

English Schools Track & Field Championships

Friday 9th & Saturday 10th July at the Alexander Stadium in Birmingham

Competing at this English Schools Track & Field Championships members of the Taunton Athletic Club



produced some outstanding individual performances in their respective events making a significant contribution to the Somerset Schools team success, which saw them win the overall C county trophy, as well as age group trophies in the Intermediate Boys and Senior Girls age groups.

There was a certain amount of expectation weighing on the shoulders of some of the club's athletes going into the championships. With several of them featuring in the top five of the UK rankings there was pressure on them to deliver on the day, which they did in style.

(Ronnie takes 100m silver -©C Holmes)

In the history of the ESAA Championships which dates back to 1925 Somerset have never before had such a successful championships. Along with the three team trophies there were eight individual medallists, including 4 golds and 3 silvers, plus two near missed in 4th place, one championship best performance and three athletes being selected to represent England Schools in the Home Countries International.

Five of the medals winners and two of the England internationals came from the Taunton Athletic Club. Javelin throwers Robin Danaher & Izzy Jeffs who are both coached by Simon de Wilton won gold in supreme style. Robin who has been picked for the England team was lying in 2nd place going into the final round, but in the style of true champions pulled out a final throw of 62 metres to win the title. Izzy Jeffs cut a frustrated looking figure in the field until she produced a lifetime best of 50.54 metres which was a new Championship Best Performance. Josie Loxton, another of de Wilton's throwers also set a new personal best of 36.09 metres in her first year in the junior girls age group to come fourth and looks capable of following in Jeff's footsteps in the future.

In the endurance events Charlie Maclean who on paper was the favourite going in the races put his coach, family and team managers through a nail biting 5 minutes and 45 seconds as he appeared to let the number 2 ranked athlete get a sizeable lead in the middle section of the race. However, Maclean's strong finish and turn of pace, coupled with a cool head and champion's self belief, dug deep for a spectacular win and a dramatic finish to the two days of competition. Training partner Blair Brown, also coached by Charlotte Fisher competed in an equally exciting steeplechase race. Running over the shorter distance of 1500 metres it took the pre-race favourite Zac Seddon of Berkshire to run a Championship Best Performance to beat Brown. In fact such was the quality of both performances that Blair's 4 mins 17 personal best ranks him 17th on the all time UK records which date back to the early 1970s. **(Charlie takes gold S/C-©C Holmes)**



The club's other silver medallist was sprinter Ronnie Wells, coached by Norbert Rosser & Charlie Larkin. Having worked his way through the heats and semis in style Wells, a relatively new name on the athletics circuit was the one to watch. One of just two athletes starting without blocks he got away to a superb start with a lead on the rest of the field. He maintained form to 99 metres and was pipped to the line by little more than a whisker. In fact neither runner was certain of the result and there was several tense minutes whilst the officials consulted the photo finish. Gracious in defeat Ronnie Wells looks capable of going one place better in the future.

For those tuning into Sky TV on Saturday afternoon the performances of Jeffs, Wells & Maclean could be seen on our television screens which demonstrates the importance that sponsors and media place on the English Schools in terms of show casing the stars of the future.

Aside from the club's medal winners a further eight members of the club made up the 25 man string Somerset team, Team Manager Richard Bowden described them as "the strongest Somerset team ever". Many put on NS (national standard) or NES (national entry standard) performances on the day, including Katie Cross (u15) – 30.40m Discus – 8th NS ; Josie Loxton (U15) – 36.09 Javelin – 4th NS PB – just outside the medals; Catherine Blew (U20) – 4:31.34 1500m – 7th in NS in a highly competitive and close race; Haydent Tyler – 12.29 Shot – 13th ; Charlie Granville – 48.06m Javelin – 7th NS; Louis Ubaka – 11.35 sec 100m – missed out on getting to round 2 by 6 x 100ths of a second ; Harry Hall – 2:03.90 800m – late call up as a reserve, acquitted himself well in an event he hadn't yet run this year ; and Evie Grogan (U17) High Jump 1.62 m NS – loved the experience, ...and as all , keen to come back in 2011 !

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