



SOUTHAMPTON AC THROUGH TO PROMOTION FINAL

On Sunday 25 July, Southampton AC's U20 and U17 athletes made the journey to Andover for the final match in the Itchen Division of the National Junior Athletes League. A win over close rivals Brighton was needed to ensure a place in the Promotion Match in August which would then give the team the chance to gain promotion to the Premier Southern Division.

Despite clashes with other athletics events, the Southampton athletes turned out in force and it soon became clear that the match was going to be very close, with Brighton also fielding a very strong team and filling every event. As scores were announced throughout the day, the lead was constantly changing, as was the difference in points between the two teams. It was to be a day when every single point and performance would count.

Southampton started off very strongly, with wins in the A and B strings for the men in the 400H event from Sean Adams and Calum Rowe. The 110H did not disappoint either, with Sean Adams hurdling a PB time of 15.5 and his team mate Sam Derham also ran a PB time of 18.5. Success continued in the sprint events, with Sam Derham running a season's best in the 100m and both Calum Bressington (23.0) and Sean Adams (23.4) producing PBs in the 200m. Solid performances from David Bolton and Simon Ninnim in the 400m continued to add valuable points to the Southampton score.

The Southampton middle distance runners were not to be outdone by their fellow athletes and in the 800m Aaron Bennett and Martin Campbell each managed to win their races. A second place in the 1500m for Harry Fisher and win in the B string from Simon Campbell in a PB time of 4.24.3 continued the run of success. With the weather conditions being slightly kinder than in previous matches, U17 Paul Warn achieved yet another PB in both the 3k (10.47.7) and the 2k steeplechase 8.10.0 and a last minute entry in the 3k from Martin Campbell resulted in a fourth place in the B race and more important points.

There were some strong performances in the field although key athletes were missing in the throws events due to holidays and injuries. The rest of the team rallied round to ensure there were no gaps in these, with Sam Tingman throwing a personal best of 20.07m in the discus and, making his debut for the club, new Southampton athlete Rob Smith threw 35.05m in the javelin to come fifth. In the men's hammer, Harry Fisher threw a season's best in the A string, with team mate Simon Ninnim coming second in the B string. With both the Southampton pole vaulters also being absent due to holidays, it was important to get good points in the other jumps. In a very exciting long jump competition for the men, Calum Bressington was narrowly beaten into second place, despite jumping a very commendable 6.06m. Success in the jumps continued, with Matt Watson and Sam Tingman winning both the A and B strings in the high jump and Matt Watson also winning the triple jump with a distance of 13.16m, with Sam Derham coming second in the B string with just under 11 metres. With Andover only having a 6 lane track, the relays were run in two heats which made it difficult to keep track of positions, but the men ran extremely well to come second in the 4 x 100m and win the 4 x 400m, beating Brighton into second place on both occasions.

For the women, the day also started off well with Millie Clifford winning the A string 400mH and also U17 athlete Laura Seaman performed particularly well as she stepped up to this longer distance and recorded a PB time of 75.0 to win the B race. Competing for the first time in this league, U17 athlete Megan Fry ran her first ever 100mH in a time of 17.4s to come second. In the 100m she also ran a SB time of 13.1 to come second in the A race, with fellow athlete Becky Kidson coming 4th in the B race. The women continued to sprint well, with Hannah Musker running a PB time of 27.3 in the 200m and Millie Clifford winning the 400m. In the B race Mel Young was running well in the lead when an injury caused her to pull up. Hopefully she will recover quickly and get back to training soon. The women middle distance runners were an unstoppable force, with Jenny Beckingham winning both the 800m and 1500m A races. In the B strings, Laura Seaman came first in the 800m and Daena Bennett, also running for the first time in this league, won the 1500m. A really great performance from another new Southampton athlete, Issie Kidson, running in her first ever competitive race on the track, resulted in a second place in the 3k and much needed points.

The women jumpers continued to amass more points with a string of third places from Jenny Beckingham in the high jump, Vicky Vinter in the long jump and Beth Sharpe who jumped a SB of 9.13m in the triple jump. Beth also came second in the long jump with a PB performance of 3.90. There was further success for the throwers as Anna Stevens won both the shot and hammer events, with fellow athlete Alisha Parnell coming fourth in shot and winning the B hammer event. There was a personal best of 30.44 for Freya Jones in the discus and Freya then went on to win the javelin competition with a throw of 47.74 which also earned her the Athlete of the Match award. In the B string javelin, despite having already competed for Southampton AC at Winchester that day, Poppy Barker threw 34.34 to win her event.

In the relays, Southampton's 4 x 100 women's relay team finished second to Brighton, but managed to turn the tables in the 4 x 400 relay in which they crossed the line in first place.

So, after an action packed day full of excitement and fine performances, it was a question of waiting for results to be checked and the final scores to be announced. Not surprisingly the end result was very close with just four points separating the top two teams. In the end, victory went to Southampton AC, with Brighton having to settle for second place. This means that Southampton AC will now travel to Barnet Copthall on Sunday 29 August to compete in the promotion match where success could mean a place in the Southern Premier Division next season.