

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC
ASSOCIATION



Cross Country
Report and Results
2006

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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Cross Country Report - 2006

There were times during this cross-country season when I simply did not believe what I was hearing! There were times when I could not believe what I was seeing!

Area championships again took place just prior to or immediately after the Christmas break. It cannot be underestimated the importance of these championships. It is from here that the progression begins to the pinnacle of the sport. Entry numbers to the county championships would strongly suggest that more athletes, and probably therefore more schools, could take part at the area stage. If our teams are to remain successful this foundation needs to be strong.

County Championships

The championships took place at The Taunton Racecourse with Richard Llewellyn-Eaton again doing a sterling organisational job. The weather was kind but one day earlier strong cold winds would have meant the cancellation of the championships and indeed postponed Richard's early preparation. As is always the case at this venue the courses set were deceptively difficult.

However for the 16 athletes who have to go through administration the large, warm 'pavilion' is a welcome base in which to recover and to make new and meet old friends. In such surroundings presentations by the Chairman were enthusiastically received.

Also within this building the computer can be set up for results, this year organised by Ian Humphries to whom I extend the association's thanks.

Likewise thanks must go to the band of various helpers who enabled this large meeting to be a success.

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A breakdown of the results:
(maximum entry per age group = 60)

Age Group	Entries	Winner	Team	Finishers
Minor Girls	49	Jess Wood (Yeovil)	Yeovil	39
Junior Girls	52	Alice Wood (Yeovil)	Yeovil	41
Intermediate Girls	40	Rosy Cooper (Mendip)	Taunton	28
Senior Girls	21	Nikki Hamblin (Mendip)	Taunton	17
Minor Boys	51	Blair Brown (Taunton)	Taunton	36
Junior Boys	57	Nathan Young (Mendip)	Yeovil	34
Intermediate Boys	49	Tom Kelly (Taunton)	Taunton	35
Senior Boys	23	Charles Albrow (Taunton)	Taunton	15

Southwest Championships

Immediately following the county championships a selection meeting was held at King's College to select the ten athletes to represent the county in each age group at the SW championships held alongside the Bournemouth track in Kings Park. The selection process was quite straightforward for all, bar one, known athletes had competed in the county championships. Millfield Preparatory School athletes could not compete at the SW championships due to the preparatory schools championships and Martha Lloyd, an ex Oxfordshire schools athlete, was selected in the intermediate girls.

Leading up to the event, one month after the county championships, all athletes made contact with me and travel arrangements were settled so that for the first time ALL athletes travelled to Bournemouth on the two team coaches. This made a huge difference for administration: I collected fees and issued kit, changed coaches somewhere near Dorchester, and stood all the way!

With new safety rules coming into effect in September this will not be possible!

At Bournemouth the team as one unit left the coaches and encamped in the grandstand. Quite a sight! Here too final encouraging words and organisation took place before each team left to walk the course with their team manager. I must express my grateful thanks to the complete team (10) of team managers at these championships. No other county had the back-up our athletes had and this team along with many parents added to the atmosphere within the county set-up.

Team managers were:

Tracey Parker, Charlotte Fisher, Jane Yandell, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton, Matthew Morgan, John Rix, Jason Allen, Les Neville, Larry Tulett and myself.

The course was dry, undulating and thus fast with warm sunshine giving way to a chilly wind.

The highlights were: determined runs from Justine Bowers (4th) and Alice Woods (8th) junior girls; an exhausting run regaining fitness from Nikki Hamblin (5th) senior girls; an encouraging debut for Blair Brown (6th) minor boys and a superb team performance from the junior boys: Nathan Young (1st), Thomas Lawson (3rd), Alex

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Wiltshire (5th), Charlie Maclean (8th) Arthur Pakenham (13th), Ben Venus (15th). Charles Albrow did not compete as he had a re-occurrence of the back problem suffered in last year's national championships!

Our team positions were:

Age Group	Position	Winning County
Minor Girls	7 th	Gloucestershire
Junior Girls	2 nd	Devon
Intermediate Girls	5 th	Devon
Senior Girls	3 rd	Devon
Minor Boys	7 th	Gloucestershire
Junior Boys	1 st	Somerset
Intermediate Boys	7 th	Devon
Senior Boys	3 rd	Dorset

National Championships

Following the southwest championships selection took place for the national team to compete in Mansfield some three weeks later. As in previous years schools were immediately circulated with names of those athletes selected and this was followed by more detailed information to each athlete. Perhaps because I had made individual contact with all athletes on the coaches going to Bournemouth or perhaps because of a letter to all Heads of Department asking their method of payment for our championships fees and returns for the national championships came in smoothly. Only two athletes withdrew, one through injury and one due to another county sporting commitment. Reserves were delighted to come into the team.

The format for the weekend followed that of many previous years. We stayed in a Premiere Travel Inn minutes away from the course. Unfortunately our Friday afternoon journey proved somewhat long due to motorway hold-ups meaning that we arrived later than anticipated and had to rush into the evening meal. (Thanks to Richard for showing us his queue jumping techniques!) Apart from this there were no problems: a brief team meeting was held after the evening meal with kit being issued prior to team photographs and departure at a very relaxed time. I do not know how other counties justify travelling such long distances on the Saturday morning!

The course was set on sloping terrain adjacent to a school and athletics track. By design it was fast and demanding from the start and gave nothing to the runners other than a severe test of strength and stamina. The weather was dry and sunny allowing the team to make a base at the top of the hill, inside the lapped course, in front of the start, close to the finishing run in.

I cannot emphasize enough the commitment by all, managers and athletes, to the team for which I express my sincere thanks.

Team managers: Jane Yandell, Tracey Parker, Michelle Miles, John Rix, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton, Les Neville and myself ably assisted by Stephanie Chappell, Ian

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Humphries and a number of parents. Again what other county can list this commitment and support?

Junior Girls

I fine run from Justine Bowers (50th) enabled the team to finish first of the SW counties and 4th within 'C' group counties.

Intermediate Girls

Unfortunately our strongest runners suffered severe physical problems. Laura Parker and Lydia Rosling did not finish whilst Rosy Cooper managed to finish but was totally exhausted and took a considerable time to recover. This left a delighted Naomi Taschimowitz (51st) as our best placed runner but only after I had corrected her omission from the initial results!

Not surprisingly the team was 7th within the southwest and 9th within 'C' group.

Senior Girls

These girls looked after each other and supported each other magnificently and shared in each other's success and disappointment. Nikki Hamblin showed that she had regained much of her fitness by finishing a delighted and pleasing seventh whilst the remaining packing in below 150th position. As a result the team came 2nd in group 'C' but slipped to 4th within the southwest.

Junior Boys

Winning the southwest was good but the achievement of the team here surpassed all that could have been imagined. To state that Nathan Young came first and that we won the team trophy does not do justice to the accomplishment and treasured memories of the afternoon. From the start the team pushed forward to gain good positions within the leading group. Gradually Nathan moved from tenth to ninth and through to third and eventually second. His battle with Seb Harding (Kent) began to take on gargantuan proportions as neither was going to give way. Not until the funnel was enveloping the two runners did Nathan nudge in front and cross the line marginally ahead only to collapse and be trampled on by those who he had defeated.

Close behind this scene of disaster another Somerset vest appeared, and then another, and another. Suddenly four had finished: Alex Wiltshire (15th), Thomas Lawson (18th), Charlie Maclean (24th). Not long after Arthur Pakenham (47th) and Ben Venus (48th) completed the course and we had 6 scorers less than 50th! All of this was happening whilst Nathan was recovering close by the first aid tent. A little while later the team was called for presentation and I was informed we had won. I thought it was group 'C' but no it was overall. What a feeling.

Intermediate Boys

This is the most competitive race of them all. Tom Kelly our most fancied runner was 'up for it' and was going well within the leading group when he was suddenly confronted by a runner stumbling towards him. Tom took aggressive evasive action (he swung a punch) others jumped or pushed the athlete who was going back for a

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lost shoe! But the damage had been done and Tom never regained his position within the leading group. Further down the field Dominic Henry was determined to finish but in so doing subjected himself to severe exhaustion. Some 45 minutes after finishing his recovery was such that first aid had to be called and he was taken to their tent to be given oxygen. A doctor was advocating transfer to hospital but fortunately recovery began to be noticeable and such action was not needed.

Terry McKiernan was our best-placed finisher in 62nd position. The team was 5th within southwest and 5th in group 'C'.

Senior Boys

Charles Albrow recovered sufficiently from his back injury to place 99th but pride of place went to Peter Baker pacing 65th. The team packed well but too far down the placings to gain honours being 3rd in southwest and 4th in 'C' group.

I submitted an article including a picture to the Western Gazette. It was edited and the picture did not appear. My title became 'Mallet Boy Blows Away Opposition.'

National Champion and National Champions

The Somerset Schools Athletic Association's cross-country season has culminated in great success at the national championships.

The road to this success started in February with the county championships being held at the Taunton Racecourse where some 500 young athletes participated.

From this event eight age group teams were selected to compete in the Southwest championships in Bournemouth at the beginning of March. In warm sunshine the 80 competitors from Somerset battled against athletes from the other 6 counties. Nathan Young was victorious in the Junior Boys age group as were this team itself.

Last weekend six age group teams, comprising in total of 48 athletes, journeyed to Mansfield for the national championships. This is one of the largest cross-country meetings in the calendar with some 400 athletes representing the 44 counties in each of the races. Although the course was fast and challenging, being on sloping and undulating terrain, our hopes were high of good individual and team performances. We were not disappointed.

Nathan Young (Whitstone School) became national champion by winning the junior boys race by 2 metres after a tumultuous battle over the 4-kilometre course. He was ably supported by Alex Wiltshire (Millfield) 15th; Thomas Lawson (Kings College) 18th; Charlie Maclean (Wadham) 24th; Arthur Pakenham (Millfield) 47th; Ben Venus (Bucklers Mead) 48th; Tim Attwell (Huish Episcopi) 190th and Tom Derrick (Kings of Wessex) 252nd. The team's performance ensured a resounding victory for which we received the Chesterfield Trophy.

Other notable performances were seen from Justine Bowers (Millfield) 50th in the Junior Girls; Naomi Taschimowitz (Kings of Wessex) 51st in the Intermediate Girls; Nikki Hamblin (Millfield) 7th in the Senior Girls; Terry McKiernon (Bishop Fox) 62nd in the Intermediate Boys and Peter Baker (West Somerset) 65th in the Senior Boys.

As a result of his outstanding performance Nathan will receive an international vest when he represents England against the other home nations in Stowe on 8th April.

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Schools International

I took a weekend out to go to the idyllic surroundings of Stowe School for the SIB Cross Country Championships. The course was not quite as mountainous as Hestercombe House and was therefore a severe test of strength, stamina and running ability. The Junior Boys event was won by a very proficient Irish boy running ahead of the entire England team.

The England team positions were almost a reverse of the national championship's positioning. The first English athlete was 7th in the national championships whilst Nathan Young came home in 6th position.

The season proved to be long, highly successful and most rewarding (for me). I sincerely thank all who were involved at any stage and in any capacity.

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