

The Ups and Downs of BOFRA Racing

Having spent the better part of the summer at these short manic fell races, I thought I would share with you the slightly crazy (as I see it) world of BOFRA races.

For the uninitiated, BOFRA stands for British Open Fell Runners Association. Originally fell running was professional: runners won money and betting on races was part of the sport. It had to clean up its act to be accepted by UK Athletics (formerly the AAA) and so the amateur FRA was formed to cater for affiliated clubs. BOFRA was formed sticking to its open rules: competitors do not need wear a club vest (in fact you don't need to wear a vest at all!), no entry forms are used (you just give in your name) and if you are placed you still receive a small brown envelope containing...money (but not much!).

Races are short, usually about 2 miles for seniors, and have a ridiculously steep lung busting climb followed by an even more ridiculous thigh burning descent. You may even get to "surf" down a scree. Oh, and in general, they send you through a stream or river within seconds of the start! And quite often The Woodheads record your exploits on camera and post your embarrassment on the web!!!

Just in case I have rather put you off, there are loads of plusses. You go to lots of beautiful places in the Dales and Lakes, some folk even venture to Scotland. They are real family affairs. The day usually kicks off around noon with U9s, then U12s, U14s, U17s and finally seniors. It's also generally part of a show or gala so there's loads of entertainment. It's cheap and the kids often end the day playing in the stream, kicking a football or eating ice cream. The BOFRA calendar has over 30 races, 15 of which count towards the championship. If you become a BOFRA member you score points at each race and could be honoured with a prize at the end of the season. It can become quite addictive. All abilities take part and it's not too hard to find yourself well up in the rankings.

If you want more info' post me on the club forum or have a look on the BOFRA website (bofra.co.uk, you can follow the link from the Ilkley Harriers site). Go on, you know you want to...!

Diane Haggart