

Andrew Pozzi, Stratford AC's speeding bullet, joined 1330 other athletes from 176 nations in Italy's South Tyrol for the 6th IAAF World Youth Championships, and he can feel totally satisfied with his memorable performances out there. Pozzi was really up for the challenge, feeling both anxious and excited, and was drawn in heat 2 of his 110m hurdles event (the hurdles are 91:4cm high). There was certainly no need for nerves though as a fantastically powerful and controlled run saw him comfortably win the race and qualify for the final in a new lifetime best of 13:61 seconds. The next afternoon saw the semi's, and although Andrew was fastest out of the blocks he clipped the last 2 hurdles which spoilt his rhythm and marginally pushed him out of the final (13:82). Despite this minor setback Pozzi greatly enjoyed the tremendous competition and surroundings, making him even more determined to continue along his learning curve and qualify again for next year's event. The whole town can be very proud of all Pozzi's hard work and talent that has seen him qualify for a world championships and represent his country.

Six young Stratford AC athletes represented Warwickshire in the recent Aviva English School Track and Field Championships in Sheffield. The event is always a major test of both nerves and an athlete's talent in what is one of the largest and most complex sporting events in the world, and is a big step up from the domestic events that the youngsters usually compete in. There were mixed fortunes for the Stratford half-dozen but, just like Pozzi, they all will have come away as much better athletes for the experience.

Adriano Ritchie was appearing in the junior boys' 400m, which is always one of the most competitive events in the whole championships and it was no different this year. Unsurprisingly he was very apprehensive before the start, but Adriano used all that adrenalin to good effect as he ran the race exactly according to plan. He came storming through the field to finish 2nd in a time of 53:04 seconds, knocking another full second off this year's PB, and in the process qualified for the semi-finals. Adriano had another decent run in his semi, but the exertions of running so fast in the heat earlier in the day proved a bit too much and he faded slightly in the home straight. He battled all the way to the line to finish 6th in 54:9, and whilst he was naturally disappointed not to make the final he has much to be pleased with in his first full competitive year over the distance. Adriano has the ESAA combined events championships to look forward to, and has to remember that he has knocked nearly 7 seconds off his 400m PB from last year!

Conor Guest competed in the junior boys' shot putt, and to start with he really struggled with his accuracy, dispensing 2 no throws which started to set the alarm bells ringing. An adjustment back to basics had the desired effect and his third throw was sufficient to get him into the final, and while he never really hit top form a best effort of 13:15m still saw Conor finish in a commendable 5th position.

On the female side it was an anxious Lucy McDermott who stepped up to the start of her junior girls' 800m heat, but the confidence soon appeared as she took the race by the scruff of the neck. A time of 2:19:4 and 2nd place saw her qualify superbly for her first major final. The pace in the final was predictably a lot hotter and Lucy couldn't stay with the leaders on the 2nd lap, but with a terrific performance she pushed herself to near exhaustion to record 2:19:9 and finish 7th.

In the junior girls' 100m Eleanor Johnston lined up in heat 2 with the hope of both reaching the final and grabbing a PB. Despite running half a second faster than she'd ever done before in the race (12:72), her hopes were cruelly dashed by one 100th of a second and her 4th place didn't quite make the last 8. This wonderful effort left Eleanor highly pleased with her PB performance, but disappointed not to make the final. Another highly competitive heat in the intermediate girls' 80m hurdles saw Imogen Green's competitors blast out of the blocks, and although this was hard

to live with she typically stuck to her task. Imogen couldn't quite make up the lost ground though and finished 6th in a time of 12:49 seconds.

Amongst the senior girls Amanda Evans had the honour of captaining the Warwickshire team, and she briefly left this important role for a blast on the 3rd leg of the 4x100m relay. The county team safely qualified from their heat (50:27) after some slick changeovers, but were then unfortunately disqualified in the final after being given conflicting instructions regarding the changeovers. Just prior to this relay final Amanda had lined up in the triple jump with mixed fortunes. Her first jump was a little untidy in the jump phase, and was judged a foul, but her 2nd jump saw Amanda steaming in with what looked like a perfect take off and well executed hop, step and jump. The eagle-eyed officials then got the magnifying glass out to examine the plasticine and call the jump a foul, which was a massive disappointment. Her 3rd jump therefore had to be a relatively safe one (10:56m), but it just wasn't quite enough to get her into the final 8 as she finished a very respectable 10th.