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Bedford and County AC Newsletter

March 2024

About the Newsletter

This is the eighth edition of Bedford and County's quarterly newsletter. If you have something you'd like to contribute to the next edition, please email webmaster@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk. This could be an outstanding individual or team performance, a write up of a favourite training session, a memorable performance from years gone by (see the 'Blast from the Past' section), or something else that might be interesting or informative.

Summer 2024 Fixtures

The fixture list for summer 2024 is now 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:

- 1st June (Trafford)
- 22nd June (Nottingham)
- 7th July (**Bedford**)
- 3rd August (Finals - TBC)

Southern Athletics League [SAL]

- 18th May (**Bedford**)
- 15th June (Luton)
- 14th July (Oxford)
- 17th August (Oxford)

Eastern Masters Athletic Club [EMAC]

- 1st May (Corby)
- 5th June (**Bedford**)
- 3rd July (Milton Keynes)
- 31st July (Sandy)
- 14th September or 15th September (Finals - TBC)

National Lower Youth Development League [LYDL]

- 20th April (**Bedford**)
- 19th May (Hemel Hempstead)
- 16th June (Bracknell – TBC)
- 21st July (Thames Valley Athletic Centre)

Eastern Young Athlete League [EYAL]

- 14th April (Stevenage)

- 5th May (Watford)
- 2nd June (Bury St Edmunds)
- 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/#/>. The dates of Kettering open meetings do not seem to have been published yet, so scan the internet over the coming weeks for these.

Road Relays

A little sooner than the summer, two important Road Relays are coming up:

- The South of England 12 Stage Road Relay takes place on Sunday 24th March at Stantonbury Campus, Milton Keynes.
- The National 12 / 6 Stage Road Relays are on Saturday 6th April at Sutton Park

Chairman's Update

Track

The good news is, that funding is now allocated to the resurfacing of the track. At a Full Council meeting on February 7th, a resolution relating to the Capital Investment Programme was passed which included the following:

“The replacement running track and facility improvements at Bedford International Athletic Stadium, at an estimated cost of £1.25 million, to re-establish the venue as an internationally respected athletics facility.”

For those who wish to explore the detail further, this appears on page 22 of the minutes of the Full Council that evening (with the motion, as voted upon, outlined on page 19).

It should be noted that this funding is spread over two years, with the bulk of it being allocated in 2025/26. Hence the Summer of 2025 seems the most realistic target for a resurfacing of the track.

If I understand correctly, it also would seem that the leisure village project has now been removed from the capital budget, although the meeting noted that this may be revisited in future.

I have since had a meeting with some of the key council personnel, and highlighted the importance (in my view) of utilising this funding as intended, within the intended time frame, and not allowing the longer term, speculative plans around the leisure village and the like to distract from this. Obviously, the removal of the leisure village from current budgets serves to underline this point.

No final decision is yet made on whether the track will be recovered in Mondo (like-for-like with the current surface) or a PU alternative - probably Polytan, as they have a proven track record (no pun) in resurfacing Mondo tracks with a new PU top. Polytan visited the track last week to conduct a further survey, as the basis to refine and finalise their quote. So those with strong views about their preferred top surface for the track, please let me know!

New operator

You will all be aware the new signage and decorative changes that have come about since GLL took on the contract to run the leisure facilities on 1st February.

Other, more important, changes resulting from the change of operator will also affect club members. Not least, in the new financial year (1st April) we will be separating the club subscription (which will still include EA affiliation) from the track pass, so the latter will be purchased direct from GLL by the individual user. This will give users much greater flexibility of payment options, which the committee feel will be a real benefit to members.

There will also be changes to the management of the café/lounge with effect from 1st March, but I am unable to confirm details of these just yet.

Next week, a number of club personnel will be conducting an 'audit/survey' of the equipment held at the track, something which is being undertaken with GLL's support, and with a view to them taking our findings into account when they decide what investment is necessary to bring all this back to the required standard.

Paul Gooding

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
Etienne Maughan	Senior Women	60m Hurdles (Indoors)	8.36 seconds
Jasmine Wilkins	Senior Women & U20 Women	60m (Indoors)	7.60 seconds
Tennyson James	M65	60m Hurdles	9.60 seconds (this is also a British M65 record – well done Tenny!)
Thaila Jade Mason	Under 17 Women	60m Hurdles (indoors)	9.06 seconds
Thaila Jade Mason	Under 17 Women	Long Jump (indoors)	5.87 metres
Lyla Danobrega	Under 20 Women	1500m (indoors)	4:46.12
Jemma Eastwood	W40	Pole Vault (indoors and overall)	3.26 metres
Jemma Eastwood	W45	Pole Vault (indoors and overall)	3.31 metres

What you see above are the current club records (at the time of going to press anyway!). Every club record is special, but Etienne Maughan and Jasmine Wilkins deserve an extra-special shout-out, because both of them have broken the records they hold several times during the winter. And as noted above, Tenny's M65 Hurdles record is also a British record!

News From the Teams

Chiltern League Roundup

The fifth and final round of this season's Chiltern League took place at Horspath, Oxford on Saturday 10 February. Rebecca Murray's win in the Senior Women's race meant that she won all five races this season. There were also top-ten performances from Theo Beale (Under 17 Men), Harry Scott (Under 15 Boys), Lily Farr (Under 17 Women) and Rosie Cusack (Under 11 Girls). We won the overall Veteran Men's competition thanks to a series of very strong performances over all five rounds (see the separate article below). The Under 17 men were also victorious in the overall competition, winning every round and securing the team prize by a significant margin, with 6 athletes in the top 10 overall for the season.





After all five rounds Bedford and County came:

- 2nd in the Senior Men's competition.
- 11th in the Senior Women's competition.
- 2nd in the Under 20 Men's competition.
- 1st in the Veteran Men's competition.
- 1st in the Under 17 Men's competition.
- 5th in the Under 15 Boys' competition.
- 2nd in the Under 13 Boys' competition.
- 5th in the F17/F20 competition.
- 6th in the Under 15 Girls' competition
- 8th in the Under 13 Girls' competition.



Mens Vets Team wins Chiltern League

For the first time in the club's history the Men's Vets Team won the Chiltern Cross Country League title. The team held the lead from the very first race at Keysoe and held on to that spot during the 5 race series, extending our lead after each round. After the Oxford race the team were 200 points ahead of the second place team.

Charlie Palmer was second in the individual standings and had great support from the rest of the squad. Paul Cooper and James Thirkettle were running their first cross country event since their school days - hopefully they will both be back next year to repeat the experience!

With the top 4 runners counting in each event we had 8 different scorers, this being the main difference to previous seasons when we have struggled to get a full team out for each event.

The vets squad will next be lining up at the Masters Road relays in May. If other athletes would like to get involved, please contact Jim Black to be added to the squad list.



Masters Track and Field Athletics – Summer 2024

One of the most successful teams in the Club is the Men's Masters Team.

What is a Masters athlete?

A Masters athlete is an athlete who is in the age group 35+. There is no upper limit, the only limit is the athlete's body. The Masters Men's and Women's Teams compete in the EMAC League (Eastern Masters AC), there are 4 Monthly Fixtures, each is held on the first Wednesday of the month, May to August, and a Final held in September.

The Fixtures for this coming season are due to be held as follows :-

- Match 1 at Corby 01 May, starting at 7pm
- Match 2 at Bedford 05 June, starting at 7pm
- Match 3 at Milton Keynes 03 July, starting at 7pm
- Match 4 at Sandy 31 July, starting at 7pm

The evenings consist of a range of all the events: running, jumping and throwing, so if you fall into the age category of 35+ and would like to compete against your peers in a friendly, but competitive, atmosphere, or just want to have a go at an event contact:

- Jim Keech – Men's Team Manager : christopher.keeche@ntlworld.com , or
- Emma Coombes – Women's Team Manager : eakeech441@hotmail.com

To compete in the League there are a couple of requirements. You must be :



- A member of England Athletics, this is automatic as a fully paid member of the Club, and
- A member of Eastern Masters AC.

You can find membership details for Eastern Masters AC at <https://emac.org.uk/about-emac/emac-membership/> , and again as a fully paid member of the Bedford and County you will only need 2nd claim membership of the Eastern Masters club (£10.00 per annum)

The evenings are good fun, you won't be embarrassed. Everyone is there to enjoy themselves, so why not have a go?

Good Luck to everyone competing in the near future.

Jim Keech

The Wheelchair Racing Section

Few wheelchair racers participate in events during the winter. However, all are training well and some of the times posted in training are very respectable.

We are continually looking to achieve more funding for wheelchair racing as we have to be self-funding. To that extent we have recently formed a club to assist and advise on all aspects of racing. The Supporters Club consists of representation from parents, coaches, local Rotary Clubs and Wheelpower, and their brief will be to look at fundraising, recruiting and social events as well as any other relevant action.

The first races of the new season are in early April and it is hoped that individuals are able to match the amazing successes of 2023 when two racers were first in the national rankings for their age group and classification in several events, and another two were either 2nd or 3rd in theirs. With two also on the England Athletics Talent Development programme for potential future Paralympians, the section is riding high at the moment.

Outstanding Individual Performances

Success for Etienne, Jasmine and Jack at the UK Championships

The UK Athletics Indoor Championships took place in Birmingham on 17th and 18th February. There were some fine performances from Bedford and County Athletes. Etienne Maughan finished seventh in the 60m Hurdles final in 8.61 seconds, having qualified in second place in her heat in a new club record of 8.40 seconds, which she has now improved this to 8.36 seconds. Jasmine Wilkins made it through to the semi-final of the 60m, where her 7.62 seconds beat the old record that she shared with Etienne by one hundredth of a second (she has now improved this to 7.60 seconds!). In the men's 3000m Jack Goodwin was close to his PB whilst finishing 11th in a time of 8:02.88.

Well done to Etienne, Jasmine and Jack on their fine performances. Etienne also gained a silver medal at the Southern Indoor Championships on 3rd February!

Euro Top 40 for Tia

Tia Wilson was 34th in the Euro U23 XC Championships in Brussels on 10th December. Although Tia was not one of the scoring members of the gold medal winning British team, it was nevertheless an outstanding performance. Tia completed the 7K course in 28:58. Well done to Tia on an excellent run!

Thaila takes silver at England Championships

Thaila-Jade Mason took the silver medal in an exciting tussle with Deeside's Olivia Scrimshaw in the U17 long jump at the England Indoor Championships on Sunday.

Whilst Scrimshaw seized the initiative with an outstanding 5.92m jump in the first round, Thaila clawed her way back into contention jumping 5.83m in the second round and 5.87m in



the last – just five centimetres shy of Scrimshaw's winning effort. Nevertheless, Thaila was delighted with her silver medal.

In the High jump, there was a bronze medal in the Under 20 Women for Gracie Wall, who jumped 1.63 metres.

Meanwhile Zaphaniah Bryan was maintaining his excellent recent form in the U17 Men's High Jump. Having recently set a lifetime personal best of 1.88m in winning the South of England title, he finished sixth with a clearance of 1.86m in a high-class competition won at 2.03m.

On the track, it was the turn of Lyla Danobrega to take a break from the mud and rain of cross country and tackle the indoor U 20 1500m. Lyla returned a time of 4m 46.12 sec. for a fine 7th place in a fast run final.

Battersea Friday Night Under the Lights 5k

There were some excellent results at Battersea's Friday Night Under the Lights 5k road race on 16th February. Ed Blythman finished tenth in the Elite Men's race in a big new PB of 14:12.47. Sam Winters came third in race 5 in a time of 14:35, which was just one second off his PB. Other results included a 15:05 from Alfie Yabsley for 36th place in race 5, a 15:07 from Ben Davies, a 15:12 from Stan Willis, a 15:57 from Dan Galpin, and a 17:54 for Alice Burgin. At the same venue on Saturday 24th February, Jamie Webster achieved a 31 second 5k PB with a time of 15:36.

Good results for Stephen and Jack in Sheffield

There were two notable performances in Sheffield over the weekend of 7th January. Stephen Simmons finished 5th in England Indoor Senior Men's Heptathlon with 5069 points. The breakdown of Stephen's events was as follows:

- 60m: 7.05 (PB)
- Long Jump: 6.80m
- Shot: 12.46m
- High Jump: 1.84M (= PB)
- 60m Hurdles: 8.43s
- Polve Vault: 4.10M
- 1000m: 3:04.56

And at the British Milers Club Indoor Grand Prix Jack Goodwin finished eighth in a high quality field in the 3000m in an indoor PB of 8:02.85. This gives Jack the qualifying standard for the UK Indoor Championships.

Well done to both athletes!

County Cross-Country Champions!

There were some excellent performances at the Bedfordshire County Cross-Country Championships at Southill Park on 7th January, and seven are Bedford and County athletes became county champions. Congratulations to:

- Ed Blythman (Senior Men)
- Lauren Nichols (Senior Women)
- Jake Reynolds (U20 Men)
- Archie Henderson (U15 Boys)
- Eleanor Smith (U15 Girls)
- Megan Barnicoat (U13 Girls)
- Rosie Cusack (U11 Girls)

Cross Challenge

Several Bedford and County athletes represented the Eastern England AAA at the Cross Challenge at Parliament Hill on Saturday 20th January. In the Senior Women's race, Rebecca Murray finished 25th and Lauren Nichols finished 44th. In the Senior Men's race, Ed Bylthman finished 47th. In the Women's 4KM Trial, Tia Wilson finished second in 15:01, and Lyla Danobrega was seventh in the Under 17 Women's race. Well done to all those who took part.

South of England Success For Thaila and Zaph

The South of England Indoor Championships on 13th and 14th January produced two gold medals for Bedford athletes. On Saturday 13th, Zaphaniah Bryan cleared a superb new personal best height of 1.88m to claim the U17 Men's High Jump title; whilst on Sunday 14th Thaila Jade Mason's 5.59m long jump was more than sufficient to pocket the U17 women's Long Jump gold. Congratulations to both athletes!

First Half-Marathon for Jono

Congratulations to Jono Janes, who clocked 68:44 in his first half-marathon at Wokingham on Sunday. Jono finished in 15th place.

British Masters Indoor Athletics Championships

A number of Bedford athletes enjoyed success at the British Masters Indoor Championships at Lee Valley on Saturday 17th February.

There were victories for:

- Tennyson James – 9.65 seconds M65 60m Hurdles
- Bob Kingman 3.70 metres M50 Pole Vault
- Edith Caux 76.55 metres W65 400m

Jemma Eastwood also set a new club W45 Pole Vault record of 3.30 metres, but as she was unable to compete in the W45 competition on the Sunday she non scored in the Men's Competition on the Saturday. Her performance was the best W45 performance by about 1 metre, but technically she did not win the W45 PV Championships.

The other Bedford competitors were:

- Steve Bass 4th M50 60m Hurdles 9.92 secs
- Peter Benedickter 4th M50 400m 58.93 secs
- Oriana Johnson 4th W60 Shot 6.80m
- Graeme Packman 4th M65 Shot 8.68m

Eastern Masters Indoor Athletics Championships

Bedford & County Masters athletes were busy in action on Sunday 11th February at the Eastern Masters Indoor Athletics Championships at Lee Valley Stadium

All of Bedford's athletes won medals in every event they competed in - many with Championship Best Performances.

Medal winners were:

Category	Event	Athlete	Medal	Performance	
M50	60m	Steve Bass	Silver	8.31 secs	
W65	200m	Edith Caux	Gold	33.09 secs	Championship Best Performance
M65	400m	Tennyson James	Gold	63.47 secs	Championship Best Performance

Category	Event	Athlete	Medal	Performance	
W35	400m	Amy Frith	Gold	68.22 secs	
W65	400m	Edith Caux	Gold	76.41 secs	Championship Best Performance
M50	60m Hurdles	Steve Bass	Silver	10.00 secs	
M65	60m Hurdles	Tennyson James	Gold	9.64	Championship Best Performance
W40	Pole Vault	Jemma Eastwood	Gold	3.26m	Championship Best Performance- This is also a Bedford club Indoor and Overall record- with Jemma only 4 days from entering a higher age group
M40	Shot	Damian Larrington	Gold	12.75m	
M50	Shot	Darren Kerr	Silver	10.04m	
M65	Shot	Graeme Packman	Silver	9.14m	
W60	Shot	Oriana Johnson	Silver	6.78m	

Awards for Gracie, Sean and Varun

Three Bedford and County athletes won awards at the Bedford Borough Sports Awards in December. Congratulations to:

- Gracie Wall, who won the Junior Sports Personality Award
- Sean Chigumba, who won the Junior Disability Sports Personality and
- Varun Bandi, who won the Senior Disability Sports Personality

A number of our other athletes were also nominated for awards. The nominations were:

- Lyla Danobrega – Junior Sports Personality
- Thaila -Jade Mason – Junior Sports Personality
- Archie Henderson – Junior Sports Personality
- Isac Raddan – Junior Sports Personality (nominated by his school)
- James Danobrega – Coach
- Michael Blunt - Coach
- Emma Coombes – Unsung Hero
- Howard Darbon – Service to Sport





Christmas Handicap

Congratulations to Jim McMahon (M60) who won the Pete Dancer Memorial Cup on Sunday 17th December at the Bedford and County Christmas Handicap. Jim ran an impressive 19:33 over the 2.97 mile course.

The fastest man was Ed Blythman in 13:55 and the fastest lady was Rebecca Murray in 16:35. Ed's time is 4th fastest ever run over the course (the course record is 13:46 set by Matt Bergin in 2019). Rebecca's 16:35 is equal 5th fastest by a woman. Her best on this course is the 3rd fastest with 16:12. The Ladies' course record is 15:52, set by Sharon Morris in 2002.

For those interested in Christmas Handicap history, the winner, Jim McMahon, set the fastest lap on three occasions - in 1990, 1993, & 1996. His PB for this course is 14:37, although his 14:09 on the old course is the equivalent of a sub 14:20 on the current course.

The race raised over £500 for the Pancreatic Cancer UK charity in memory of Pete Dancer. Thank you to everybody who donated, well done to everybody who ran, and big thanks to Tony Forrest and all the organisers and volunteers who made it happen.

Club Development Plan

Please take a look at the latest version of the Club Development Plan, which is on the website at <https://bedfordandcountyac.org.uk/index.php/about-us/development-plan>.

Blast from the Past – English Schools Combined Events a Launchpad for International Careers

September always sees the finals of the English Schools Combined Event Championships, which have been the launchpad for several Bedford and County International Careers.

It was twenty-eight years ago in September 1995 that Cloe Cozens came third in the Inter Girls Heptathlon and gaining selection for the Schools International. She followed up in 1996 with silver, then was third in 1997 as a senior and finally champion in 1988, the year she represented Great Britain at the World Junior Championships in Annecy where she came 16th. The following year she competed in the European Junior Championships in Latvia Chloe went on to gain a number of international vests as a Junior and an U23. Her points scores of 5358 and 4746 (U20 and U17 respectively) still stand as club records along with Javelin records of 51.79m (Club) and 48.15m (U20); U20 shot of 12.24m: and U20 Long Jump of 5.72m. Chloe is now a teacher.

1996 was special year for Bedford & County Combined Eventers, as not only did Chloe claim silver, but Matt Tribble did likewise in the Inter Boys Octathlon, also gaining a Schools International. Meanwhile Chloe's twin sister came 5th - an agonising 7 points behind 4th which would have gained her an international vest as well. And, a Junior Boy (Marlon Hendrickson) was also 5th - only 10 points short of the coveted international vest. What a year that could have been – four internationals in the team of just 16 from such a small county– but we had to be satisfied with two.

Ros Gonse came to heptathlon relatively late at the age of 17, first making her mark in September 2000 with 2nd place in the Schools Championships Birmingham. She went on to represent Great Britain on many occasions including being in the winning team (which included Jessica Ennis) at the European Nations Cup in 2007 which set a record winning total. She achieved the Beijing Olympic B standard with her personal best score of 5798 Points which still stands as the club record along with her 6.01m long jump. Ros is now a physiotherapist.

Although an athlete from U15, Gavin Fordham also come late to combined events competing in only one English Schools Championships, but was bitten by the bug and more than 20 years later is still actively competing, although injury prevents him from doing decathlons. 2001 was his big breakthrough year with selections for the GB International team both indoors and out – the latter being at Bedford, alongside Ros and coach Dennis Johnson His Club record of 6590 points (Senior Implements) still stands. Gavin is now Head of PE at Kempston Academy.

More recently, Stephen Simmons claimed the ESAA Inter Boys Octathlon title in 2019 with 5346 points and finished 2nd in the schools international which followed. He stood a good chance of being selected for the European Junior Championships in 2000, but covid led to the cancellation of all events. He bounced back in 2021 to win the ESAA Senior Boys decathlon. He holds the club combined events records for U13/15/17/20 and the hurdles records for U13/15/17. He is studying medicine at Kent University.

Dennis Johnson

Social Media

The club is building its social media presence, making more use of the Facebook and Instagram accounts. Social media is a great way for members of the club to keep up with news, club success and information about upcoming fixtures. It would be great to get as many people behind this as possible, athletes and parents alike, so please do give us a follow:

- Facebook: Bedford & County Athletic Club
- Instagram: @bedfordandcounty

We will also need help from you, if you have any photos or news from any event that you would like to share, provided you have the athlete in the photo's permission, please send them via a direct message on Instagram/Facebook or send an email to socialmedi@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk.