

Top flight athletics action will come to Mansfield for the first time ever next year as Mansfield men's team gained promotion to the prestigious British Athletics League. The team stormed to victory in the Qualifying match at Abingdon and, along with second placed Glasgow AC, will join Division 4 of the League.

Team Manager Martin White has nurtured a young team over the last few years and taken them from the depths of the Midland League, steadily climbing the Divisions, eventually becoming Division One champions. White was absent on the day due to his holidays but should be proud of his achievements, and those of stand in team manager Stef Wilcockson.

Harriers will face tough opposition from Bedford & County AC, Medway & Maidstone, Channel Islands, Glasgow AC and Havering Mayesbrook but the strong team spirit will hold them together and the next target will surely be promotion to Division 3.

Ricky Soos, Olympic semi-finalist over 800m in Athens in 2004, returned to competitive track action for Mansfield for the first time in 5 years, running to victory over 1500m in 3:53.92. After a series of injuries resulting in long lay-offs from the sport, Soos surprised the two Eritrean athletes running for Glasgow AC who hadn't expected any major competition and obviously hadn't been watching the recent form – Soos having run 1:49.21 over 800m in Poland earlier in the week – a performance that moved the Loughborough based athlete back into the top 25 of the UK rankings.

Harriers had a good start to the match with Adam Sansom and Stef Wilcockson both producing new personal best performances in the 400m Hurdles, Sansom finishing 5th in the A string in 55.32 and Wilcockson 2nd in the B string in 55.90. Sansom also took second in the B string 200m in 22.75.

Success continued with Chris Brown and Danny Barks taking 1st and 2nd respectively in A and B races of the 800m and Paul Gair and Steve Woolley both taking 3rd in the Hammer, Gair just 3cms short of his PB with a best throw of 43.20m. Barks also took 2nd in the B string 1500m and Brown did likewise in the 3k Steeplechase, a race in which James Mee produced a new PB of 9:29.11 to finish second in the A string. Mee also finished 3rd in the 5000m with Stuart King 4th in the B race.

Richard Woolley and Lee Peters produced a clean sweep in the Javelin – Woolley unleashing a throw of 55.69 metres to win the A string and Peters winning the B with a 53.57 metre throw. Woolley also finished 4th in the B string Shot with brother Matt also gaining useful points with season's best performances in the Discus, Shot and Pole Vault.

There was a new PB for Sam Cordin over 200m. His time of 21.96 secs secured 3rd place in the A race and was Cordin's first ever wind legal sub 22 secs run. Cordin also took third spot in the A string 100m in 11.19 with Neal Baines doing likewise in the B race in 11.38. Martin Cook ran a season's best of 49.49 over 400m to win the B race with Paul Wright 3rd in the A race in 49.97.

After disqualification for the 4x100m Relay team the match ended on a high with the 4x400m quartet of Sam Cordin, Ricky Soos, Martin Cook and Paul Wright clocking a new club record of 3:18.50 to take victory in the last event of the match.

With the first choice athletes in action on the track the pressure was on others at Birmingham's Sutton Park where the Midland Road Relays clashed with the BAL Qualifier at Abingdon. The Midlands event acts as a qualifier for the National Road Relay Championships at the same venue on October 17th and with the first choice athletes available to run in this event, the team had to secure a top 25 finish to ensure qualification.

Mark Johnson led off for Harriers and demonstrated fine form again as his return to racing action continues apace. Johnson recorded a time of 19:10 for the 3.5 mile lap before handing on to Steve Grainger for the second lap. Grainger managed to hang in amongst a tough field and despite losing a few places handed on to Danny Heathcote for leg 3 with the team still in a strong position.

Heathcote ran strongly, producing a sub 20 lap of 19:51 and handed on to Mike Mumford, who produced a good balanced run and showed that his hard work over the summer is beginning to pay off.

Pete Stafford took over from Mumford and ran his usual well paced, controlled race before handing on to Doug Ross, whose job it was to ensure Harriers finished in the top 25 – which he made sure of with a 25th placed finish!

Natalie Yates ran a strong first leg in the Ladies race bringing the team back in 8th position with an individual time of 15:49 over the 2.5 mile lap. Yates handed on to Amie Grainger, making her senior debut in these relays and the youngster ran a well controlled lap to keep Harriers in a strong position.

Jackie Massey was next out, returning to racing action whilst still recovering from a broken arm after a fall during a training run. Massey produced a determined leg, handing over for the final lap to Kahli Johnson, who knocked a minute off her last outing over this course.

The ladies also had a B team out with Clare Coombes, Emma Wilkinson, Gina Radford and Jane Stafford making up the quartet whilst the men only managed half a second team through Steve Davies, Tim Raynor and Graeme Wilkinson.

Action returned to Sutton Park again on Sunday when it was the turn of the young athletes and both the Under 13 Girls and Under 13 Boys teams picked up medals.

It was the Girls race first, Molly Johnson leading out and running a time of 15:47 before handing on to Caelidh Ross who clocked 15:40. Ella Shirley brought the trio home in second place behind a strong Halesowen team to take the silver.

Lewis Ashmore led off for the Boys, clocking the fastest Mansfield leg with at a time of 14:17. Sam Johnson took over on second leg running 14:36 with Bailey Wardle bringing the team home in Bronze medal spot in a time of 14:50.

There were also top 10 finishes for the B teams of Claire Norris, Emma Heath and Rachel Norris (8th) and Alex Rieley, James O'Mara and George King (7th).

Demi-Jade Jakymelen led off for the Under 15 Girls running 16:01 with Chevelle Baxter (15:24) and Hayley Silver (15:56) running on 2nd and 3rd, the team finishing just outside the top 10 in 11th position.

Performance of the day came from Jake Lancaster on the first leg of the Under 15 Boys race running a speedy 14:04. Lancaster handed on to Jordan Boam (15:45) with David Wilkinson anchoring home the team to 13th position in a time of 15:56.

The Under 17 Girls were unlucky to just miss out on a medal, finishing in 4th spot. Claire Talbot led off and came home in a time of 15:03, handing on to Rachel Brandham (14:49) before Shannon Boardman ran the final leg in 15:33.

Ryan Saxton and Ryan Childs recorded identical times of 13:25 over the first two legs of the Under 17 Boys race with Richie Talbot not far behind, running 15:33 on the final leg.

2 Harriers ran in the Great North Run in hot conditions. Keith Cook clocked 1:46.20 and Gill Leccia ran a time of 2:08.30.