

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION



Cross Country Report and Results 2007

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2007 Cross Country, including London mini-marathon, Report

Introduction

I start to write this at the very end of what has been a most enjoyable, extremely pleasant and successful season. This can only come about through the efforts of the many officials, helpers and team managers, the full co-operation of parents and the boundless enthusiasm and energy of our athletes. Even though I say this myself, we seem to have something quite special within the county when these distinct elements come together with such conviction that success is not only seen but anticipated and enjoyed.

Junior Championships

After a couple of years break these championships took place again thanks to the efforts of Richard Llewellyn-Eaton to stage the event on the expansive fields of King's College.

I sent out all the information via email many weeks before the event and thus gave plenty of time for entries to be made back to me, hopefully via post to include entry fee (£1 per individual or £4 per team of six with 4 to score) or email.

Schools will remain nameless but: one school entered fully only to withdraw many athletes at the very last minute due to a school trip! Another allegedly sent entries via fax (I don't do fax) and were a surprise addition at the start of proceedings! Another contacted me about a week after the event asking when it was to take place! I fully realise that this was a new event in diaries but knowing that school staff are well equipped with email facilities I fail to understand why basic administration cannot be carried out. This though is not a problem relating solely to a renewed junior cross country championships!

Weather prior to the championships had been fine until the days immediately before when much heavy rain fell causing the course to be quite wet underfoot but thankfully the afternoon itself was dry. Sadly, but perhaps not surprisingly, out of the 40+ schools emailed only nine took part and not in all age groups. Thus the event was small as a county championship but was of great value for a couple of 'new' schools did take part.

With the vast majority of the competitors running a competitive cross country for the first time much of the apprehension was dispersed by the way in which Richard used

county athletes, as hares, to run ahead of the races so no one went off course. As a spectator I found this most pleasing, I am sure team managers and those parents present also appreciated this piece of organisation.

Winners:

	Individual	Team
Year 7 Girls	E Ruffell-Hazell (Queens)	Minehead
Year 7 Boys	K Young (Whitstone)	Westfield
Year 8 Girls	E Derrick (Hugh Sexey)	The Park
Year 8 Boys	O Sheppard (Downside)	Downside

A county championship badge was presented to each winner as they crossed the line whilst certificates to first six individuals and the winning team were posted.

Hopefully next season more participants will take part and the event become a true county championships

Senior Championships

These took place at Millfield School on 3rd February thanks to the sterling organisation of John Rix who utilised the 'horse gallops' for the majority of the course. In order to link the start/finish field with the course, runners had to negotiate two short lengths of tarmac which all in all did not detract from the event. The afternoon saw warm sunny conditions enabling many athletes to produce fine performances.

A programme was produced containing a course map and all athletes' names. A number were given to team managers but none were sold on the day. The organisation of a cross country event requires numerous stewards out on the course plus officials for the start and finish and personnel in the administration area for results and selection. It is most difficult therefore to find those extras who are needed to direct traffic and spectators or sell programmes. But, with the entry procedure such that a programme can be compiled easily and printed, programme sellers should be part of the overall strategy.

The number in each race was not to the maximum but nonetheless keen competition was seen throughout both individually and between teams.

	Enter	Finish	Winners: Individual	Team
Minor Boys	55	36	K Young (M)	Mendip
Junior Boys	59	45	D Westgate (S)	Sedgemoor
Inter Boys	51	36	N Young (M)	Mendip
Senior Boys	34	21	A Heath (M)	Taunton
Minor Girls	46	31	E Ruffell-Hazell (T)	Taunton
Junior Girls	53	42	I Ness (T)	Mendip

Inter Girls	40	32	L James (Y)	Mendip
Senior Girls	25	17	N Taschimowicz (M)	Yeovil

(not all entries would have started)

In the administration 'pavilion' we again saw many old acquaintances amongst the new crop of runners and with all known runners competing selection for the southwest championships was problem free.

SW Championships

These were held in Melksham and were most certainly not problem free!! It is perhaps easiest if the brief notes that I made immediately after are simply listed below!

The championships took place on 3 March at Stonar School. The event will be remembered for events behind the scenes!!

Briefly:

- a. Information to counties received a week or so after the county championships
 - i. Entries returned to multiple recipients
 - ii. Some counties did not receive information to required person
 - iii. Coincided with school open day
 - iv. Headteacher asked for cancellation
 - v. Two JB trophies returned, we now have JB T&F!
- b. Course:
 - i. Posts only
 - ii. Severe condition underfoot
 - iii. Race distances at maximum length
 - iv. Sharp left through single file gate near finish
 - v. Marshalls didn't know courses, both before and during races
 - vi. SB came back to start
 - vii. Some MG were disqualified
 - viii. First Aid not on actual course
- c. Results:
 - i. Immediate results with no times
 - ii. Team scores not available
 - iii. SG incorrectly calculated – we did win
 - iv. JG additional athletes and missing athletes
 - v. MB – Dorset ran 11, team score void
 - vi. Full results received 12 March
- d. Our athletes:
 - i. 10 team managers present thanks to ALL – consequently individual teams and overall team organisation so much easier
 - ii. Some replies in slow, due to '1' above
 - iii. A SG - didn't want to run told me on Friday
 - iv. An IG - still haven't heard from
 - v. A JG – reprimanded by school
 - vi. All boys selected – competed
 - vii. Whole team was very much together but lacking in depth.
 - viii. Many thanks from parents during and after event
 - ix. JB injury – sprained ankle – needed first aid on course (b.viii) followed by quick journey home via a parent
 - x. SB "plastered" in mud

xi. JB mud in eye needed first aid

e. Recommendations:

- i. Letter of thanks to Fiona Padfield at Stonar for sterling work in difficult circumstances
- ii. At SW AGM – chat through the system of hosting the championships which must be implemented through the host county secretary.
- iii. All information from host county sent to county secretaries as well as cross-country secretaries

This can only give a flavour of the event; you had to be part of the organisation to fully appreciate the cumulative nature of the unfolding situations before, during and after the championships.

County best performers and team result

Year 7 Girls	28 th – K Macdonald	5 th team
Junior Girls	18 th – N Dowds	7 th team
Inter Girls	8 th – L Chappell	6 th team
Senior Girls	4 th – N Taschimowitz	1 st team
Year 7 Boys	7 th – I Taschimowitz	3 rd team
Junior Boys	4 th – D Westgate	6 th team
Inter Boys	3 rd – N Young	3 rd team
Senior Boys	10 th – P Baker	6 th team

Given the county results, with all athletes participating, and the south-west results plus other regional results at hand selection for the national championships was quite easy.

National Championships

This year the championships took place at Temple Newsam, Leeds on 24th March. I had booked a Travel Inn and had very good dialogue with the manager leading up to the weekend. What I did not appreciate was that the Travel Inn was located by the back gate of Temple Newsam. Thus after a very slow journey to Leeds we were warmly welcomed and smoothly organised into rooms and the evening meal at which there was a 2-for-1 offer hugely appreciated by all. Being so close there was absolutely no rush in the morning and this too was hugely appreciated by all.

At the course athletes met up with parents and coaches who had travelled independently. The team, now 10 team managers strong, set up a base overlooking the start and finish areas and this area was fully used by athletes, parents and coaches. The course was a multi-lapped course over very grassy and very hilly terrain. The long 'drag' away from the start was not the easiest encounter on the course.

Consequently a number of our athletes did not complete the course, but they were not alone. Thankfully first aid cover was excellent as usual and the vast array of toilet facilities was also most noticeable. Congratulations must go to the organisers who seemed to get most things right.

County best performers and team result

		SW team	C group	National
Junior Girls	116 th – I Ness	5 th	8 th	38 th
Inter Girls	104 th – L James	3 rd	4 th	27 th
Senior Girls	21 st – N Taschimowitz	1 st	1 st	6 th
Junior Boys	74 th – D Westgate	5 th	12 th	32 nd
Inter Boys	10 th – C Maclean	2 nd	4 th	19 th
Senior Boys	89 th – P Baker	5 th	7 th	33 rd
Aggregate Boys	6 th C Group County			
Aggregate Girls	3 rd C Group County			

Unofficially this meant that we were overall 3rd C group County.

I had great pleasure taking back the Junior Boys Trophy won the previous year and with the way athletes were performing during the afternoon I felt that we would just miss out on a trophy. To the whole team's delight an announcement was made for the senior girls' team to go to presentation. This it turned out was to be presented with the H Witham Trophy for the team with the highest placed 8th finisher. Perhaps no other trophy illustrates the personality of the Somerset teams than this trophy for throughout the weekend the support for each other was outstanding at all times. This was in stark contrast to the turmoil I encountered within other county teams!! We are most fortunate.

Finally my over-riding memory was a comment by one of our athletes who simply said, 'How many supporters did we have, they were all the way around?!' Little did he know, nor myself at the time, that the many supporters we did have ran from vantage point to vantage point to cheer on the team. One pair of supporters was Pat Hall, chairperson of the Association in 1979 and 1981, and her husband who had also stayed in the Travel Inn with the team.

Sincere thanks to all involved with the team.

Adidas Mini London Marathon

The team's performance in the 2006 national cross country championships meant that we received an invitation to compete in this year's Adidas London Mini-Marathon. I had no hesitation in accepting this but at the time had no idea what this actually meant other than it was all expenses paid!

It meant an unforgettable weekend for those involved.

For the first time we took 11 and 12 year olds on an overnight stay and to make things a little more difficult the age groups were not in line with ESAA ages! But once the team was selected I had a most positive response from all involved.

Entry was on line and required much detail. This detail was used not only for the run itself but also accommodation and souvenir allocation. The overnight stay was in Royal Holloway College just outside the M25 near Heathrow. This was shared by all other county teams but was extremely well organised by students from the college. The

college is set in quite magnificent surroundings, akin to Harry Potter!, and from the first moment the young athletes know this was to be something special.

Our accommodation was on the top floor of the impressive 5 story Victorian building which meant that other teams had no need to disturb us. A couple of athletes were in the 'East wing' and here there was disturbance from the ornamental roof-top chiming clock! After breakfast rooms had to be vacated ready to depart for central London at 6.30am!

A convoy of coaches journeyed into London, travelling through designated road blocks and along one-way streets the wrong way! Organisation was impressive, to say the very least, with hundreds of helpers exceptionally well briefed.

The holding area for the races was an NCP car park adjacent to the start at Southwark Bridge. The course went along Victoria Embankment to Westminster Bridge turning into Birdcage Walk, sweeping past Buckingham Palace and into The Mall.

Our best performers were:

Boys 11 – 12	22 nd - K Young	Girls 11 – 12	29 th - S Kurle
Boys 13 – 14	14 th - A Wiltshire	Girls 13 – 14	29 th - C Blew
Boys 15 – 17	17 th - D Layton	Girls 15 – 17	13 th - N Taschimowitz

Again countless parents came to support their children and the team and one of those unforgettable moments for me was to lead the entire team past Trafalgar Square and down Whitehall to the coach.

With the county being third overall this year at the national cross country there is a chance we may get an invite to London again!

Thanks must be expressed to the team managers who accompanied the athletes to London and **ALL** cross country events. Their efforts, as always, are very much appreciated. I did receive a card from one young athlete whose words, which I quote in full, totally sum up the athletes' thoughts,

"Thank you for an amazing weekend. I felt really proud to be part of this fabulous event. It has really inspired me to run a full marathon (with my dad, hopefully!) when I am older. As a team we all appreciate the hard work you put in as a team manager giving us these opportunities. May it continue."

Cross country team managers:

Brian Baker
Charlotte Fisher
Ian Humphries
Jane Yandell
Jason Allen

John Rix
Les Neville
Richard Llewellyn-Eaton
Sarah Mead
Tracey Parker