FABIAN4

A POSSIBLE APPROACH TO DETERMINING START TIMES

The fabian4 system is efficient for doing start times and the help function is clear. These notes are designed to make it even easier to do the start times.

PART A How to upload start times and hired dibbers

A1 Getting started and exporting the entries into a csv file

1. You first need to obtain the email from fabian4 issued as soon as fabian4 has gone live for the event. This grants you “Organiser access” and enables many things to be done not available to other users.
2. Retain this as you will need to use it each time you log on for Organiser access.
3. Click on the “fast logon” link. This is the first of the two log on routes set out in the bottom half of the fabian4 email.
4. Once into the fanning website from this logon link, on the left hand side, click on “Export”
5. Leave the top box with the first line highlighted in grey saying Competitor Data csv format
6. Keep the box ticked which says V10 OE/MT2003. This is the default option.
7. Leave the box for add in address details unticked
8. Leave Use “,” as the csv delimiter. This is the default option.
9. For multiday events, there is an option to download one day only. This will almost always need to be selected when doing start times within a multiday event.
10. Click generate file. The file is then added to your documents folder.

A2 Amending the file heading

1. I find it easier to always use the same file name for each download, and a simple one that I can easily recognise in my documents folder. I therefore rename the download file to [Event Name][Year] Fabian start times. Each subsequent download generates a different file name. I amend the second one to the same as the above and then overwrite the previous file. Any start times previously uploaded to fabian4 will be included in any subsequent download file.

A3 Adding start times

1. Go to the “Start” column and add times in the format 10:00

2. For helpers, second parent where there is a split start time etc, use 00:00. When uploaded this appears as “open” in the start list. (This route can also be used when start times are not being allocated to make it clear to each competitor that this is the case.)

3. Save file as a csv file.

A4 Uploading start times

1. Return to the fabian4 Home page
2. Click on Import
3. Tick the third box down “Import start times”
4. For mulitday events, change the drop down box from All events to the specific event you are dealing with
5. Click “Choose file” which opens the browser to search your saved documents
6. Ensure the .csv file is selected
7. Click “Upload file”
8. Ensure the “success” screen is shown

A5 Check that the uploading was successful

1. Return to the fabian4 Home Page
2. Locate the event on the right hand side
3. Click on Display and review the changes you have made

A6 Uploading hired dibbers

1. There is less work to do at Enquiries on the day if hired dibbers are already entered into fabian4 before the Entries database is downloaded into Autodownload
2. Follow the procedures above and add the hired dibbers into the csv file
3. When uploading, tick the fourth box “Import hired dibbers” instead of the third box is step A4.3
4. Put each hired dibber into a separate envelope marked on the outside with the dibber number and the competitor name (this makes it easy for families collecting several hired dibbers to ensure the right one is allocated to each family member and they can check back to the envelope at any time if in doubt)
5. In fabian4, a “H” appears in the Entries database to show a hired dibber and this is then flagged in Autodownload when these competitors finish, in the same way as usual.

PART B Some tips on allocating start times

There is no standard way of doing this - the notes below are what I do and so can be varied as deemed appropriate.

The aim is to end up with the start times fairly evenly spread across the available start times as this aids the smooth running by the start team on the day. It is definitely worth avoiding any minute with no competitors starting if at all possible as this is how the start procedure most frequently gets out of sync in practice.

I follow the approach below by first considering the competitors assuming all start at two minute intervals. this is the case even where I know I need to be allocating competitors on some courses to start at one minute intervals due to the high number of competitors on that course.

B1 Getting started

1. Prepare a grid with a column for each course and a row for each available start time (see example attached)
2. Ascertain from the Planners the first control on each course and add this into the grid at the top
3. Ascertain from fabian4 the entries on each course and add this into the grid at the top
4. Using the Entries data and first control, determine a split of the courses between odd and even numbered start times such that the first controls are as spread roughly equally between odd and even as possible and the competitor numbers in total for the courses are spread roughly equally between odd and even. This typically means that start times for adjacent courses may be the same i.e either odd or even; this does not matter.
5. Let’s now take the example of a course with 120 available start times and 70 entries at the standard entry closing date. This course has been allocated as one primarily using “even” start times.
6. Amend the shading in the start times master to leave blank spaces where you have an “allowable” start time and the orange shading where you have a “not to be used, at least initially” start times. In our example, the whole “Even” column at 2 minute intervals will be blank. The aim will be to ensure that all, or virtually all, of these available slots are filled by the end of the process, with any gaps being in the “other” block of odds or evens. Using our example, all even minute time slots 10:00 to 12:00 will eventually be used (61 slots on total).
7. Amend the shading in the right hand column for courses where the entries exceed the number of available start slots in the left hand column. Create some blank cells for use.using our example, on the right hand side i.e. the ”Odd” minutes every four minute interval will be shaded and the intervening ones blank. This gives us a further 30 “allowed” start slots making 91 in total, enough to deal with our entries at the standard closing date and probably our late entries too. The idea behind shading alternate start times in the Odd block is that there can never be more than 3 competitors on this course starting in consecutive minutes.
8. For courses with few starters, allowed start times may be changed to every four or six minute or longer time intervals. This is often the case for the Black course and for the White and Yellow; in the latter case it reduces the likelihood of one child just following another.
9. Do the above shortly before the standard entry closing date but check it is still appropriate immediately after the standard entry closing date
10. The grid does not need to be kept to rigidly, indeed a surge of late entries or difficulty in accommodating a large family entering late wanting similar start times may mean a few shaded squares need to be used but the aim is to keep the use of these to a minimum

B2 Allocating times

1. Enter the fabian Entry number into the grid. This is for ease of future reference if changes are needed
2. Lots of ways to do this but the order I suggest is as follows.
3. Go through all the special requests. Some "start near” are directly visible on the fabian4 website but others are only in the special requests column in the downloaded file. Do these first or note separately which ones you need to take care with later
4. Take those requesting the earliest start block available first and allocate these
5. Within the earliest start block allocate all competitors first where there is more than one entry on a form. Give them similar start times. Then use those entering individually as fill ins
6. Decide when you want the last starts to be. Normally we like to keep the last starts a bit earlier than the advertised last start time to speed up collection of the controls. The lower the total entry for the event, the earlier this might be.
7. Repeat the above procedure for the latest start block
8. If 5 start blocks are being used, then do the second earliest start block
9. If 5 start blocks are being used, then do the second latest start block
10. Then lastly do those electing the middle start block. This block will include everyone who has not specified a start time (though there is considerable flexibility for these competitors)
11. Write all the competitor entry numbers in pencil into the grid (the pencil can then be erased and the start time becomes available for someone else when a competitor requests a change of start time or it transpires that an error has been made. The most common errors are getting the column wrong for the competitor or when dealing with the unshaded squares on the right hand side for those courses with high participant numbers when it is easy to enter the minute from the far left hand side instead of the one on the left of the block on the right side

B3 Checking times and dibber numbers

1. The Excel or csv file can be sorted by course and then start time order for a quick check that no two start times are the same
2. The file can also be sorted by dibber number so that a quick check can be done to confirm that the same hired dibber has not been inadvertently entered for two competitors
3. If there is a need for competitors from the same club to have start times further apart from each other than the standard gap then the sort can be done by course then by club then by start time to ensure that the appropriate gaps have been made. Changes will need to be made where the initially allocated start times are too close together. For Level B events, a four minute gap between competitors from the same club is expected.

B4. Other aspects

1. fabian4 uploads work on the basis that if there have been new entries whilst the start times are being determined, the file upload still works successfully leaving the new entries to be done at a later date.
2. A new Export file will need to be created to pick up these new entries
3. If the only changes are to start times and dibbers of existing entries previously exported, a new Export file is not needed. The changes can be made to the existing saved csv file and it can be re-uploaded. This is very quick to do.

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