

SOMERSET SCHOOLS' ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION
COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Millfield School, Street
Saturday/Sunday 28/29 April 2007

In late February, information and entry forms were sent to 67 schools and 15 clubs in Somerset, with a closing date of 23 March so that the programme could be prepared over the Easter holidays. In another attempt to encourage entries, this year I included a sheet listing all those schools, colleges and clubs which had entered the Championships over the past 7 years – this was around half the number in the county. As usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date, and indeed, on the days of competition.

We returned to Millfield this year, following track refurbishment, and enjoyed the usual superb hospitality thanks to close liaison with Gary Jennings and the generosity of the school.

A total entry of 254 showed an encouraging increase on the 175 of 2002, the 192 of 2003, the 218 of 2004, the 235 of 2005 and the 224 of last year, so thanks are due, once again, to those loyal schools and clubs who appreciate the value of the unique atmosphere generated for their athletes by Combined Events competition.

Dorset joined us once again, with an entry of 23. We also included six events for the Somerset County AA which could not be accommodated in their Track and Field Championships: Under-15 Boys' Hammer; Under-17 Men's Hammer; Under-20 Men's Hammer; Under-20 Women's Hammer; Under-17 Men's 1500m Steeplechase and a 2000m Steeplechase for Junior and Senior Men. There were no entries for the Senior Men's 110m Hurdles and the Women's Steeplechases could not be offered as the barriers at Millfield are not adjustable.

In a host of fine performances, two records were broken. Ben Gibb scored a magnificent 5214 points in the Intermediate Boys' Octathlon, adding a massive 428 points to James Kindon's 15 year old previous mark, and Mark Plowman increased his own 2006 score by 265 points to record 6080 for a tremendous Championship Best Performance.

The 2007 County Champions are:

Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon (27 entries)

Robbie Tait	(Millfield Preparatory)	717
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Junior Boys' Pentathlon (51)

Robert Clowes	(Queen's College)	2402
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Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk (3)

Philip Cowell	(Brymore)	18-06.0
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Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (28)

Ben Gibb	(Brymore)	5214 CBP
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk (5)

Alex Wright	(Brymore)	25-30.2
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<u>Senior Boys' Decathlon</u> (17)		
Chris Wakeford	(Millfield)	4808
<u>Senior Men's Decathlon</u> (8)		
Mark Plowman	(Yeovil Olympiads A.C.)	6080 CBP
<u>Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon</u> (34)		
Joanna Callender-Wood	(Mendip AC)	647
<u>Junior Girls' Pentathlon</u> (51)		
Rachel Spencer	(Queen's College)	2483
<u>Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon</u> (22)		
Hayley Steward	(Frome College)	3060
<u>Senior Girls' Heptathlon</u> (16)		
Victoria Manning	(Millfield)	3973
<u>Senior Women's Heptathlon</u> (1)		
Mel Sibley	(University of Wales)	2628

Weather conditions were favourable; warm on the first day, but a little overcast on the Sunday.

A number of teachers assisted our loyal band of officials to ensure the meeting ran efficiently, and all worked incredibly hard throughout the entire week-end.

Computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of totals and positions immediately after each event and thanks go to Brian Baker and Linda Tree for that vital service. Fully automatic timing and photo finish were in operation throughout the meeting, fascinating aspects of the week-end for the athletes, and another development which has enhanced the status of our Championship, thanks to the time and effort put in by David Cooke. 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/Sunday 23/24 June 2007

The hosting county (Devon) and the venue (Exeter) for the 2007 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were confirmed at the 2006 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting, with Christine Baden as the Local Organiser. Thus, we were entirely confident that the meeting would be a resounding success thanks to Christine's enthusiasm and experience, together with the outstanding support she could count on from the Devon Schools' AA, Devon County AA and Exeter Harriers. Add to these factors the superb Exeter Arena facility and we knew we had all the ingredients necessary for a first class Regional Round – and the athletes certainly responded!

I was kept fully informed of all developments throughout the winter and while there was some liaison with regard to the programme and timetable, and invaluable input (literally) from Brian Baker, it was Christine and members of the Devon Schools' AA and the Devon County AA who ensured careful preparation and sound organisation.

Initial information was sent to all relevant county secretaries in late April with a reply slip to indicate probable numbers in each age group for all competitions (including Race Walks), and names of any officials able to attend. The electronic system for entries did not appear to present too many problems, and certainly made seeding of heats and pools a relatively straightforward task – thanks once more to Brian Baker's expertise on the computer.

Some 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, but I am pleased to note that the decline has been arrested with 121 entries in 2005, 113 in 2006 and 116 in 2007. It should be noted that only the South-East Region bettered this total, with an entry of 135.

The detailed breakdown for 2007 is as follows:

	JB	IB	SB	JG	IG	SG
Avon	4	0	0	4	2	1
Channel Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall	4	4	2	4	4	1
Devon	4	4	2	4	4	3
Dorset	4	4	4	4	4	4
Gloucestershire	0	4	0	3	1	1
Somerset	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wiltshire	3	0	0	4	1	0
TOTALS	23	20	12	27	20	14

Inevitably, numbers actually competing did not quite match this entry, nor could the very high standards of performance, from individuals and teams, quite be maintained from the 2006 meeting. There were two superb Championship Best Performances involving the Somerset Intermediate Boys, however, with the team scoring 14009 points to better Cornwall's 1994 total of 13625, and a member of that team, Ben Gibb, adding 158 points to Guy Stroud's 2004 mark in recording 5468 points.

The depth of quality in the region at present remains encouraging though, as five individual athletes and five teams broke into the South-West "All-Time Top 10" rankings.

It was gratifying to see that athletes from all seven competing South-West counties qualified for the E.S.A.A. Championships in September; the full list is as follows:

<u>Junior Boys' Pentathlon (2948)</u>			<u>Team Result (7816)</u>	
1. Joe Hutchinson*	(Wiltshire)	2784	1. Avon	7054
2. Adam McBride	(Avon)	2643	2. Somerset	6991
3. Olly Biddulph*	(Somerset)	2425	3. Dorset	6110
4. Alex Lee*	(Dorset)	2407	4. Devon	5859
			5. Cornwall	5683
<u>Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (5310)</u>			<u>Team Result (13625)</u>	
1. Ben Gibb	(Somerset)	5468 CBP	1. Somerset	14009 CBP
2. Alex Macgregor*	(Devon)	4964	2. Cornwall	12949
3. Lee Hamilton*	(Cornwall)	4553	3. Devon	12477
4. Jamie Courtenay*	(Gloucestershire)	4351	4. Gloucestershire	11773
			5. Dorset	10975

Senior Boys' Decathlon (6726)

1. Hugo Turner*	(Somerset)	5351
2. Edward Moyse	(Dorset)	5059
3. James Hill*	(Cornwall)	4893
4. James Ozanne	(Dorset)	4786
5. Matthew Harris*	(Cornwall)	4426

Team Result (16693)

1. Dorset	13782
2. Somerset	13211

Junior Girls' Pentathlon (3143)

1. Rebecca Chapman*	(Devon)	2793
2. Holly Brown	(Cornwall)	2635
3. Rachel Spencer*	(Somerset)	2480
4. Anne-Marie Keast	(Cornwall)	2471
5. Poppy Gleson*	(Somerset)	2446

Team Result (7985)

1. Cornwall	7457
2. Somerset	7304
3. Devon	7264
4. Wiltshire	6878
5. Dorset	6487
6. Avon	5765

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (4687)

1. Hannah Thompson*	(Wiltshire)	4140
2. Izzy Jeffs*	(Somerset)	4013
3. Rachael Pitman*	(Avon)	3852

Team Result (12277)

1. Devon	11095
2. Somerset	10682
3. Dorset	9671

Senior Girls' Heptathlon (4649)

1. Sophie Skinner*	(Devon)	4453
2. Hayley Pitman*	(Avon)	4340
3. Serita Shone	(Dorset)	4234
4. Victoria Manning*	(Somerset)	3863

Team Result (13129)

1. Dorset	11213
2. Somerset	10661
3. Devon	10151

* Individual qualifiers for the ESAA Championships.

Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk

1. Philip Cowell	(Somerset)	19-39.8
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk

1. Alex Wright	(Somerset)	24-26.5
2. Ben Casey	(Somerset)	28-32.4
3. Fingal Bleasdale	(Somerset)	31-20.6

Senior Girls' 5000m Race Walk

1. Jennifer Sampson	(Dorset)	34-24.6
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Christine Baden and her Devon colleagues (particularly Eileen Mander, Chris Kirwin and Terry O'Brien who gave invaluable support) are owed a tremendous vote of thanks for their excellent organisation and running of the Championships, and I know Christine would wish me to pay tribute to the outstanding co-operation and helpfulness of the stadium ground-staff, and to all those officials from neighbouring counties who worked so hard throughout the two days. Technical Manager, Bob Ivory (Devon) and Field Referee, Sally Higman (Somerset) added international standard knowledge and commitment, ensuring the unique atmosphere of Combined Events was maintained. Members of the Somerset Schools' AA supported the event with customary loyalty so announcing, scoring and certificate preparation and presentations all went smoothly.

Once again, it was much appreciated that Pauline Wilson and Peter Cassidy travelled all the way from Essex in order to judge the race walks.

The venue for the 2008 Championships (due to be held on Saturday/Sunday 28/29 June) will be Yeovil Athletics Arena; the meeting will be organised by Somerset Schools' AA.

RICHARD BOWDEN

E.S.A.A. SAINSBURY'S COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING
CHAMPIONSHIPS

Exeter Arena

Saturday/Sunday 15/16 September 2007

With the Championships taking place at a local venue very familiar to us, in a county whose personnel have a wealth of Combined Events expertise, we were full of expectation of a well-organised, enjoyable meeting. Given those conditions, and after some excellent displays at the South-West Regional Championships, we were hoping for individual and team success to round off what had already been a tremendous season. Sadly, our hopes were dashed as injuries took their toll in a meeting too far.

With one team and a further six individuals qualifying for the Combined Events Championships, and four Race Walkers selected, our group would once again be one of the largest on show, and even when Hugo Turner became unavailable through injury, once 3 other Senior Boys and 2 more Senior Girls were 'promoted' from the reserve list, it would mean we would field teams in three of the six age groups and the total number of athletes in our party would be 18.

With so many of our athletes based in Taunton, a single mini-bus was sufficient for those needing to travel on the Friday evening, with pick-up points at Sexey's, Millfield, Puriton and Taunton. The team stayed at Gipsy Hill Hotel, just 15 minutes from the stadium, and this accommodation proved satisfactory.

The weather was fine and conditions were generally favourable for the athletes. All events were held inside the stadium. The organisation by the Devon Schools' AA was first class and our athletes were given every chance to perform well.

Our full results were:

Junior Boys' 3000m Walk

Philip Cowell	(Brymore)	9	18-23.73
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Junior Boys' Pentathlon

Olly Biddulph	(East Bridgwater)	24	2337
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Walk

Alex Wright	(Brymore)	1	23-39.89
Ben Casey	(Westfield)	6	28-36.64
Fingal Bleasdale	(Brymore)	8	32-01.46

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Ben Gibb	(Brymore)	14	4650
Christopher Hewitson	(Huish Episcopi)	20	4362
Henry Biss	(Queen's College)	25	4259
Bryan Disney-Chilcott	(Queen's College)		Dnf
Team Score		4	13271

Senior Boys' Decathlon

Rhys Llewellyn-Eaton	(King's College)	25	4105
Kevin Koloska	(Wellington)	27	3994
Tom Danaher	(King's College)		Dnf

Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Poppy Gleeson	(Sexey's)	22	2377
Rachel Spencer	(Queen's College)	28	2220

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon

Izzy Jeffs	(Taunton School)	20	3790
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Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Victoria Manning	(Millfield)	11	3883
Rebecca Klys	(Wellington)	26	3248
Justine Singleton	(Taunton School)	34	3016
Team Score		5	10147

The highlight for Somerset was a gold medal performance from Alex Wright in the Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk, going one better than his silver in last year's meeting. On the other side of the coin, Ben Gibb's injury was the only thing that prevented him gaining his fourth ESAA international vest and this injury, together with Bryan Disney-Chilcott's withdrawal (again through injury) meant the Intermediate Boys' team failed by just 7 points to achieve a place on the rostrum.

I was delighted that we had at least seven team managers on hand during the week-end who could prepare and encourage our athletes and once again I extend grateful thanks for their loyalty to the county.

RICHARD BOWDEN