

James's Grand Prix update – March 2025

Having now taken over from Alan, my plan for the remainder of this year is to learn the ropes, fully understand the current process and get to grips with everything '*Grand Prix*'. I would also like to obtain the thoughts & feelings of our club members.

I've set myself a personal goal to enter as many of this year's Grand Prix events as I can, as I believe in leading by example and really want to fully embrace my new responsibility!

The Grand Prix is a fabulous element of our club, and I've hugely enjoyed partaking in it since joining Valley Striders. I'm not intending on making any significant changes, however if I do come across opportunities (e.g., perhaps include some new events?), these will be considered and implemented where practicable.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, I would love to hear from you.

Some early feedback I've received from a number of members is there's a perception that the Grand Prix is not widely understood and is seen as a bit of an 'enigma'. Yeah, I can see why that might be the case, so I'm also setting myself another goal to try de-mystify the Grand Prix and increase everyone's awareness, which will hopefully lead to greater participation, by more members.

This month's introductory update from me aims to make a start at explaining the basics of the Grand Prix. In future editions I'll build on this and go into more detail, perhaps explaining how various races are selected to be included, and how the scoring works.

But, for now, let's start at the beginning, with an explanation of how members are placed into the various groups, which determines who you compete against, and the different types of races which fall into various categories.

I've also provided a simple calendar of forthcoming Grand Prix events, just in case reading this provokes a bit of interest and you fancy taking part!

There are two groups that men and ladies are separately placed into;

1. An age category
2. A 'race pace' category

This means you will be competing against people of the same gender who are broadly the same age as you (irrespective of your race pace), and you will also compete against people of the same gender who run at the same pace as you, irrespective of age.

The following tables help illustrate this;

There are five age categories;

	1	2	3	4	5
Men	Under 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 54	65 and Over
Ladies	Under 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 54	65 and Over

That's the easy bit. As long as you know how old you are (!), you now know what age category you will fall into.

There are also seven 'race pace' groups, which are labelled 'A' through to 'G', with those in group 'A' being the fastest.

We publish tables within the Grand Prix pages of our website which show which 'race pace' group you're in, so you can see who you're up against!

I will also explain how these categories are determined.....

Here's a link to the tables, so you can see which group you're in;

<https://www.valleystriders.org.uk/run/competition/grand-prix/latest-standings/>

So how have we placed you into these groups?

Your placing into one of the seven categories (A to G) is based on our 'pace charts' – there's one for men, and one for women. Newcomers (and other Striders with no recent form) will be placed into group "U" (unclassified) until they have run sufficient races and then their grouping assessed on their performances. This way new club members should have the opportunity to complete a qualifying number of events if they join the club partway through the year.

The pace charts show the times you need to achieve at different distances to be placed into a group. People are placed into groups based on their best time in any of the 8 distance categories (ranging from 1 mile, all the way through to a marathon), achieved during the previous year.

Once you're in a group, you compete against the other members in the same group.

There are two ways you can be 'promoted' into a higher group next year;

1. The first way is to win your group. All winners will be automatically promoted!
2. The second way is if you take part in any event which is captured within the 'Power of 10' results (it doesn't necessarily have to be a 'Grand Prix' event) and you achieve a race time which belongs to a higher group for that particular distance.

Let's illustrate this using a couple of examples;

Example 1 - a lady is in group E this year.

During this year, she enters the Edinburgh Half Marathon and achieves a time of 1:53:20.

This performance belongs in group D because she was quicker than 1:54:16, which is the minimum time to qualify for a Half Marathon within Group D (shown in the following table, circled in red), therefore next year she will be 'promoted' to Group D.

Women's Race Times							
Distance	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 mile	5:57	6:23	6:54	7:25	7:56	8:49	9:42
5K	20:47	22:19	24:07	25:55	27:43	30:47	33:52
5 miles	33:37	36:07	39:01	41:55	44:49	49:48	54:47
10K	41:55	45:01	48:39	52:16	55:53	62:06	68:19
10 miles	69:07	1:14:14	1:20:13	1:26:11	1:32:09	1:42:24	1:52:38
Half Mar	1:31:38	1:38:26	1:46:21	1:54:16	2:02:11	2:15:46	2:29:20
20 miles	2:21:53	2:32:23	2:44:39	2:56:55	3:09:10	3:30:12	3:51:13
Marathon	3:09:07	3:23:07	3:39:28	3:55:48	4:12:09	4:40:10	5:08:11

Example 2 - a man is in group E this year.

During this year, he enters a 10k race and achieves a time of 45:00.

Therefore, next year he will be 'promoted' to Group D. This is because he was quicker than 46:35, which is the minimum time to qualify for a 10k within Group D, as shown in the following table, circled in blue;

Men's Race Times							
Distance	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 mile	5:20	5:47	6:14	6:40	7:07	8:01	8:54
5K	18:08	19:39	21:10	22:40	24:11	27:12	30:14
5 miles	29:44	32:13	34:41	37:10	39:39	44:36	49:33
10K	37:16	40:22	43:28	46:35	49:41	55:53	62:06
10 miles	61:45	66:54	1:12:02	1:17:11	1:22:20	1:32:37	1:42:55
Half Mar	1:21:53	1:28:42	1:35:32	1:42:21	1:49:11	2:02:49	2:16:28
20 miles	2:07:58	2:18:38	2:29:17	2:39:57	2:50:37	3:11:57	3:33:16
Marathon	2:51:42	3:06:00	3:20:18	3:34:37	3:48:55	4:17:32	4:46:09

So, there you go. You now know what Group you're in, which other members of the club you're up against, and how you can get promoted each year (unless you're already in Group 'A' of course!).

Here's a calendar showing the forthcoming Grand Prix events. You'll notice there's no XC events scheduled – that's because these take place during other months of the year. We may also add an extra Parkrun Grand Prix event in either June or July – watch this space....

26 forthcoming Grand Prix events scheduled through to July 2025 (across all seven categories)

	Short	Med	Long	Handicap	Parkrun	XC	Fell / Trail	Volume
March	Evensplits (26th)	Vale of York 10 (30th)	Spenneth 20 (23rd)					3
April	Evensplits (23rd)		3 Peaks Fell Race (26th) London Marathon (27th)	Eccup Reservoir (30th)	Roundhay (12th)		Baildon Boundary Way (6th) Guiselley Gallop (20th)	7
May	Evensplits (28th)	Leeds Half Marathon (11th)	Leeds Marathon (11th)				Cookridge 10k (18th) Ilkley Trail 10k (26th) Apperley Bridge Canter (29th)	6
June	Evensplits (18th) Hyde Park Summer Mile (25th)	Otley 10 (11th)					Wharfedale Trail Half Marathon (7th)	4
July	Evensplits (23rd)	Eccup 10 (6th) Ilkley Half Marathon (13th)		July handicap (TBC)			Danefield Relay (1st) Golden Acre Relay (TBC)	6

In the next newsletter I will explain more about these seven event categories and how the Grand Prix scoring works across them.

I hope you've enjoyed reading about the Grand Prix and feel a bit more informed about it. If any of the events within the calendar here take your fancy, give them a whirl and I'll see you there!!

All the best,

James