

Welsh Athletics
The Manor
Coldra Woods
Newport
NP18 1WA

13 April 2005

Dear Sirs

MDC - Affiliation 2005

As secretary of MDC, I write to acknowledge receipt of your recent correspondence in relation to affiliation as MDC has now held its AGM and I have the appropriate mandate to reply.

Your letter ignores the queries raised over the alleged ten member automatic affiliation rule and the legality or otherwise of the aspects of the AAW constitution which I raised. I also note that despite the indication that clubs who did not reply to Mr Brace's circular of 260105 would not be treated as affiliated, AAW has nonetheless included MDC in its yearbook despite my correspondence and the club at the last check remained listed on the AAW website. I assume this is an oversight on the part of the 'professional staff' and that in the light of what is set out below AAW will promptly amend/update at least the website.

The decision of MDC at a properly convened and quorate AGM was that **the club wishes actively to disaffiliate from AAW**. For the purposes of this correspondence, MDC is prepared to ignore Mr Brace's comments in his letter of 150704 as if he wishes to have a say in the minuting of MDC's AGMs he would have to be a member – which he is not – and, in any event, the minutes have now been approved so that his remarks are entirely inappropriate.

The reasons for disaffiliation are these:-

1. The issues raised by the breaches of the relevant rules in force at the time including safety rules committed at Waun Fach remain unresolved despite invitations to AAW to deal in a manner considered appropriate by those concerned.

- 1.1 In his letter of 150704 Mr Brace effectively admits that what I understand is now the rule recognising category D races was only under discussion ie not in force at the time. The

inevitable inference is that the actions in question were outside of the existing rules. That admission is long overdue yet AAW has proved itself incapable of taking the next logical step.

1.2 Despite that concession, AAW has persistently endorsed the stance of its appointees and continued its support of those individuals. Mr Brace's suggestion that it is sufficient to have invited the then committee to move on is wholly inadequate as that is tantamount to an endorsement of a contravention of the rules by the governing body itself.

2. It is clear that MDC/race organisers cannot rely on the support it/they can properly expect from AAW when 'the chips are down'.

2.1 It is a long standing principle within MDC that the race organiser is always right and must have the final say on safety matters in particular because it is he or she who is ultimately responsible. Any other arrangement is wholly impracticable as decisions which have to be taken on the day of the race could only be taken by a meeting of the entire club as it is the entire membership of a club which is liable if there is a breach of duty by the club as race organiser. AAW has persistently declined to recognise that the race organiser's decision is final and binding.

2.2 The WFRA approach to insurance and safety issues enshrines that same principle and is therefore in the club's view infinitely preferable to that of AAW. Avoidance of the insurance policy from inception at Waun Fach or costly and uncertain litigation over such an avoidance was only escaped by the good fortune that there were no accidents on the day notwithstanding the behaviour of AAW appointees – see para 1 above. Neither MDC race organisers nor the club as a whole is prepared to expose themselves or itself to such risks and liabilities at the whim of AAW.

3. The events of the past few months provide more than ample evidence that MDC members can insure their races and that the club can continue to function in the manner it sees fit outside the AAW umbrella.

3.1 The AAW letter of 240305 refers to the obligations of a club to AAW. In circumstances where in the club's view AAW has completely failed in its supervisory/disciplinary role particularly in relation to safety considerations. MDC considers that AAW is in breach of its obligations as governing body to its constituent clubs. The obligations are reciprocal; the one way traffic and trumpeting of the official line is unacceptable.

3.2 The WFRA insurance scheme provides a format which is acceptable to MDC members (see 2.2 above). Despite untraced rumoured suggestions to the contrary, the scheme is fully effective in its own right independent of the AAW equivalent.

3.3 WFRA has a large membership of race organisers, its own calendar, website and open championship without discriminatory fee levies. There is no perceived value for money in or return on a compulsory £15 levy which would be payable by every member whether participating runner or otherwise where AAW take no interest in or put any effort into fell running at local level. As a result, WFRA-insured organisers do not need the AAW scheme with its inherent weaknesses and probably now enjoy wider support at local level than their AAW counterparts.

3.4 MDC does not need the blessing of 'the official body' to continue to function as it sees fit. As has been stated in previous correspondence, the club has no aspirations to the management of the sport at international level which is properly the domain of AAW. However, MDC remains the largest fell running club in southern Britain and the marked decrease in S Wales races at least in the AAW 2005 calendar demonstrates the importance of a continued relationship which AAW seems willing to sacrifice despite being given notice of the imminence of the schism. AAW risks becoming irrelevant at local level.

3.5 In the circumstances, MDC is not prepared to subscribe to the requirement in your circular of 260103 that it will comply with AAW rules.

It is therefore with regret that MDC formally disaffiliates as not only will this impact on those of its members who compete in other disciplines but also because it appears that a continued relationship in some form may be beneficial to the sport as a whole. However, such a relationship cannot be contemplated under current circumstances; had AAW acted to address those circumstances properly as it was invited to do, it is possible that this schism could have been avoided.

Yours faithfully

DA Adlam
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