

Stay warm but cool down

A couple of comments from a cold coach.

Running conditions were pretty good at the start of last night's Oxford open at Horspath – no wind and some welcome warm sunshine. The 800m races were on fairly early, and many of the athletes were quite rightly warming up in shorts with just a light top. By the time the 1500m races were coming up, the sun had gone, it was decidedly chilly and full tracksuits were now the order of the day. So that's all good so far. However, by this time the meeting was running a little late, nothing disastrous or unexpected, of the order of 15 mins, and here is where a few people were caught out. By trying to estimate how long they had purely in terms of time, leggings and trousers were coming off far earlier than necessary, and the benefits of warming up were ebbing away as they waited for their turn on the track.

A different approach would be to keep an eye on which events are in progress. Last night for example, there were 4 separate 1500m races. Anyone not in the first race would have had ample time to sort out their trouser situation while the preceding race was in progress. The final top layer can come off in seconds just before you are called to line up. If you are in the first race, take note of what the preceding event is and where the starter will be. Last night it was the 400m, and so the starter and marksman had to get themselves and their equipment across to the back straight – time enough for getting those layers off.

There was some hard running going on last night, which was great to see. After a tough training session, everyone trots off together for a gentle and essential cool down, possibly without really thinking about it. Racing might involve just one or two of you at a time, and now you have to think for yourself. A cool down jog is still vitally important, especially if you are racing again in the next day or two, as many of you will be in the upcoming county championships. Of course you want a few minutes first to recover, get the spikes off, layers back on and maybe find out what time you did, but then grab

a drink and take yourself off for a few minutes to cool down and just as importantly calm down. With midweek meetings especially, with work or school the following morning, you and your support crews won't want to hang around, but you can easily do what's necessary while they are walking to the car park – just meet them at the car. That's all there is to it.