

Mansfield Harriers & Athletic Club

The first big test of the winter's training came for Mansfield Harriers when Men's, Women's and Veterans teams took part in last weekends Midland Road Relay championships at Sutton Park in Sutton Coldfield.

Solid results were achieved by all the teams with some outstanding individual performances. Both Men's and Women's senior teams finished 9th, qualifying them to compete in the National Championships at the same venue on April 26th.

The Men's event consisted of twelve legs – 4 over a long lap and 8 over a short lap. Luke Cragg ran the first leg in a team that included 4 veterans in their line up. Recording a time of 27:59 for the first long leg he handed over to Steve Lisgo who produced one of the top Mansfield performances of the day with 15:11. The Scottish junior international over Steeplechase produced the third fastest ever leg by a Mansfield runner to gain 3 places and bring the green and blue vests back in 7th place.

Chris Brown-Monks took over the baton running a solid third leg of 16:15 despite losing one place. Taking over in 8th position Stuart King was next out taking on the second long leg of the day.

King has put in some solid mileage over the winter and this certainly showed as he ran a personal best time of 28:24 retaining 8th position in handing over to the first veteran out Doug Ross. Ross opened up a good lead on the 9th placed team and despite a recent virus ran a respectable 16:45.

The 6th leg was taken on by Aiden Reid in 15:17 handing on to James Mee for the 3rd long leg of the day. Mee is another athlete that has put in a solid winter and this showed with a time of 28:47. He handed on Steve Grainger, the second veteran in the team, who ran a personal best of 17:07 over the short leg hanging on to 8th place.

Grainger passed on to Mike Mumford who came home in 17:29 before handing over to Gareth Deacon for a long leg. At this point, with a lead of 80 seconds and with Deacon's recent strong performances, Team Manager Carl Emery's pre race prediction of 8th place looked as though it was in the bag. However disaster struck Deacon when he suffered a hamstring problem in the first half of the course and hobbled back in a time of 33:46 having done incredibly well only to lose one place.

This put the target time of 4:08 out of reach but Pete O'Mara and Pete Stafford did the club proud on 11th and 12th legs despite the horrendous weather conditions. O'Mara finished with a pb of 17:42 and Stafford, who had been ill most of the week, with 18:11 to record a team time of 4:12.53.

The Mansfield ladies recorded one of their best performances with the A team only missing a sub 2 hour run by 30 seconds. With 6 Ladies all running a short leg Mansfield fielded two teams in the event.

First out for the A team was Lisa Farquharson who, despite suffering from a stomach bug, brought the team home in 17th place with a personal run of 18:56. She handed on to Kirsty Huntingdon who is back running with the club after working in the North East for the last few years. Kirsty produced a fantastic run to gain 7 places and record a time of 18:53, the fastest of the day by a Mansfield athlete.

Miriam Tedder ran a solid leg of 20:25 next handing over to Nikita Pembleton who came back in 19:06 and in 9th place. Ever reliable Maddy Collinge went out next running 22:21 and the final leg was run by new member Nicola Dolaw in 20:48.

The B team finished 28th with Tina Green on the first leg coming back in 22:19, Julie Grainger (21:04), Wanda Curley (22:34), Denise Winfield (24:05), Sue Bellingham (23:04) and Helen Hoxha (22:16).

Mansfield's veteran men couldn't repeat their 4th place finish of last year but with 4 of the potential team running in the senior team this was perhaps inevitable.

A final finish place of 11th was well deserved on the day. Steve Davies, in his final stages of preparation for next weekend's London Marathon, led out the blue and green vests and recorded 34:21 over a long leg.

Davies handed on to Alan Maddocks, whose solid winter's training, paid off with a strong run of 19:33. Next out was Keith Mellor, returning after a period off, who recorded 21:01 before handing over to Trevor Hiscox.

Hiscox ran the second long leg for the Veterans coming back in 34:51 before handing over to the second 55 year old of the team Bob Scott. Scott ran 19:26 retaining the 12th place that Steve Davies had gained on the first leg. It was left to last leg runner Tim Raynor to move the team one place up to their final finishing position with a solid run of 18:57.

Several Mansfield runners made the trip to Lincoln recently for the annual Lincoln 10K. This is one of the biggest 10k races on the circuit attracting 4000 runners in great conditions and over a flat course.

Trevor Hiscox was first Mansfield athlete back in 112th position in a time of 39:31. Not far behind were Kirsty Huntingdon and Faz Fahy finishing 142nd and 143rd respectively both recording times of 40:17.

Alan Maddocks was 220th in 41:42, Chris Huntingdon 2098th in 58:14 and Helen Hoxha 2099th 58:15.

Away from the roads last weekend saw the start of the early season warm up meetings on the track. At Rotherham Amie Grainger was awarded a special prize by Rotherham Harriers for becoming the first ever woman to complete a steeplechase at the town's Herringthorpe Stadium whilst Lee Peters and Keira Abbott also competed there in the Senior Men's Javelin and Under 15 girls 800m.

Several Mansfield athletes took part in the Spring Spruce meeting at Harvey Hadden Stadium in Nottingham. Here Rachel Gair showed good early season form in the hammer with a throw of 53.31 metres. Rachel's Dad, and Coach, Paul did likewise in the Veteran Men's hammer throwing 39.13 metres.

Elsewhere on the field Becky Woolley continued her excellent form of last season with a throw of 29.12 metres in the Under 15 Girls javelin while there was a new PB for Adam Sansom with a time of 59.2 in the 400m Hurdles.

Mansfield's sprinters were out in force led by Dale Jacobs back from injury recording 11.5 in the 100 metres. Paul Wright and Stef Wilcockson both ran the 100m and 200m with times of 11.7/23.6 and 11.8/23.9 respectively.

Multi eventer Laura Bennett had an early outing in the 100m Hurdles – her first

year at this distance – recording a highly respectable 16.4 seconds.

This weekend sees Mansfield Harriers stage two events at the town's Berry Hill Park. On Friday evening (April 11th), starting at 7pm, there is a 5K Road Race sponsored by MANSFIELD BUILDING SOCIETY. The 2 lap course starts and finishes in Berry Hill Park and is open to anybody over the age of 14.

This is an ideal distance for anybody who has just started running and wants to enter their first race and all entrants will be guaranteed a warm welcome.

Entries will be taken on the night and there is a free supper for all entrants. Full details at www.mansfield-harriers.org

The following day Harriers host an open graded track and field meeting – again entries will be taken on the day and the programme starts at 1pm.

As the summer season approaches Mansfield Harriers are always keen to welcome new members of all ages (from 9 to Veterans) and of all standards. Training nights for track runners and road runners take place at Berry Hill Park from 6.15 on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.