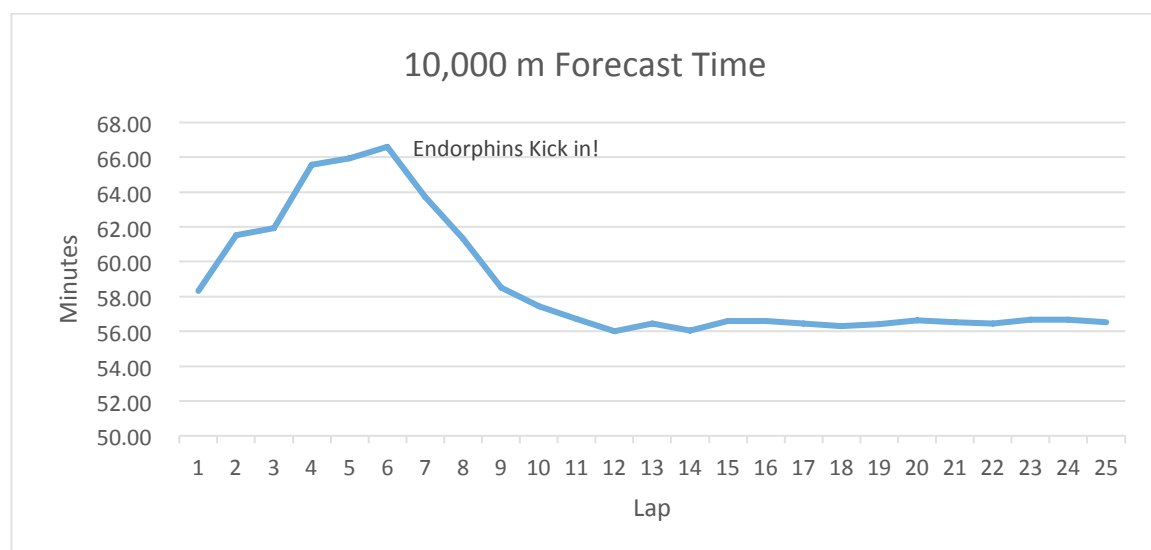


Southern Men's League or Ultra Multievents – What's the difference?

I've recently completed my second ultra multievent of the year, and it caused me to reflect on a recent Southern Men's League match at the end of May, when the might of just two F&C athletes managed to beat one of the other teams. In April, I completed a one day tetradecathlon (14 indoor events) in Helsinki. Yesterday I survived a one day icosathlon (20 outdoor events) in Heiloo Netherlands. In between, I competed in 16 events in the Southern Men's League match. So what is the difference?

First of all, ultra multievents are strictly ordered to provide a logical rotation of events – e.g. sprint then jump then hurdle then throw then distance, so there is some thought given to recovery. By contrast, one typical league match scenario involves simultaneous high jump, javelin, and 100m, which allows little time for recovery and increases injury risk. Secondly, in a league match you are competing for position, so if everyone streaks off in front of you, you may as well jog around, but if you realise that you have a potential battle, you need to put in the full effort, or keep jumping or throwing. In multievents you are competing for performance. Performance means points, so every second you lose on a 1500m is equivalent to an extra 25 cm on your competitor's javelin throw. Thirdly, Southern Men's League is for senior athletes, while ultra multi-events are grouped in 5-year age bands, and use age-graded implement weights and hurdle heights (a real relief). However there are also similarities. It's vital to manage your day – you need to maintain nutrition and energy levels, warm up sufficiently to perform safely, and manage injuries and tiredness, which are inevitable when competing in multiple disciplines.

Preparation is key, and has been severely lacking in my big events this year as frequent injuries have prevented me from achieving a good level of fitness and above all, stamina. However, the one day ultra multievents are few and far between, so I carried on regardless and kept my fingers crossed. For the tetradecathlon it paid off and I secured the M50 British record. It's possible I also did that at the icosathlon, but I have yet to track down the relevant record data. However it was a much harder challenge that very nearly ended at event 15, the 3000m, when a quad strain meant I hobbled around in over 17 minutes. I headed straight for the massage table and received some painful running repairs, which lasted until the final event – the 10,000m. Half a lap in and I was limping again at 2:40 a lap and contemplating walking. However, as the picture below shows, the power of endorphins (or ibuprofen) can work wonders, and under the floodlights at around 11.30pm, 15½ hours after the first event, I finished in 56:39.



In the table below, I've listed the events in each of the three 'multievent' tournaments, and compared total scores for the nine events that were common to all of them. It shows clearly that the Southern Men's League is the least effective way to get good results, and that all the extra running in the icosathlon also takes its toll on event performances.

	Tetradecathlon April		Icosathlon June		SML Match, Par	
	Result	Points	Result	Points	Result	Points
60m	8.34	713				
100m			13.32	653	15.6	307
LJ	4.26	427	4.39	459	4.16	404
200h			34.16	524		
SP	7.63	422	7.49	412	6.56 *	347
5000m	24:59.00	203	25:38.88	165		
800m	2:43.01	580	2:56.75	450	3:12.9	316
HJ	1.45	528	1.40	480	1.40	480
400m	1:05.02	524	1:06.16	487	1:31.8	3
HT			18.05	214	15.38 *	165
WT	9.00	420				
3000SC			16:15.01	318	16:09	327
60h	12.05	407				
110h			21.69	413	24.5 *	227
DT			19.15	264	17.43 *	231
200m	28.14	593	28.12	595	41.8	2
PV	2.30	314	2.00	231	2.20	284
3000m	13:28.17	370	17:17.24	37		
400h			1:29.48	178	84.8 *	264
JT			28.98	378	28.30 *	366
1500m	6:06.09	452	6:17.92	399	6:40.6	307
TJ	9.09	383	8.62	320	8.61	319
10000m			56:39.85	290		
Event Total		6336		7267		4349
Common Total (Bold)		4223		3833		2462
* = senior implements/hurdles						

Multievents begin typically with the pentathlon (5 events), combining throws, sprint or hurdles, jumps, and a middle distance. You can see the various different combinations at the Cheshire County AA page: <http://cheshireaa.com/statistics/CEscoring.htm> where you can also work out your age graded score. If you're interested to take part, let me know and I can point you towards a competition or two, especially in the very supportive world of masters' athletics.

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