

## **Sussex Schools Athletics Association**

### **Chair Person's report 2014**

It has been an exceptionally successful year for all Sussex Schools Athletics teams; in fact I think it may well be the most successful season across the board, since I became Chair in 2000. There have been some outstanding individual results one of the highlights being Robbie Fitzgibbon in Senior Boys 1500m winning a great final, one of the team highlights was the Senior Girls winning the best County with all 8 finishers in the ESAA XC which displayed true team work, that is what I've enjoyed most this year; I've taken both ESAA teams, the Cross Country Team to Derby and the Track and Field team to Birmingham and both teams have demonstrated brilliant team spirit, supporting each other with great enthusiasm, making new friends and learning to stay away from home. To me there is more to Sussex Schools than just the Athletics, there are a whole raft of life experiences, not just the successes but learning to cope with the disappointments, often these can be what make a stronger athlete.

As for the Association which has a small number of adults who work tirelessly to ensure the young athletes have opportunities, I would like to say we go from strength to strength but I'm sorry to say that is not so; we have lost a number of committee members in recent years due to their family circumstances changing, quite rightly. Unfortunately we have not seen any other young teachers willing or able to fill the vacancies. It may be the state of the teaching profession which sees teachers required to take on ever increasing responsibilities at school with decreasing amounts of spare time.

We must look to a solution that sees the links between Schools, Clubs and County increase and so strengthen Athletics in Sussex to ensure that Children have appropriate Athletic opportunities from the enthusiastic beginner to the U20 National winner.

I would like to thank the Committee, Officials and everyone who has helped over the year with School events and teams. I would particularly like to thank Reg Hook, who as president of the Association, has never been content to a figure head but has been as active as ever: counting Team Kit, writing Web articles, taking photos and keeping me on track in the nicest way. I am delighted that, in his 80<sup>th</sup> year, Reg has finally received the recognition he so richly deserves.

## **Sussex Schools Cross-country championships – Waterhall, Brighton - - - 22 -01-14**

Despite the mud and the threat of getting soaked there were a record number of 550 runners at the Sussex Schools Cross-country championships at Waterhall, Brighton on Wednesday afternoon.

Organised by Chris Jones and students and staff of the Cardinal Newman Catholic School this was the largest number of runners for at least a decade and fully justified the decision to switch the race to a Wednesday from its traditional Saturday date.

The afternoon opened with a sparkling run from Almi Nerurkar (Brighton & Hove High School) who left the rest of the Junior/U15 girl runners wallowing in the mud as she romped to an outstanding victory in 12:38 despite this being only her first year in the age group.

Nerurkar, who had her thirteenth birthday last week is probably the youngest winner since the rules prevented Year 7 athletes from competing.

Nearly forty years ago Rosie Wells, who was then still attending Westdene Junior School, won the title.

Naomi Fonteyn (Blatchington Mill), who is only a couple of months older than Almi took second place in 13:09 while Charlotte Matthews (Cardinal Newman) took third place in 13:44.

The fine running all afternoon only managed to produce a few surprises amongst the medallists and all the titles went very much as expected.

Dylan Leisinger (Claremont) took the Boys U15 title in 16:40 but George Crocker (Hazelwick) and Joe Body (St.Richards) both had excellent runs to fill second and third places in 16:49 and 16:58 respectively.

As anticipated Stephen Ferroni (BACA) in his first year in the Intermediate/U17 age group was in control throughout the race eventually finished some 40 second clear of his nearest rival. Being quite happy run in the leading group until the halfway mark and then gently squeezing the pace to clock 22:17 from Toby Lewis (Brighton College), who had an excellent run to clock 22:58 and Luke Cooper (Rye) who was clocked at 23:22.

The girls race saw Rosie Ellis (Chichester High) who was outsprinted in the County Championships by Martha Coyle (Cardinal Newman) determined not to let Coyle use her superior speed in the final stages again made certain she had put sufficient daylight between her and her rival to take the title in 14:56 to 15:07 with Sophie Markwick (Helenswood) scooping up the bronze medal in 15:35.

The largest victory of the afternoon came from Grace Baker (Bexhill) who put virtually two minutes between herself and her nearest rival in the senior/U19 race when clocking 17:15 and Baker will be in line for a medal at the English Schools championships in March.

Leah Harris (Worthing High) and Esther Lutz-Davies (BHASVIC) who have crossed swords several times this season over the Country and it was Harris who had just that little extra pace in the finishing field who took the silver medal in 19:13, just two seconds ahead of her rival.

The senior boys saw another first timer take the crown as Harry Leleu (Seaford Coll) took the crown in 27.33 just eight seconds ahead of another first timer Spencer Thomas (Plumpton) with Felpham runner, James Mckenzie, finishing third in 28:57.

In the team events Brighton College ran away with three of the six titles the intermediate boys and girls and the senior girls races.

Blatchington Mill took the Under 15 girls crown, Cavendish the U15 boys title and Lancing College the senior boys team title.

### **Schools Inter-counties**

Brilliant running from Toby Lewis, Sian Driscoll and Naomi Fonteyn highlighted the Sussex performances at the South East Inter-counties cross-country event at the Southampton Leisure Centre on Saturday.

As was expected the conditions at Southampton were decidedly mucky and some of the races suffered with further downpours and high winds.

Many of the athletes who had already booked themselves a place in the Sussex Schools teams for the English Schools, the first four in each age group at last months Sussex Schools championships were already assured of a place in the team that will travel to Castle Donnington next month, chose to give Saturdays event a miss.

In the Intermediate age group Toby Lewis, who was second in the Sussex event, ran probably his best race to date to finish a splendid sixth while there was also a top twenty placing for Dan Corbie in 18<sup>th</sup> place and these two helped the Sussex team into fourth place.

In the senior groups Sion Driscoll, who had missed the Sussex event and needed to race to stake a claim for a place in the team, did everything that was asked of her to finish in tenth place with Leah Harris filling 14<sup>th</sup> spot, Hannah Croad 16<sup>th</sup> and Esther Lutz-Davies 19<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately Sussex could not muster a scoring six runners in this race.

In the junior race Naomi Fonteyn notched up a rare victory over Sussex champion Almi finished 11<sup>th</sup> to her rivals 19<sup>th</sup> place while the team finished in seventh place.

There was also a fourth team spot for the Intermediate girls team where Rosie Ellis finished in 13<sup>th</sup> place, just two places ahead of Martha Coyle.

The junior boys finished in seventh team spot with George Crocker and Thomas Eames leading the squad home in 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> places respectively while the senior boys placed eighth in the team event with Sam Kamara, whose speciality is swimming, leading the team home in 25<sup>th</sup> place.

### English schools T + F report

Just one medal for Sussex on Day one of the English Schools Championships at Birmingham, but by and large a good day for the Sussex athletes who piled up Entry and National Standards as many fought their way into Saturday's semis and finals.

It was pole vaulter Livvy Connor who matched last year's bronze medal in the Intermediate event. She was forced to add some 20cm to her performance by clearing 3.50m a national Standard. Tasmin Campbell also achieved a national standard by clearing 3.30m for seventh place. There was another standard in this event as Millie Hemsley finished 17th in this high quality event clearing 2.90m, an entry standard.

Johnny Haines added a chunk to his previous best throw when he took sixth place in the Inter boys hammer throw with 56.84m - a national standard. There was sixth place and another entry standard in the junior boys javelin throw for Elliott Bayley with 44.86m. In the inter boys pole vault Scott Devlin cleared a personal best of 4.00m, and entry standard for ninth place.

In the inter girls discus throw Lea Kiekenbeck threw an entry standard 33.98m but this only earned her 12th place in the final and the junior girls javelin throw produced two entry standard throws with Emily Robinson throwing 32.91m for seventh place in her Pool and Catriona Jamieson 31.91m for 11th place in her pool. Unfortunately neither managed to reach Saturday's final.

Lotte Hoare finished fifth in her pool in the inter girls hammer throw with a NS of 46.13m and will be in action again on Saturday along with ten other athletes who have qualified for Saturday's semi-finals and finals. There are several athletes who have not yet set their feet on the track.

At the end of the day the senior girls relay team fought their way through to the final placing fourth in their heat with a new Sussex Senior record time of 47.98s, half a second faster than the 1981 record of 48.42s set by Crawley.

A very happy Sussex team returned from Birmingham on Saturday having won ten medals in the English Schools Championships, the highest number for many years. There was just one gold medal and that was a surprise as Robbie Fitzgibbon, who took a senior bronze medal last year and has had a fairly low key season, missing both the County and the Sussex Schools championships. However he ran an excellent 1500 metres timing his race to perfection to win by nearly two seconds in 3:48.62s.

Another who has not been seen on the track much this season, Stephen Ferroni, ran out of his socks in the inter 3000m to collect the silver medal behind arch rival Ben Dijkstra (Leics) in, 8:42.48s and was just unable to contain his rival in the final stages.

This run however has earned him a run in an English Schools vest in the Home Countries International at Cardiff next weekend.

He will be joined by sprinter Toby Harries who finished second in the Inter 200m in 21.65s as he crashed over the line behind Ryan Gorman (Derby). It will be interesting to see whether Gorman can get the better of him again in Cardiff.

A further six athletes won bronze medals to add to Livvy Connors pole vault bronze on Friday.

In the senior age group James Lasis was rather unfortunate in the discus throw when a long, valid, throw was ruled out and he had to settle for bronze with 59.78m and Spencer Thomas, after cruising through his heat and semi-final of the 800m was involved in a blanket finish in the final where just two tenths of a second covered the first three athletes. Thomas was squeezed into third place in a personal best time of 1:50.80s, more than one second faster than he had ever run before.

The third senior medal came from all-rounder Katie Garland, who had been a member of the senior 4 x 100m relay record breaking team on Friday. She leapt to a personal best of 5.66m in the long jump before pulling a hamstring and having to withdraw from the rest of the competition and of course the relay team.

Intermediates Finley Bigg and Joe Fuggle collected their bronze medals both recording their bests with Bigg clocking 49.36m in the 400m flat and Fuggle 55.50s in the 400m hurdles and both are first reserves for the English Schools team for the Schools International at Cardiff next weekend.

The final bronze medal came in the junior girls high jump where Lillie Franks cleared a personal best height of 1.69m

The counties are divided into three groups and Sussex have joined the A group and the senior boys did exceptionally well to place third in their team competition.

## Inter Counties T + F Report

In many ways Sussex School athletes have an advantage of many counties as they prepare for the English Schools championships and this was again born out at Crawley on Saturday. Surrounded, as we are by three of the top Counties nationally, Surrey, Kent and Hampshire, they always have a tough battle in the Annual Inter-county Schools match and it gives them great preparation for the talent they will meet in the Championships.

Sussex winners at this event are usually few and far between but in a good match for Sussex they did notch up six A winners, including a relay victory, and ten B winners.

Conditions were bright and hot and a little oppressive and performances were generally a little below the previous weekends Sussex Schools championships though then there was a slight help of a breeze.

Bucking the trend however was Luke James, who had emerged out of the blue last weekend to win the Sussex Schools title,

Running in the junior boys 800 metres this talented rugby player has certainly transferred his talent to the athletics track with great effect.

A strong and powerful runner, rather reminiscent of Chris Carter, he was at the head of field from the start and powered his way down the finishing straight to hold off the much fancied Harry Richardson from Hampshire to set a personal best time of 2:02.9s while Tom Dean won the B race in 2:05.9.

There was another winning personal best in the intermediate age group when Finley Bigg blasted his way through the 400 metres to duck inside 50.0sec. for the first time in 49.8s, a full second clear of his nearest rival.

A few minutes earlier Toby Harries, another rugby player transferring his talent to athletics, had used the same tactics in the inter 200m to finish more than a second clear of his nearest rival in 21.9s.

In the intermediate girls age group Tamsin Campbell won the pole vault event clearing 3.10m while Millie Hemsley took the B vault in clearing 2.80m.

There was another double in the inter high jump with Lucy Milnthorpe clearing 1.62m and Emma Gutierrez-Waldron 1.56m.

The relay victory came in the junior boys race where the team Jordan Levey, Jon Searle, Mike Logan and Joshua Persad clocked 45.6sec, a National Standard time.