

SOMERSET SCHOOLS ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

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2010 Cross-Country Report

It would be so very easy to simply state that what has gone before so successfully took place again this year but each cross-country season has its own personality even though the basic format does not change!

Junior Championships.

Again these were held on the expansive fields of King's College thanks to Richard Llewellyn-Eaton and his ever enthusiastic band of helpers. This year they certainly did need to be enthusiastic for the weather was wet, wet, wet. So much so that no times could be given for the final race due to waterlogged watches!

The event was again well supported but by fewer teams and athletes than in the previous year, in fact down to 70% of the 2009 entries.

Primary Results:

Under 13 girls	Individual Champion Elen Falkingham (Queen's)	Team Champion Taunton School
Under 13 boys	Archie Walton (Castle)	Castle
Under 14 girls	Holly Brown (Queen's)	Queen's
Under 14 boys	Charlie Omerod (Kingsmead)	Danesfield

It is certainly encouraging from an organiser's viewpoint that five different schools are listed.

Senior Championships.

The championships returned to The Taunton Racecourse where the day was sunny and dry but chilly which made for some good competition.

Entries received were not at the maximum of 60 per race. Disappointing in particular were the intermediate girls' entry (38), the senior boys' (35) and most harrowing of all the senior girls' with an entire entry of nine athletes! Inevitably at this stage there will be non-runners and also non-finishers consequently no race had more than 40 finishers whilst the intermediate girls and senior boys had just over 20 and the senior girls' race saw eight complete the course.

Primary Results:

Minor Girls	Individual Champion Emma Clarke (Sedgemoor)	Team Champion Yeovil
Minor Boys	Luke Prior (Sedgemoor)	Taunton
Junior Girls	Holly Brown (Taunton)	Mendip
Junior Boys	Ben Hawkins (Taunton)	Taunton
Intermediate Girls	Harriet Rogers (Taunton)	Taunton
Intermediate Boys	Blair Brown (Taunton)	Mendip
Senior Girls	Catherine Blew (Taunton)	(Taunton – 3 runners)
Senior Boys	Charlie Maclean (Taunton)	Taunton

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Thanks must be extended to Richard Llewellyn-Eaton for not only putting up the course but also for enlisting many helpers to ensure that the championships ran smoothly and also to Ian Humphreys who again managed to get results out in double quick time.

(It is worth noting that second, by 13 seconds, in the junior girls race was Emily Smith.)

South-West Championships.

After each race at The Racecourse it was good to see familiar faces alongside the new and with that the building of the cross-country family for the forthcoming races. Selection immediately after at King's College was straightforward with the only major decision whether to select all the senior girl finishers – we did.

Confirmation and formation of team members for the south-west championships in Truro was problematical in that:

- although the Millfield Preparatory athletes had stated they were available other school commitments meant they were not!
- one athlete decided that cross-country running was not for her and decided not to run again!
- illness
- a county soccer commitment.

This meant that only four teams ran as selected, including the senior girls, but all, except the two senior teams, had a full team of 10 runners.

Coach parking and team disembarkation at Truro is historically difficult but once completed, and with team members through county administration in the sports hall, the afternoon proved to be enjoyable. The course was the same as that to be used for the SIAB International later in the season and was thus thoroughly well marked with tape. Although set on school fields the undulating and sharply turning course proved more than satisfactory for a regional championships.

Early during the afternoon Sam Sommerville's second place finish in the minor boys' race was a pleasant surprise, including to Sam! His performance enabled the minor boys to win the team championship. Charlie Maclean dominated and won the senior boys' race whilst other counties dominated all other races.

The afternoon will be remembered, however, for an injury sustained by Ceejay Spencer-Browne (SG) who slipped/fell on one of the tight turns and badly twisted her ankle. First aid at the course was not particularly forthcoming! Fortunately Ceejay's relations live in Truro and were at the course so took her to hospital. Doubly fortunately her uncle works in the hospital and managed to fast-track Ceejay through the emergency department so that, heavily plastered and with crutches, she could be picked up by the coach.

(It should be noted that second, to Lauren Bleaken by 9 seconds, in the junior girls' race was Emily Smith.)

National Championships.

Selection the day after the south-west championships was non-problematical with the only question, 'How many senior girls to select?' It was decided to select all eight but to give them the chance to opt out. Administration following this was easy as all athletes selected competed with the exception of two senior girls.

The course at Heaton Park, Manchester was literally across the road from the Premier Inn. We decided to walk the course on the Friday. It was laid out on undulating, open park land with short grass with a difficult wooded section. The evening was gorgeous with the team walking in shirt-sleeves, in small groups, chatting incessantly. Back at the Premier Inn the restaurant setting was ideal with the entire team eating on a balcony area. The only small complaint would be the speed and organisation of service. As is usual the team was joined by parents who had travelled either on the coach or independently.

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All looked set for a good day's cross-country running (particularly as Isaac Taschimowitz had now joined the team direct from Germany) until Jess Wood (IG) fell severely ill soon after the meal. Thankfully close friends of the family were with the team and Jess was looked after throughout the night. Mercifully the bug did not spread to the remainder of the team and in the morning Jess was whisked away, extremely disappointed, from the team by her parents.

Also overnight heavy rainstorms had set in which continued throughout the day. With the team based so close to the course individual teams did not leave until the latest moment before walking to a course unrecognisable to the one walked the previous evening!

In such conditions running became a battle of attrition but as is always the case all athletes were determined to finish, including Ceejay and George Harris at the very back of their fields; Ceejay having to visit the doctor and then transported by ambulance back to the team coach.

Highlights of the day were performances by Blair Brown (JB – 18th) and Charlie Maclean (SB-11th) both of whom would secure greater success on the track.

However the surprise highlight was in the junior girls race where looking straight towards the finish through rain from my position in the finishing tent I saw a Somerset vest at the front. It was a close finish and unbeknown to herself Emily Smith had crossed the line first! I had to confirm this to a very surprised and then extremely excited young athlete who from then conducted herself in the best possible way throughout a protracted presentation and interviews. So from second in both the county and the south-west championships Emily had peaked to perfection with a one second win and a two second gap to Lauren Bleaken in third. It was rumoured that Emily had used her racing brain to run a shorter but hillier route near the finish projecting her into the winning position.

Overall our teams did not win trophies: the boys placed 3rd in 'C' group (beaten by Gloucester and Dorset) with the girls having no score.

With surprise illness and severe weather it became vitally important that the team consisted of eight team managers for it was 'all hands on deck' throughout the weekend. Noticeable was the fact that we seemed to be the only team who utilised the finishing tent but I can report this is hugely appreciated by both athletes and their families.

Sincere thanks to all team managers throughout the season:

Jane Yandell	Les Neville
Charlotte Fisher	Richard Llewellyn-Eaton
Tracey Parker	Stuart Richards
	Larry Tulett
	Richard Bowden
	Jason Allen
	Adrian Palmer
	Brian Baker

SIAB International.

Emily's first place finish meant that she was automatically selected for the home international in Truro. She was not the only Somerset representative as Dick was managing the team and I went to support as did a large number of her family. Emily again credited herself extremely well placing 5th behind other England representatives with Lauren Bleaken achieving international success 20 seconds ahead of Emily.

BB
Sept '10