Surrey League Website Manual

Instructions for race organisers

Date

13th October 2016

Prepared By

Andy Robinson
Managing Director

Executive Summary

These notes are to help meeting organisers use this system to manage matches. They will be updated prior to each match.

Doing the results can be a huge and daunting task. This is particularly true with joint Ladies and Mens fixtures. With a mix of inaccurate declarations and a few errors in the timing or position-recording, whoever volunteers to take it all home can be stuck all weekend, and then spend the next week dealing with emails from everyone about misspellings, kids in the wrong age groups, unknown athletes and so on. The best you can hope for is that the team scores were roughly right on the first pass.

We're hoping to make it much faster by

1. Having accurate, pre-checked names and ages for all the athletes
2. Getting at least 75% of the declarations typed in by team managers before the race, instead of by the organiser that night
3. working out all the scores instantly
4. letting more than one person share and check the work

The website and tools within can do a lot to save you time. However, they are new, there will be bugs from time to time, and you can't always rely on the internet. So it's very important that you use the traditional means of recording what happens: at least two independent position-recorders, at least two timekeepers, and if possible a video of the finish.

This started out as a hobby project in 2014-15 season. It's now one of the prototypes for a new project – OpenTrack - which we are building to help make many events in athletics easier to organise and manage. Your help and feedback are greatly appreciated.

Table of Contents

1.Introduction.....3
2.Understanding the Declarations.....4
3.Start Lists, Results and scoring.....7
4.Timekeeping.....11
5.Video.....13

1. Introduction

Here are the key things organisers of meetings need to know.

1.1. Get in touch

If you're organising the match, tell us, as early in the season as possible. There are a few volunteers working on this system, and we will not magically appear at your event ready to do everything. But we can explain how it works, train you, and even help find people who can help with the results. But....not on race day.

1.2. Decide who is going to do what

Most clubs have someone who is good with numbers and spreadsheets to sort out the results. There are quite a few people in IT or accountancy.

Because we're doing things with mobile screens and apps, you may be able to find people willing to spend half an hour at the race entering declarations and capturing results. Identify them early, preferably not on race day, and people can then practice what they are going to do.

1.3. Getting access

To prepare results or record finish line data, you need an account on http://surreyeague.org/ with either "superuser" or "results" permissions. Create your account if you don't have one, then send an email to info@surreyleague.org telling us who you are and what you want to do, and we'll give you permission.

Ideally, if you are organising a match, get in touch with a couple of weeks to go, and we will arrange some proper training. We can do shared-screen calls.

1.4. Practicing

We have a separate test server which you can safely play on. It's also possible to use a special "Fake Race" to practice recording finish positions.

2. Understanding the Declarations

The biggest time-saving comes from having accurate declarations. It currently works differently for different groups:

- Ladies (adult and girls) keep race numbers for the whole season. So their numbers live in the athlete database and there is no “declaration” as such.
- Men live in the athlete database, without numbers. A separate declaration is prepared for each race, just like the paper ones.
- The male Young Athletes race (30min before the Senior Men in Division 1) does not yet support online declarations. We'll get there for January. Sorry, boys.

We'll explain this quickly with pictures.

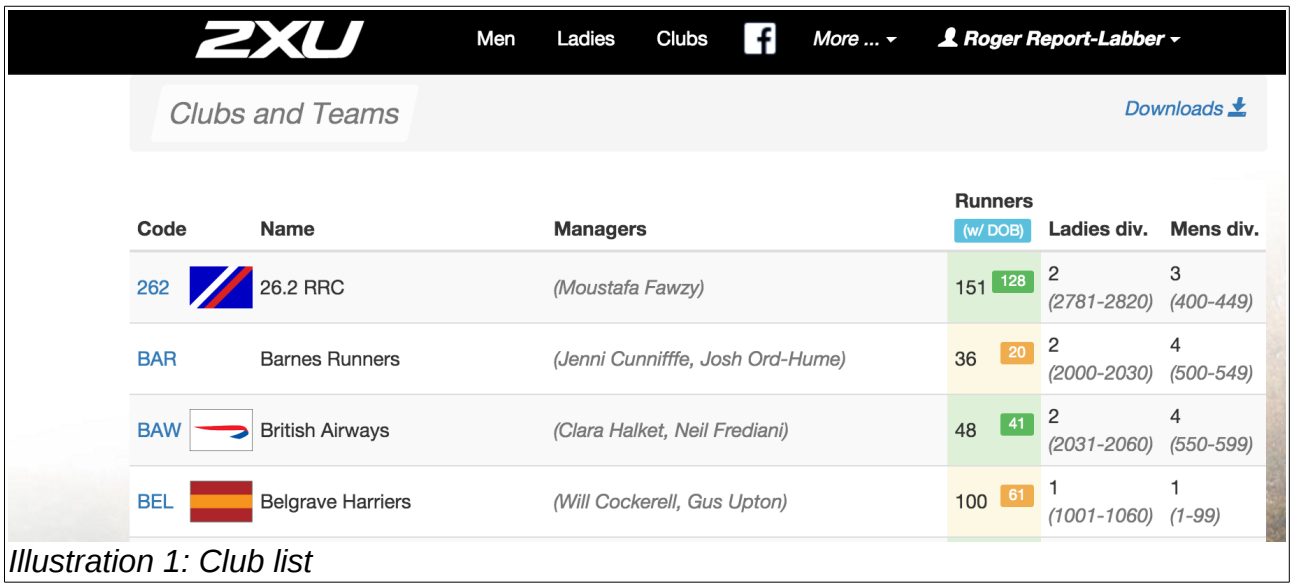
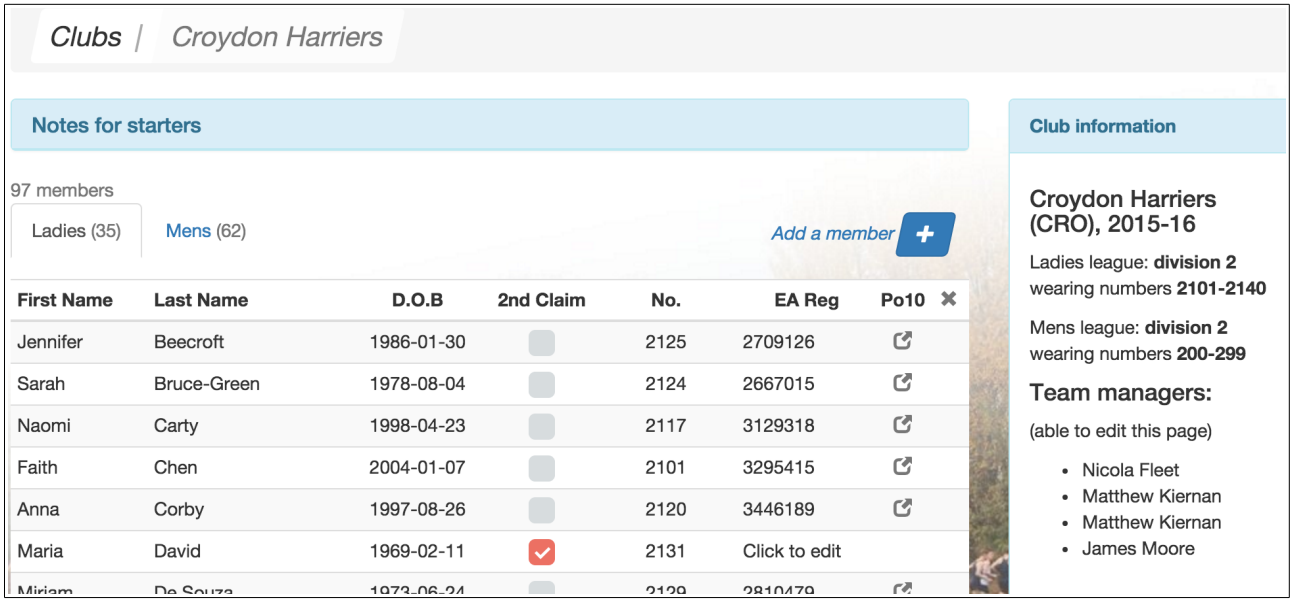


Illustration 1: Club list

Let's look at one club

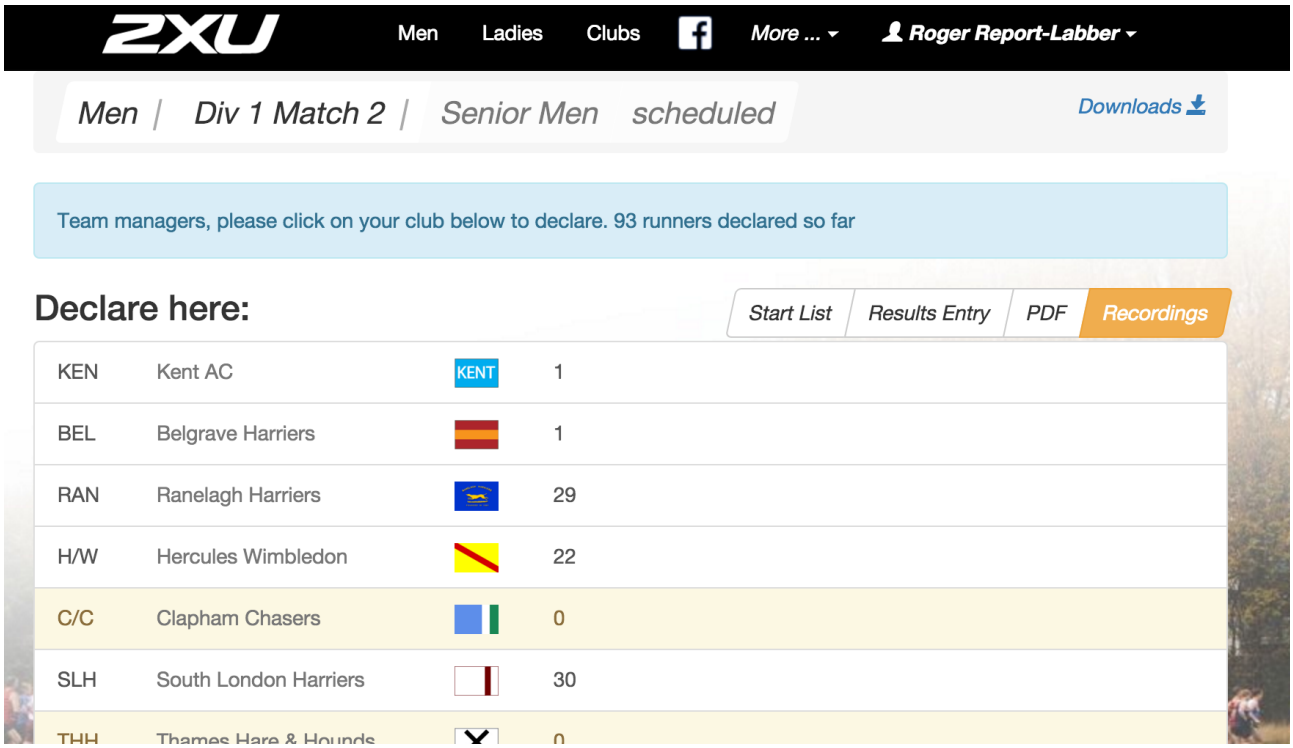


Some important things about the database:

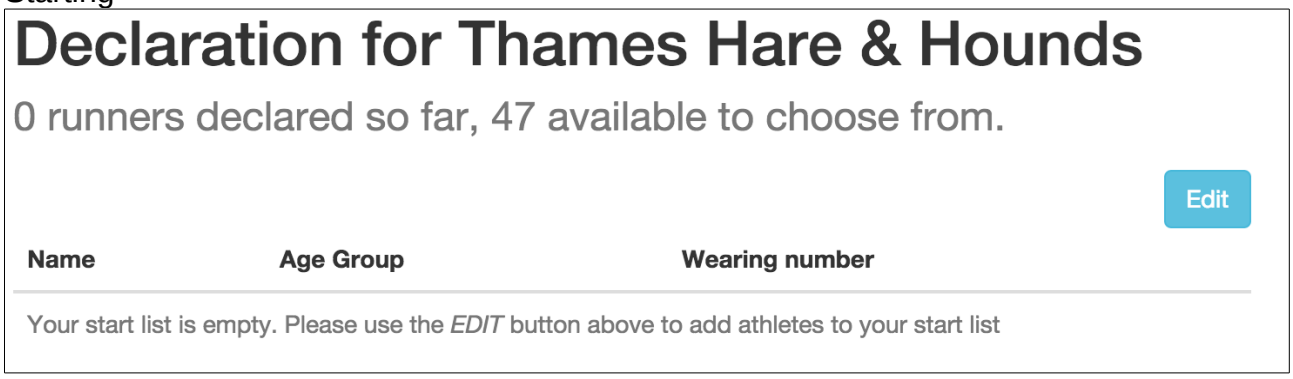
- for the Ladies races, we use the date of birth to prepare a start list. We work out if they are in the U13, U15/U17 or Senior race automatically. So if a girl is appearing as “unknown athlete” in the results, despite having the right number, fill in the right date of birth!
- Ladies have race numbers allocated. This can also be done with a click by a superuser, so if you get a few new ones while doing the results, and tell us what they were wearing, we can add them.
- Men don't have numbers, as they are allocated “per match”.

2.1. Men's Declarations

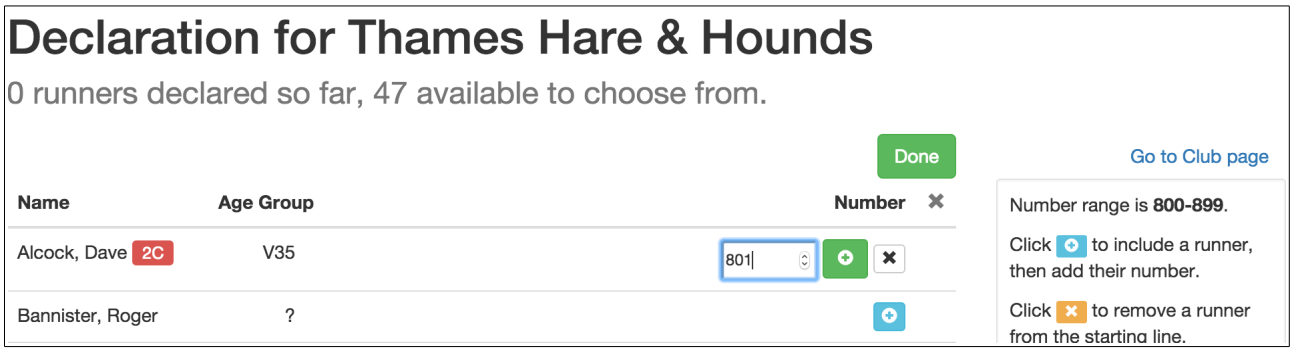
Mens captains declare online. If the athletes are entered, they don't have to type them in again, just choose them and show what number they are wearing.



Starting



Editing this gives a screen which is quite quick to work with, and designed to work on a phone.



Completed declarations can be seen by anyone, so you can spy on your rivals before the race!

Team managers have access to declarations at any time, even after the race, in case they need to correct a mistake.

The meeting organisers can also use the declarations page. If someone hands in a paper declaration, hopefully it can be quickly keyed in while the race is underway, so it doesn't need to be taken home and done later.

3. Start Lists, Results and scoring

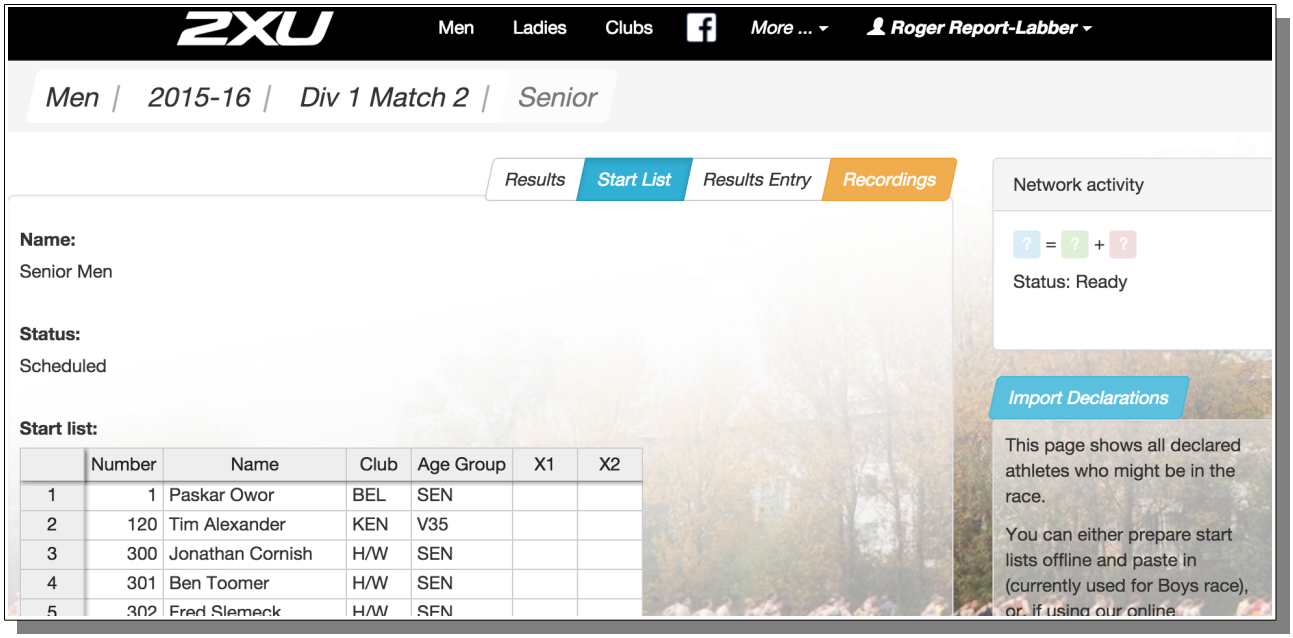
The results are calculated from three things:

1. Number allocations: e.g. we know that Thames Hare and Hounds are wearing 800-899. So even if we have no declarations at all, we can work out the points and the team scores
2. A start list, which is everyone who might be running the race. This can either be prepared offline by you and pasted in, or "pulled in" from the online declarations.
3. The "finish line data", a list of positions and times.

3.1. Preparing the start list

To get ready, look in the right sidebar for the button saying 'Import Declarations", and click it. All the known runners will appear. The Start List grid is Excel-like – you can select everything with Ctrl-A, and copy and paste with Ctrl-C, so you can paste it out into your own scoring spreadsheet if you want, to take the data away with you.

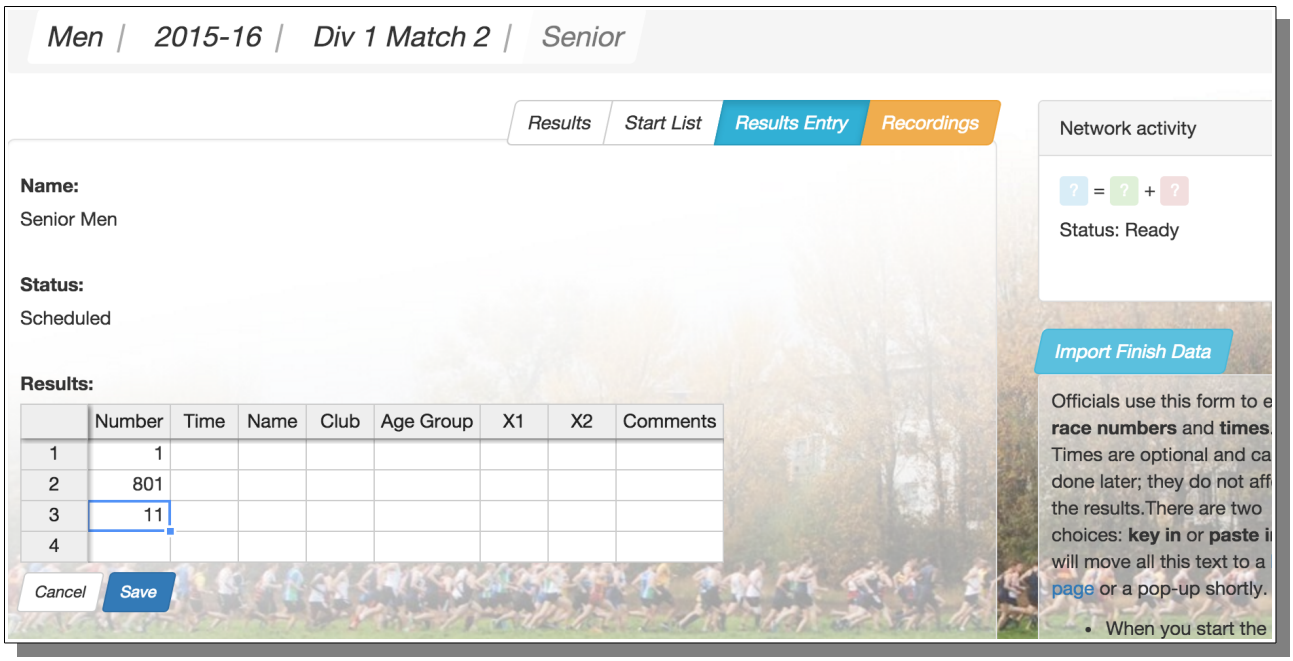
If declarations or athlete data change, this needs to be clicked again before the results are updated. Typically, after a race there are a few athlete data issues which need fixing.



3.2. Pasting or typing in results

Now imagine the race has finished, you have taken everything home and it's time to do the results. We now go to the tab marked "Results Entry".

It is possible to just key in the numbers of the finishers if you want. However, almost everyone prefers to use a spreadsheet for this, and paste in 'en masse' You just need two columns, for numbers and times; times can be done later. To paste data in, click n the top left cell and use "Ctrl-V".

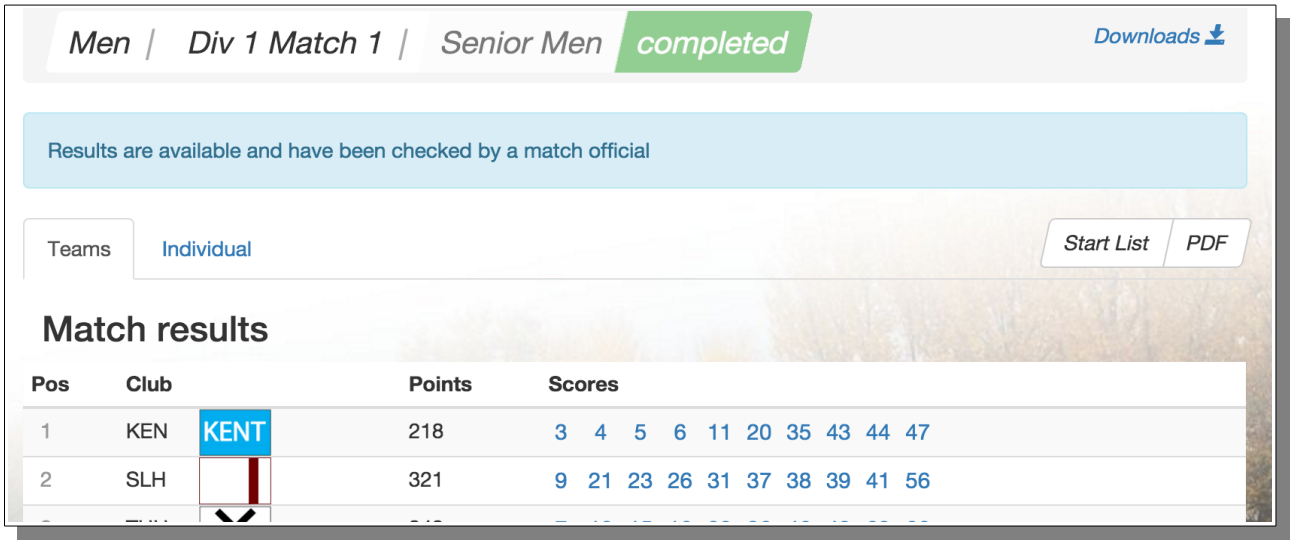


The other columns after the first two are for information only, as you might need to paste in results from another spreadsheet. They flash up names as you key them in.

Remember to hit the 'save' button after pasting or typing! The 'network monitor' in the top right corner confirms when things are saved (which is quite important in a windswept field).

3.3. Results

As soon as the start list and finish order are saved, the results are available, with team scores too!



The rest is just a matter of checking carefully.

4. Real-time recording with our “app”

The logical conclusion is to have somebody keying in the finishers as they arrive. We now have a PARTIAL solution. By the end of the season, we hope to have pages for position and timekeeping, and the tools to reconcile and highlight differences; for now we allow for one position recorder.

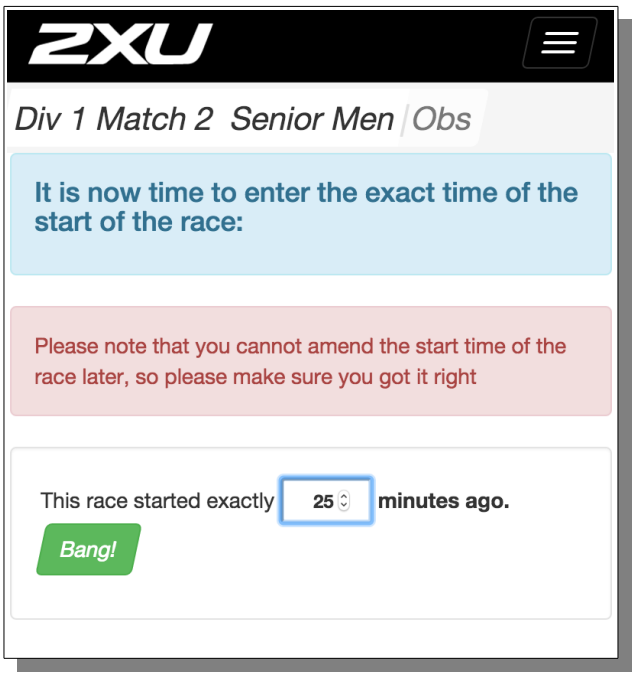
If you're going to use this, make sure you practice beforehand – we will explain how later. At this point, we'll shrink the page a bit, because you will probably want to use a mobile phone or a tablet.

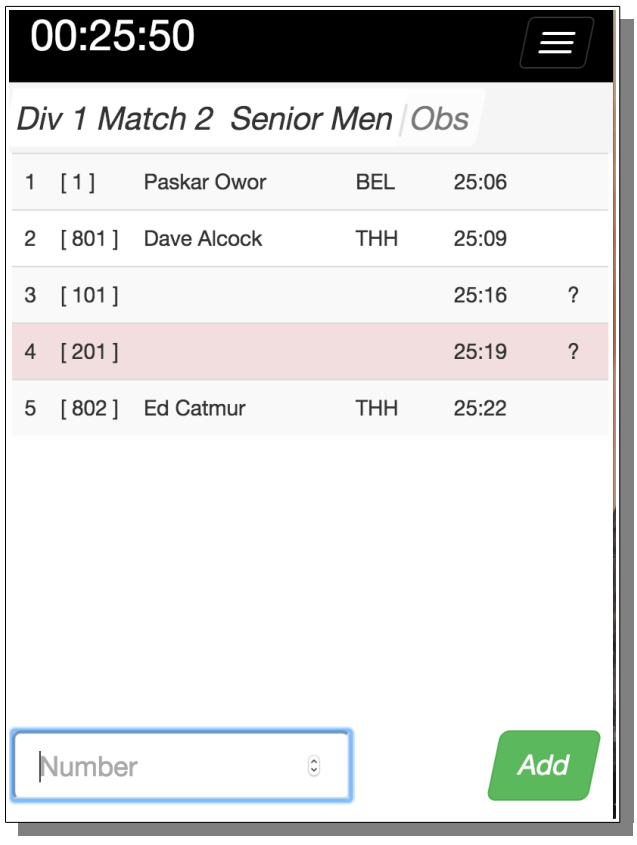
4.1. Starting the recording

The first thing is to set the start time. The page will look like this. You can wait until the official watch reaches a nice round number – e.g. 25min in the left screen below.

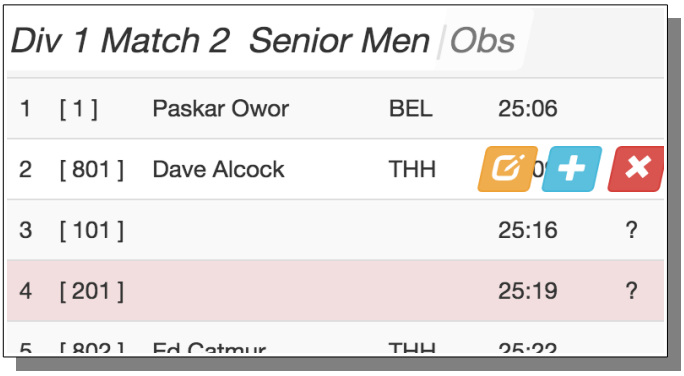
4.2. Recording observations

Then the page changes to show a clock, and you can key in the finishers. This should be used at the back of the funnel, standing next to someone doing the same thing with a biro. If the funnel crew are disciplined and nobody slips through, it should be possible to get everybody.





If you make a mistake, you can move the mouse or your finger over any row to see correction tools; you can edit, delete or insert an extra row:

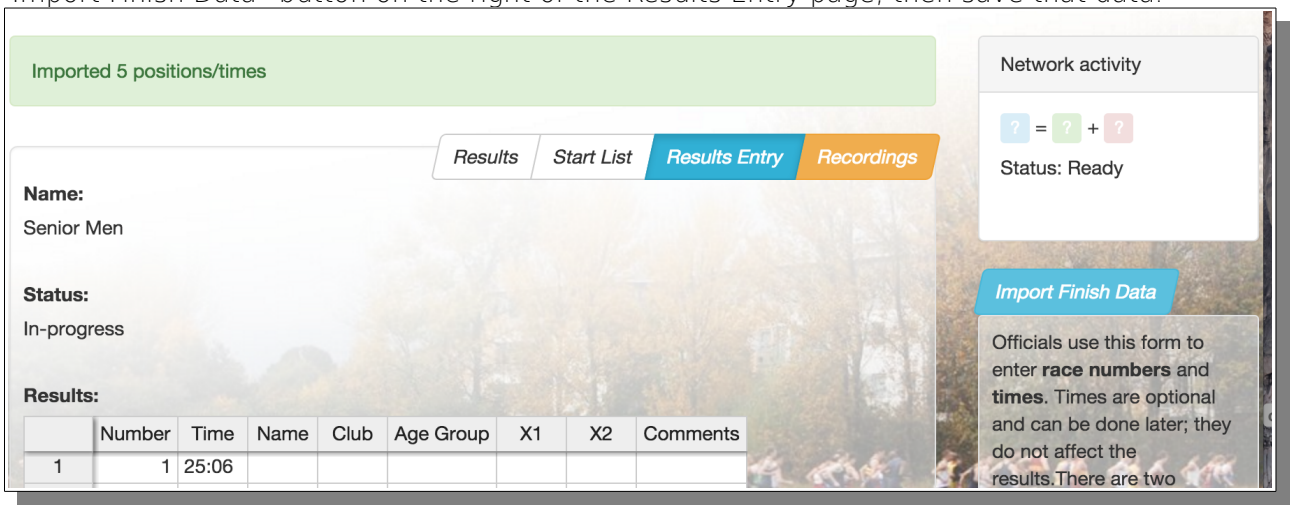


The system will also highlight "suspicious" stuff in pink – repeated or unexpected bib numbers, for example. The idea is that you keep recording, and sort it out later

Note that the times recorded are wrong, as the recorder is not at the finish line, but they are useful in case you need to work out "where things went wrong" and they will give people a rough time until the correc ones are pasted in. We're going to improve things later in the winter, so we can merge data with separate timekeepers.

4.3. Importing the observations

These "observations" do not go straight into the results, because we're planning on allowing for multiple observers and a cross-checking process in future. Instead, you need to click the 'Import Finish Data" button on the right of the Results Entry page, then save that data.



We suggest someone else is doing this (with another phone or ipad) every 10-20 finishers. You can then keep an eye on the results page and shout out when the first few teams close, or let people watch on their own phones, even as people are finishing.

If there are mistakes, or you want to merge in the times later, we suggest copying the entire grid of numbers into your own spreadsheet, where you can reconcile the various clipboards and watches, then pasting back in the corrected series later on.

5. Timekeeping

Most races use at least two watches. Some clubs have expensive special printer-watches which record onto rolls of paper, and others have special USB cables needing special software to download to a PC. In my view, these are all completely OBSOLETE and your life will be much simple with a free stopwatch app.

All of these let you record a series of times, then either copy/paste into an email, or email off a list of times to yourself (or someone else). No re-keying needed.

Here are three for iPhone

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/best-stopwatch/id505112994?mt=8

https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/stopwatch-timer/id412538313?mt=8

And this one for Android...

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fps.stopwatch&hl=en

The timekeeper should put their phone in flight-safe mode, so their nobody call and nag them during timekeeping!

However, you do need to know how to split up the text into columns on the spreadsheet. Worst case, send it to info@surreyleague.org.

In due course, we'll have one which accepts notes for positions (so you can record the occasional bib number as a cross check), and write something to import it automatically.

6. Video

A video of the finish line can resolve a lot of difficult issues. If someone misrecords a few positions, sometimes it's the only way to figure things out.

If you are going to record a video, then make sure you have a way to upload it to YouTube, and do so AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. If it's up there, then you won't personally have to answer all the queries. Send a link to info@surreyleague.org and we can actually make links from the results into the video, so you can click on an athlete to see them finish! If things do get messy, this will allow many people to check for inaccuracies and report them to you.