

Five junior athletes from Stratford AC hit the medal trail at last weekend's Midland Counties Indoor Track & Field Championships at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham.

Andrew Pozzi jumped extremely well and consistently in the U17 triple jump, and just held off his other challengers to win gold with a distance of 12:59m. He was then followed onto the rostrum by his two training partners; Amanda Evans, who won silver in jumping 10:28m in the U17 ladies triple jump, and Chris Bartlett, who also got silver in the U20 men's triple jump with a leap of 13:65m. Both were in their first triple jump competitions of the year.

Charlie Burn has hit some brilliant early season form, and in the space of a week has knocked a full second off his 400m personal best. He easily qualified for the final from his U17 men's heat, and then he went on to control a superb tactical race before just running out of steam in a blanket finish to end in bronze medal position, but recording a time of 50:11 seconds. Bryn Stretton completed the medal haul in winning bronze in the U15 boys' 400m with a new personal best time of 59:52 seconds, and he also finished 4<sup>th</sup> in his 200m heat in a new PB of 26:54 seconds.

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Staying with the highly successful Stratford AC juniors, but moving outside onto the rain and mud of cross-country, the fourth meeting of the West Midlands Young Athletes CC League saw the squad retain their excellent 14<sup>th</sup> place overall. The course at Weddington (Nuneaton) was very boggy but the club's young runners showed a lot of determination, and with one match to go both Rugby & Northampton and Solihull & Small Heath are eminently catchable ahead of them.

The U11 girls are back up to a medal position, and only 18 points on the season behind Tamworth for second place, after excelling in a large field of 95. Clemmie Holden had a fine run in 8<sup>th</sup>, as did Molly White in 13<sup>th</sup>, while Chloe Connor (31<sup>st</sup>), Ellen Scholes (42<sup>nd</sup>), Trisha Cooper (58<sup>th</sup>) and Hannah Taylor (65<sup>th</sup>) all provided invaluable back-up. The U13 girls' squad were missing runners through illness and other athletic commitments, but those present performed admirably with Sara Copham gaining her first top ten finish (9<sup>th</sup>) and Katie Taylor gaining a season's best 45<sup>th</sup>. The U15 girls' race saw Emma Copham have another really strong run, improving by one place on last time to finish in 16<sup>th</sup> place out of the 74-strong field.

In the U11 boys' Edward Caswell returned to near his best in 29<sup>th</sup> after a uninspired run last time, and with a little more concentration could move up even further, although he does still have another year left in this age group. Ciaran King (35<sup>th</sup>), Thomas Chapman (47<sup>th</sup>) and Patrick Eaves (61<sup>st</sup>) all did themselves justice and finished strongly, so even without a full team they remain in 9<sup>th</sup> place. It would be interesting to see what they could they achieve with another one or two colleagues in attendance. The same could also be said for the U13 boys who lie in 11<sup>th</sup> position, but are in close touch with the two or three teams above them. They were led home by Jack Alison (15<sup>th</sup>), who continues to improve along with his growing confidence, while Michael Suren (61<sup>st</sup>) was seemingly having a really strong run but then went over on his ankle. This was terribly bad luck at a time when he was going so well, but he bravely limped round the last lap just to get points for the team. Fraser Weetman (65<sup>th</sup>) and Chris Bowyer (66<sup>th</sup>) both had steady runs, with Chris managing to get a season's best position. In the U15 boys Sam Taylor had another consistent run to finish 48<sup>th</sup>, and go alongside his previous placings of 50<sup>th</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> this season.

The U17 boys' team were also short, this time through both injuries and call-ups for county teams. Stratford are probably the only team which loses runners to the South-West Schools events, so on the same day as the WMYACCL fixture the club had Jonty Wilson running for Gloucestershire Schools at Cardiff in the combined Cross Challenge and South-West Schools. Jonty picked a great moment to produce what was probably his best run of the season, coming in 54<sup>th</sup>, and he can be tremendously encouraged by how close he was to some of the top runners ahead. Possibly even surpassing this though was Jack McMullen's performance in the U15's, who came in 31<sup>st</sup> after a very strong even-paced run.

So, after the penultimate WMYACCL match Stratford AC's points total is 11,682, which compares to 7,349 (15<sup>th</sup> place) in 2005-06; 5,990 (16<sup>th</sup>) in 2004-05; 6,719 (18<sup>th</sup>) in 2003-04 and 3,412 (18<sup>th</sup>) in 2002-03. All of these are the final scores at the end of the season, and 2003-04 had more fixtures than the current format, so the final league match in March (at Wolverhampton) is one that everyone is looking forward to.

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The following week the younger members of the Stratford AC squad continued to dominate the local schools races at Croft School. In the Year 5 girls' race Chloe Connor was 1<sup>st</sup>, with Rachel Chandler 3<sup>rd</sup>, and in the Year 5 boys' event Edward Caswell won. Guesting in this race was Ben Taylor, a year 3, who beat many of the older runners to come across the line in 37<sup>th</sup>. In the Year 6 girls' Clemmie Holden was 1<sup>st</sup>, Laura Burlton 2<sup>nd</sup>, Trisha Cooper 4<sup>th</sup> and Hannah Taylor 6<sup>th</sup>.

Following the County Schools Championships, Stratford AC has it's best ever representation in the Warwickshire County Schools team for the National Championships in March up at Leeds. Hard earned congratulations should go to Emma Copham (2<sup>nd</sup> in the county championships), Sara Copham (2<sup>nd</sup>), Becky Young (5<sup>th</sup>) and Jason Harman (5<sup>th</sup>). This means that combined with the Gloucestershire runners the club will have 6 representatives present, doubling their previous best.