS

I have used a strict 1% or 400 metres as the limit for road races.

OLD MEASUREMENTS

I am currently issuing certificates for courses measured in 1986 - 6, 1987 - 2, 1988 - 3 and 1989 - 13. (These figures are slightly lower than my verbal report - I have eliminated multiple uses of a course.)

MEASURERS

The active list of measurers is about 25, 6 of whom are from other areas. There are still about 5 inactive measurers who have not retired. In the past 3 years I have gained 4 measurers, all in the Avon/Gloucester area. One was trained at a weekend course organised by AAW at Cardiff, and the other 3 at weekend courses run from my home. I currently have 2 potential measurers in the Birmingham area, and will need to provide a suitable course for them. I have 2 Grade 2 measurers under consideration for upgrading to Grade 1.

4.3. South of England Athletics Association – Mike Sandford

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the time of the last meeting I was still learning the ropes having just taken over from Roger Gibbons. I would like to acknowledge the valuable help and advice given by Roger and many others, but I would particularly mention Mike Tomlins and Maurice Ault. Both of these later have now pretty much retired from measuring, their advice has been greatly appreciated, as has their prodigious work in measuring many courses.

NEW CERTIFICATES & RENEWALS

1996 – 159, 1997 – 151, 1998 – 151, 1999 to 10 Sept – 120.

In addition well over 400 courses are renewed each year, some being used several times during the year. I coordinate with the SEAA Permit secretary and we chase up the few courses mentioning a specific distance for which no certificate has been issued. There are typically 2 to four cases per year. Often at the core of the problem is either inadequate response from the course director to issues raised by the measurer, or else the measurer has failed to submit a report.

MULTI-TERRAIN COURSES

These are increasingly popular, but course measurement certificates can not be issued if much over 5 to 10% is off road. If I receive such a report I send a standard letter to the organiser explaining the situation, and while acknowledging the approximate distance, I warn that an exact distance can not be claimed. I issue about 10 such letters per year.

RENEWAL OF COURSES OVER 10 YEARS OLD

I became concerned that courses last seen or measured by a measurer over ten years ago needed checking. This followed two incidents. In one the race director no longer had the original report and a measurer measuring a change in another part found that the start had been moved to another road and the course was substantially short. The other case followed an adjustment to a very old course, which was not fully remeasured at the time and was later found to be slightly short.

With support from SEAA measurers, I proposed to the SEAA Road Running Committee that I should not renew certificates more than 10 years old, unless a measurer who either knew the course or who went especially to inspect it could guarantee that no significant changes had taken place. Examination of the original measurement report is an essential part of this process. In any year, only about 10 courses ten years old are still in use and have to be checked. Most race directors order a new measurement, and these have revealed at least 3 courses were short due to road changes or different measurements standards for pre 1987 courses, e.g. no SCPF! Three courses have been checked by measurers to still conform with the original report and roads are unchanged, so these now have issued with new certificates and have another ten years lease of life.

MEASURERS: RETIREMENTS

I have had quite a number of outright retirements. But also several measurers who no longer want to measure outside their immediate locality sometimes stay on the list and may occasionally adjust a course which they have previously measured. Most measurers seems to retire by just becoming inactive and not responding to any correspondence, perhaps because they have moved away, although I have never had a letter returned. I wrote to all measurers who I have never heard anything from and who had not submitted a report since 1994 warning them that they would be removed from the list of active measurers. I shall carry out another weeding out process going back to 1996 shortly. I say that a measurer removed from the active list can always be restored if he wishes to be, and I suppose I would always accept a report from someone who had once been on the list.

MEASURERS: UPGRADING TO 1

Two experienced measurers, Hugh Jones and Phil Hazell, were upgraded to 1 following checks of their measuring. Others have sufficient experience and 5 have been in the pipe line for over a year awaiting a course check by a grade 1 measurer. I am afraid these measurers have been rather let down by the long delay.

MEASURERS: TRAINING SEMINARS FOR NEW MEASURERS

I have held two seminars to train new measurers in October 1997 and May 1999. Both were held in my home town, Abingdon, since the preparation of facilities and suitable practice courses is easier in an area one knows very well. 5 new measurers attended each seminar. This is about the maximum that can be easily handled by

one instructor and still provide individual attention. My lecture course is based on a set of viewgraphs covering all the fundamentals. A copy is provided to each measurer. The extensive practicals include layout of a 3 mile and a 5 k course, on a loop in Abingdon whose distance is known very precisely, so it is possible to check the performance of the candidates. All 10 qualified as grade 2 and their appointments were confirmed by John Disley. I am not sure whether a further training seminar will be required in 2000, since we have plugged most gaps, but with continuing retirements one will definitely be needed before the end of 2001.

VALIDATION OF A COURSE FOR A WORLD BEST TIME

A world best performance was claimed on the Welwyn Garden City 5 mile course in 1997. I carried out a validation measurement and found that the course was 10.6 yards short of 5 miles. The course dated back to 1988. No obvious change to the roads could be identified. The original measurer retired some years ago and I was unable to make contact to clarify some details of his report.

CERTIFIED ACCURATE

In 1996 I proposed a newsletter for UK measurers. I heard nothing concerning national funding, so I have produced a 16 page newsletter, *Certified Accurate*, for the SEAA measurers, and distributed one copy to each of the other area secretaries. The fourth edition was issued in January 1999 another one is overdue, if I am to achieve my reduced goal of two per year.

MARSHALLING OF COURSES USING PART OF THE ROAD

I have been disappointed to find in local Oxfordshire races a few where the organisers have allowed corner cutting on the right when they have stated to the measurer that runners will be required to run in the left half of the road. It is particularly noticeable in low key races which do not have a significant leading pack that whereas the leaders stay in the allowed road section, a few leading vets and others chasing hard behind try to cut right hand bends and corners and are not prevented from doing so by marshalls. This is a clear problem for the measurer to decide whether to trust the race directors instructions or play super safe and measure on the right even where only the left half is nominally available.

4.4. North of England Athletics Association – Alan Ritchie

Introducing his report, Alan said no news was good news. There had been no great difficulties. The number of races were decreasing. There had been 43 certificates issued so far in 1999. He expected 60 by the year end. The last two years had been at 90 so races were clearly disappearing. He drew attention to the costs of running on public roads. The police charged £45/hr for a sergeant, and £15/hr for specials. To close a road for a £10k cost £800.

He had attempted to organise training seminars, but these had been cancelled through lack of interest. He had carried out training on a one on one basis. He found this was useful since he could 'strike while the iron was hot', otherwise potential recruits could lose interest if they had to wait for a seminar. Two new measurers had been trained. His policy was to ask other measurers to find measurers.

Alan said he had circulated copies of the SEAA newsletter to his measurers and asked if he could arrange for NEAA funds to pay for extra copies. Mike Sandford agreed to this.

4.5. Scottish Athletics Federation – Raymond Hutcheson

Since Norrie Williamson's return to South Africa at the end of November 1998, Scotland has been without a Scottish Area Course Measurement Secretary and a Grade 1 measurer. Likely candidates for upgrading and taking over this position are Adrian Stott and John McKinlay, other commitments permitting. There appears to be no Scottish measurer solely dedicated to course measuring. Norrie did mention Raymond Hutcheson, a grade 2, as "the most active measurer", but this must remain a secondary pursuit as he is currently a chief grade timekeeper/photo-finish operator.

Before departure, Norrie submitted a report expressing disappointment that his proposals to upgrade existing measurers and to qualify new measurers had made no progress. The main reason for this was given as lack of

finance: the SAF made a five-figure loss over the year in a report submitted to the AGM at Stirling on 5 June. Criticism was also leveled at race permits being issued to organisers who had failed to have their courses properly measured, thus removing any incentive for organisers to conform with the rules.

Copies of Scottish measurement reports are held by the SAF H/Q at Caledonia House, South Gyle, Edinburgh, and copies are also held by Adrian Stott who fell heir to Norrie Williamson's collection on his departure. Copies of measurement reports also were sent to the Road Runners Club (until recently, John Foden).

Mike Sandford said that he had seen on the RRC web pages and it had been confirmed by Roddie Fisher, the Standards Secretary for the RRC, that the RRC time allowances for hilly courses would be discontinued from January 2000. Measurers should be informed that the RRC no longer requires copies of the measurement reports or an estimate of time allowance.

During the past twelve months measurements have been made of:

Strathclyde Park 10K, Eyemouth Half Marathon (with a recent repeat measurement following completion of roadworks), various 5K courses for Cancer Research "Race for Life" events at Glasgow, Dundee and Perth (Scone Palace); Dunfermline Half Marathon (re-measurement following course alteration), Paisley 10K, Inverdyde Half Marathon (re-measurement after course alteration), Dundee 10K (new course), Perth & Kinross 10K (after course alteration).

Raymond said that separate certificates were not issued. The report itself contains the certification.

5. Coordination of measuring supplies

Most area secretaries had small stocks of counters for new measurers.

Fluorescent safety bibs were in short supply in some regions. **Phil Holland offered to locate suppliers of safety bibs who could print "Course Measurer" on the back as an warning to traffic.**

6. Plans for training seminars

A total of about 12 measurers were ready for upgrading to grade 1, distributed as follows: Wales - 2, Midlands - 2, Scotland - 1, NEAA - 2, SEAA - 5. It was agreed that the most effect way to achieve this would be through a National Seminar. **A proposal should be put to UK Athletics to fund such a seminar in the first half of 2000.**

7. Requests for measurement of multi-terrain events. MCAA procedures for off road events.

It was noted that in response to the demand for measurement of multi-terrain races different regions had introduced special certificates for multi-terrain races. These special certificates were worded to make clear that the course measurement did not have the same accuracy as a road measurement.

Different standards were being applied in the various regions as to what was the maximum off-road or similar hard surface allowed for a road race. It was suggested that a firm off-road surface such as smooth grass or dirt can be measured with an accuracy of about 1% using a calibration done on a road surface. **After some discussion the following guidelines were agreed for the maximum amount of such off road which could be used and still retain the overall accuracy of measurement of a road race:**

Up to 10k	10% off road allowed
Amount over 10k	5% off road allowed

For a number of popular race distances this gives the following amounts:

5k	0.5 km
10k	1 km
10 miles	1.3 km
Half marathon	1.6 km
20 miles	2.1 km
Marathon	2.6 km

8. IAAF/AIMS measurement matters

Hugh Jones said that IAAF and AIMS were virtually synonymous as far as measurement and international road racing were concerned. The IAAF promote and sanction races. AIMS is an organisation which races can join to gain international recognition.

He said the IAAF were taking measurement seriously. A new course measurement booklet was being prepared by Dave Cundy, Australia. The Pacing of Women's World Bests in mixed races was under discussion.

AIMS and IAAF were due to meet in Madeira. A joint list of races was published in Distance Running.

9. UK: Athletics - organisation of road running

Mike Sandford said that he had sent to the UK Athletics Office and also to Geoff Wightman, who had been appointed head of the endurance policy and support team, details of the CMWP meeting with an invitation to attend. He had hoped that there would be an explanation of how UK Athletics would interface with the course measurement and the Working Party. He had no response.

The working party strongly expressed their view that course measurement needed national coordination and their concern that the working party had been left without an official status or position in the new arrangements which were being set up by UK Athletics.

10. Insurance for measurers

It was agreed that UK Athletics should be asked to clarify the position on insurance for measurers.

11. Future national measurement activities and role of Course Measurement Working Party

After some discussion of the best way forward, John Disley proposed that he should write to the president and chief executive of UK Athletics making the following points:

- The Course Measurement Working Party wanted confirmation that they are still formally recognised as the body organising course measurement nationally. The post of chairman needs to be confirmed, and a secretary appointed.
- The formal contact point for the CMWP within UK Athletics management teams needs to be identified, and the precise remit of the post with regard to course measurement needs to be specified.
- Funding is needed to make it possible for the CMWP to meet at least once per year in order to ensure national coordination of technical matters.
- Funding is required in 2000 for a national seminar to upgrade leading measurers to grade 1.
- Funding is needed to produce a national newsletter for measurers possibly based on 'Certified Accurate' presently produced for measurers in the South of England.
- Measurers need to know whether they are covered by a valid national insurance. If so they need to see a copy or brief outline of the cover.
- Arrangements may be needed for the issue of measurement certificates for nationally organised events, a task formerly carried out by the BAF Measurement Secretary.

12. Any Other Business

There was a discussion of the procedure for issuing certificates when a measurer visits another region. Reports are usually but not always submitted to the regional/area measurement secretary in whose region the race is located. This might be another occasion when a national issuing authority could be useful.

Informally reviewing the business of the meeting those attending felt that it was well worthwhile. The possibility was aired of meeting in Birmingham on a future occasion. There was no overwhelming preference. Whatever venue was chosen there would be travelling difficulties for some.

The meeting closed at approximately 2.30pm.