

Very occasionally at athletics meetings there are times when you have to stop what you're doing and just watch and appreciate quality athletes performing well, and Stratford AC recently provided a few of these moments! The club's remarkable junior section have really started to feed through into the senior men's track and field team in the last couple of years, and this talented bunch helped the squad to one of their best ever results in the third of their four Midlands League fixtures. Charlie Burn was the latest graduate to make his senior debut and joined the likes of Chris Wright, Joe Brocklehurst, James Chamberlain and Neil Hawkins in oozing class and making that all important step from being a star of the future to a star of the present. With a resounding win in the Division 3 fixture over at Rugby the club are right back in the promotion frame as they regained second place overall from Birmingham Rowheath, but they are only there on 'goal difference' currently.

15-year old Charlie could not have done any more as he got PBs in the 200m (2B, 23:1) and 400m (1B, 51:1), before running the 3rd leg in a stunning 4x400m that resulted in a new club record. Neil Hawkins performs to these high standards every month and completed a magnificent 400m double (1A, 49:8) as he equalled the club record, having already competed in the 200m (2A, 22:9), where he lowered the club record from 23:1 seconds, the pole vault (6A, 2:40m), the high jump (4=A, 1:75m) and a PB in the 100m (3B, 11:4), as well as anchoring the 4x100m and 4x400m teams! With his usual aggressive front-running Joe Brocklehurst attacked from the start in the 800m (2A, 1:55:4) and was just pipped at the post, but in the 1500m (1A, 4:05:0) he just blew away the opposition in great style. James Chamberlain displayed what a terrific asset he's been to the club as, despite hurting his arm during the javelin competition (4A, 48:21m), he still managed to pick up good points in the shot (6A, 9:24m) and discus (6A, 28:08m). This just left Chris Wright to impress with excellent performances in the long jump (1A, 6:37m), triple jump (4A, 12:03m), 100m (5A, 11:7) and 4x100m.

Team manager Paul Hawkins has done a fine job in adding some other quality performers around this backbone, and this is often the area where large amounts of points can be won or lost. On a bakingly hot afternoon that prompted a drinks station on the 5000m Rob Minton (5A, 17:40:7) ran a brave race before the temperatures and hay-fever took its toll towards the end, and all of this after the 400m hurdles (4B, 65:7) and high jump (4=B, 1:50m). Ben Shuker, Ed Mills, Malcolm Hawkins and Dan Wright emphasised the point by picking up scoring heavily in the 7 events, plus the relays, that they competed in. Ben Shuker completed a fine double of throws in the hammer (5B, 16:99m) and javelin (3B, 36:35m), Ed Mills gained good points in the 400m hurdles (6A, 64:6) and Mal Hawkins belied his lack of training with performances in the long jump (2B, 5:96m) and shot putt (6B, 8:13m). With Dan Wright looking to be just as promising as his brother he raked in the points on the triple jump (3B, 11:11m), 800m (4B, 2:06:4) and 4x100m, and things were starting to shape up nicely for the club on the day.

At the other end of the age-scale to the club's golden generation are Henry Lowry, Malcolm Bowyer, Steve Donnelly, Graham Black and Keith Hawkes, who had a fairly mixed bag of results between them. Despite a very sore knee Henry rolled back the years with a courageous 110m hurdles display (3B, 22:9) and a respectable discus at short notice (5B, 20:66m), Malcolm kept battling away in a tough 2000m steeplechase (3B, 7:48:3), and Steve Donnelly made his track and field debut with a promising 1500m (4B,

4:52:6) in which he just got out-sprinted in the home straight. Graham Black sets such high standards in the hammer (5A, 25:75m) that he's even muttering about training, whilst Keith Hawkes had a day to forget in the pole vault (5B, 2:10m), steeplechase (6A, 7:14:0), 110m hurdles (7A, 24:4) and 5000m (2B, 19:26:7).

For once, coming into the relays the club were reasonably confident that they could hang on to their halfway lead and the 4x100m quartet increased this confidence by coming 4th in 46:6 seconds. The 4x400m though was glorious, as the quartet looked like this was their first event of the afternoon and finished 7 seconds ahead of a strong Birchfield team. The new club record of 3:29:8 minutes involved Rob Minton, Joe Brocklehurst, Charlie Burn and Neil Hawkins. A magnificent end to a memorable afternoon, and with the final meeting taking place at Worcester in August there is no reason why the squad shouldn't take up residence in Division 2 next summer.