

Mansfield Harrier Luke Cragg celebrated his Christmas break back home in Nottinghamshire with an outstanding performance at the highly competitive Ribble Valley 10K on December 27th.

Cragg, currently studying at Adams State University in the USA, went under 30 minutes for the first time in cold conditions on the Lancashire roads, a performance which took him into 16th spot on the UK senior 10K rankings for 2009.

In a race won in 29:21 by Tom Lancashire of Bolton Harriers, who represented GB over 1500m in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, only 5 seconds separated the next four athletes. Cragg eventually finished in fifth spot and was given the same time of 29:43 as the fourth placed athlete, Altrincham's Matt Barnes.

Billy Farquharson and James Mee provided good back up for Cragg with the trio taking the team prize. Farquharson, who runs first claim for Notts AC continued his return to racing and, running second claim for Mansfield, finished in 12th spot in a time of 30:20. Mee was 23rd in 31:08.

Disappointment struck a host of Mansfield athletes when the Southwell 10K, run on a fast out and back course from Caythorpe Cricket Club, had to be cancelled due to the poor weather conditions and dangerously icy roads.

Cross country action returns this weekend when the Nottinghamshire County Championships are again staged alongside the Derbyshire Championships. It is Derbyshire's turn to host this year and the event will be staged at Derby's Markeaton Park.

Mansfield Harriers will be hoping to retain some of the five team titles that they secured last year. The Senior Men are out to retain the title they snatched, for the first time in decades, from Notts AC and a strong field is entered.

Despite Luke Cragg and Steve Lisgo having to return to their studies in the USA a squad comprising James Mee, Stuart King, Ricky Soos, Doug Ross, Danny Barkes, Chris Dale, Chris Brown and Callum Cullen should be in with a good chance.

At U13 Boys level Sam Johnson will be out to retain his individual title although he will face strong challenges from team mates Lewis Ashmore and last years U11 Champion Alex Rieley. This trio, backed up by Bailey Wardle, will be hoping for team Gold.

Molly Johnson and Caelidh Ross, two of the three who took Gold at U13 Girls level in 2009, are still eligible to compete and, along with Nicole Goulding, winner of last years 2009 U11G race, should retain their title.

In the U15G race Chevelle Baxter, Ellie Saxton and Hannah Hardy all start and will be in a good chance of team Gold if they can produce strong runs.

The U17 Men lost out on the title last year to Notts AC by just one point so will be looking for revenge this year whilst the U17/U20 Women are guaranteed Gold if they finish a team as no other clubs have entered sufficient athletes.



Ribble Valley Images

Top Left – Luke Cragg

Top Right – Billy Farquharson

Bottom Left – James Mee