

The end of the track and field season saw the youngsters from Stratford AC claw their way back into a mid-table position in the final Heart of England League table, after a disappointing result in the previous match, when over 50 athletes descended upon Tipton. They were competing against teams from Amber Valley, Rugby & Northampton, Tipton, Solihull, Tamworth, Dudley & Stourbridge and Halesowen, and whilst Emily Lewis, Matthew Toms, Imogen Green, Andrew Pozzi and Chris Bartlett all recorded wins, this was a real team effort with everyone playing their part and scoring consistently well across the events.

The end of season inter county match for U13 and U15 athletes had some of Stratford's finest athletes competing in Derby for Warwickshire with Hannah Noble, Eleanor Johnston, Georgie Evans and Andrew Pozzi all contributing significantly to the county team's win against Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, Humberside, South Yorkshire and Leicestershire.

With the winter season upon us the junior athletes' talents turn to cross country and Sportshall athletics. Stratford are the current champions in the Warwickshire Sportshall League and they literally hit the ground running (and jumping and throwing) with a comprehensive win against Coventry, Leamington & Warwick, Rugby and Solihull. There are new skills to learn in Sportshall athletics and it was impressive to see the new athletes pick up the techniques quickly and the older, more experienced ones once again lead by example and enthusiastically throw themselves into the events. The team powered on to their well deserved win, and with over 40 athletes travelling to Coventry it was important that all the athletes contributed to their respective age group scores; and this was reflected in the final results:

U11 girls 2nd, U11 boys 1st, U13 girls A 1st, U13 girls B 4th, U13 boys 1st, U15 girls 1st, U15 boys 1st.

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Just to ensure that Stratford AC's juniors don't have to hibernate during the winter, last week saw the first West Midlands Young Athletes Cross Country League fixture. This was held at Pype Hayes Park in Sutton Coldfield on a pleasant parkland course, partly through woods, and was quite undulating with a short, sharp hill of about 100m up to the finish.

The first race saw the U11 girls race over a one-lap course, with the start delayed for a couple of minutes to allow Chloe Connor to get to the start line after she was held up in traffic. After a fast and furious opening the Stratford team had their best ever performance, led by Clemmie Holden in 5th place only 9 seconds behind the winner. Molly White had her highest finish to come 13th, and looks like she can go even better, whilst Ellen Scholes had a tremendous run in 25th despite suffering from a heavy cold. Chloe Connor, making her debut, came 46th despite having no warm up time, with Trisha Cooper a very fast finishing 57th closely followed by Hannah Taylor in 63rd. Olivia West was also in her first cross country for the club and completed the team in 86th. The team finished in a fantastic 2nd place only narrowly beaten by the host club, Royal Sutton Coldfield, but just pipping Birchfield and a host of other strong clubs.

The U11 boys were not to be outdone despite only have four runners when five count for the team. Three of the runners were making their league debuts, and they look like

they can improve with a little more experience. Edward Caswell was first of the Stratford team home in 13th place, and looked very strong throughout, followed by Ciaran King who had a great race to come through in 24th. Patrick Eaves, the veteran of the team after one race last season, battled really well to cross the line in 32nd position, just ahead of Thomas Chapman who showed how much he has improved in training over the last few months and looked very good in 40th. The team were eventually 5th and can clearly challenge at the top if they get a full squad out at the next race.

In the U13 girls race Katie Taylor led the way for Stratford finishing in 52nd place in a very tight race where only a few seconds improvement would make a huge difference in the finishing position. The other Stratford girl in this race was sprinter Georgie Evans, doing some useful winter endurance work and coming 91st after a very strong second half of the race. One of the highlights of the day was in the U13 boys where Jack Allison had a great run to come 8th. Jack had a strong start and held a top ten position the whole race, threatening a place in the top three until very near to the finish. Also in this race was Michael Suren who found the going tough in his first race in this age group, but still had a good run to come 31st.

Sam Taylor was the only Stratford runner in the U15 boys, looking very strong in the longer distance race in this age group to come a very useful 50th. In the last race of the day, the U17 men, Dan Wright found the increased distance hard going but kept a steady pace through the three gruelling laps to come 42nd, while Troy Tomlinson was close behind in 48th and both look likely to improve with more experience at this distance.

Overall Stratford came a useful 15th and with a larger team they will hopefully improve as the season goes on.