

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

**Millfield School, Street
Saturday and Sunday 27 and 28 April 2019**

Full information and entry forms were sent to our 60 schools and colleges and to the 4 major Track and Field clubs in Somerset on Tuesday 26 February, with a closing date of Friday 29 March. The details were also emailed to the schools, colleges and clubs and to various parents and coaches. In addition, 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 Monday 15 April and as usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date.

Everything was in place at Millfield School, thanks to close liaison with Alan Richardson and excellent co-operation from Colin Ashman and his ground-staff. The track and the field event sites were in superb order, and refreshments were to be on sale on both days. Grateful thanks must go to everyone at Millfield School 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 on the day before the meeting.

The best laid plans ... As we have observed over the years, the weather in late April tends to be rather unpredictable, with combinations of drizzle, sunshine, storms and chilly breezes often experienced throughout our competition. This year though, the weather was entirely uncooperative as Storm Hannah struck on the Saturday. We watched helplessly as hurdles set out in readiness for the first event toppled at random but the really ominous sign was when Sally Higman suffered a head injury due to a High Jump stand being blown over. Finally, a High Jump bed actually taking off signalled that the Championships were in real jeopardy so a meeting of the organisers and senior officials was called to decide the best course of action. It was decided that neither the Under-13 Boys' Quadrathlon nor the Junior Boys' Pentathlon could take place but that the older age groups could contest all events except Hurdles and High Jump.

Although the decision to cancel the 2 competitions was clearly disappointing to certain parents, the older athletes were relieved to get the opportunity of an early-season outing – the Decathlon becoming a very competitive Enneathlon (?) with 9 of the 10 events, as we salvaged all we could of Day 1. Saturday's conditions were very strange, of course, with wind speeds of up to +9.2mps and even +10.9mps in the Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon 200m heats, but Day 2 went ahead in calm, mild conditions with many of the athletes whose competitions had been disrupted on the Saturday returning to compete on Sunday.

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 205 (in the overall total of 289) in 2013 and a further rise to 223 (of 295) in 2014. After a disappointing drop to 164 (of 257) in 2015 I reported that a Somerset total around 220 to 230 should be a realistic target. It was gratifying to get back beyond 200 in 2016 (with 206 of the 292) but although I then reported another 20 would be pleasing in 2017, we actually received 20 fewer Somerset entries with 186 of the 285. The total slipped to 181 last year but 20 Dorset athletes and 80 guest competitors boosted the overall total to 281 (just 4 fewer than in 2017).

This year saw another alarming slump (even below the 2015 figures) with 158 Somerset entries in the overall total of 249 which included 25 Dorset entries and 66 guests. Those 66 guest entries were from as far afield as Devon, Avon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Surrey, Warwickshire, West Sussex, Kent, Leicestershire, Cleveland, South Wales, Jersey, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The decline in the last 2 years is partly due to the fact that we have had to impose an 'entry standard' in the Junior Girls' Pentathlon as the competition had become so popular, but a 2020 overall target of 25

Dorset entries, 80 guests and 180 from Somerset schools and clubs would take us back up to a more usual 285. The record number of overall entries remains a distant 308 from 2011, nevertheless, our meeting remains one of the largest Combined Events competitions in the country.

With no European Under-18 Championships or Commonwealth Youth Games this year there was little call for us to organize events for that age group. Race Walks were offered for all age groups and alongside the usual entries from Brymore Academy we received entries from an Under-13 Boy (his second year in this age group) and a Junior Girl – Abby Hughes (King’s College) who smashed the 3000m CBP by over 3 minutes with 17:02.05.

With so many of the Combined Events competitions incomplete or cancelled, CBPs were almost impossible, though Lucy Fellows (Millfield School) added 179 points to the Junior Girls’ Pentathlon CBP with a score of 3161 – the third time the CBP has been set in the past 5 years.

The 2019 County Champions were:

Under -13 Boys’ Quadrathlon (29 Somerset entries) – Event cancelled.

Under-13 Boys’ 1000m Race Walk (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Toby Wright	(Taunton AC)	7:25.56
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Junior Boys’ Pentathlon (28 Somerset entries) – Event cancelled.

Junior Boys’ 3000m Race Walk (4 Somerset entries – 1 competitor).

Joe Stephenson	(Brymore Academy)	20:40.88
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Intermediate Boys’ Octathlon (18 Somerset entries – 13 competitors) – Event incomplete.

Intermediate Boys’ 5000m Race Walk (2 Somerset entries – 0 competitors).

Senior Boys’ Decathlon (5 Somerset entries – 3 competitors) – Event incomplete.

Senior Men’s Decathlon (0 Somerset entries).

Under -13 Girls’ Quadrathlon (25 Somerset entries – 17 competitors).

Ella Staddon	(Huish Episcopi Academy)	739 points
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Junior Girls’ Pentathlon (32 Somerset entries - 20 competitors).

Lucy Fellows	(Millfield School)	3161 points CBP
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Junior Girls’ 3000m Race Walk (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Abby Hughes	(King’s College)	17:02.05 CBP
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Intermediate Girls’ Heptathlon (12 Somerset entries – 6 competitors) – Event incomplete.

Senior Girls’ Heptathlon (8 Somerset entries – 4 competitors) – Event incomplete.

Senior Women’s Heptathlon (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor) – Event incomplete.

A number of teachers, coaches and parents assisted our loyal band of officials (including a very welcome number from Dorset, Devon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Wales) and all worked incredibly hard during the weekend – particularly in those trying conditions on the Saturday. As usual, Sally and Nick Higman (Referee and Technical Manager respectively) led the officials brilliantly, ensuring what was left of the meeting ran efficiently. We were very lucky to have the services of other international-standard officials in Chief Starter Alan Bell and Starters’ Assistant, Jemma Bates.

Prompt computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of results, totals and positions immediately after each event and thanks go to Brian Baker, Ann Whistlecroft and Barbara Gadd 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 22 and 23 June 2019

The organising county (Devon) and the venue (Exeter Arena) for the 2019 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were decided at the 2017 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting, with Christine Baden as the Local Organiser. The provisional timetable was agreed (largely a replica of the 2013 and 2016 editions), and an information email was sent to County Secretaries (and other county contacts) on Tuesday 30 April with a reply requested by Friday 24 May. This email implored all counties to support the meeting, provide officials 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 in Exeter a week prior to the meeting. Once again, the programmes were printed professionally by Frome Printing Company, which ensured a neat, attractive finish. Track slips, pins and numbers were supplied by ESAA and arrived in good time this year, with Brian Baker producing the field cards.

25 years ago, entries were up around the 130 mark and after several years of slight decline – 117 in 1998, 121 in 1999 and 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 10 to fewer than 100 entries (99) for the first time in a decade. Although our target of 120 has not been achieved for many years, entries bounced back up to 111 in 2014, slipped back slightly to 104 in 2015 but returned to an improved 112 in 2016, a solid 108 in 2017 and 107 last year - but down to 102 this time. After a pleasing number of 99 actually competing in 2014 and 98 taking part in 2015, 2016 and 2017 there were 10 fewer last year following almost 20 late withdrawals – and participation this year was down by yet another 1, at 87, so we must strive to arrest further decline in numbers taking part. Sadly, interest dropped in 4 of the 6 Regions, with only East Anglia and the North-East showing slight improvements. The South-East attracted 131 entries (with 111 participants), the North-West (97 and 91), East Anglia (96 and 83), the Midlands (88 and 77) and the North-East (76 and 76). The South-West entries were as follows:

	Junior Boys	Inter Boys	Senior Boys	Junior Girls	Inter Girls	Senior Girls
Avon	4	4	1	4	4	2
Channel Islands	0	0	1	0	1	0
Cornwall	1	0	0	2	1	1
Devon	1	3	1	4	3	3
Dorset	2	1	1	3	1	0
Gloucestershire	4	0	0	4	4	0
Somerset	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wiltshire	4	1	3	4	4	0
TOTALS	20	13	11	25	22	10

There were 3 Somerset Race Walk entries this year – the first-ever Under-13 Boy (Toby Wright) and 2 Juniors – Joe Stephenson and Abby Hughes who clocked a most impressive time of 16:35.69 for the Junior Girls' 3000m Walk.

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 Brian Baker (Somerset Schools' AA Officials' Secretary), Sally Higman (Somerset County AA Officials' Secretary) and Irene Brown (Devon County AA) in the recruitment of officials so that events were well staffed (though some Team Managers were required to assist). 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 Jayne Reed, Keith Reed and Kate Martin (Devon County AA) with Track Referee Irene Brown 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 co-ordinator and certificate printer. The officials' lunches were supplied by Tony Howard Catering and Event & Medical were the First Aid providers.

Although overall participation has declined, the quality of performances at the head of the fields continue to be extremely encouraging (with the girls again to the fore). 6 individuals (4 girls and 2 boys) and 6 teams (again, 4 girls' and 2 boys') achieved places in the South-West "All-Time Top-10" rankings. The highlight was a Championship Best Team Score of 14149 points by Somerset in the Intermediate Boys' Octathlon - by just 140 points beyond the 2007 total.

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: Will Hart (JB Somerset), Liam Hillier (IB Avon), Jonathan Evans (SB Avon), Rian Upton (SB Somerset), Ella Isaias (JG Devon), Jessica Duncton (JG Gloucestershire), Olivia Bagg (IG Somerset), Maya Jones (IG Somerset) and Lowena Riley (SG Cornwall). In addition, Xander Long (Dorset) and Evan Campbell (Channel Islands) were brought into the Senior Boys' Decathlon as there were fewer than 45 competitors in the 6 Regional Rounds.

All 8 South-West counties are due to feature in the ESAA Championships, with 46 qualifiers in the following numbers: Somerset 18, Devon 10, Avon 6, Wiltshire 4, Cornwall 2, Dorset 2, Gloucestershire 2 and the Channel Islands 2. The leading results and the list of automatic qualifiers* for the ESAA Championships were as follows:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon (Record - 3169)

1. Luke Ball	(Avon)	2781
2. Joe Coley*	(Gloucestershire)	2514
3. Adam Nolan	(Avon)	2336
4. Isaac Ketterer*	(Cornwall)	2285

Team Result (Record - 8003)

1. Avon	7200
2. Gloucestershire	6116
3. Wiltshire	6025
4. Somerset	5940

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (Record - 5786)

1. Jami Schlueter	(Somerset)	5317
2. Craig Moncur*	(Devon)	4991
3. Oliver D'Rozario	(Somerset)	4621
4. Daniel Hamilton-Strong*	(Devon)	4534

Team Result (Record - 14009)

1. Somerset	14149 CBP
2. Devon	13213

Senior Boys' Decathlon (Record - 7128)

1. Rory Howorth	(Wiltshire)	6403
2. Luke Cressey*	(Devon)	5786
3. Toby Sauter*	(Somerset)	5145

Team Result (Record - 18124)

1. Wiltshire	15515
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Junior Girls' Pentathlon (Record - 3221)

1. Lucy Fellows	(Somerset)	3188
2. Seren Rodgers	(Somerset)	2995
3. Amelia Watling*	(Wiltshire)	2835
4. Lily Amor*	(Dorset)	2729

Team Result (Record - 9176)

1. Somerset	8880
2. Wiltshire	7680
3. Devon	7580
4. Gloucestershire	7443
5. Dorset	6344

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 5064)

1. Lucy Woodward*	(Channel Islands)	4642
2. Katie Chapman	(Devon)	4589
3. Megan Hamilton-Strong	(Devon)	4555
4. Lucy Chalmers*	(Somerset)	4252

Team Result (Record - 13818)

1. Devon	13128
2. Somerset	12370
3. Avon	10927
4. Wiltshire	10674
5. Gloucestershire	10339

Senior Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 5223)

1. Emily Bee*	(Devon)	4908
2. Emily Tyrrell*	(Devon)	4788

Team Result (Record - 13129)

1. Somerset	12474
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The unique atmosphere of Combined Events was maintained throughout the weekend thanks to some outstanding performances, rousing team spirit and the commitment of so many individuals and groups mentioned earlier. The team aspects were enhanced by the usual presentations of the South-West Track and Field trophies.

The venue for the 2020 Championships (due to be held on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 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 2021 South-West Regional Championships, an email to County Secretaries (and other interested parties within the counties) inviting 'bids' to stage the meeting was sent out on 4 September. The hosting county and venue were then decided at the South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting at Wellington School on Saturday 5 October – Somerset will organise the meeting again, at the same venue - The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil, on 26 and 27 June.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Exeter Arena
Saturday and Sunday 21 and 22 September 2019

The ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships returned to Exeter Arena after another 2-year absence and once again this proved to be an excellent venue. The Local Organising Committee was packed with expertise and enthusiasm for Combined Events - added to that we had the services of a stadium staff used to staging national championships so we could be sure we were in good hands.

With 4 teams and 3 individual athletes qualifying for the Combined Events Championships, and 2 Race Walkers selected, our group would once again be one of the largest on show with a total of 20 athletes and 7 Team Managers (a most encouraging show of loyalty and commitment).

Believing that most of our athletes would prefer to travel daily, it was not felt necessary to make a group booking in a 'team hotel', though parents were given the details of the Best Western Lord Haldon Country Hotel, where Jane Yandell and I would be staying. No one chose to stay with us and the team met on each day at the stadium.

In fact, it was just as well that we were not required to look after any athletes in the selected hotel as on the Tuesday before the Championships Jane and I were moved out due to a problem with 'some pipes' – plumbing or heating. Sadly, this meant we missed an Elvis tribute act on the Saturday night. We were booked into the nearby Exeter Court Hotel which offered adequate accommodation and food but with breakfast not starting until 8.00am at weekends we had to accept a packed breakfast, waiting until arrival at the stadium before getting any hot food. Clearly, these circumstances would have been extremely inconvenient for our athletes so their decision to travel daily was most fortuitous.

The weather was pleasantly warm on the Saturday, with 1 or 2 bouts of drizzle during the afternoon, but frequently changeable on the Sunday, the athletes having to face anything from warm sunshine to storms throughout most events. 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

Will Hart	(Sexey's School)	14	2565 (PB)
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Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Jami Schlueter	(Millfield School)	3	5242
Oliver D'Rozario	(Wellington School)	12	4570
Harry Barton	(Millfield School)	19	4264 (PB)
William Stokes	(Chilton Trinity School – Bridgwater College)	20	4215 (PB)
Team Score		2	14076

Senior Boys' Decathlon

Toby Sauter	(Richard Huish College)	12	4750
Rian Upton	(King's School)	14	4660 (PB)

Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Seren Rodgers	(The Castle School)	2	3096 (PB)
Grace Fielder	(King's Hall School – King's College)	16	2738
Maya Kendell	(Millfield School)	29	2516
Francesca Sandy	(Bishop Fox's School)	39	1777
Team Score		3	8350

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon

Lucy Chalmers	(Millfield School)	11	4334 (PB)
Maya Jones	(The Castle School – Richard Huish College)	16	4255 (PB)
Olivia Bagg	(Robert Blake Science College)	28	3797
Team Score		5	12386

Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Ashleigh Bailey	(Millfield School)	8	4281
Ellie Carrow	(Richard Huish College)	11	3641 (PB)
Andrea Gilbert	(Taunton School)	12	3593
Holly-Mae McKenna	(Richard Huish College)	DNF	
Team Score		1	11515

Junior Girls' 3000m Race Walk

Abby Hughes	(King's College)	2	16:26.85 (PB)
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Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk

Joe Stephenson	(Brymore Academy)	DISQ	
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Having won 10 team trophies in the 31 years of the competition (Junior Boys in 1989, 2005 and 2006, Intermediate Boys in 1991 and 1992, Senior Boys in 2018, Junior Girls in 2015 and Senior Girls in 1999, 2000 and 2018) we retained the Senior Girls' team title this year.

The individual highlights were a silver medal for Abby Hughes (King's College) in the Junior Girls' 3000m Race Walk, a silver for Seren Rodgers (The Castle School) in the Junior Girls' Pentathlon and a bronze for Jami Schlueter (Millfield School) in the Intermediate Boys' Octathlon. Seren and Jami will be in the England team for the Home International Indoor Pentathlons in Glasgow on Saturday 30 November, meaning that there will have been 12 Somerset athletes in the England team since 2010 (from Buckler's Mead Academy, King's School, Millfield School, The Castle School, Wellington School and West Somerset College).

Every Somerset athlete enjoyed family support thanks to another loyal group of parents, siblings and grandparents and that certainly helped engender a most encouraging team spirit.

Jane Yandell, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton, Steve Shaw and Jon Leonard were joined as Team Managers by Lydia Chamberlin, Sam Ellis and Alan Richardson, with coaches Peter Grosjean and Graham Norris also adding vital support, helping to make this meeting a fitting end to another tremendous season.

RICHARD BOWD