

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

**The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil
Saturday and Sunday 30 April and 1 May 2022**

Full information and entry forms were sent by email to our 60 schools and colleges and to the 4 major Track and Field clubs in Somerset on Monday 28 February, with a closing date of Thursday 31 March. The details were also emailed direct to various parents and coaches. In addition, the information was sent to the Dorset Schools' AA and the Dorset County AA who would be holding their County Combined Events Championships within the meeting, and to all those guest competitors who had competed in recent years. The final details were emailed to all competing schools, colleges, clubs and guests on Wednesday 20 April with all the information and the final timetable displayed on the Somerset Schools' AA website. As usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date.

The average entry had been 280 over the past 10 competitions (ranging from 249 in 2019 to a record 308 in 2011) but after the disruption caused by Storm Hannah in 2019 and the 2020 and 2021 Championships having been cancelled, this year's total of 187 indicated the devastating effect the pandemic has had on the teaching of our sport in some schools. Nonetheless, encouraging group entries were submitted by those loyal schools who support the meeting year after year, appreciating the value of the unique atmosphere generated for their athletes by Combined Events competition. The programme was produced professionally, by Frome Printing Company, with each athlete and official receiving a free copy.

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. Therefore the meeting continues to be one of the largest Combined Events competitions in the country; this year's 110 Somerset athletes being joined by 77 guest competitors who had travelled from near and far - Dorset, Avon, Wiltshire, Devon, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, London, Kent, Leicestershire, Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland - in order to post an early-season score.

An important development since 2013 has been the inclusion of Under-18 Decathlon and Heptathlon competitions (often at the request of UKA) so that some of the most talented younger athletes would have an opportunity to compete using Under-18 hurdles and implements, with a view to qualification for the European Under-18 Championships (or, in the early days, the IAAF World Youth Championships).

This year's meeting saw some of the elite athletes targeting the European Under-18 Championships in Jerusalem, while Brynja Brynjarsdottir (City of Lisburn AC) was attempting to qualify for the Under-18 Nordic Games in Iceland (needing a score in excess of 4500 points) and Meabh O'Connor (Dundalk St Gerard's AC) was seeking the Athletics Ireland standard of 4750 points for the European Youth Olympic Festival in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia. Several of the slightly older competitors were aiming for the World Athletics Under-20 Championships in Cali, Colombia, or even the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham.

The quality of a superb group of UKA officials (from Somerset, the South-West, South Wales and beyond) ensured the meeting was granted a Level 2 Licence which meant that Abigail Pawlett's (Loughborough Students AC) Under-20 Heptathlon score of 5535 points (surpassing the UKA standard of 5400) could be considered for Cali. Although Seren Rodgers (Richard Huish College) fell just 104 points short of the UKA standard for the European Under-18 Championships with her CBP of 5096, she and Abigail topped their respective age group rankings on the World Athletics website, putting Yeovil above venues such as Sydney, Nice, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Tel Aviv, Auckland, Sao Paulo, Kingston (Jamaica), Osaka, Daegu, Canberra and Mexico City.

Race Walks were offered in all age groups and alongside the usual contingent from Brymore Academy, entries were received from 3 other schools, 1 each from King's College (Abby Hughes setting a Senior Girls' 5000m Race Walk CBP of 25:00.31), Wellington School and Westfield Academy.

The 2022 Somerset County Champions were:

Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon (19 Somerset entries – 11 competitors).

Tom Barnett (Taunton Preparatory School) 740 points

Junior Boys' Pentathlon (26 Somerset entries – 17 competitors).

Rory Micklethwaite (King's School) 1820 points

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

Seth Hamilton (Brymore Academy) 20:40.88

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (9 Somerset entries – 4 competitors).

Toby Wright (Heathfield School) 3859 points

Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk (8 Somerset entries – 5 competitors).

Cameron Howe (Wellington School) 31:57.96

Under-18 Men's Decathlon (3 Somerset entries – 2 competitors).

Louis Welch (Richard Huish College) 3156 points

Senior Boys' Decathlon (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Oliver D'Rozario (Richard Huish College) 5606 points

Senior Men's Decathlon (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Dan Brown (Yeovil Olympiads AC) 3710 points

Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon (21 Somerset entries – 18 competitors).

Ellie Danner (Millfield Preparatory School) 646 points

Junior Girls' Pentathlon (26 Somerset entries - 18 competitors).

Nia Rodgers (The Castle School) 2459 points

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (3 Somerset entries – 2 competitors).

Yasmine Fettah (Heathfield School) 2646 points

Under-18 Women's Heptathlon (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Seren Rodgers (Richard Huish College) **5096 points CBP**

Senior Girls' Heptathlon (2 Somerset entries – 2 competitors).

Lucy Fellows (Millfield School) 4746 points

Senior Girls' 5000m Race Walk (1 Somerset entry – 1 competitor).

Abby Hughes (King's College) **25:00.31 CBP**

Senior Women's Heptathlon (0 Somerset entries).

Everything was in place at The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil, for high-quality competition thanks to close liaison with Paul D'Arcy (Referee) and his Yeovil Olympiads AC colleagues, meticulous preparation on the part of Nick and Sally Higman (Technical Manager and Referee respectively) and the co-operation of the ground-staff.

Prompt computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of results, updated 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 thanks to David Cooke (Somerset County AA Secretary) assisted by Eleanor Brock. Their willingness to devote an entire weekend to the meeting epitomises the superb relationship between the Somerset Schools' AA and the Somerset County AA. Dave Watson (Gloucestershire) and Charley McConnell (Northamptonshire) also worked on photo-finish.

Presentations were made shortly after the conclusion of each competition by Alex Wright (a former SSAA athlete and now an Olympic Race Walker for Ireland), Katie Cobb (a former SSAA athlete and now SSAA Treasurer), UKA officials Alan Bell (allowing us the chance to thank Alan and Lesley Minervini for making the long trek from Cumbria in order to officiate at our meeting) and Jackie Brett (allowing us the chance to thank her for all her work on Power of 10) and friends of the Association Iain Presnell (ESAA Combined Events Co-ordinator) and John Mackie (allowing us the chance to thank him for producing and regularly updating the Roll of Honour documents for each ESAA county).

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil
Saturday and Sunday 25 and 26 June 2022**

The organising county (Somerset) and the venue (The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil) for the 2022 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were due to be decided at the 2020 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting but once that was cancelled the decisions were made at the Extraordinary General Meeting on Tuesday 16 March 2021. The provisional timetable was agreed (largely a replica of the 2021 edition), and an information email was sent to County Secretaries (and other county contacts) on Friday 13 May with a reply requested by Friday 27 May. This email encouraged all counties to support the meeting and implored them to provide officials.

The new electronic entry system operated smoothly, automatically allocating each athlete to the appropriate heat or pool according to the PBs on the entry forms, which were all received by the due date, Tuesday 7 June. Thanks to Brian Baker's wizardry on the computer, the final start-lists were compiled, the timetable and updated South-West 'All-Time' Top 10s, together with the list of officials and certain important notes for competitors were added to the programme so that I was able to email the completed document to all my South-West contacts on Monday 20 June. Track slips, pins and numbers were supplied by ESAA and arrived in good time, with Brian Baker producing the field cards and Katie Cobb (SSAA Treasurer) printing the programmes at Hazlegrove School.

Most counties had been unable to resume their own Combined Events Championships (though a number of South-West athletes competed as guests in the Somerset County Championships) but our entries showed a slight but encouraging increase from 2021, with Cornwall and Dorset making welcome returns this year. An analysis of the Participation Pattern over the past few years showed that with 71 entries (and 66 actual participants) in 2021 we were about 20 down on 2018 and 2019, and about 30 fewer took part than in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, but this year attracted 10 more entries (81) resulting in 73 taking part during the weekend, 7 more than in 2021. From little acorns ...

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	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall	0	0	0	2	0	1
Devon	0	2	1	4	3	2
Dorset	0	1	0	2	4	0
Gloucestershire	4	0	3	4	3	0
Somerset	4	4	3	4	2	3
Wiltshire	2	1	1	1	1	0
TOTALS (81)	14	11	8	21	17	10

There were 4 Somerset Race Walk entries this year – 1 Junior Boy and 3 in the Intermediate age group.

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 Irene Brown (Devon County AA) – the South-West Schools' AA Officials' Secretary, and the inputs from Brian Baker (Somerset Schools' AA Officials' Secretary) and Sally Higman (Somerset County AA Officials' Secretary) in the recruitment of officials (though a few Team Managers were required to assist). Officials' travel expenses were offered for the first time, thanks to generous 'sponsorship' on the part of the South-West Schools' Athletic Association.

With Sally Higman as Referee and Nick Higman as Technical Manager the weekend ran smoothly, despite the fact that the requested transfer of a High Jump bed from one end of the Arena to the other was unable to be accomplished. Photo-finish was in operation on both days, thanks to Jayne and Keith Reed (Devon County AA) with Track Referee Irene Brown overseeing the relevant events. Brian Baker wore several hats – those of scorer, results co-ordinator and certificate printer.

The quality of performances of the leading few competitors (especially in the Intermediate and Senior age groups) were encouraging, though only a single individual achieved a place in our South-West 'All-Time Top-10' rankings – Katie Chapman scoring 4842 to remain in 7th in the Senior Girls' Heptathlon list, improving on her 4828 from 2021 but still left an agonising 5 points behind her sister Rebecca's 4847 from 2011 in 6th position.

The 'next best 9' rule concerning qualification for the ESAA Championships confirmed a trip to Bedford for the following 6 South-West athletes: Jacob Earle (JB Wiltshire), Abdul Yousef (JB Avon), Matthew Newton (SB Devon), Alice Wilson (IG Avon), Ellie Mullins (IG Wiltshire) and Ella Isaias (SG Devon). Also invited, due to there being spaces to make up the 45 in each age group, was Zara Mitchell (SG Cornwall), with Seren Rodgers (SG Somerset) being granted a wild card entry due to her representing Great Britain in the Heptathlon at the European Under-18 Championships in Jerusalem.

7 of the 8 South-West counties were to feature in the ESAA Championships, with up to 44 qualifiers in the following numbers: Somerset 13, Gloucestershire 10, Avon 8, Devon 7, Wiltshire 3, Dorset 2 and Cornwall 1. The leading results and the list of automatic qualifiers* for the ESAA Championships were as follows:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon (Record - 3169)

1. Oliver Belbeck	(Gloucestershire)	2429
2. Oscar Wilson	(Gloucestershire)	2376
3. Rory Micklethwaite*	(Somerset)	2122
4. Luke Johnson	(Gloucestershire)	2069
5. Robert Brand*	(Somerset)	2013

Team Result (Record - 8003)

1. Gloucestershire	6874
2. Avon	5594
3. Somerset	5460

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (Record - 5786)

1. Jakob Roberts*	(Dorset)	4582
2. Toby Wright	(Somerset)	4029
3. Conor Hewitt*	(Avon)	3892

Team Result (Record - 14149)

1. Somerset	10504
2. Avon	9301

Senior Boys' Decathlon (Record - 7128)

1. Sulaiman Ouiles	(Gloucestershire)	4814
2. Kyle Neal	(Gloucestershire)	4473
3. Doug Rogan Rea*	(Wiltshire)	4278
4. Louis Welch*	(Somerset)	3950

Team Result (Record - 18124)

1. Gloucestershire	12918
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Junior Girls' Pentathlon (Record - 3221)

1. Lucy Lucas*	(Dorset)	2592
2. Isla Pain*	(Gloucestershire)	2561

Team Result (Record - 9176)

1. Somerset	7049
2. Avon	6787
3. Devon	6323
4. Gloucestershire	6071

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 5064)

1. Jessica Duncton*	(Gloucestershire)	4506
2. Mayalee Osola*	(Avon)	4457

Team Result (Record - 13818)

1. Devon	11636
2. Avon	11203
3. Gloucestershire	10935
4. Dorset	9661

Senior Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 5223)

1. Katie Chapman*	(Devon)	4842
2. Lucy Fellows*	(Somerset)	4763

Team Result (Record - 13441)

1. Avon	11295
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The venue for the 2023 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 2024 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 Saturday 10 September. The hosting county and venue were then decided at the South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting on Saturday 8 October – Somerset Schools' AA at the Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil, on Saturday and Sunday 22 and 23 June 2024.

ESAA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Bedford International Athletic Stadium
Saturday and Sunday 17 and 18 September 2022

The ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships returned to Bedford International Athletic Stadium for the sixth time in 14 years and, as usual, this proved to be an excellent venue. With Dennis Johnson (a Combined Events coach with immense enthusiasm and experience) as Organising Secretary, and a stadium with staff used to holding national championships, we could be sure we were in good hands.

With 2 teams and 5 individual athletes in the Combined Events Championships, and 5 Race Walkers having been selected, our group would once again be one of the largest on show with a total of 18 athletes and 7 Team Managers. Initial information was sent out by email on 30 June with the final details emailed on 31 August. The Combined Events athletes were charged only £20.00 (Race Walkers £10.00) but although we offered BACS as a quick and easy payment method, some fees took months to arrive, even after several reminders.

For many years we had arranged coach transport and a 'team hotel' for the Somerset and Devon group at the ESAA Championships, with a subsidy for each Somerset athlete thanks to any surplus made at the Somerset Combined Events and Race Walking Championships, but once the Covid-19 situation forced the cancellation of our 2020 and 2021 Championships we realised we were not in a position to offer financial assistance towards the 2021 Bedford weekend.

Therefore, the decision was made to ask our athletes to arrange their own transport and to book their own hotel accommodation. We were confident those arrangements would work as we had found over a great many years that almost every Somerset athlete had been supported by parents and/or other family members, so by travelling together and booking a family room it would certainly be possible to cut down costs enormously.

Those arrangements proved popular in 2021 so we decided to repeat the system this year, though for reasons of cost our suggested 'base hotel' this time was the Bedford Town Centre (Riverside) Premier Inn. This location (just 2 miles from the stadium) offered a far greater choice of restaurants for the evening meals.

There were 4 withdrawals but reserves were delighted to accept late invitations and in some cases vastly improved the team's chances of success.

The weather was fairly warm on both days (though a little windy and overcast on occasion). The organisation was most efficient and our athletes were given every chance to perform well.

Our full results were:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon

Rory Micklethwaite	(King's School)	20	2159 (PB)
Robert Brand	(King's School)	36	1529

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Tom Bennett	(King's College)	9	4508 (PB)
Toby Wright	(Heathfield School)	18	4146 (PB)
Josh Cobb	(King's College)	25	3856 (PB)
Oscar Webb	(Millfield School)	29	3423
Team Score		3	12510

Senior Boys' Decathlon

Louis Welch	(Richard Huish College)	19	3943
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Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Nia Rodgers	(The Castle School)	30	2433
Tabitha Olivier	(Millfield Preparatory School – Millfield School)	35	2305 (PB)
Zoe Allen	(Millfield School)	37	2288
Darcie Cockburn	(King's College)	40	1955 (PB)
Team Score		7	7026

Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Seren Rodgers	(Richard Huish College)	1	4968 (PB)
Lucy Fellows	(Millfield School)	10	4132

Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk

Seth Hamilton	(Brymore Academy)	DISQ
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk

Aidan Crispin	(Brymore Academy)	3	31:04.05 (PB)
Aidan Grandfield	(Brymore Academy)	4	37:24.13
Cameron Howe	(Wellington School)	DISQ	

Senior Girls' 5000m Race Walk

Abby Hughes	(King's College)	3	28:00.98
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The team highlight was a place on the podium for the Intermediate Boys, a team in which Tom Bennett was a revelation. In his first Combined Events competition, perhaps unsurprisingly he set 8 individual event PBs on his way to achieving a magnificent 8th place. He and Josh Cobb (2 of the 4 substitutions) rounded off the weekend with 1500m runs of 4:34.22 and 4:34.88 respectively to secure team bronze by almost 500 points over Cheshire.

The individual Combined Events highlight was a gold medal for Seren Rodgers in the Senior Girls' Heptathlon, capping a magnificent season in which she had already finished 7th in the Heptathlon at the European Under-18 Championships in Jerusalem. Somerset gained 2 more individual medals as Aidan Crispin and Abby Hughes each won bronze in their 5000m Race Walks, meaning that 7 of our 18 athletes appeared on the podium for medal presentations.

There was another award as one of the substitutes, Darcie Cockburn, earned an Ultimate Trophy having already represented SSAA in Cross-Country and Track and Field at South-West level in 2022. Darcie received her trophy from Ian Roberts (ESAA Chairman) at the Somerset team base.

I suspect that every Somerset athlete had family support in Bedford but I cannot be sure as several members of the team chose not to join the group at the team base we had set up at the seating area just inside the stadium entrance on the home straight. I plan to emphasise the point that we shall be expecting all our athletes to be visible as Somerset team members at the designated base in future, in addition to a reminder that Somerset kit (tracksuits, wet-tops and/or hoodies) will be required, and may be borrowed if necessary.

Jane Yandell, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton, Steve Shaw, Lloyd Williams and Zach Harrop were joined by debutant Alex Ireland (King's School) so we had our usual large group of Team Managers. We were also pleased to welcome Neil Wheeler (the new Millfield School Director of Athletics) to our organisation. The superb co-operation on the part of King's College, Brymore Academy and Millfield School should be noted as their assistance with athletes' and Team Managers' transport and accommodation minimised costs to the Association.

RICHARD BOWDEN