

Mansfield Harriers' strength in depth was tested at the weekend as they had their first encounter in the British Athletics League along with a fixture 24 hours later in Midland League Division One.

With the closure of the Blackwall Tunnel and the resultant six mile queues for the Dartford Bridge testing the transport arrangements to Ashford Martin White's team should nonetheless be content with their fourth place finish in their first BAL outing.

White has nurtured the Mansfield squad all the way from the lower divisions of the Midland League and finally achieved his ambitions of British League status. His starry eyed ambitions of retirement from competition and moving into management were thwarted as he was forced back into action, the sprinter filling gaps in the Long Jump, Shot and Hammer!

Harriers finished fourth in the match and should be confident of holding their own in this league if not even seeking promotion within the next two years.

Steve Lisgo failed to make it back from the USA in time to compete but Luke Cragg did, securing second place in the A string 3K and taking victory in the B string 1500m. Danny Barks made it a double victory over 1500m, taking the A string in 3:55.10.

Lee Peters and Matt Woolley scored the second double of the day in the Javelin. Peters threw a best of 57.43m to take the A string and go within 25cms of his personal best whilst Woolley's victory in the B string was one of seven events that he performed in.

One of Woolley's other scores came in the Pole Vault where he took fourth spot in the A string with a clearance of 3.00m, Connor Mchale taking third in the B string with the same height.

Elsewhere on the track Sam Cordin and Aaron Aplin both took third in the 100m clocking 11.35 and 11.51 respectively. Cordin was fourth over 200m in 22.42 whilst Aplin took second in the B string in 22.68.

Paul Wright and Martin Cook were third and second respectively over 400m, recording times of 49.73 and 50.24 with Chris Brown taking third over 800m in 1:55.41. Brown had run a lifetime best of 1:50.21 earlier in the week at the BMC races in Stretford.

James Mee ran 9:01.65 to take second place over 3000m in the B string whilst Stef Wilcockson bagged two fourth places over the 110m and 400m Hurdles. Jonny Newell missed the 400m Hurdles because of traffic and was replaced by Jonathan Cordin who had only gone to watch his brother compete. Cordin finished fourth with Newell arriving in time to take third in the B string 110m Hurdles.

The action switched to Birmingham the following day for the second fixture of Division One in the Midland Track and Field League. Here Harriers are fighting for survival this season as naturally the focus is on preserving the hard fought for slot in the British League.

Against tough competition and with a severely weakened team every athlete fought hard for points but in the end the club could not escape sixth place spot and hard work will be required in the two remaining fixtures to avoid relegation.

Becky Woolley and Lucy Banner took maximum points in the Women's Javelin, Woolley producing a new PB of 39.44m which takes her to seventh spot on the UK U17 age group rankings.

Charlotte Gair and Claire Beaumont gained useful points in the Discus taking second in the A and B strings respectively whilst Becky Smith took maximum points in the B string Pole Vault, Chloe Elphick taking fourth in the A string. Elphick also came within 2cms of her PB in the Triple Jump, consolidating her sixth place UK age group ranking.

Elphick and Laura Bennett took good points in the 100m Hurdles both taking second spot in the B and A strings respectively.

Over 100m Neal Baines ran 11.5 and Dale Jacobs 11.6 to take fourth and third respectively in the A and B strings whilst over 200m Baines clocked 23.2 to take third in the B string, Aaron Aplin taking third in the A string in 22.5.

Greg Millar and Chris Ashmore threw 50.47m and 31.06m to secure double third in the Javelin.

Chris Brown, Daniel Winter and Danny Barks both joined Aaron Aplin in making the journey back from Ashford to compete on the track. Barks suffered a tight hamstring in his 800m but still managed to finish in third spot clocking 1:57.1. Brown was third in the 1500m in 4:03.0.

Winter recorded 10:36.1 in his second 3K steeplechase in 24 hours to finish fourth with Danny Heathcote, returning from a services stint in Afghanistan, running 10:37.8 to take second in the B string. Probably for the first time ever there were three Mansfield vests in this event, Steve Grainger guesting and coming home in a new PB of 11:01.0.

There were also three green and blue vests in the 3K, Chris Dale running 8:55.2 to take third in the A string, Alan Smith taking second in the B string and Ryan Saxton setting a new U17 club record as a guest.

Away from the track and onto the fells and Ellie Maddocks continued her new race career finishing as seventh lady home in the Austwick Amble fell race at Settle, completing the 8 mile, 1200 foot climb in 69:40.

At the Buxton Half Marathon, starting in the hot afternoon sun Steve Davies completed his 99th Half Marathon with a fourth place finish, taking the prize for the first VM50 in a time of 84:54. Clare Coombes was the first VL35 back in 1:54.47 and Maddy Collinge was first VL60 in 1:56.10.