

Parents' Guide



Dear Parents,

This is the first time we have written to the parents as well as the athletes, but with the popularity of the club exceeding all our expectations it is vital to keep our environment as safe and stress free as possible. With that in mind I have listed a few pointers below which I would ask you to discuss with your child/children, and hope that we can count on your full support.

Club Sessions - Please make sure that your child arrives promptly (at least five minutes before start time would be ideal) and that they are prepared. A drink (not fizzy!) is vital, as is suitable clothing - the weather can turn quite chilly, especially during the evening sessions, and when the wind blows at Westminster Lodge it comes from every direction. Also a light waterproof (club rainjackets are ideal) and jogging bottoms - cold legs don't work very well, as well as adding to the risk of injury. Make sure that they have had something to eat (but not a three course meal fifteen minutes before the session) - but do look at the website for nutrition advice.

All youngsters for the first session should be accompanied onto the track and escorted to the session manager or one of the coaches and collected at the end of the session. We would ask, for obvious safety reasons, that you do not drop the children off or arrange to meet them in the car park - we cannot accept responsibility for children outside the arena.

Kit - Please make sure their kit is labelled - when they are all wearing the same things, life can become quite complicated at the end of a session. We have two large black bin sacks full of unclaimed clothing. We will shortly have to send these to a charity shop as we do not have the room to store them.

Discipline - All of our coaches are volunteers who give their very precious time freely in order that your children can benefit from participation in a healthy and active environment. Unfortunately, from past experience, we have come to realise that some children can have a disruptive influence, which may threaten the safety and well-being of other athletes - as well as the sanity of their coaches. This not only affects their own training group but also the coaches as well and we do not want a situation to arise where we lose coaches because they stop enjoying their work as a result of bad behaviour. May we ask that you discuss this issue with your child and let them know that the Club will not tolerate bad or disruptive behaviour and that you fully support whatever measures we feel necessary to avoid these disruptions. We don't want to be heavy handed and have managed in the past to avoid drastic action, but it also means that by having to deal with individuals on a one to one basis we are removing coaches from what they are there to do - which is coach. Thank you for your support and understanding in this matter.

Parental Involvement - We always welcome parents who would like to help out at our training sessions or indeed in any of the areas involved in running the club. From being just three of us - plus a couple of coaches - over the past few years, we now have a regular coaching team of about 10 parents/senior athletes (plus the three of us!), but are still anxious to build up a real core of helpers. If you are down at any of the training sessions and would like to get involved - then please do! We always need extra pairs of hands - particularly during the first session. The majority of the coaches you now see at the sessions began by "getting involved" and it now means that we are able to give your children a

much better standard of instruction than ever before. We continue to operate a programme of coach education, the cost of which is funded by the Club, but it all starts by just helping out. If you feel it is something you would be willing to have a go at then please don't hesitate to let us know.

It is the same with the officiating side of things. We desperately need to get parents involved here. For our league matches we have to provide a given number of field/track/timekeeping officials otherwise we are penalised by the deduction of points. If your child is in the team, why not come along and help at the matches. It's not rocket science and you will be amazed by what you learn about each individual event and how enjoyable it is.

When we have home matches (two this season) we aim to provide a refreshment tent (hot/cold drinks and sandwiches usually), but as most of our already overstretched volunteers are usually helping out in other areas, we need additional help to man the tent. If we get enough volunteers then the amount of time actually needed from any individual is usually very small.

Please give this some thought and if you want any more information or think there is some particular way in which you would like to help the club, then please don't hesitate to contact me.

Team Selection - Dates for this year's fixtures have already been provided and are listed on the website. It would be appreciated if your child could indicate availability to Tim as soon as possible so that his team selection should be fairly straightforward. If your child is selected but is unable to compete - please let Tim know immediately so that he can make other arrangements and not be left sitting on the coach waiting for athletes who have not bothered to inform him of their non-appearance.

Website - For those of you who are not familiar with our club website - you are missing a treat -it was redesigned last year by Paul Campbell, one of our senior coaches, and it is excellent. It provides a fund of useful information as well as regular message updates and is obviously the most convenient form of mass communication. If you have access to a computer please ensure that your children use the website on a regular basis to keep themselves (and you!) informed of what is happening. This coming season it will have match dates, team selections, directions to venues and transport times listed as a matter of course. This should hopefully then ease the burden for Tim who usually spends every evening before a match, ringing round to his athletes to make sure they know when and where they are supposed to be. It also contains the obvious things such as training session times, hints on preparation, nutrition advice as well as kit prices, all fixture dates and Gavin's messages!

Sponsorship – Regrettably, our original sponsors, Godfrey Davis, have been taken over so many times that the current owners have decided to dispense with all sponsorship. Do you know of anyone who would be willing to sponsor - however small? Do you have your own business? Would you like to advertise on our website? If you would like more information please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for taking the time to read this parent's guide and for discussing the relevant issues with your children. We look forward to a harmonious and stress free season.

Lynne K. Milner
Chairman