

Membership of frame running group growing with new equipment and training

Corstorphine AAC's frame running group has gathered pace to enjoy a surge in members, additional specialist equipment and awards for its coaches as it celebrates a first anniversary.

The group – the first of its kind in Edinburgh – launched in January 2023 with one-hour sessions for two athletes as part of Corstorphine AC's Active Schools training on Friday afternoons at the Royal High School.

It now accommodates six physically disabled and impaired competitors aged 12-60 on the track at Saughton every week with the group having been gifted a new frame from the Be More Bailey Foundation set up to provide the opportunity for young people with disabilities to take part in athletic disciplines using specialist equipment.

Also, a major athletics grant to purchase parts to adapt the equipment for members has been received.

The sterling efforts of Graeme Reid and Francesca Snitjer were recognised when the pair scooped Lothian Disability Sport's coach of the year award.

Recalling the group's launch 12 months ago, Graeme says: "There was no regular frame running session in the capital and

the athletes were traveling to East and West Lothian, and even as far afield as Perth, to get a coached session. Even then, some of them were just added to the regular juniors session so it was not bespoke to their needs.

“We decided to start slowly and built up our knowledge and experience over the first few months, working with only Ian Duncan and Finlay Menzies by adding one hour of frame running after ActiveSchools in order to understand how the sessions should be formed. We also travelled to Glasgow to observe a session by John Owens with Red Star AC at Crownpoint. I think it was during that session that we realised that we were on the right track.”

Frame running is a form of adaptive running, which supports athletes’ bodies supported by a ‘trike’, allowing them to experience the sensation of free movement – often for the first time.

Graeme, who doubles as Corstorphine AC’s vice-president, has been relentless in filling out funding applications in a bid to secure support for the venture.

The group later received a new frame from the Be More Bailey Foundation, which was set up to provide the opportunity for young people with disabilities to take part in athletic disciplines using specialist equipment.

CAAC’s team was also chosen as one of the first beneficiaries of Athletics Trust Scotland’s Transforming Lives campaign, with a grant to purchase spare parts such as saddles, seat posts, chest plates and special gripped gloves so that each frame can be modified to suit an individual’s body.

Graeme adds: “We’ve managed to secure a substantial amount of funding, which has allowed us to purchase three frames of our own. They are not cheap at £3,000 each, however, we hope to raise a bit more money to purchase a further two frames, giving us a good variety of sizes to offer our participants.

“We built up the infrastructure and have added a new coach (Sarah Murphy) to the team and on the back of that we’ve gradually been able to build up the squad of runners. While it’s nice to have competitive athletes in our group, it’s also really important to us that we are offering opportunities to anyone who may benefit from the most basic type of movement.

“We’ll look to expand the Friday afternoon session at the Royal High with some basic activities to get as many kids as possible involved.

“The support from the whole frame running community in Scotland has been incredible.

“Frame Running Scotland, Lothian Disability Sport and Queen Margaret University in Musselburgh have been superb in providing advice and equipment any time we’ve asked, and Pamela Robson at Scottish Athletics is always on hand with good advice and specialist coaching resources that she has available. The Hub at Scotstoun Stadium is also a superb facility, which we’ve used to our benefit. We can borrow any frame running equipment from a full frame to a specialist glove or a different type of saddle.”

The frame running group has already become part of the fabric of CAAC, culminating in its involvement at the club’s Track & Field Championships in September.

Original members Ian and Finlay have also gone from strength to strength as they enjoy success both nationally and internationally. Ian won four gold medals at the World Abilitysport International Cup in Denmark last July, while Finlay scooped three golds at the Scottish Disability Sport Junior Athletics Championships at Grangemouth in June and completed both the Edinburgh and Manchester half-

marathons – the latter in a personal best time of 1hr 39mins.

Graeme says: “The best thing has been watching our squad

develop, each in their own way. It could be something as simple as seeing improved strength or movement in a leg, or someone having the confidence to now go out and compete, to some of the competitive guys getting PBs. "I can't say enough about how the club as a whole has supported our squad. At the beginning, I was told they had to train with the rest of the club rather than finding a time slot where they could train on their own. That's inclusiveness at its best.

"The highlight for everyone involved was the inclusion of the frame running squad in club championship day. Club president David Arnott told the three frame runners at the time to join in the relay event at the end. Quite unsure as to how it would work, they led off their respective teams and were made to feel such a big part of the day."

"The greatest attribute of all the squad is their enthusiasm. They may have been dealt a difficult hand in life but they are sure to make the most of it."

Graeme and Fran were honoured for their dedication to the group when they won the LDS coach of the year award in October.

Fran says: "To be recognised for what we have only been doing since January is amazing but to me it's about the athletes, and we couldn't do any of it without them. They are the true champions.

"It has been such a rewarding experience. I love going to coaching every week and seeing the group develop, both individually and as a whole. We started off with two athletes in January and now we have six. The athletes teach me every week about dedication, resilience and motivation. They never come to a session without a smile on their face, and seeing them achieve their own goals is brilliant.

"I feel a great sense of pride for each of them when I get a text about Finlay's latest half-marathon time or Ian's gold

medal in Denmark or watch Paul receive his club championship trophy or get a text from Elaine about her latest run down at Cramond, see the pure joy on the face of Catherine every time she gets on the frame and watch Ben improving week on week.

“Additional coach Sarah Murphy has been brilliant. I am looking forward to seeing what the next couple of years brings us with this group. The parents and carers of the athletes are also fantastic and always willing to help out. They are a key part of the support, and the athletes wouldn’t be able to come to the sessions without their dedication and commitment.”

* CAAC is holding a frame running event at Saughton on June 2 as part of the ongoing development of the group. It is hoped the day will become an annual event and eventually expand to include wheelchair athletes.



Corstorphine Athletic Club’s frame running group.



Graeme Reid and Francesca Snitjer were named Lothian Disability Sport's coach of the year.