

## **SOMERSET SCHOOLS' ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Millfield School, Street  
Saturday and Sunday 25 and 26 April 2009**

In late February, information and entry forms were sent to 67 schools and 17 clubs in Somerset, with a closing date of 27 March so that the programme could be prepared during the Easter holidays. As usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date, and indeed, on the days of competition.

We enjoyed the usual excellent hospitality at Millfield, thanks to close liaison with Gary Jennings 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. The new Pole Vault landing area was especially appreciated – grateful thanks must go to Millfield for such attention to detail.

The meeting continues to gain in popularity, the total entry of 268 maintaining the extremely encouraging trend from 175 entries in 2002, 192 in 2003, 218 in 2004, 235 in 2005, 224 in 2006, 254 in 2007 and last year's total of 259. One or two schools entered athletes for the first time, 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.

In 2008, the quality of performance in the Senior age groups was enhanced enormously with the acceptance of 14 guest competitors (mostly of international standard) and although Chris Bartram's Northern squad were unable to join us this year (due to their warm-weather training schedule) Ian Grant returned with five Decathletes. One of these was Ashley Bryant who would go on to finish 10<sup>th</sup> in the European Junior Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia (scoring 7193 points) just three months later. David Guest travelled from South Wales to take part in our meeting and he was to finish in 14<sup>th</sup> position in Serbia with 7144 points. Other guests came from Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Hampshire and Surrey. Dorset joined us once again, with a record entry of 31.

Apparently, our Championship is advertised at Great Britain squad week-ends as a meeting athletes of that calibre might wish to contest – an enormous compliment to Somerset Schools' AA, Somerset County AA and Millfield School.

We also included eleven 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-17 Women's Hammer, Under-20 Women's Hammer; Under-17 Men's 1500m Steeplechase, a 2000m Steeplechase for Junior and Senior Men and a 1500m Steeplechase for Junior and Senior Women. There were no entries for the Senior Men's 110m Hurdles. Race Walks were offered for all age groups, attracting a total entry of eight.

Despite a host of fine performances, no records were broken this year. Flora Lickiss (a Dorset athlete representing Poole AC) did amass 777 points in the Under-13 Girls' Quadrathlon, however, to better the Somerset record score of 723. I believe we may see Flora in a Millfield (and a Somerset?) vest in the future.

## **The 2009 County Champions are:**

### **Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon** (41 Somerset entries – 33 competitors)

Luke Reynolds (Taunton AC) 846

### **Junior Boys' Pentathlon** (46 - 27)

Jake Cussell (Mendip AC) 2375

### **Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk** (2 -2)

Doug Hepper (Brymore) 22-07.5

### **Intermediate Boys' Octathlon** (25 - 13)

James Lelliott (Millfield) 5019

### **Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk** (4 - 3)

William Brewer (Brymore) 31-18.3

### **Senior Boys' Decathlon** (10 - 4)

Michael Gibson (Yeovil College) 3905

### **Senior Boys' 5000m Race Walk** (1 - 0)

### **Senior Men's Decathlon** (4 - 2)

Stuart Richards (Yeovil Olympiads A.C.) 3196

### **Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon** (45 - 32)

Flora Larkin (Taunton AC) 578

### **Junior Girls' Pentathlon** (46 - 36)

Emily Dixon (Team Bath) 2359

### **Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon** (21 - 8)

Amelia Richards (Millfield) 3905

### **Senior Girls' Heptathlon** (9 - 3)

Hayley Steward (Frome College) 3568

### **Senior Women's Heptathlon** (0)

Weather conditions were favourable, warm on both days, though slightly better on the Saturday.

A number of teachers, coaches and parents assisted our loyal band of officials and all worked incredibly hard throughout the entire week-end. Sally and Nick Higman (Referee and Technical Manager respectively) led the officials brilliantly, ensuring the meeting ran efficiently.

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 and Sunday 27 and 28 June 2009**

The hosting county (Devon) and the venue (Exeter) for the 2009 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were confirmed at the 2008 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, Bob Ivory's expertise and attention to detail and the helpful co-operation of the stadium staff and we knew we had all the ingredients necessary for a first-class Regional Round.

I was kept fully informed of all developments throughout the winter and whilst 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 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 operated smoothly and certainly made seeding of heats and pools a relatively straightforward task.

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, so I was pleased to note that the decline had been arrested with 121 entries in 2005, 113 in 2006 and 116 in 2007. Thankfully, the 2008 total of 109 did not herald the beginning of another downward trend as there were 119 entries this year, including a most encouraging increase in both senior age groups. The detailed breakdown for 2009 is as follows:

|                 | <b>JB</b> | <b>IB</b> | <b>SB</b> | <b>JG</b> | <b>IG</b> | <b>SG</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Avon            | 3         | 4         | 0         | 4         | 4         | 0         |
| Channel Islands | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
| Cornwall        | 4         | 4         | 2         | 4         | 4         | 0         |
| Devon           | 3         | 3         | 3         | 4         | 4         | 3         |
| Dorset          | 4         | 4         | 0         | 4         | 1         | 2         |
| Gloucestershire | 0         | 1         | 1         | 0         | 4         | 0         |
| Somerset        | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         | 4         |
| Wiltshire       | 4         | 4         | 1         | 4         | 4         | 4         |
| <b>TOTALS</b>   | <b>22</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>25</b> | <b>13</b> |

Inevitably, numbers actually competing did not quite match this entry (103 athletes actually took part) with standards in depth not quite up to those we have seen in recent years. Consequently, only two individuals and two teams found places in the South-West "All-Time Top-10" rankings. Nevertheless, there was a superb Championship Best Performance in the Pentathlon involving the Cornwall Junior Girls, with the team scoring 8124 points to better Somerset's 2004 total of 7985 by a margin of 139 points.

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:

## **Junior Boys' Pentathlon (2948)**

|                       |             |      |
|-----------------------|-------------|------|
| 1. Jake Cussell       | (Somerset)  | 2479 |
| 2. Harry Hall         | (Somerset)  | 2389 |
| 3. William Evans*     | (Dorset)    | 2387 |
| 4. Jake Cory          | (Somerset)  | 2326 |
| 5. Braedon Cleverley* | (Wiltshire) | 2243 |
| 6. Ben Davies*        | (Wiltshire) | 2213 |

## **Team Result (7816)**

|              |      |
|--------------|------|
| 1. Somerset  | 7194 |
| 2. Wiltshire | 6540 |
| 3. Avon      | 5735 |
| 4. Cornwall  | 5628 |

## **Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (5468)**

|                    |            |      |
|--------------------|------------|------|
| 1. Adam McBraida*  | (Avon)     | 4709 |
| 2. Robert Clowes   | (Somerset) | 4698 |
| 3. Alex Lee*       | (Dorset)   | 4599 |
| 4. Taylor Stevens* | (Avon)     | 4226 |

## **Team Result (14009)**

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| 1. Somerset  | 12768 |
| 2. Avon      | 12089 |
| 3. Dorset    | 11790 |
| 4. Cornwall  | 9829  |
| 5. Wiltshire | 6092  |

**Senior Boys' Decathlon (6726)**

|                     |                   |      |
|---------------------|-------------------|------|
| 1. Jamie Courtenay* | (Gloucestershire) | 5982 |
| 2. Ben Gibb         | (Somerset)        | 5756 |
| 3. Chris Hewitson   | (Somerset)        | 5796 |
| 4. Ben Conibear*    | (Devon)           | 5353 |
| 5. Henry Biss       | (Somerset)        | 5143 |
| 6. Chris Claydon*   | (Wiltshire)       | 4873 |

**Team Result (18124)**

|             |       |
|-------------|-------|
| 1. Somerset | 16543 |
| 2. Devon    | 14986 |

**Junior Girls' Pentathlon (3143)**

|                           |             |      |
|---------------------------|-------------|------|
| 1. Lottie Richardson      | (Cornwall)  | 2852 |
| 2. Jordanna Morrish       | (Cornwall)  | 2756 |
| 3. Jo Callender-Wood*     | (Somerset)  | 2678 |
| 4. Emily Dixon*           | (Wiltshire) | 2528 |
| 5. Alice Vage             | (Cornwall)  | 2516 |
| 6. Anna Alexander-Holmes* | (Wiltshire) | 2511 |

**Team Result (7985)**

|                    |                 |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1. Cornwall</b> | <b>8124 CBP</b> |
| 2. Wiltshire       | 7351            |
| 3. Somerset        | 6904            |
| 4. Dorset          | 6023            |
| 5. Devon           | 5668            |
| 6. Avon            | 4004            |

**Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (4687)**

|                    |             |      |
|--------------------|-------------|------|
| 1. Rebecca Chapman | (Devon)     | 4390 |
| 2. Gaby Rowsell*   | (Dorset)    | 4083 |
| 3. Philippa Brett* | (Cornwall)  | 3927 |
| 4. Hannah Claydon* | (Wiltshire) | 3525 |

**Team Result (12277)**

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| 1. Devon           | 10388 |
| 2. Gloucestershire | 9450  |
| 3. Somerset        | 9351  |
| 4. Avon            | 9204  |
| 5. Wiltshire       | 8494  |

**Senior Girls' Heptathlon (4649)**

|                     |             |      |
|---------------------|-------------|------|
| 1. Hannah Thompson* | (Wiltshire) | 3666 |
| 2. Lucy Averill*    | (Wiltshire) | 3635 |
| 3. Hayley Steward   | (Somerset)  | 3600 |
| 4. Jess Oliver      | (Somerset)  | 3495 |
| 5. Sara Geary       | (Somerset)  | 3421 |
| 6. Lauren Anning*   | (Devon)     | 3186 |

**Team Result (13129)**

|              |       |
|--------------|-------|
| 1. Somerset  | 10516 |
| 2. Wiltshire | 10221 |

**\* Individual qualifiers for the ESAA Championships.**

**Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk**

|                              |         |
|------------------------------|---------|
| 1. Doug Hepper (Somerset)    | 19-20.3 |
| 2. Robert Whittle (Somerset) | 20-53.1 |

**Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk**

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| 1. Will Brewer (Somerset)   | 29-17.8 |
| 2. Tom Cleaves (Somerset)   | 31-15.9 |
| 3. Chris Chaffey (Somerset) | 32-41.3 |
| 4. Will Gourlay (Dorset)    | 33-48.0 |

Christine Baden and her Devon colleagues (particularly Eileen Mander, Chris Kirwin, Jan Phillips 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.

I regret that this report must conclude on a sad note but in recording the passing of Chief Timekeeper, Richard Rowe in August we are able to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by a true stalwart of Devon and South-West athletics over a great many years.

The venue for the 2010 Championships (due to be held on Saturday/Sunday 26/27 June) will be Millfield School, Street (organised by Somerset Schools' AA). The 2011 hosting county and venue will be decided at the South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting at Wellington School on Saturday 3 October and colleagues will be informed of the details following that meeting.

**RICHARD BOWDEN**

## **E.S.A.A. COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Bedford International Stadium  
Saturday and Sunday 19 and 20 September 2009**

The ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships found a new home this year, Bedford International Stadium, which proved to be an excellent venue. With Dennis Johnson (a Combined Events coach with immense enthusiasm and experience) as Organising Secretary, and a stadium whose ground-staff have a national reputation second-to-none, we could be sure we were in good hands, and so it proved throughout a wonderfully enjoyable week-end.

With four teams and one individual athlete qualifying for the Combined Events Championships, and five Race Walkers selected, our group would once again be one of the largest on show. Happily without injuries and withdrawals this year, we finally arrived in Bedford with a total of 22 athletes and 5 team managers. I say “finally” because we encountered severe hold-ups on the Friday journey which took six hours from Wellington. Nevertheless, the athletes were patient and well-mannered despite the delay and this encouraging attitude set the tone for the entire week-end.

We travelled with Berry’s Coaches, sharing with the Devon group as usual, and stayed at the Bedford Premier Inn (Priory Marina) within easy walking distance of the stadium. This hotel had been selected and booked almost a year in advance of the meeting, mainly for the athletes’ convenience (many could return to the comfort of their rooms immediately following competition on the Saturday without having to wait for the Junior Boys’ Presentation). The location also alleviated any problems regarding the coach driver’s hours on the Sunday.

The weather was excellent and conditions were entirely 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’ 3000m Race Walk**

|             |           |              |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Doug Hepper | (Brymore) | Disqualified |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|

### **Junior Boys’ Pentathlon**

|                |                  |    |      |
|----------------|------------------|----|------|
| Jake Cussell   | (Wells Blue)     | 11 | 2600 |
| Harry Hall     | (West Somerset)  | 15 | 2500 |
| Jake Cory      | (Buckler’s Mead) | 24 | 2287 |
| Matthew Tailby | (St Augustine)   | 31 | 1899 |
| Team Score     |                  | 6  | 7387 |

### **Intermediate Boys’ 5000m Race Walk**

|               |           |   |         |
|---------------|-----------|---|---------|
| Will Brewer   | (Brymore) | 4 | 29-45.7 |
| Tom Cleaves   | (Brymore) | 5 | 33-08.4 |
| Chris Chaffey | (Brymore) | 6 | 33-45.3 |

**Intermediate Boys' Octathlon**

|                 |                  |    |       |
|-----------------|------------------|----|-------|
| James Lelliott  | (Millfield)      | 1  | 5330  |
| Ben Thompson    | (West Somerset)  | 26 | 4015  |
| Olly Biddulph   | (Millfield)      | 28 | 3916  |
| Aaron Athersuch | (Buckler's Mead) | 30 | 3855  |
| Team Score      |                  | 3  | 13261 |

**Senior Boys' 5000m Race Walk**

|           |                  |   |         |
|-----------|------------------|---|---------|
| Ben Casey | (Yeovil College) | 4 | 29-45.7 |
|-----------|------------------|---|---------|

**Senior Boys' Decathlon**

|                |                   |    |       |
|----------------|-------------------|----|-------|
| Ben Gibb       | (Yeovil College)  | 6  | 6226  |
| Henry Biss     | (Queen's College) | 18 | 5205  |
| Chris Hewitson | (Millfield)       | 27 | 4773  |
| Michael Gibson | (Yeovil College)  | 33 | 3672  |
| Team Score     |                   | 2  | 16204 |

**Junior Girls' Pentathlon**

|                   |                |    |      |
|-------------------|----------------|----|------|
| Jo Callender-Wood | (St Dunstan's) | 15 | 2631 |
|-------------------|----------------|----|------|

**Senior Girls' Heptathlon**

|                |                  |    |       |
|----------------|------------------|----|-------|
| Sara Geary     | (Yeovil College) | 18 | 3355  |
| Hayley Steward | (Frome College)  | 19 | 3345  |
| Jess Oliver    | (Millfield)      | 20 | 3330  |
| Stephanie May  | (Taunton School) | 24 | 3080  |
| Team Score     |                  | 3  | 10030 |

Three athletes' performances are worthy of note. James Lelliott secured an emphatic victory in the Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (leading throughout the competition) to earn yet another international vest. This more than made up for the disappointment of missing the Kelvin Hall Indoor International by just 93 points in 2008. Chris Hewitson suffered yet more injury woe as an overnight reaction to his first day's exertions prevented him from completing his best event (the 110m Hurdles) on the Sunday morning. Typically, he showed great courage to finish the Decathlon and achieve a score. Ben Gibb, the defending Decathlon champion, has had an injury-ravaged season and his lack of speed was evident as he found himself in 26<sup>th</sup> place after the first event (100m). To his enormous credit he fought his way through the field to finish in a gutsy 6<sup>th</sup> place to help the team to the rostrum. Thus Ben ended a wonderful Somerset Schools' AA career in which he has epitomised all those qualities we would wish to see in our athletes.

The team enjoyed tremendous support from our loyal group of parents, and they certainly helped engender a fantastic team spirit which was most definitely a major factor in a great many performances. Another factor which should never be underestimated was the incredible work carried out by the team managers. We were due to take seven (another amazing sign of outstanding loyalty) but unfortunately, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton and Julie Singleton had to miss the trip. Most other counties would find themselves facing serious problems in the situation of losing two team managers, but superb care and attention to detail throughout an exhausting two days were still afforded to a most deserving group of Somerset athletes whose response on and off the track made the meeting one of the most enjoyable I have ever attended.

**RICHARD BOWDEN**