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Bedford and County AC Newsletter

June 2024

Newsletter

This is the ninth edition of Bedford and County's quarterly newsletter. If you have anything you would like to contribute to the tenth edition, which will be out in early September, email webmaster@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk.

Summer 2024 Fixtures

The fixture list for summer 2024 is up on our website. Go to <https://bedfordandcountyac.org.uk/index.php/performance/fixtures> to see the full list. But here are some of the 2024 Track and Field League dates for your diary:

National Athletics League:

- 22nd June (Leigh)
- 7th July (**Bedford**)
- 3rd August (Finals - TBC)

Southern Athletics League [SAL]

- 15th June (Luton)
- 14th July (Oxford)
- 17th August (Oxford)

Eastern Masters Athletic Club [EMAC]

- 5th June (**Bedford**)
- 3rd July (Milton Keynes)
- 31st July (Sandy)
- 14th September or 15th September (Finals - TBC)

National Lower Youth Development League [LYDL]

- 16th June (Bracknell – TBC)
- 21st July (Thames Valley Athletic Centre)

Eastern Young Athlete League [EYAL]

- 28th July (**Bedford**)

Open Meetings

- Watford Harriers run a very popular open meeting every other Wednesday during the summer, starting on 3rd April. These focus on middle distance events for Under 13s up to Seniors, although there is often also one sprint event and one field event. For more information, see <https://watfordharriers.org.uk/open-meets>.
- Two other open meetings tend to be popular with younger athletes and provide a greater range of events than Watford. These are Corby and Kettering. For Corby, you can enter at <https://entry4sports.co.uk/#/>, and for Kettering, you can enter via <https://meets.rosterathletics.com/public/competitions>.

Club Record Breakers

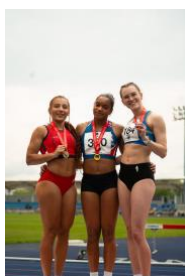
Congratulations to the athletes who have broken club records since the last edition of the newsletter.

Athlete	Category	Event	New Club Record
Jasmine Wilkins	Senior Women & U20 Women	100m	11.43 seconds
Etienne Maughan	Senior Women	100m Hurdles	13.54 seconds
Lois Fordham	U15 Girls Indoor Best	Pole Vault	2.55 metres
Edith Caux	W65	200m	32.11 seconds
Edith Caux	W65	400m	74.12 seconds
Stephen Simmons	Senior Men Indoor Best	Heptathlon	5069 points
Stephen Simmons	Senior Men Indoor Best	60m Hurdles	8.34 seconds
Jemma Eastwood	W45	Pole Vault	3.32 metres
Richard Martin	M40	Hammer	55.94 metres
Emily Elphick	U13 Girls	Javelin	33.72 metres

Outstanding Individual Performances

Great starts to the season for Etienne and Jasmine

Etienne Maughan, now at Newcastle University, has had an outstanding opening to the 2024 outdoor season.



She started at the Loughborough Open where she finished second in 13.81. Two weeks later she made a big step forward and won the BUCS Championship, 13.62 and 13.59 in the final. From this she was selected to represent England at the Loughborough International. In a field that included Katarina Johnson Thompson, medal winning heptathlete and Alicia Barrett, a seasoned international, Etienne won convincingly in another PB (and club record) of 13.54.

Etienne is looking forward with confidence to the rest of the Summer season.

Jasmine Wilkins has also been in impressive early-season form, breaking the club's Senior Women's and Under 20 Women's 100m record twice. Jasmine's first club record of 11.60 seconds came whilst running at the UCONN Northeast Challenge meeting in the United States on 13th April, and she followed this up with a stunning 11.43 second 100m against top-class opposition in the Stratford Speed Grand Prix on 26th May. But for the wind, which was marginally over the 2.0 limit, this performance would have put Jasmine 11th in the UK Senior Women's rankings (as it is, her 11.60 seconds currently places her third in this year's Under 20 Women's UK rankings).

British Universities Silver for Tia

Tia Wilson claimed 5000m silver at the British Universities Championships at Sportcity on 6th May in a time of 16:03.72. Tia is currently 11th in the UK Senior Women's rankings for 3000m with her 8:57.14 PB set at Birmingham on 27th April.

Jack Leads Senior Distance Pack



There have been some impressive early season distance performances from the Senior men, none more so than Jack Goodwin's stunning 13:35.77 5000m PB set at the Ifam track in Brussels on Saturday 25th May. Slicing a huge 16 seconds off his previous best, Jack's time was only just over a second outside of Mark Draper's Senior Men's club record, which was set in 2011. Jack's time currently ranks him 14th in this year's UK rankings.

Also notable have been:

- Ed Blythman's 14:12.28 5000m PB set at Battersea on 26th April
- Noah Campion's 14:15.13 5000m PB set at Battersea on 26th April – Noah is currently 5th in the UK Under 20 rankings for 5000m.

County Championships

There were many excellent performances at the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire County Championships at Woodside Stadium, Watford on 11th and 12th May. Congratulations to the following, who set County Best Performances:

- Thaila-Jade Mason: Under 17 Women's 80m Hurdles (11.87 s) and Long Jump (5.92 m)
- Lois Fordham: Under 15 Girls Pole Vault (2.50 m)
- Emily Elphick: Under 13 Girls Javelin (33.72 m)

Performance of the day must go to Emily who not only set a new U13G Javelin Club record, but also a new Championship Best Performance of 33.72m, bettering the Club record by 2.22m and the CBP by 6.64m.

The U13s won 9 gold, 5 silver and 2 bronze, U15s 10 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze, U17s 10 golds, 9 silvers and 6 bronze and U20/Seniors 11 gold, 4 silver and 4 bronze.

The club won all top 3 places in the following events:

- U13B 800m 1st Ethan, 2nd Jake, 3rd Thomas
- U17W 100m 1st Thaila, 2nd Iyimefin, 3rd Katy
- U17M 800m 1st James, 2nd Mackenzie, 3rd Archie
- U17M 1500m 1st James, 2nd Mackenzie, 3rd Isaac
- U17W Long Jump 1st Thaila, 2nd Holly, 3rd Katy

(And also a special note that a little further north Richard Martin became Yorkshire County Hammer Champion for the eleventh year in a row). The club's County Champions are:

- Sophia Wing
- Noah Graham
- Bronwyn Phillips
- Thaila-Jade Mason
- Ethan Gibbs
- James Prior
- Lily Farr
- Lyla Danobrega
- Rosie Cusack
- Eleanor Smith
- James Prior
- Milly Dunger
- Thaila-Jade Mason
- Rafi Beddington

- *Zaphaniah Bryan*
- *Gracie Wall*
- *Jake Wallace*
- *Archie Ashpole*
- *Jessica Frost*
- *Oskar Eastwood*
- *Lois Fordham*
- *Casey-Mae Chandler*
- *Mia Flynn*
- *Emily Elphick*

Meanwhile, at the Cambridgeshire County Championships, four Bedford & County AC athletes came away with medals:

- *Martha – U15 girls’ javelin – 3rd 24.28m*
- *Tilly – U17 Women’s triple jump 2nd 10.74m*
- *Eva – U20 Women’s triple jump 1st 10.58m, long jump – 3rd 4.74m*
- *Louis – U20 Men’s Javelin – 1st 43.20m*

News From the Teams

Junior Athletes Get The Season Off To An Amazing Start

The Club’s youngest athletes have had an outstanding start to the season with multiple PBs, SBs and top 3 placings being obtained in every match.

We have currently had two EYAL matches and one YDL match. We first travelled to Stevenage in the EYAL where we finished 3rd and backed this up with another 3rd place finish at Watford. In the first match of the YDL, at home, we finished 1st.

The recent Bedfordshire County Championships produced 29 gold medalists, 17 silver medalists and 12 bronze medalists, whilst at the Cambridgeshire Championships we had a silver and bronze.

The outstanding performance of the season so far has to go to Emily in the County Championships U13G javelin where she beat the club record by 2.22m and smashed the Championship Best Performance by 6.64m.

The increasing strength in depth and camaraderie between the athletes is an asset to the club. It is great to see numbers increasing back to where we were before the pandemic.

We would also like to thank all the parents that have helped with our officiating duties and transporting the athletes to and from fixtures and training. And additionally, we would like to thank all the coaches who have prepared the athletes for this season, especially as there are many athletes who are new to competing.

Tina & Jodi,

Girls’ & Boys’ Team Managers

Road Relays

The Senior Men’s team finished ninth in National Twelve Stage Road Relays at Sutton Park on Saturday 6th April, with Jack Goodwin (26:04) running the joint sixth fastest long leg of the day, and Ben Davies (15:27) the tenth fastest short leg. The team had previously finished fourth in the Southern 12 stage road relays at Milton Keynes on Sunday 24th March with the B team a commendable 26th. Jack Goodwin's 25:40 was the fastest long leg of the day, and Noah Campion's 14:54 was the fourth fastest short leg.

Jim Black’s Endurance Group

Quite a few members of our group have been concentrating on longer distances over the spring with Half marathons been used in the Marathon program. Several PB's have been improved during this process including Ben Munns at Cambridge, Hannah Bolton at Bath and Sean Crawley at Reading in half marathons.

Moving up to the full marathon distance we had 2 athletes at Paris, 1 Brighton, 4 Manchester, 6 London, 1 Newport and 1 Milton Keynes. All had different targets for each race ranging from making their Debut, qualifying for a better starting place next year, improving their PB and having a good day / weekend racing. Many of the group achieved their goals and congratulations to Mark Allen, Ed Schofield, Emily Bousfield, Jenny Dunkley and Sean Crawley who all improved their PB's.

Camp Croatia 2024

An idea was initially toyed with last year to plan a trip which involved training away from home, and into the unknown. After initial discussions and pre-planning, the trip became a reality. This year members of Jim Black's training group were fortunate enough to run away quite literally! to Pula in Croatia, thanks to Claire Perusko and her family. The training camp was attended by Mollie Blizzard, Adam Harris, Charlotte Kent, Emma Smith, Hayley Vinnicombe, Claire Perusko and Jim Black ran.

As we all know as athletes sometimes we can't see the future and injury rears its ugly head. However, this trip proved positive for some injured athletes who were also able to attend and provide bike support aiding their own recovery.

Andre Bonadies and Mark Allan were on bike and photo duties and were able to enjoy time away.

The trip was three days away from the stress of everyday life. Day 1 involved an introduction to Croatia, a welcome run in the form of an out and back. Day 2 consisted of a warm and undulating Pyramid session focusing on speed, and the final day culminated with a longer run around the sea and hidden areas of Pula.

Sometimes in running it's good to aid our mental health and well-being so with hard work comes play.... After a recovery dip in a (Cold sea) each day there were many other delights including the local delicacies.

One particular treat that stood out for our members was a boat trip across the island which Claire's family kindly took them out for - the views were stunning and they were treated to sightings of dolphins!

All in all it was a successful and stunning trip for all involved and something that will be looked at and hopefully repeated for next year. If anyone has any suggestions or is interested in planning for another camp for 2025, please speak to Jim.

The Wheelchair Racing Section

The Club's development plan identifies that the Wheelchair Racing section will endeavor to attract at least 2 new participants each year. For the second year running we have achieved this - fairly recently we have welcomed Bella Luckett and Tammy Harrison. Both have made good progress settling in to their chairs and beginning to put into practice the new skills they are learning. It will not be too long before we see them competing.

There has only been one major athletics meeting recently. At Coventry on a wet and chilly weekend Varun Bandi and Katie Connolly both competed in a range of track events. Conditions were generally against fast times, but Varun did manage to lower his Club 1500m time which now stands at 4mins 28.08, 15 seconds quicker than his previous one. Varun has also received confirmation that he is one of a few Bedford young sportspeople to have been awarded a Greenwich Leisure Sport Foundation Award.

We have been fortunate enough to have been awarded a grant from the Wixamtree Trust to enable the upgrading of several racing chair frames that we have collected, but which need new parts etc. to make them usable.



The Wheelchair Racing Supporters Club has had its second meeting recently and plans have been prepared to attract more funding, develop social activities and increase membership. It was also agreed that the section would have a stand at the River Festival in July to publicise itself to a wider audience.

Howard Darbon, Manager

Blast from the Past – Bannister Scales Athletics Everest



It was 70 years ago on 6th May 1954 that a 25 year old medical student scaled the athletics Everest of the sub 4-minute mile. It had long been thought by many scientists as beyond the limits of human capability. Many had tried, but none could get closer than 4 minutes 1.3 seconds. However, Bannister, his training partners Chris Chataway and Chris Brasher and his coach Franz Stampfl made it their ambition to succeed, as did the Australian, John Landy and the American Wes Santee.

But Bannister might have been two years retired in 1954, had he won the Olympics in Helsinki in 1952. His light training schedule had prepared him to run a heat and a final, but when he learned that a semi-final was to be inserted, he knew that he would not have the stamina to race on three consecutive days and still be competitive in the final. He was right – he finished 4th, and so set himself up to become one of the most famous names in athletics history.

As a medical student working in a hospital, he had very limited time for training with only three 45 minutes sessions squeezed into his lunch break, so he had to make the most of those precious minutes. Training was going well, until at one point the times would not come down. They decided they were stale and came up with a unique remedy - a weekend rock climbing in Scotland! Returning refreshed, training times tumbled, he was back on course and the scene was set.

Meanwhile, Landy had run six times under 4 minutes 3 seconds and was planning a campaign in Scandinavia where fast tracks and good competition beckoned and sub 4 would have been a certainty. Bannister could not delay. Yet conditions at Oxford's Iffley road cinder track were not ideal for there was a strong wind, which would have destroyed their chances and Bannister wanted to call it off. However, the flag on St. George's nearby church, famously dropped shortly before the race. It was a case of now or never. Bannister said "It's on"

In his anxiety, Brasher, who was due to pace the first two laps, false started, but they got away at the second time of asking, with Brasher setting the pace. (57.5) but Bannister was so full of running that it felt slow and he shouted "Faster, Chris, Faster!" Brasher ignored him and passed the half mile in 1 min 58 – perfect timing. Chataway then took over and they passed three quarter mark in 3 minutes 0.7 seconds. With 300 yards to go, Bannister pounced driving all the way down the straight and throwing himself across the line. In a mixture of elation and fatigue, "I felt I must have done it, but was my mind playing tricks" It was minutes before the announcer gave a long drawn out result eventually ending with " And in a world record time of three ..." the rest was drowned out by the roaring of the crowd. 3 minutes 59.4 seconds – history had been made.

The record lasted only 46 days, before Landy broke it with 3 minutes 57.9 sec in Helsinki.

Later that year, Bannister won the European Championships and, in a race, dubbed "the Mile of the Century" defeated Landy at the Commonwealth Games in Vancouver.

At the end of the season, Bannister retired to concentrate on his medical career and became a renowned neurologist. In later life he considered his medial achievements far superior to those on the track. He died in 2018.

Amazing as it may seem to us, he did not win the inaugural BBC Sports View Award. That went to Chataway who had set a 5000m World record in an epic race, narrowly defeating the previously unbeatable Russian, Kuts, under the floodlights of the White City Stadium. Bannister did not begrudge his friend the honour.

Brasher went on to become the 1956 Olympic Steeplechase champion, despite being only the third British steeplechaser on the team. He became even more famous for co-founding (with John Disney – 6th in the same Olympic steeplechase) the London Marathon, which is still organised by Brasher's son, Hugh.

I was only 10 at the time of Bannister's feat, but it fired my ambition to become an athlete. I vividly remember the newspaper headlines the next day, and one of the boys in my street saying "When we grow up we will all be running it" Not so – 6,664 people have climbed Everest, whilst fewer than 2,000 have run sub 4.

The current World Record held by Morocco's Hicham El Guerrouj was set in 1999 - 3minutes 43.13 sec. Steve Cram held the British record with a time of 3m 46.32, which was set in winning the Bislett Golden Mile in 1985, until Josh Kerr broke it with a 3m 45.34 in winning the Prefontaine Classic only a few days ago. So much for what scientists once believed!

Only one person in our club has run sub-4 – Club record holder Mark Draper (3min 56.8.) Of course, it is rarely run these days, but no-one other than Mark has run the equivalent 3 minutes 42 sec. over 1500m.

Now look in the Bedford Harriers trophy cabinet at the track, where you will see a print depicting the very moment of Bannister's triumph.

Dennis Johnson