

Hundreds of young athletes from all corners of England descended on the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham for the Sainsbury's English Schools Championships, which is the biggest event of its kind in the world. Five Stratford-upon-Avon AC athletes, who had all been selected for the Warwickshire schools' team, had what can only be described as mixed experiences in one of the biggest occasions in their young athletics careers.

First up was Will Barnett in the Junior Boys' long jump and, in pouring rain and with no experience of competing at this level, he stuck soundly to the job. His jump of 5:25 metres was good enough to put him into a fine 14th position out of the 25 competitors. Intermediate Boys' Andrew Pozzi has had a busy and successful season, and he was next on the long jump runway after Will. Unfortunately his normal rhythm on the runway deserted him, and despite a best jump of 6:16m he jumped below his peak and missed the final.

Charlie Burn really gave the Stratford contingent something to cheer about as he eased into the semi-final of the Intermediate Boys 400m with an outdoor personal best of 50:06 seconds. He "felt pretty confident" of improving on that the following day in the first of the semi-finals, but it did not go according to plan. Charlie was slow out of his blocks and then found it difficult to get into the race, finishing a "very disappointing" 5th, just outside the qualifying places for the final. Amanda Evans competed in the Intermediate Girls' triple jump event and was unable to improve on her first round jump of 10:50m, and she too didn't make it into the final.

Warwickshire boys' team captain Chris Bartlett, competing in the Senior Boys' triple jump, just missed the bronze medal by 2 centimetres, and he ended the competition in a crumpled heap on his last jump after suffering cramp. However, there was some good news for KES pupil Joe Curtis, who competes for Solihull & Small Heath AC and was in the same triple jump competition. After missing out on the medals in previous events he came up trumps by winning a richly deserved silver medal with a personal best jump of 14:56m.

The Warwickshire team had great success in winning both the Senior Boys' and Girls' competitions, and finished 3rd in the Group C county competition.

For the seniors, the second Warwickshire Road Race League fixture took place recently, and there were many encouraging results to spur on the 14-strong Stratford AC contingent. Coventry Godiva had to relocate their 'Midsummer 5' from its normal city venue due to location issues, and so the event took place this year on the Prodrive vehicle testing circuit at FenEnd, near Warwick. The perimeter roads of the old wartime airfield provided an ideally flat and traffic-free venue, with the only slight drawback being the exposed nature of the course, which left the runners battling the windy conditions for parts of the 5-mile race. The race also incorporated the Warwickshire County AA 5-mile championships, so there were plenty of incentives for all the competitors to do well.

Consequently, on a chilly Wednesday evening there was a good-sized field of 323 runners lining up at the start, and it was Wayne Vickers (29:25, 31st) who was first back for Stratford. Wayne performed well amongst some high-quality athletes, and with last year's ironman concentrating more on his running this year, triathlon's loss has been the club's gain. The trio behind Wayne – Emerson Mayes (32:05, 85th), Andy Cockerill (32:45, 100th) and John Turner (32:59, 104th) – have all been in fine form this summer, and are really spurring each other onto greater things. John's new

lease of life provided him with a fantastic new 5-mile PB at the grand old age of 63, and he was somewhat unfortunate not to be even higher than the 3rd male O60. Geoff Hillman (34:37, 135th) is another who seems to continually improve, whilst Dave Maundrell (35:56, 161st) and Emma Bexson (36:00, 163rd) provided another great tussle in their now epic series. Luke Watkins (37:12, 182nd) managed to cope admirably with the pressure of having his dad Graham chasing him round, who in fact did very well to finish only a couple of minutes later, and then came two excellent PB runs from Sarah Odell (37:24, 185th) and Naomi Whittaker (39:11, 213th). The prolific race-goer John Butler (44:27, 281st) just pipped a very rare appearance from Austin Jones (45:10, 288th), while Jane Mason (45:42, 291st) was another to put in a superbly strong run and lower her PB in the process. Declan Logue (47:20, 302nd) wrapped up a successful night for the club, with Scott Hazell (Coventry Godiva) comfortably taking first place in 25:10 minutes, and Leamington's international distance runner Sue Harrison taking the female honours, and 13th overall, equally easily in a time of 27:33.

After the two WRRL events Emma Bexson and Sarah Odell were well placed in the top 10 of the individual females, with Sarah also 4th in the female veterans' group, while the team standings saw Stratford mid-table in both gender categories and 5th and 3rd in the veteran males and females respectively. Although not having any counters at Stratford's WRRL fixture - the 'Summer 6' (because all members were ably assisting) - the club has already shown how well they can do in this competition, just as long as they can get people out there participating.