

Cold winds and incessant rain are hardly the conditions expected for a big championship in early summer, but that's exactly what Stratford upon Avon AC's juniors had to contend with at the U15/17 Midland Counties Track & Field Championships held at the Alexander Stadium regional athletics centre in Birmingham. The gloomy weather could not totally quell the spirits of athletes though, and Imogen Green got them off to a good start with a season's best of 12:96 seconds in the U15 75m hurdles, finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in her heat and just missing out on qualifying for the final. Then in the javelin the following day she threw 22:39m to finish just outside of the medals in 4<sup>th</sup> place.

James Warrender also had a good weekend, collecting bronze medals in the U15 shot and discus and also competing well in the high jump and javelin. Andrew Pozzi's growing medal collection is certainly impressive and he was again in the medals, winning silver medals in the U17 100m hurdles, the long jump and in the triple jump.

Emma Titcomb didn't quite get into the race in the final stages of her heat of the 80m hurdles, but finished with a respectable time of 13:1 seconds. The same could be said of Bryn Stretton and Henry Warrender in their U15 80m hurdles heats, but they all showed that their better technique is having a positive impact on their performances.

Emma stepped up to the 300m and ran a PB of 44:75 in finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in her heat, and then on day 2 of the championships she showed her improvement this season in the gruelling 300m hurdles by finishing her heat with another PB of 47:18. Unfortunately two hard races in one day proved just too much for her in the final, where she ran out of steam in the home straight and finished in 5<sup>th</sup> place.

Bryn and U17 Sam Mason-Brown struggled in the conditions during the 400m, with the chill wind blowing into the faces of athletes in the finishing straight and they finished 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively in their heats. Bryn did qualify for the final but couldn't take his place due to injury.

Charlie Burn showed his strength in the U17 400m and cruised to an impressive win in his heat and ran an outdoor PB time of 50:49 seconds. The final was a slightly different story when his big rival Michael Warner from Notts AC turned on the gas in the home straight to win, leaving Burn with a very satisfying silver medal.

Amanda Evans reached the final of the U17 200m with a season's best time of 27:82, but couldn't take her place as it clashed with her favoured event, the triple jump. Despite not being at her best she still reached the final, and finished 5<sup>th</sup>, and also showed signs that the rhythm was returning to her jumping.

James Johnston and Sam Mason-Brown were up against some very quick athletes in the U15 and U17 100m, and both finished their heats in a season's best time of 13:79 and 12:30 seconds respectively.

Isobel Burn and Georgie Evans battled against the elements in their heats of the U15 200m and finished with times of 28.14 and 28.97 respectively. Along with 7 other girls Georgie had to compete in high winds and relentless rain in the high jump, and she just finished outside of the medals in 4<sup>th</sup> place

A gritty performance from Sam Taylor in the U15 3000m saw him eclipse a long standing club record by running an excellent time of 11.02.24.

Conditions in the long jump were poor but James Johnston, Henry Warrender, Rebecca Pozzi and Katie Taylor all competed well.

The U13s - Alex Grant (8<sup>th</sup>), Oliver Snow (12<sup>th</sup>), Chloe Adams (13<sup>th</sup>), Hannah Taylor (15<sup>th</sup>) and Eleanor Johnston (17<sup>th</sup>) - competed in a Quadrathon competition of 100m, high jump, shot and long jump, all with promising results.

Some of the younger club members then went on to compete in Rugby & Northampton AC's "Summer Slammer", comprising of 3 events of the athlete's choice which must include 1 run, 1 throw and 1 jump. The events are scored in schools years and the Stratford athletes were in amongst the medals and trophies at the end of a very successful evening. Two of the stars of the event were year 3 winners Ben Taylor and Lexi Bannister, while Felicity Bee was 2<sup>nd</sup> and Jessica Carter was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the year 4 girls, and Guy Russell-Wilkes was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the year 4 boys. Molly White was 3<sup>rd</sup> for the year 6 girls and Lauren Stephens won the year 8 girls, with Imogen Green finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> by just one point in the year 9 girls where Jemma Lane finished 3<sup>rd</sup>. Other athletes who competed with great credit were Troy Stephens, Jackson Goodrum, Ellen Scholes, Hannah Taylor and Oliver Snow.

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On the seniors' road running front, north-west Coventry was the venue for the first of the year's Warwickshire Road Race League fixtures. The Northbrook 10K starts and finishes in Allesley, providing an undulating rural course that was made more difficult on the day by the warm and sunny conditions. Kate Wright (41:24, 55<sup>th</sup>), third in the ladies O35s, led the 14-strong Stratford contingent home, but only just as she held off a fine second-half run from Mark Francis, returning to racing after a break, to edge it by one second. Emerson Mayes (44:24, 102<sup>nd</sup>) and Roger Wilson (45:02, 110<sup>th</sup>) probably won't remember the morning with any great affection, given their high standards, but they were split by someone who will – John Turner (44:29, 105<sup>th</sup>). John's dedication in losing weight and training hard after two years of heart and blood pressure problems has been nothing short of remarkable, and with the results following he was 3<sup>rd</sup> in the male O60s category, one place ahead of Roger. Darren License (46:33, 133<sup>rd</sup>), David Maundrell (47:48, 150<sup>th</sup>) and Emma Bexson (47:54, 153<sup>rd</sup>) continued their tremendous 2007 form with strong performances, just ahead of Michael Oliver (48:26, 165<sup>th</sup>) and Sarah Odell (49:38, 180<sup>th</sup>). A day out for the Watkins family saw Luke (55:06, 233<sup>rd</sup>) and Natasha (66:05, 321<sup>st</sup>) enjoy themselves, and they came home either side of John Butler (60:39, 294<sup>th</sup>) and Jane Mason (61:36, 302<sup>nd</sup>). With the Stratford members being well placed amongst the 354 finishers the race meant a very positive start to the club's WRRL campaign.