

Southampton AC
National Junior League Match 3 Report
Sunday 27 June 2010 Winchester

The third match in the NJAL league was always going to be exciting and close, with Southampton AC going into the meeting in second place behind Itchen division leaders Brighton, and hoping to take full advantage of a home fixture.

Yet again, it was the hottest day of the year but even the soaring temperatures and added distractions of the Grand Prix, Wimbledon and the small matter of a football match didn't dent the enthusiasm of the athletes who pulled out all the stops to produce a string of fine performances and good results.

The women's team had a few new faces this time, with U17s Laura Seaman and Elly Henderson making their debuts for the team in the 800m and coping well with the challenge. There was a welcome return to the team for Louise Webb, back from university, who won her 400mH B race and then went on to win the 100mH in a new pb time of 17.9. Our 100m and 200m sprinter Becky Kidson (U17) was ably assisted by U20 Jenny Beckingham who stepped down from her usual middle distance races to run personal bests in both events (13.4/26.7). Millie Clifford produced a double victory in the 400m and 400mH with Melody Young also winning the B 400m race in a time of 65.0. With a fourth place in the 1500m from Mhairi-Clair Stewart 9U17) and third in the 3k from Liberty Pritchard (U17) the day was going well for the women's team.

In the field events our triple and long jumpers, Vicki Vinter and Anna-Sara Tingman continued to earn valuable points for the team, despite the heat and lack of shade for those waiting to jump. This was a problem shared by the throwers but Anna Stevens managed to win the shot competition and come second in hammer, events in which she was ably supported by Alisha Parnell. Anna also took second place in the discus and our second thrower, U17 Poppy Barker, threw a personal best of 22.84 to win the B competition. The highlight of the day was the javelin where Poppy threw a Grade 1 distance of 40.22m to win the competition and was given the Female Athlete of the Match award.

For the first time this season the men's team only had one space left and was hopeful of winning its side of the match. True to form the men didn't disappoint and despite the conditions even came away with a string of personal bests. Our sprinters ran well, with Calum Bressington coming second in the 100m and third in the 200m and U17 Will Hodgetts, making his debut in the team, ran 12.2 to come second in the B string 100m. In great condition was U17 athlete Sean Adams who won all three of his races and set new personal best times in 200m (23.6), 110H (16.0) and 400H (55.9). In the 400m Ben Winstanley equalled his best time of 50.8 and Aaron Bennett ran a new best time of 50.5 to come second in the B race.

Rather surprisingly, the weather didn't seem to cause too many problems for our middle distance runners. In a very close finish in the 800m, Simon Ninnim was unlucky to be awarded second place, despite recording the same time of 2.00.0 as the winning athlete and U17 Amarpal Gill produced a personal best of 2.22.9 to place third in the B race. In the 1500m the Campbell twins, Martin and Simon, yet again recorded new pb times and ran 4.22.1 and 4.25.1 to finish fourth in the A race and third in the B string respectively. Runners in the 3k had the sympathy of all the onlookers but Amarpal Gill ran a new best of 10.50.3 and U17 Paul Warn came in first in the B race in a time of 11.15.2. Very bravely, Paul then went on to run again in the 2k steeplechase where he finished second in the B race in a pb time of 8.37.7 with our A athlete, Justin Hunt also running a pb time of 7.44.4 to finish fourth in his race. Justin also jumped a new best of 12.55 in the triple jump and ran a pb of 64.7 in the 400H. Matt Watson was also in good form, producing lifetime bests in each of javelin, discus and triple jump where he won the competition with a distance of 13.85m. It was good to see Richard Humby back in the pole vault where he produced a comfortable winning height of 4.00m. In the absence of our main throwing athlete due to injury, Sam Tingman, Simon Ninnim and Calum Rowe filled in on shot and hammer to earn points for the team which were to prove very valuable as the day progressed.

With just the relays to go, the match was too close to call, but in an exciting end to the day the women's 4 x 100m and 4 x 400m teams came fourth and second respectively. In the men's races, our team was narrowly beaten into second place behind Brighton in the 4 x 100 relay but produced a fantastic record time of 3.62.2 to win the 4 x 400m relay and cemented victory in the overall match with a final total score of 511, just one point ahead of rivals Brighton.

This means that Southampton AC will go into the fourth and final match of the season in first place in the Itchen Division of the NJAL league, but by a very narrow margin. We will be looking for a win on Sunday 25th July at Andover to ensure our place in the promotion finals in August is guaranteed.