

# The BUPA Great Edinburgh Cross Country – 8th January 2011

✘ Great Britain's Number One distance runner Mo Farah, after the best season of his career last year, will be aiming to continue his purple patch with a victory in the Bupa Great Edinburgh Cross Country on Saturday.

Farah, the first athlete to score a European Championships 5000m and 10000m double for 20 years in Barcelona, will captain the GB and NI team when it tackles opponents from the United States and a Europe Select side in the inaugural Men's International Team Challenge in Holyrood Park over 8km.

The competition, with each squad fielding nine runners, will be decided by the contingent that accumulates the lowest number of points from its first six finishers in the 8km race.

Farah, who became the first ever Briton to smash through the 13 minutes barrier for 5000m shortly after his triumph in Barcelona last August, knows not only the team contest but the individual race will be a close call given the high quality of the field.

American skipper Galen Rupp, hailed as one of the most exciting American prospects to emerge in recent years, should prove a handful as well as nine-times European cross country champion and captain Sergey Lebid.

Lebid and Farah have been involved in some great cross country confrontations in recent years, including a spectacular clash at the Edinburgh meeting in 2007, where the Ukrainian won a close race in a specially arranged 4km contest.

Now the stage is set for yet another encounter over what is a

demanding course and both stars will be determined to score maximum points to contribute to their respective team's bids for victory in the Team Challenge.

The International Men's race which, for the first time, will be held over 4km, brings together a bevy of Olympic, World and European track gold medallists and includes Britain's 2010 number one over 1500m, Tom Lancashire.

Eliud Kipchoge, given his experience of the terrain in Holyrood Park after a victory and three third place finishes over the longer distance on previous visits to the scenic venue, will start a strong contender for victory.

But the 2008 Olympic 5000m silver medallist and former world champion will ignore, at his peril, his major rivals, in particular fellow Kenyans Asbel Kiprop and Brimin Kipruto.

Kiprop may be better known for his speed which saw him awarded the Olympic 1500m gold medal in Beijing over a year after the disqualification of Bahrain's Moroccan-born drug cheat Rashid Ramzi. But he also has a valid cross country pedigree after winning the 2007 World Junior title.

Kipruto has far less experience of the winter orientated discipline but his credentials as reigning Olympic and former world 3000m steeplechase champion, should see him a major player in the title chase – particularly as the field will have to jump obstacles on each circuit of the race.

Arturo Casado will also be entering new territory at this level, but the Spanish winner of last summer's European Championships 1500m gold medal, leapt at the opportunity to spearhead the European challenge for honours.

Ricky Stevenson, winner of the 2010 race when scoring the biggest win of his career against domestic-only opposition and Nick McCormick, a former two-time winner plus Steve Vernon, a double UK 4km champion when the distance was part of the World

Cross Country Championships schedule, also take part.

The Women's International race over 6km, which has always been a major highlight of the Bupa Great Edinburgh Cross Country, has the potential to provide the greatest ever competition given the composition of the star-studded field.

Kenya's current world 5000m and 10000m gold medallists Vivian Cheruiyot and Linet Masai – both former world junior cross country champions – are standout figures on the start list but they know a great fight for victory will be on their hands.

They line up against an illustrious field of overseas entries which also touts fellow countrywoman Milcah Chemos, Ethiopia's Genzebe Dibaba and Jessica Augusto of Portugal.

Cheruiyot will be aiming, at her fifth appearance in Edinburgh, to score a victory after grabbing two second and two third podium places in her previous visits.

The world's number one over 5000m last summer is in great shape, completing her campaign with a brilliant victory at the BOClassic 5km victory in Bolzano on New Year's Eve.

Masai, despite her youth, has twice placed runner up at the World Cross Country Senior Championships and will be aiming to regain the Edinburgh crown she won in 2009 after finishing second a year earlier.

The 21-year-old also scored high profile pre-Christmas victories on the EuroCross circuit with successes in the Cross de l'Acier and Course de l'Escade meetings.

Augusto was the runaway winner of last month's European Championships crown and the Portuguese woman faces a formidable task against her African rivals.

But the 2009 Bupa Great North Run champion is a determined runner who knows the Edinburgh course well from past appearances. Presently in great shape she easily won the

Madrid Sylvester 10km race on New Year's Eve.

Dibaba is a two-time world junior cross country champion and world junior 5000m title holder and no one doubts she has the credentials to prove herself at the higher level.

If she needs any motivation it is the fact her sister, multi Olympic medallist Tirunesh, has twice been crowned Edinburgh champion while fellow Ethiopian Gelete Burka has claimed victory on three occasions.

Chemos has come on leaps and bounds since taking the 2009 world 3000m steeplechase bronze medal and last year was ranked number one over the distance after winning last summer's overall Samsung Diamond League title and the Commonwealth Games gold medal. She has the credentials to improve on her sixth position in Edinburgh a year ago.

Three-time European junior cross country champion Steph Twell, who has finished fourth on two occasions in Edinburgh will be joined by the ageless double Olympic marathon runner Liz Yelling and Hattie Dean, top British finisher in last month's European Championships.

Scotland's Freya Murray, the Bupa Great South Run runner up last October who was hoping to spearhead the British challenge, has been forced to withdraw with a foot injury but fellow Scot Steph Twell, Commonwealth 1500m bronze medallist will be flying the flag for the home nation.

All events will be broadcast live on BBC One on Saturday between 1pm and 2.30pm.

The day also includes the 5k Bupa Junior Great Winter Run and the 2.5k Bupa Junior Great Winter Run where over 2000 runners of all abilities will take part in the mass participation events around Arthurs Seat.

Paul Bush OBE, Chief Operating Officer for EventScotland said,

“The Bupa Great Edinburgh Cross Country and Winter Run are the perfect way to kick off the New Year and the year of Active Scotland.

“EventScotland are happy to be supporting this event once again that supports both elite sport and mass participation which captures the essence of the year ahead. The main aims of the year of Active Scotland are to raise the profile of Scotland as an active country and an active holiday destination; and inspire Scotland’s people and visitors to take part and enjoy the benefits of sport and physical activity.”

The Great Edinburgh International Cross Country is regarded as one of the world’s best annual cross country events where the cream of world cross country distance running descend upon Scotland’s capital city.....The athletes to watch at Holyrood Park on Saturday 8th January 2011 are:

**MEN’S INTERNATIONAL TEAM CHALLENGE  
8 KILOMETRES**

Mo Farah (GBR) – 2010 was the best season of his career highlighted by winning European 5000m and 10000m the first athlete to achieve the feat for 20 years. Also became first Briton to run under 13 minutes for 5000m. Spent December training at high altitude in Kenya and returned to finish second when losing at the BoClassic 10km road race in Bolzano by an inch. The former European Cross Country champion will captain the GB & NI team.

Galen Rupp (USA) – expected to lead the American challenge after the withdrawal of team captain Dathan Ritzenhein, who injured himself training indoors because of the bad weather last week in Michigan. Not a cross country regular but the 24-year-old is one of the most exciting prospects ever to emerge in the USA. The 2008 Olympic 10000m finalist has significantly lowered his 3000m, 5000m and 10000m personal bests this past year, his self confidence soaring as a result.

Sergey Lebid (UKR) – Europe Select captain and winner of a ninth European Cross Country Championships title last month. A week later he overcame a very strong African contingent to win the Brussels leg of the IAAF Challenge Series. No stranger to Edinburgh, he won the fourth of his record number Euro gold medals in Holyrood Park and in 2007 defeated Farah in a specially arranged 4km head-to-head. The 35-year-old Ukrainian has been an ever present at the European Championships since they were first organised by Nova International and staged at Alnwick in 1994.

## MEN'S INTERNATIONAL

### 4 KILOMETRES

Eliud Kipchoge (KEN) – The Olympic 5000m silver medallist and former world 5000m title holder has performed consistently in Edinburgh since winning the first inaugural long course race in 2005 and then finishing third on a further three occasions.

Asbel Kiprop (KEN) – Reigning Olympic 1500m champion with excellent cross country background having won the 2007 World Junior Championships title.

Brimin Kipruto (KEN) – Won 2008 Olympic 3000m steeplechase gold medal. He hasn't paid any serious attention to cross country in the past but with his steeplechase background and barriers to clear in Holyrood Park, his style of running will be extremely suited to the fast course.

Arturo Casado (ESP) – Another inexperienced cross country runner but Spain's current European 15000m gold medallist should, apart from the barriers, relish leading the European challenge.

Reigning and former champion Ricky Stevenson and Nick McCormick lead the British entry list alongside Steve Vernon, two-time UK champion when the distance was part of the World Cross Country Championships schedule.

## WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL

### 6 KILOMETRES

Vivian Cheruiyot (KEN) – The reigning world 5000m champion will be aiming, in her fifth appearance in Edinburgh, to score a victory after grabbing two second and two third podium places in her previous visits. The World's Number One 5000m runner last summer completed her year with a brilliant BOClassic 5km victory in Bolzano on New Year's Eve. A former World Junior Cross Country champion.

Linnet Masai (KEN) – The current world 10000m title holder has also finished twice runner up at the World Cross Country Championships and will be aiming to regain the Edinburgh crown she won in 2009, after finishing second a year earlier. The 21-year-old former world junior champion also scored high profile pre-Christmas victories on the EuroCross circuit with successes in the Cross de l'Acier and Course de l'Escade meetings.

Jessica Augusto (POR) – The runaway winner of last month's European Championships crown Augusto faces a formidable task against her African rivals. But the 2009 Bupa Great North Run champion is a determined runner who knows the Edinburgh course from past appearances. In great shape she easily won the Madrid Sylvester 10km race on New Year's Eve.

Genzebe Dibaba (ETH) – The two-time world junior cross country champion comes from a running family – her two elder sisters Ejegayehu and Tirunesh having proved themselves at Olympic and World Championships level. Her aunt is the legendary and former Bupa Great North champion Derartu Tulu. Added the world junior 5000m gold medal to her CV last summer.

Milcah Chemos (KEN) – Currently the world 3000m steeplechase number one and shortlisted for the 2010 IAAF Women's Athlete of the Year Award after winning last summer's overall Samsung Diamond League title and the Commonwealth Games gold medal.

Emerged after claiming the World bronze medal in 2009.  
Finished sixth in Edinburgh last January.

Three-time European junior cross country champion Steph Twell, who has finished fourth twice in Edinburgh and home grown Freya Murray, the Bupa Great South Run runner up last October, spearhead the British challenge.