

Mansfield Harriers Report 11th October 2009

In warm and still conditions more akin to summer racing Mansfield Harriers kicked off their winter league campaign with the first fixture of the North Midlands Cross Country League at Derby's Markeaton Park.

Danny Barkes opened his winter account with an impressive run in the 3 lap senior men's race. Looking comfortable throughout he finished in 8th place in a race won by Derby AC's Alex Pilcher. Former Mansfield Half Marathon winner and Mansfield resident Billy Farquharson, running for Notts AC, returned to racing with an impressive second place finish.

Disaster struck Mark Johnson with less than a mile of the race to go when he pulled up with a calf problem. Johnson was having an excellent run, just having moved up into 12th place, and will be hoping he can cure it in time for next weekend's National Road Relays.

Chris Brown finished strongly just missing out on the top twenty taking 21st spot with Doug Ross the next blue and green vest back in 35th.

Steve Davies showed that he is over the injury and illness problems he had earlier in the year with a strong run to take 39th place. Davies then went on to travel a round trip of 400 miles the following day to compete at Bridgend in the Gwent League. Hoping to impress the Welsh selectors ahead of selection for the British Masters international fixture next month he completed the 10K course in 37:50 and as 2nd V50 he will be hoping he has done enough to secure a place when the team is announced later this week.

Tim Raynor (49th) and Terry Ashmore (94th) were the only other men to make the top 100.

Natalie Yates was another Harrier to have an excellent race on the parkland course, finishing in 5th in the Senior Ladies event. This race was won by Sian Edwards of Kettering Harriers, a class runner who finished 10th in the World Junior Cross Country Championships in 2007. With Miriam Tedder finishing in 22nd and Kahli Johnson in 23rd Harriers go into the next match in 2nd place team spot.

Eva Williams, Clare Coombes and Wanda Curley took Mansfield's Vet Ladies into second spot overall after this first race – Williams returning in 26th, Coombes in 43rd and Curley 47th.

Great packing from Mansfield's Under 13 Boys made sure of the top spot in the team event. Sam Johnson, Lewis Ashmore and Alex Rieley took 2nd, 3rd and 4th individually with Johnson just 4 seconds behind the Nene Valley AC winner.

There were also top team spots for the Under 15 girls and Under 17 women, Demi-Jade Jakymelen taking 2nd spot in the Under 15s with Chevelle Baxter showing no signs of nerves as she moved up an age group to take 4th and Ellie Saxton finishing in 9th. At Under 17 level Hannah Wragg was first harrier back in 2nd place with Claire Talbot (6th) and Rachel Brandham (10th) making up the team.

With 3 top 7 spots the Under 13 Girls could have expected to be leading the way in the team event however City of Stoke AC had other ideas and with a 1st, 2nd and 9th they go into match 2 in the lead. Caelidh Ross led home the Mansfield trio with her 5th place finish, Nicole Goulding finishing in 6th and Molly Johnson in 7th.

Strength in depth was missing in the Under 15 and Under 17 Boys events, Jake Lancaster the highest placed Under 15 in 8th spot and Richie Talbot the first home in the Under 17 race finishing in 11th.

OTHER MANSFIELD FINISHERS: Under 13 Girls – 8: Claire Norris, 11: Emma Heath, 20; Rachel Norris. Under 15 Girls – 11: Charlotte Bellingham, 14: Hannah Hardy, 17: Alice Mortiboy, 18: Tamsin Smith, 33: Robyn Foster. Under 17 Women – 22: Christie Childs, 23: Laura Brown. Sen/Vets Ladies – 54: Anne Brown, 60: Carol Hartin, 61: Tina Green, 64: Sue Bellingham, 70: Clare O’Mara, 71: Lynne O’Reilly, 72: Louise Harrison, 74: Denise Winfield, 80: Michelle Peet, 81: Gina Radford. Under 13 Boys – 8: James O’Mara, 9: Finny Quilty, 19: Ben Hardy. Under 15 Boys – 30: Jordan Boam, 43: Jonny Brown. Under 17 Men – 15: Ryan Childs, 18: Tom O’Mara, 24: Alex Heath. Sen/Vet Men – 106: Graeme Wilkinson, 112: Trevor Hiscox, 124: John Harrison, 130: James Bellingham, 131: Jason Foster, 154: Julian Wood, 161: Keith Mellor, 169: Steve Childs, 182: John O’Reilly, 192: Dave Rose, 199: Steve Wragg, 210: Alan Smith.

Just as Mansfield’s men achieve National League status, the women will be looking to strengthen their side next season after the resignation of two athletes – both of whom are going on to compete first claim for National League teams. Current rules preclude second claim athletes from competing in the Midland League meaning that Harriers will be unable to call on Rachel Gair and Lucy Spray next season.

Gair is currently ranked 8th in the UK in the Women’s Hammer, an event she took up after initially joining the club as an Under 13 sprinter. Commenting on her decision, the 23 year old said “After over 10 years at Mansfield Harriers it was a really tough decision to leave – the club has been a big part of my life and have helped me enormously. Having thrown over 60 metres this year my next goal is to represent England at next year’s Commonwealth Games in Delhi. To achieve this I need a higher level of competition on a more regular basis and my best chance of getting this is at Trafford AC, where I am already a higher claim member”.

As well as representing the club Rachel has also been Team Manager of the Women’s team and an active committee member and she went on to add “This is definitely not goodbye – I’ll still be training at Berry Hill and will be supporting the club in any way I can”.

400m Hurdler Lucy Spray who is continuing her studies at Cambridge University where she is also President of the Athletics Club is also leaving in search of National League action.