

SOMERSET SCHOOLS' AA / SOMERSET COUNTY AA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Millfield School, Street
Saturday and Sunday 23 and 24 April 2016**

On Friday 19 February, information and entry forms were sent to 67 schools and colleges and the 4 major Track and Field clubs in Somerset, with a closing date of Thursday 24 March so that the programme could be prepared during the Easter holidays. The details were also emailed to the schools and colleges, and to all the Somerset clubs. The information was sent to the Dorset Schools' AA, the Dorset County AA and to all those guest competitors who had competed in recent years.

Final details were sent to all competing schools, colleges, clubs and guests on Friday 8 April. As usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date, and indeed, on the days of competition.

We enjoyed the usual first-class hospitality at Millfield School, thanks to close liaison with Alan Richardson, excellent co-operation from Colin Ashman and his ground-staff and the generosity of the school. The track and the field event sites were in superb order, offering the athletes every chance to perform at their best. Grateful thanks must go to everyone at Millfield for such attention to detail and to Nick and Sally Higman for their careful inspections and meticulous preparation of the field event areas and all the implements. Weather conditions were generally favourable (warmer on the Saturday, cooler on the Sunday) though gusty winds (up to -4.2mps on the Saturday and -2.5mps on the Sunday) were frustrating in one or two heats on the track. The athletes did enjoy better luck in the Long Jumps on Day 2, however, and overall the wind was calmer than those figures and not too much of a factor.

The meeting continues to be popular and after a dip below 200 Somerset entries in 2012 (for the first time in almost a decade) it was good to see a total of 205 in 2013 and a further rise to 223 in 2014. An alarming slump to 164 last year gave cause for concern though and considering the numbers we had attracted in the past I reported a year ago that a Somerset total around 220 to 230 should be a realistic target. It was gratifying to get back beyond 200 this year with 206 but another 20 would be pleasing in 2017.

The recent trend has been: 175 entries in 2002, 192 in 2003, 218 in 2004, 235 in 2005, 224 in 2006, 254 in 2007, 259 in 2008, 268 in 2009, 203 in 2010, 240 in 2011, 190 in 2012, 205 in 2013, 223 in 2014 and 164 last year. One or two schools entered athletes for the first time (Holyrood Academy and Hugh Sexey Middle School with particularly encouraging numbers), but, once again, thanks are due mainly to those loyal schools and clubs who support the meeting year after year, appreciating the value of the unique atmosphere generated for their athletes by Combined Events competition.

Since 2008 the standards of performances in the Senior age groups (and increasingly, in the younger competitions) have been enhanced enormously with the acceptance of guest competitors (many of international standard) and I am delighted to say that after their 2014 absence they returned in excellent numbers again this time. An important development last year was the inclusion of Under-18 Decathlon and Heptathlon competitions (at the request of UKA) and those were offered again so that some of the most talented athletes in the UK (and Ireland) would have an opportunity to take part in a high-quality meeting using IAAF Youth hurdles and implements with EDM, photo-finish and fully automatic timing with a view to selection for the inaugural European Youth Championships in Tbilisi, Georgia. I am very pleased to report that three Irish athletes, Daniel Ryan, Shannon Sheehy and Kate O'Connor achieved that selection due, in no small part I hope, to competing in our meeting (though Kate O'Connor was forced to withdraw after 3 events due to illness). This year various guests travelled from Devon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, South Wales, Worcestershire, The West Midlands, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Hertfordshire, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Ireland and Scotland.

The meeting was raised from a Level 2 event to Level 3 as we were due to have Katarina Johnson-Thompson with us, attempting to gain the qualifying score for the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games. Unfortunately she had to pull out on the Thursday due to injury.

On the 'domestic' front the highlight was a tremendous Championship Best Performance by Gavin Phillips (Team Bath) in the Senior Men's Decathlon, adding 114 points to Mark Plowman's 2007 total.

Dorset joined us once again, with 20 entries, making the grand total 292 which compares very well with recent years – 299 in 2009, 277 in 2010, 308 (a record) in 2011, 268 in 2012, 289 in 2013, 295 in 2014 and 257 last year. 300 is the target in 2017.

With the Somerset County AA Track and Field Championships continuing to be a two-day meeting we did not need to incorporate any additional events this year, though Race Walks were offered for all age groups, attracting a total entry of two Junior Boys and three Intermediate Boys from Brymore Academy.

The 2016 County Champions were:

Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon (45 Somerset entries – 38 competitors)

Fred Fisher	(Hazlegrove School)	722 points
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Junior Boys' Pentathlon (42-29)

Jamie Schlueter	(Millfield Preparatory School)	2094 points
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Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk (2-2)

Louie Chiswell	(Brymore Academy)	21:04.74
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Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (16-13)

Cliff Schwabauer	(Millfield School)	4309 points
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk (3-3)

Herb Elliott	(Brymore Academy)	33:29.32
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Senior Boys' Decathlon (5-3)

James Slipper	(King's College)	4664 points
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(Under-18 Boys' Decathlon 1-1)

(Laurenz Kirchmayr)	(Millfield School)	(5753 points)
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Senior Men's Decathlon (2-2)

Gavin Phillips	(Team Bath)	6194 points CBP
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Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon (40-27)

Lydia Smith	(Bishop Fox's School)	676 points
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Junior Girls' Pentathlon (38-27)

Ellie Carrow	(King's College)	2580 points
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Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (10-9)

Anna Brophy	(Millfield School)	4105 points
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Senior Girls' Heptathlon (6-4)

Ellen Barber	(King's School)	4360 points
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Senior Women's Heptathlon (1-1)

Sara Geary	(Cardiff Metropolitan University)	4081 points
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A number of teachers, coaches and parents assisted our loyal band of officials and all worked incredibly hard throughout the entire weekend. As usual, Sally and Nick Higman (Referee and Technical Manager respectively) led the officials brilliantly, ensuring the meeting ran efficiently. Larry Tulett (Track Referee) led the track team with his customary calm approach and the athletes were lucky to have the services of an international Starter in Alan Bell.

Computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of totals and positions immediately after each event and thanks go to Brian Baker for that vital service. Fully automatic timing and photo-finish were in operation throughout the meeting, another development which has enhanced

the status of our Championships, thanks to David Cooke and Eleanor Brock. This is typical of the superb co-operation between the Somerset Schools' AA and the Somerset County AA.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Exeter Arena
Saturday and Sunday 25 and 26 June 2016

The organising county (Devon) and the venue (Exeter Arena) for the 2016 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were decided at the 2014 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting, with Christine Baden and Eileen Mander as the Local Organisers. This was partly for the purpose of a dry run in preparation for the English Schools' AA Championships, due to be hosted by Devon three months later – though given the hard-working, experienced group of Combined Events enthusiasts in the county this was far from necessary. The provisional timetable was agreed (largely a replica of the 2013 edition), and an information letter was sent to County Secretaries on Friday 13 May with a reply requested by Friday 27 May. This letter implored all counties to support the meeting and repeated an overall target of 120 entries.

The electronic system for entries operated smoothly, though, as I report every year, some counties persist in failing even to estimate personal best performances for some athletes. This causes a good deal of trawling through Power of 10 to ascertain season's best performances so that athletes are not disadvantaged in their allocated heats and pools. Once those performances were added to the entry forms Brian Baker quickly organised the start-lists of competitors and their seeding so that this information could be given to Team Managers at the South-West Schools' AA Track and Field Championships a week prior to the meeting. Once again, the programmes were printed professionally by Frome Printing Company, which ensured a neat, attractive finish.

Twenty years ago, entries were up around the 130 mark and after several years of slight decline – 117 in 1998, 121 in 1999, 114 in 2000 – an encouraging 126 entered in 2001 and 121 in 2002. There followed an alarming dip to a total of 93 in 2003 and 96 in 2004, so I was pleased to note that the decline had been arrested with 121 entries in 2005, 113 in 2006 and 116 in 2007. I was hopeful that the 2008 total of 109 was not about to herald the beginning of another downward trend but increases to 119 entries in 2009 and 118 in 2010 suggested healthier interest. The total entry of 120 in 2011 maintained our optimism but we fell back to 109 in 2012 and I was dismayed to report that the 2013 total fell by a further ten to fewer than 100 entries (99) for the first time in a decade. Although our target of 120 has not been achieved in the last three years, entries bounced back up to 111 in 2014, slipped back slightly to 104 last year and returned to an improved 112 this time (with a healthy number of 97 actually competing, the same as in 2015). As usual, only the South-East Region with 124 entries (111 participants) topped our totals. The remaining four Regions saw entries (and participants) of 98 (89) in the Midlands, 93 (80) in East Anglia, 90 (76) in the North-West and 80 (74) in the North-East. The South-West entries were as follows:

	Junior Boys	Inter Boys	Senior Boys	Junior Girls	Inter Girls	Senior Girls
Avon	4	3	0	4	4	4
Channel Islands	0	1	0	0	0	0
Cornwall	0	0	0	0	3	1
Devon	4	4	0	4	4	3
Dorset	1	1	1	4	3	2
Gloucestershire	3	4	0	4	4	0
Somerset	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wiltshire	4	4	1	4	4	1
TOTALS	20	21	6	24	26	15

With 97 athletes taking part (compared with 103 in 2009, 102 in 2010, 99 in 2011, 92 in 2012, 78 in 2013, 99 in 2014 and 97 in 2015) the recent decline in participation has, hopefully, been halted. In fact, the number was 98 in 2015 with the inclusion of Linton Gardner (Hereford and Worcestershire) who was seeking a Decathlon score with photo-finish and fully automatic timing, for possible selection for the European Junior Championships. It was actually 98 this year too, as an unexpected Junior Girl arrived from Cornwall. This was due to a mix-up in communication (not at all the fault of Cornwall Schools' AA) but common sense prevailed and the athlete was permitted to compete, finishing a creditable 9th with 2555 points. There were 5 Race Walk entries this year, 1 in the Junior Boys' age group, 3 in the Intermediate Boys' 5000m event and, pleasingly, a Junior Girl from Wiltshire.

Obviously, considerable numbers of volunteers are vital to ensure the efficient running of the meeting. Thus, I should pay tribute to the work carried out by Larry Tulett (Somerset Schools' AA and South-West Schools' AA Officials' Secretary), Sally Higman (Somerset County AA Officials' Secretary) and Janet Phillips (Devon County AA) in the recruitment of officials so that events were well staffed. With Sally Higman as Referee and Nick Higman as Technical Manager the weekend ran smoothly, with only minor tweaking of the timetable necessary. Photo-finish was in operation on both days, thanks to Kate Martin and Devon colleagues, with Track Referee Larry Tulett ensuring the running events started punctually and were contested according to all the relevant rules. Brian

Baker wore several hats – those of announcer, scorer, results provider and certificate printer! The officials' lunches were supplied by Exeter Harriers and Mediwest were the First Aid providers.

Standards at the head of the fields remain extremely encouraging (especially in the Girls' age groups), with 9 individuals and 7 teams achieving places in the South-West "All-Time Top-10" rankings. The highlights were outstanding individual Championship Best Performances in all three Girls' age groups and two team score CBPs by the Devon Junior Girls (adding a massive 410 points to Somerset's 2015 total) and the Somerset Intermediate Girls.

The depth of talent throughout our Region was emphasised when the 'next best 9' rule concerning individual qualification for the ESAA Championships came into operation as the following South-West athletes deservedly earned a September return to Exeter: Archie Davis-Grant (JB Gloucestershire), Cliff Schwabauer (IB Somerset), Tommy D'Cruz (IB Devon), Evan Campbell (IB Channel Islands), Holly-Mae McKenna (JG Somerset), Martine Scott (JG Somerset), Jenna Blundell (IG Wiltshire), Olivia Dobson (IG Devon), Olivia Galloway (IG Dorset), Molly D'Arcy-Rice (IG Gloucestershire), Georgia Silcox (SG Somerset), Hannah Sherborne (SG Dorset), Lottie Garratt (SG Somerset), and Sarah Long (SG Avon). In addition, two more Senior Girls were invited as there were fewer than 45 competitors in the 6 Regional Rounds – Georgia Patterson (Wiltshire) and Laura Statham (Avon).

All eight South-West counties featured in the ESAA Championships, with qualifiers in the following numbers: Somerset 17, Devon 14, Gloucestershire 7, Dorset 5, Wiltshire 4, Avon 3, Cornwall 1 and Channel Islands 1.

The leading results and the list of automatic qualifiers* for the ESAA Championships were as follows:

<u>Junior Boys' Pentathlon (Record - 3169)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 8003)</u>	
1. Rory Howorth*	(Wiltshire)	2807	1. Devon	7320
2. Luke Cressey	(Devon)	2679	2. Wiltshire	6853
3. Jami Schlueter*	(Somerset)	2492	3. Avon	6292
			4. Somerset	5734
			5. Gloucestershire	5432

<u>Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (Record - 5786)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 14009)</u>	
1. Cameron Hale*	(Dorset)	4771	1. Gloucestershire	12631
2. Jack Turner*	(Somerset)	4768	2. Somerset	12396

<u>Senior Boys' Decathlon (Record - 7128)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 18124)</u>	
1. Ryan Long*	(Dorset)	6258	1. Somerset	14142
2. James Slipper	(Somerset)	5321		
3. Callum Short*	(Wiltshire)	4923		

<u>Junior Girls' Pentathlon (Record - 3143)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 8766)</u>	
1. Samantha Harris	(Devon)	3221 CBP	1. Devon	9176 CBP
2. Emily Bee	(Devon)	3174	2. Somerset	8109
3. Ellie Carrow*	(Somerset)	2794	3. Gloucestershire	7056
4. Emily Tyrrell	(Devon)	2781	4. Wiltshire	6802
5. Tia Jackson*	(Avon)	2747	5. Dorset	6497
			6. Avon	6011

<u>Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 4687)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 12767)</u>	
1. Bethan Burley*	(Dorset)	4752 CBP	1. Somerset	12923 CBP
2. Natasha Smith*	(Gloucestershire)	4610	2. Dorset	12515
			3. Devon	11820
			4. Wiltshire	11565
			5. Cornwall	10499
			6. Gloucestershire	10324

<u>Senior Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 4847)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 13129)</u>	
1. Ellen Barber*	(Somerset)	5014 CBP	1. Devon	12801
2. Georgia Doyle-Lay*	(Cornwall)	4610	2. Somerset	12441

Throughout a thoroughly enjoyable weekend the unique atmosphere of Combined Events was maintained thanks to some excellent performances, rousing team spirit and the commitment of so many individuals and groups mentioned earlier. Exeter Arena looked magnificent, as usual, and the team aspects were enhanced by the presentation of the South-West Track and Field trophies won the previous weekend.

The venue for the 2017 Championships (due to be held on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June) will be the Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil, and the meeting will be organised by the Somerset Schools' AA. With regard to the organising county and venue for the 2018 South-West Regional Championships, the usual letter to County Secretaries (supported by an email to other interested parties within the counties) inviting 'bids' to stage the

meeting was sent out on 22 September. The hosting county and venue will then be decided at the South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting at Wellington School on Saturday 15 October.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Exeter Arena
Saturday and Sunday 17 and 18 September 2016

The ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships returned to Exeter Arena after a four-year absence and once again this proved to be an outstanding venue. The track, infield and the field event sites had been prepared in meticulous fashion with Bob Plumer and his staff clearly taking tremendous pride in their work. Brand new hurdles and implements added to the wonderful look and 'feel' of the stadium and with Eileen Mander as Organising Secretary (leading a hard-working Local Organising Committee with immense enthusiasm and a wealth of experience), we could be sure we were in good hands, and so it proved throughout a wonderfully enjoyable weekend.

With four teams and four individual athletes qualifying for the Combined Events Championships (though one declined the invitation to compete), and four Race Walkers selected, our group would once again be one of the largest on show in Exeter, with a total of 21 athletes and 4 Team Managers.

Hotel accommodation proved very difficult to find. Possibly a combination of both Exeter City and Exeter Chiefs playing at home and the Exeter University Freshers' Week starting earlier than in previous years caused the shortage (and the prices to rise). The chosen hotel, the Countess Wear Premier Inn, was offered to parents to book direct but only four athletes stayed, with two Team Managers and three parents enjoying the comfortable rooms, delicious food and good-humoured company.

The weather was gloriously warm throughout both days and, combined with gentle breezes, was certainly favourable for the athletes. The organisation was most efficient, the stadium looked magnificent and our athletes were given every chance to perform well.

Our full results were:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon

Jami Schlueter	(Millfield School)	37	2044
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Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Jack Turner	(Wellington School)	6	4799 (PB)
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Senior Boys' Decathlon

James Slipper	(King's College)	8	5541 (PB)
George Watts (non-scorer)	(Bridgwater College)	17	4320 (PB)
Jamie Croucher	(Strode College)	19	4304
Tim McKee	(Richard Huish College)	22	3100
Laurenz Kirchmayr	(Millfield School)	DNS	
Team Position and Score		2	12945

Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Ellie Carrow	(King's College)	11	2969 (PB)
Holy-Mae McKenna	(Bishop Fox's School)	22	2755 (PB)
Martine Scott	(Millfield School)	32	2521
Team Position and Score		4	8245

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon

Anna Brophy	(Millfield School)	12	4513 (PB)
Elise Thorner	(Millfield School)	24	4060
Cerys Lee	(Wellington School)	25	4039
Lauren Rousell	(The Park School)	28	3858
Team Position and Score		3	12612

Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Ellen Barber	(King's School)	1	4712
Georgia Silcox	(Sexey's School)	11	4050 (PB)
Lottie Garratt	(Strode College)	25	3417
Team Position and Score		2	12179

Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk

Louie Chiswell	(Brymore Academy)	6	24:06.70
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk

Herb Elliott	(Brymore Academy)	6	36:07.73
George Clay	(Brymore Academy)	7	36:23.94
Jacob Knight	(Brymore Academy)	8	39:14.56

The Senior Boys' team achieved a very pleasing second place on the podium, and Jack Turner (Wellington School) appeared there too, gaining 6th place in the Intermediate Boys' Octathlon. The major highlights though were on the Girls' side once again. Ellen Barber ended her Schools' AA career with a well-deserved gold in the Senior Girls' Heptathlon, helping her team to second place. The Intermediate Girls were third and the Junior Girls finished fourth.

With the venue so close to home soil, it was not surprising that almost every Somerset athlete had family support and this particularly loyal group of parents and grandparents certainly helped engender a most encouraging team spirit.

Another factor which should never be underestimated is the incredible work carried out by the Team Managers. Jane Yandell and Richard Llewellyn-Eaton were joined by Alan Richardson in ensuring that every Somerset athlete was well prepared for competition and helped throughout the weekend.

It should be noted that people continue to want to be involved with our teams thanks to the excellent response we invariably see from every athlete selected. Superb care and attention to detail during an exhausting two days were afforded to yet another most deserving group of Somerset athletes throughout the competition, making the meeting a most fitting end to another tremendous season.

RICHARD BOWDEN