

## **Over 100 Mansfield Harriers athletes have been in action over the last week as the summer season began in earnest.**

Solid performances earlier in the month at the Midland Road Relay Championships had seen both Men's and Women's teams qualify for last weekends National Championships at Birmingham's Sutton Park. Men's Team manager Carl Emery had experienced a nightmare week prior to the event with injury hitting athletes on a daily basis meaning 6 changes to the 12 man line up that finished 9th at the Midland event.

With 12 laps of Sutton park to go – six over a long leg of 5.4 miles and 6 over a short leg of 3 miles - ever improving James Mee led off for Mansfield on the first leg and came back in 30th position against some of the country's top runners. Mee's time of 28:17 was a 30 second improvement on the previous personal best he posted 3 weeks earlier at the Midland event.

Mee handed on to Steve Lisgo for the first of the short legs and despite taking 3 runners to come back in 27th Lisgo was disappointed with his time of 15:38. Next out was Craig Kelly who continued his comeback to competitive racing with a highly credible time of 31:27 on the long leg. Kelly had raced for the first time in several years earlier in the week and his legs felt the affect of 2 races in 3 days.

Luke Cragg took over the 4th leg with Harriers in 38th place and took 5 athletes over the short 3 mile leg to come back in 33rd. Cragg, recently announced as Athletics Weekly Young Athlete of the month, has been undergoing blood tests after suffering from fatigue and considering this should be pleased with his time of 15:30.

One of 6 veteran athletes in the Mansfield line up Doug Ross was the next runner out and produced another strong run returning from a long leg in 31:18 before handing on to Chris Brown. Brown is another athlete that has been suffering recently with injuries and is hoping to return to fitness for his preferred track running over the summer. With a run of 16:30 he retained the 34th position that Ross came home in.

Marathon veteran Steve Davies took on the 7th leg and despite losing 6 places produced a time of 32:41. Carl Emery continued his return to form with a fine performance on the 7th leg. In an event that he has always said is the best of the year Emery showed the sort of form that he has been capable of with a run of 17:12 making up 3 places.

John Farquharson took over from Emery to run the 5th long leg of the day and in his first race for several months came back in 34:15 before handing over to Steve Grainger to run the 10th leg. Grainger had missed the first fixture in the Notts Road Race league earlier in the week after suffering with a virus but managed to run a second quicker than his run at the Midland Champs – making up 3 places for Harriers and coming back in 17:06.

Trevor Hiscox, drafted into the team late, yet again showed what a great club athlete he is running along leg despite being entered in the Sheffield Half Marathon the next day. Hiscox ran his leg in 34:51 before handing on to the 6th veteran in the team Alan Maddocks who produced a personal best of 19:27 to bring Harriers home in 43rd position with an overall time of 4:54:12.

Women's team manager Vanda Curley also changed half of her team from the six that finished in 9th at the Midland Championships. The team were led out on their 6 stage race by Lisa Farquharson who improved on her performance 3 weeks earlier over the same 3 mile lap to finish in 18:56. Lisa handed on to Kirsty Huntingdon who ran another strong leg to come home in 18:55 just two seconds slower than her run at the Midlands bringing Harriers back in 36th position.

Miriam Tedder gained another 2 places on the third leg and took a second off her personal best on this course recording 20:26. Eva Williams, one of the 3 changes in the team, retained 34th position with a run of 21:27 before handing on to Helen Scott who continued her return to form with a time of 22:13.

Tina Green was last out for Mansfield returning with a time of 22:36 to bring the team home in 39th position with an overall time of 2:04:22.

Earlier in the week 35 blue and green vests turned out for the first fixture in the Notts AAA Road Race League over a picturesque course at Epperstone. James Mee was first Harrier home in 31:49. After taking it very steady over the first mile Mee began to pick up the pace – and pick off the runners – to record an excellent early season performance.

With 11 of Mansfield's top 17 finishers in this same race last year missing through illness and injury it was always going to be a tough team event for Harriers. However a fantastic comeback race for Craig Kelly, on the day of his 28th birthday, lifted the spirits. Kelly, who has been out of the sport for several years concentrating instead on football, had an excellent run to take 15th position and the team will be relying on him producing similar performances for the rest of the summer.

Doug Ross was next Harrier home in 17th place with Pete Stafford only 30 seconds behind him in 25th. Another great comeback followed with Team Manager Carl Emery coming back from a long period of illnesses and injuries to finish 34th. This was a great run for Carl who, with a bit more serious training behind him, will be hoping for a top 20 finish before the end of the season.

Steve Davies, fresh from his 47th Marathon and now in training for his 48th later in the year in New York, ran a solid race to finish in 39th with another London Marathon finisher Rob Smith coming home in 50th place.

Ross, Stafford, Davies and Smith scored for a Veteran Men's Team which finished 2nd on the night and which, with a few of the missing athletes hopefully returning for the next fixture, should be capable of pushing for 1st.

The Senior Men's Team finished 6th – a position they'll definitely be hoping to improve on next time out. Joining Mee, Kelly and Emery as scorers in this race were Steve Lisgo (68th), Mark Jenkins (73rd) and Trevor Hiscox (90th).

The women's team, who took the overall league title in 2007, were again weakened by injury and had to be content with 4th place in this first race.

Lisa Farquharson led the way for the ladies and, despite struggling throughout the race with a knee problem, did well to finish in 4th place. Miriam Tedder continued to display her improvement with a 14th place finish and Eva Williams ran well to take the spot as third counter with a 29th place.

The Veteran Ladies Team finished in 3rd place thanks and were led home by another athlete making a welcome comeback – Tanya Turner finishing in 40th position. Ever reliable Maddy Collinge was next back in 45th closely followed by London marathon finisher Maz Lee-Cerrino in 47th.

Other Mansfield positions: MEN - 97: Marcus McCarthy, 108: Clive Russell, 110: Danny Barkes, 116: Alan Crewe, 119: Les Chambers, 124: Alan Maddocks, 134: Jeremy Kirk, 164: Keith Mellor, 178: Daniel Ward, 182: Philip Shaw, 197: Ivan Colton, 207: Adey Bellingham, 211: Dave Ward. LADIES: 37: Kate Raynor, 50: Tina Green, 51: Vanda Curley, 52: Jane Stafford, 79: Denise Winfield, 86: Julie Grainger

The first fixture in the Booth Decorators Road Race League at Derby's Darley Abbey Park saw 25 Harriers make the journey with several younger athletes making their debut on the roads.

On the night it was the junior athletes that shone with 15 year old Daniel Winter coming home in overall 7th place and taking first place in the Junior Men's event. With a time of 25:40 Winter was mixing with some quality road runners from across Notts and Derbys.

Next home were 17 year old Luke Marshall and 14 year old Richie Talbot in 32nd and 34th respectively and taking 4th and 5th places in the Junior Men's rankings. John Wood in 45th and Trevor Hiscox in 50th were the next men home and were joined by 55th placed Henry Partridge and Bryan Borrill in 77th to make up the 7 counters for the men's team which finished in 5th place on the night.

It was another youngster that led the way home for the women – 14 year old Claire Talbot finishing in 62nd overall. Fast improving Talbot, who ran 29:25, also took the crown as first Junior Lady.

Talbot was joined by another 2 juniors in the team event to secure a 3rd place team finish, Hannah Wragg finished in 76th overall and Kate Raynor in 124th.

Other Mansfield positions: 94: Darren Clarke, 118: John O'Reilly, 129: Holly Blount, 134: Adey Bellingham, 144: Daniel Ward, 145: Gina Radford, 158: Julian Wood, 160: Lewis Cortin, 163: Jo Bettison, 168: Dave Ward, 180: Kirsty Saunby, 189: Lynne Talbot, 203: Jane Wragg, 204: Tanya Partridge, 208: Michelle Peet

Mansfield's Under 20 team had their first outing in the National Junior League at Birmingham's Alexander Stadium. Competing in the Midland Premier Division the competition here is tough and provides a good test for the youngsters. With competition from Birmingham's premier club Birchfield AC, West Wales (a composite club representing many of the clubs West of Cardiff), Tamworth, Cardiff AC, Cannock and Staffs, Notts AC and a combined Chesterfield/Amber Valley Club the opposition draws from much bigger areas than Mansfield.

On the day Mansfield's youngsters were outstanding and rallied to produce one of the club's best performances ever in this league finishing in second place. The points table went to the wire with Harriers finishing on 396 just 5 points ahead of Cannock & Staffs and 13 ahead of Notts AC.

James Mee, competing in some of the toughest events on the track, added to his

road form of the last week with wins in the 3000 metres, 2000m Steeplechase and a second in the 400m Hurdles along with 5th place in the 1500m. Meanwhile Sam Cordin produced encouraging early season performances in the 100m and 200m despite still recovering from a chest infection to take 3rd and 2nd place respectively.

Mee's early season form is being matched by that of Adam Sansom who produced a personal best in the 400m Hurdles. Sansom, still an Under 17 athlete, was racing for the first time over the higher Under 20 Hurdles but this didn't stop him producing a fine performance of 58.31. This was followed up with a 3rd place in the 'B' string Long Jump and victory in the 'B' string Triple Jump before anchoring home the 4x400m relay team.

On the field Charlotte Gair produced yet another personal best in the Discus recording a qualifying distance for the English Schools Championships at this early stage of the season. Gair, who earlier in the week had been at an English Schools organised, and Sainsbury's sponsored, mentoring session where guest mentors included Olympic Gold winning sprinter Jason Gardener, threw 35.44 metres to take first place spot. She added to her Discus PB with an excellent throw of 31.44 metres to take 3rd place in the Hammer.

All rounder Richard Woolley won the javelin with a throw of 58.20 metres after taking 3rd in the Long Jump with a leap of 6.08 metres. Meanwhile Tom Bell took 2nd in the Triple Jump and newcomer Danny Martin won the 'B' string Javelin with 43.77 metres.

Mansfield's female middle distance athletes again produced the goods to take valuable points. The 800 metres saw a 4th place in the 'A' string for Georgia Milton and 3rd place in the 'B' string for Hannah Wragg. Dea-Anna Davey ran a good race against tough opposition to finish 3rd in the 'A' string 1500m with Laura Brown backing her up well with 2nd place in the 'B' string. In the 3000m Emma Wilkinson took 3rd spot in the 'A' string with Kate Raynor coming home first in the 'B' event.

Success continued over the hurdles and barriers starting with a strong debut run over 400m Hurdles from Jess Grieves who took second place with an excellent time of 68.95 seconds. Laura Bennett and Vanessa Harrison continued the success with 3rd place in the 'A' string and 1st place in the 'B' string respectively in the 100m Hurdles. Switching from hurdles to barriers Amie Grainger came home 3rd in the 'A' string 1500m Steeplechase with Holly Blount, on her debut in this event, taking 3rd in the 'B' string.

The heavy rain arrived in time for the 4 x 400m relays but this didn't deter the girls' quartet from smashing the Under 17 club record with a time of 4:14.21 bringing them home in 3rd place. Led out by Emily Reeve the team started strongly and picked up pace as Reeve handed over to Dea-Anna Davey on second leg. Davey picked off another athlete to hand on to Amie Grainger for the third leg. Grainger went out strong and with 150 metres to go passed the Cardiff athlete to take Harriers into third position. Georgia Milton took the baton for the final leg to bring Harriers home safely and to gain valuable points.