

Whether to specialise in one event or branch out into multiple disciplines is a question that has been occupying the thoughts of both young and old at Stratford AC recently! The strength of Stratford AC's juniors in multi-discipline competitions was again underlined by a series of fine individual performances in the Warwickshire Schools Combined Events Championships. The two day event was held over at Nuneaton, and the club's U13 boys Jo Noble and Luke Beardsmore led the way with the eclectic mix of 80m, long jump, shot and 600m. Both seemed a lot more comfortable on the track than off it, as the pair recorded their best points scores in the 80m and 600m races, and they were ranked in the highly respectable positions of 12th (Jo) and 21st (Luke).

Meanwhile the junior boys' pentathlon (80m hurdles, shot, long jump, high jump, 800m) saw Adriano Ritchie storm to a magnificent 1st place courtesy of a totally dominant show against nearly 50 competitors. With 500+ point performances in both the hurdles (13:7) and shot (11:60m), these gave Adriano a terrific start and propelled him on towards an excellent total of 2,184 points. The club's other entrant in this age category, Alex Grant, was impressively consistent as he finished well up the field in 19th.

A remarkable long jump (6:10m), a 1:64m high jump and a sub-minute 400m (59:7) from Josh Buzzard should have put him much higher than 33rd place in the Inter Boys Octathlon, but after falling in the 100m hurdles he was in no state to do the final event (1500m). Much the same applied to Henry Warrender, who came 35th after a slightly more consistent set of results than Josh but also had to miss the long run at the end.

For the girls Jeniva Chambers showed just what enormous star potential she has with a string of fine performances across all 4 events, and she duly came out on top in the U13 age group. Chloe Connor kept on battling throughout in the same category and was rewarded with an excellent 600m run in the final event; enough to pull her up into 8th place.

It's a bit difficult to know how Eleanor Johnston didn't triumph in the Junior Girls Pentathlon, since the only event of the five that she didn't triumph in was the shot! The highlight of her 2,531-point haul was a new senior women's club record in the high jump (5:03m), but Eleanor unfortunately still had to settle for silver. Anna O'Leary came 15th as she also showed an encouraging all round aptitude, whilst a quality high jump and 800m couldn't quite rescue Clemmie Holden from a disasterous opening 75m hurdles as she finished 26th.

The inter girls heptathlon was a runaway success for Stratford as Imogen Green, Georgie Evans and Isobel Burn finished in 1st, 3rd and 7th respectively. Imogen dominated proceedings from start to finish, amassing a huge total of 3,752 points along the way, Georgie managed to stay in contention throughout despite having just returned from injury, and any sort of improvement in Isobel's javelin throwing would see her shooting up the finishing order.

This just left the senior girls' heptathlon, and the event witnessed another memorable Stratford performance – this time from Amanda Evans. After terrific performances in the high jump (1:51m), long jump (4:93m) and 200m (27:80) she led over the two days right up until the last event (800m), but her final total of 3,520 points was not quite enough to hold onto first place and she had to settle for a fine silver.

The tragic death of one of the male competitors in Sunday's Stratford Triathlon completely overshadowed this popular event, but there was still a mass of good performances from local athletes. From the athletic club distinguished triathlete Robin Corder (1:08:35, 23rd, 3rd 45-49) displayed his class as he led the way in the main sprint event (400m swim, 40k bike, 5k run), and his position will surely rise as a couple of dodgy looking times above him are corrected. The much less experienced Phil Howell (1:15:00, 117th) showed that he has all the attributes for this other type of multi-discipline sport, and finished with a splendid run to pick up a host of places, while Phil Groom (1:18:32, 204th) just edged out club-mate Mark Bullock (1:18:59, 212th). Mark has worked incredibly hard to improve his biking and running but Phil, only 2 weeks on from a fine Shakespeare Marathon showing, picked up a couple of minutes on a good swim leg and just couldn't be caught. Another who made good ground after a steady swim was tri debutant Andy List (1:25:09, 370th), who should be delighted with such a high finish amongst the 612 male competitors. There were some great performances from the membership of the Sharks and the Cycling Club, as well as Playtime Productions, but a special mention must go to the Sharks' George Brear (1:13:41) for getting the fastest swim of the day – a lightning 4:51! The RAF's Dale Grassby was the overall winner in 1:01:19.

The women's race was just as competitive and held at the same locations – the Leisure Centre pool, Tidd Road / Charlecote / Sherbourne / A46 / Warwick Road bike loop, and running up and down the riverside path at the back of the Leisure Centre. On a beautiful day for triathlon Stratford AC can certainly look proudly back on splendid races from three of their women athletes, including 2 in the top 5! Debbie Cooper (1:10:44, 3rd) produced the fastest female bike leg of the day (41:39), and then summoned up a real battling final discipline (given her minimal amount of run training in the last 12 months), but finished just outside Samantha Boswell's (BRAT) winning 1:09:11. Alison also produced a fantastic cycle leg (42:21, the 2nd fastest) and quality run, but always knew that she was up against it after a relatively slow swim. The third of the running club trio, Marianne Flint (1:29:11, 72nd), has a lot less race experience behind her, but had a beautifully even set of splits to show for all her hard training.

Seven of Stratford AC's finest firmly opted to stay in the single discipline sector on the same day, as they joined 950 others in sunny Tewkesbury for their annual half-marathon. Johann Breytenbach (1:23:49, 22nd), who could be a triathlon great with some swim coaching, and Mark Francis (1:26:55, 39th, 2nd M50) both produced sparkling runs only two weeks post-marathon, with Phil Brennan (1:37:34, 151st) giving chase behind. The remarkable Mr Brennan still came in as 2nd over-60, despite giving most of his rivals at least 5 years! James Deacon (1:38:04, 159th) and Dave Maundrell (1:43:07, 250th) couldn't quite continue their sparkling 2009 form after a lot of hard racing recently, leaving Allan Coldicott (1:43:11, 251st) to narrowly fail in reversing his losing streak against Dave! On a warm morning when a revised course and more marshals only just avoided the shambles of 2008, the omnipresent John Butler (2:16:22, 809th) completed yet another major race in a long and happy career.