

SOMERSET SCHOOLS' ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION JUNIOR (UNDER-13 AND UNDER-14) CHAMPIONSHIPS

**Yeovil Athletics Arena
Wednesday 11 June 2008**

All eligible schools were notified after Easter with entries due by half-term. The Championships Committee of 5 then met on Thursday 29 May to prepare the event, and final details were sent to all competing schools on the following day.

Most entries were in order, with staff once again finding it much easier to fill in the forms accurately now that each age group is of a different colour, however, some schools completely ignored the simplest of instructions so there were still a few of the usual problems:

- a) Schools failing to return the officials' form – even though this is a condition of entry.
- b) Schools failing to include entry fees – involving more communication after the meeting at a particularly busy time of the season.
- c) One school entered a number of Year 9 pupils in the Under-14 age group (but allowed SSAA to retain the extra entry fees once the error had been pointed out).
- d) One school entered a number of athletes in three events, causing considerable confusion.
- e) One school's entries arrived two weeks late as the Finance Department had not noted the urgency for payment and forwarding of the entry forms. These entries were refused with the forms and fees returned. Subsequently, a letter of apology was received.
- f) Club coaches and parents continue to be frustrated when schools fail to enter talented athletes; however, they tend to pester the organisers rather than confront the school wherein the problem lies.

Warm weather on the day, together with our group of loyal Somerset County AA officials and the tremendous enthusiasm of the athletes combined to make the event a thoroughly enjoyable occasion.

Entries were received from 26 schools (up from 25 in 2006 and 21 in 2007) with the following breakdown by age group:

Under-13 Girls – 127 (115 in 2006, 88 in 2007)
Under-13 Boys – 135 (116 in 2006, 92 in 2007)
Under-14 Girls – 127 (159 in 2006, 142 in 2007)
Under-14 Boys – 159 (174 in 2006, 137 in 2007)
Total entries – 548 (564 in 2006, 459 in 2007)

Fully-automatic timing and photo-finish were in operation thanks to David Cooke, with the images on sale to the athletes.

The general standard was encouraging in most events with three Championship Best Performances:

Under-13 Girls' 200m: Phoebe Bryant (Danesfield) – 28.29

Under-13 Girls' High Jump: Roo Black (St Dunstan's) – 1m38

Under-14 Boys' Long Jump: Daniel Handford (Queen's College) – 5m39

Results were sent to all competing schools as soon as possible after the Championships, together with certificates (for the first three in each event) and County Champion badges. I included a photo-finish image of an athlete from each school (with David Cooke's permission) wherever possible.

This meeting surely remains a valuable early experience for our youngest talent.

RICHARD BOWDEN

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Report on Senior Track & Field Championships

As is now customary entries were received by Dave Cooke. This enabled the track draw and field pools to be quickly formulated as well as producing finishing times when linked to the photo-finish equipment. Attached to this is also the scoring for the championships. Much debt must be credited to David for all his work leading up to the event. After last year's very poor weather throughout the summer it was not surprising that the number of entries increased (see table below). However the amount of this increase (2008 – 2007) cannot simply be credited to the weather but also to increased awareness within the areas linked to the SASP coaching programme.

Unfortunately as the day progressed it became quite evident that many athletes were not turning up or withdrawing from 'double' events on the day. An analysis has showed that some 125 competition entries withdrew! This is a huge percentage of the initial entry and initial discussion has already started to try and alleviate the amount of additional work this produces.

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	Taunton	Yeovil	Total entries	Events	max entries	%	2008 - 2007
JB	19	35	49	41	144	14	224	64%	+23%
IB	36	42	47	41	166	17	272	61%	+15%
SB	21	10	43	29	103	17	272	38%	+9%
JG	21	19	39	37	116	10	160	73%	+15%
IG	19	22	50	31	122	16	256	48%	+17%
SG	15	4	32	32	83	16	256	32%	+13%
	131	132	260	211	734	90	1440		
non participants	23%	31%	17%	29%	= 125 athletes				

The day itself was blessed with warm sunshine of the sort that posed the problem, is it blazers on or off? However, knowing the entry numbers, the great expectation of the competition was severely dented when it became clear that the hammer events could not take place due to the cage being deemed unsafe! But once the championship was underway smooth organisation and good competition ensued albeit 20 minutes behind time for an inexplicable reason.

Not only was photo-finish equipment utilised but also EDM on one long throw. This without question enables the field events to be completed on time.

Five Championship Best Performances were recorded:

Junior Boys	High Jump	1.81	A. Athersuch	Yeovil
Inter Boys	Discus	48.30	L. Biddlecombe	Yeovil
Senior Boys	400m	49.10e	A. Brown	Mendip
Junior Girls	800m	2.16.26e	E. Fitz-Hugh	Mendip
Inter Girls	Javelin	40.49	I. Jeffs	Taunton

Taunton area, with by far the largest number of entries and the smallest number of drop-outs won all the trophies on offer.

SOUTH-WEST SCHOOLS' AA TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Exeter Arena
Saturday 21 June 2008

Following the Somerset Schools' AA Track and Field Championships, the selection committee met at Wellington School on Sunday 15 June to select the team for the South-West Championships. We enjoyed the customary superb hospitality and, as usual, the meeting took over six hours, as is the norm when we are due to travel 'away from home' for the South-West Championships. In total, 116 athletes were selected to fill 138 places, the Intermediate Girls' Pole Vault and Hammer events once again proving the stumbling blocks. 31 schools and colleges were represented compared with 32 in 1996, 32 in 1997, 33 in 1998, 33 in 1999, 34 in 2000, 33 in 2001, 33 in 2002, 35 in 2003, 29 in 2004, 32 in 2005, 32 in 2006 and 28 last year. The consistency of these figures serves to re-emphasise the fact that there remains a fair number of schools and colleges which fail to take part significantly at Area or County level – invariably some pupils of potential South-West standard are not afforded even the earliest opportunity to demonstrate their ability. Hopefully, this situation may be addressed with the appointment of Graham Norris as Somerset's Senior Competition Manager – in July there were new competitions involving over 250 state school pupils and a plan is being formulated to prepare more athletes from this sector to take part in the Somerset County AA Championships next May. In addition, Stuart Richards is already making headway in his role as a Community Athletics Coach in the South Somerset area.

Schools and colleges with selected athletes were notified on the Monday morning, and their subsequent communication to pupils and students appeared to be a little better this year, so fewer had to be 'chased' for confirmation of availability on the Thursday afternoon.

Much of the administration and 'kitting-out' was done in the two coaches on the journey to Exeter, and then completed at the team base in the stadium. A number of athletes travelled independently and whilst this does not cause problems with the collection of numbers and the borrowing or purchasing of kit, as these later-arrivals have not been part of a 'captive audience', they are often the athletes whose fees remain unpaid after the meeting. This year, however, the last payment arrived in mid-September, beating the 2007 performance by three weeks! Having said that, the situation regarding payments was far better this year so the frustrations I expressed in the 2007 report need not be repeated – as has been pointed out, we are dealing with large numbers of athletes from a variety of establishments.

Having won 8 of the 12 trophies in 1997, 4 in 1998 and 9 in 1999, I reported in 2006 that the twenty-first century had yet to be as fruitful. Devon are invariably formidable opponents and have dominated in recent years. 2000 saw us claim 2 titles, with 3 in 2001, 2 in 2002, 2 in 2003 and the same number in 2004. Sadly, 2005 saw us slump to just a single piece of silverware, the Overall Boys' shield. We recovered a little in 2006 with 3 victories but even the most optimistic amongst us could not have predicted the wonderful team performance we were to witness on home soil last year when we took 9 of the 12 titles. That was always going to be a hard act to follow (especially in Devon) but the results on the day showed we had failed to repeat the dose by a mere half a trophy (sharing the Junior Boys' cup with Dorset). Unfortunately, a little more time in retirement and computer expertise have given Brian Baker the chance to check every single point and he discovered some days later that Dorset had, in fact, won the Junior Boys' title by one point, and Devon should have been awarded the Overall Girls' shield beating Somerset by four points! We decided honesty to be the best policy (in case we were rumbled) so Somerset's 2008 final haul of seven trophies was made up of the following victories: Senior Girls, Senior Boys, Overall Boys, Overall Track Events, Overall Field Events, Relays and Overall Champions.

Our 2008 South-West Champions are:

Junior Boys – 2nd - 88 points (Dorset 89)

Shot	Hayden Tyler	(King's College)	13m 39
Javelin	Robin Danaher	(King's College)	53m 21

Intermediate Boys – 2nd - 80 points (Avon 108)

1500m	Nathan Young	(Whitstone)	4-06.9
1500m Steeplechase	Charlie Maclean	(King's College)	4-26.3
Discus	Liam Biddlecombe	(Holyrood)	46m 56

Senior Boys – 1st – 118 points

200m	Nick Clements	(Yeovil College)	22.2
400m	Alex Brown	(Millfield)	48.9
800m	Dominic Henry	(Wells Blue)	1-56.6
110m Hurdles	Chris Wakeford	(Millfield)	14.2
400m Hurdles	Chris Wakeford	(Millfield)	54.0
Pole Vault	Ben Gibb	(Brymore)	4m 20
4 x 100m Relay			43.6

Junior Girls – 6th – 31 points (Dorset 72)

Intermediare Girls – 3rd – 78 points (Devon 103)

80m Hurdles	Amelia Richards	(Millfield)	11.9
Javelin	Izzy Jeffs	(Taunton School)	41m 81
4 x 100m Relay			50.1

Senior Girls – 1st – 116 points

1500m	Laura Parker	(West Somerset)	4-46.0
400m Hurdles	Katie Sockett	(Millfield)	64.5
Discus	Katie Wickman	(Millfield)	41m 20
Javelin	Misha Gaffney	(Bruton School for Girls)	37m 21

19 event wins was three fewer than the 2007 figure but bettered our 'normal' performance of around 17 in 2001, 2004 and 2006.

None of these performances would have been possible without the excellent work of a dedicated, loyal group of team managers, namely Julie Harrison, Charlotte Fisher, Sarah Mead, Tina Jones, Les Neville, Jason Allen, Gary Jennings, Clive Thomas, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton and Stuart Richards. All the athletes would wish to thank them most sincerely, I am sure.

A large number of our officials were on duty, together with presentation, scoring and announcing teams, and we can be proud of the contribution made by Somerset personnel (whether home or away) to ensure the smooth running of what is a huge meeting.

RICHARD BOWDEN

E.S.A.A. SAINSBURY'S TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Gateshead International Stadium Friday/Saturday 11/12 July 2008

Following another tremendous Somerset performance at South-West level, we certainly had every reason to be optimistic as we set about selecting the best 25 athletes for the ESAA Championships.

61 athletes at or around the required standard were considered in 65 events in 2004, whereas in 2005 we found ourselves considering 'only' 39 across 48 events. The 2006 'cast' consisted of 39 athletes once again, across 45 events, but our strength in depth was reflected last year in that we considered 51 athletes over 59 events. In 2008 41 athletes were under the spotlight across 49 events. The usual meticulous selection process was carried out at Wellington School where we enjoyed superb hospitality, as always.

Despite losing a National Standard athlete (Catherine Blew) prior to selection and another (Kitty Eleyae) after the team had been submitted, on performances we were still able to select our strongest team in the past 20 years. Once the nominated reserve was unable to accept the invitation to compete in the Intermediate Girls' 100m, frustratingly we arrived at the Championships with only 24 athletes for the fourth time in the last six years.

Transport arrangements ran smoothly with Berry's Coaches, as usual, with pick-up points at Wellington, Taunton, Puriton and Gordano Services. A number of athletes travelled independently and met the team in Gateshead, though one athlete having a car at the accommodation afforded that individual a measure of independence which the team management found irritating; a situation which may require discussion at an appropriate time.

Accommodation was at St Aidan's Hall (Durham University) and proved comfortable with excellent food.

The table below indicates the performance of this year's team and clearly shows the excellent quality of our top athletes who secured our best crop of National Standards in the past 15 years. We also recorded our greatest number of top-8 finishers during that period. Three-quarters of the team scored points, though a surprisingly small number gained a Personal Best. Our overall score equalled our 2007 total and we felt sure we would be in contention to retain the Overall Champions' trophy. It was something of a shock therefore, to lose to Norfolk (a former B Group county) by an astonishing margin of 23 points! Winning two trophies for the third year in succession, however, was a noteworthy achievement.

Our overall performance is analysed below:

	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
Personal Bests	8	7	5	12	9	10	12	3	12	8	8	6	9	7	3
Entry Standard	7	7	11	11	9	9	6	7	6	8	6	6	7	7	7
Nat Standard	7	4	2	6	6	8	6	2	8	3	5	4	7	8	9
Top-8	13	11	12	12	12	12	13	7	11	9	11	11	12	13	15
Scorers	15	13	15	19	16	17	15	11	17	12	14	12	14	16	18
Total Score	66	62	59	75	85	78	87	44	68	40	78	57	83	98	98
Trophies	SG	-	-	SG	SG	-	SB	-	JB	-	SG	-	JB	IG	IB
					SB		IG		SB				SG	Ov	SG

The team scores and positions for each age group were:

Junior Boys	5 =	12 points	(30 – winning total)
Intermediate Boys	1	22 points	
Senior Boys	7	11 points	(32)
Junior Girls	11=	2 points	(45)
Intermediate Girls	2	20 points	(29)
Senior Girls	1	31 points	
Aggregate Total	2	98 points	(121)

Congratulations are due to our two ESAA Champions (both with the spear), Robin Danaher (King's College) in the Junior Boys' age group and Izzy Jeffs (Taunton School) in the Intermediate Girls' event. Izzy was joined in the ESAA International team by Charlie Maclean (King's College) who achieved silver in the 1500m Steeplechase. Izzy took the gold in the SIAB Home International at Bedford with Charlie earning bronze.

I must conclude this report with a tribute to the work carried out throughout the week-end on the part of the team managers. I certainly feel that all the athletes would agree that they were prepared as thoroughly as possible, particularly in the final lead-up to competition. Having taken 7 team managers to Gateshead in 2006, and 8 to Birmingham last year (rather than our stipulated 5) we appointed 8 again this year though unfortunately Julie Singleton was subsequently unable to attend. We welcomed Sophie Thomas (the Senior Girls' Javelin winner from 2007) to the management group this year (even though she was not introduced at the team meeting!) and she certainly enjoyed seeing the Championships from a different aspect.

RICHARD BOWDEN