

In the short lifespan of Stratford AC's fledgling women's track & field squad it has always been said that if they could just get a few more competitors out then they would thrive. Well, this theory was proved to be spectacularly correct at the third and final meeting of their Midland Women's League 2007 campaign. Even with a few absentees this was their largest ever team, and they didn't just come top on the day, they absolutely destroyed their Division 5 opposition!

The match was being hosted by Shrewsbury at Telford, and on a really cold and wet afternoon there were a number of debutants who not only helped this section of the club take a significant step forward, but also found that they actually quite enjoyed some of the disciplines! Gloucester, who had comfortably won the previous two fixtures, finished second on the day to top the overall standings, but with any sort of result in the first meeting Stratford could well have joined them in being promoted. The women's league is a combination of U15, U17 and seniors, and with the Stratford juniors often committed to other events representation has usually been low. This time though they were there in force and proved to be worth their weight in gold. In the U15s Katie Taylor had a highly productive afternoon with a great wins in the A long jump and a tight U17 B 300m (as a first year U15), as well as a 2nd in the A 800m, with sister Hannah smashing her PB and winning the B 800m (as a first year U13). Georgie Evans also had an excellent day, winning a very close A 100m on the dip, as well as the A 75m hurdles and the U17s A high jump, whilst Jemma Lane impressively won the A high jump. Lauren Stephens won the U17 B high jump, and came 4th A in the 200m and javelin, with Charlotte Proctor continuing the fine work by finishing 3rd in the B long jump, 2nd in the 200m B race and was the 5th A thrower in the shot. Zoe Chandler, another U13, finished 2nd in the B high jump, and got thirds in the B 75m hurdles and A 1500m with a strong run and flying finish, and Heather Bradley came 2nd in the B javelin, and also got big points for 3rd in the B 100m and B shot.

In the U17s Amanda Evans and Alice Burman came 2nd in the A and B 100m respectively, with the former also winning the B 80m hurdles and coming 2nd A in the senior long jump, and Alice grabbing thirds in the A discus and senior 200m. Emma Titcomb showed her promise with a fine win in the A 80m hurdles, and second places in the A 300m and B discus.

The senior women also showed that doing things for the good of the team can sometimes produce surprising results – for example, what odds you would have got at the beginning of the summer on Helen Monk (5A) and Maxine Horsman (4B) opening the proceedings in a hammer event, and doing extremely well, really is anyone's guess! The pair then went on to benefit from Sandie Green's coaching by performing well in the javelin and shot, with Max finishing 4A and 6A respectively, and Helen being placed 4th B in both. Maxine then completed a fantastic points haul for the club, and a full set of throws, by getting 5th A in the discus, alongside fellow debutant Sarah Odell (4B). On the track Sarah was one of the stars of the show, enjoying a great battle with Emma Bexson in the 3000m as the pair took firsts in the A (Emma) and B placings, whilst Sarah also got 2nd in a battling B 800m run and 5th in the B 100m. After all her heroics in the throws Helen Monk then took to the track and, despite her worst fears, looked completely at home in taking the 2nd B slot in the 400m. Yvonne Caswell may have done a fine job on the day as team manager, but she'll be disappointed to have dropped down the world rankings as she was beaten into 3rd place in both the 800m and 1500m by Gloucester's GB international starlet Emily Pidgeon. Yvonne also did well to get 4th B in the high jump and 3rd A in the 400m,

whilst it was terrific to see Michelle Bartlett (1B) back competing in the long jump. Apart from her eye-catching victory in the 5000m Emma Bexson, another obliging and talented addition to the squad, was also spotted winning the B 400m hurdles and 1500m, and getting 2nd in the B 100m hurdles. One of the biggest factors in this milestone performance has to be Sarah Bland, not only for what she did on the day but, with Yvonne's time currently very limited, in organising some invaluable practice sessions for those members unsure about what to expect. Her boundless enthusiasm also stretched to the 400m hurdles (2A), the 200m (6A) and the 100m hurdles (2A). One of the most satisfying days in recent years for the club was then completed by the sight of Stratford quartets in all of the three relay events, with the U15 (Katie, Charlotte, Jemma and Georgie) and senior women (Yvonne, Emma T, Alice and Amanda) coming runners up in their 4x100m races, and the senior women (Sarah B, Sarah O, Maxine and Emma B) taking third in the 4x400m. The 379 points that the team accumulated was by far the largest they have ever achieved, moving them up to 4th place overall, and if this impetus is maintained through into next summer then their prospects are extremely rosy. Thanks as always go to officials Daphne Hawkins, John Turner, Mike Lane, Lucy Titcomb, Paul Hawkins and Tony Jackson.