



British Athletics League Match 4 – Rugby – 20th August 2017

Chelmsford Athletic Club Senior Men's Team were in action again last weekend at Rugby for the final fixture of the British Athletics League season. Chelmsford were holding third place in Division 3 prior to the match and, with the top two going up and league points very close, a promotion place was a real possibility. However, it wasn't going to be easy. All eight clubs in the division, from as far afield as Yeovil in the south and Mansfield in the north have very strong athletes and all have proved difficult to beat throughout the summer.

The match started very well for the team with an A and B string double in the High Jump. Tom Hewes was the last to enter the competition, at 1.90m – and went on to win by a 10cm margin, ultimately clearing a superb 2.10m and eliciting cheers from the Chelmsford ranks. Sergei Zotin provided excellent support, winning the B string with 1.90m, and the team were literally off to a flyer.

With the team's multi-eventers, Mike Bartlett and Luke Keteleers already scoring heavily in the Field events hopes were running high of a positive outcome. More good news came when Mike and Jamie Allway took a double win (A and B string) in the Pole Vault, stretching Chelmsford's early lead. The team again scored well in the 400mH, with Luke teamed up with Rhys Collings on this occasion.

Mark Woodley and Darren Blackwell showed that they meant business on the track with a double third in a very close and hard fought 800m race. Chelmsford's growing lead was then temporarily checked in the 100m, with the team's perennial lack sprinters. However, Grant Twist and Ken Hoyer stopped morale dropping by taking a first (A) and third (B) in the 3000m Steeplechase. Grant cruised away from the field for a superb win.

Luke and Bradley Reed were then only one place short of the perfect score, in the 110mH - Bradley storming to victory in the A string, and Luke second in the B.

With Marcus Hunt and Paul Owen in the 400m, Sergei Zotin and Fluke Ladphanna in the Long and Triple Jumps, and Alex Reynolds and Yasha Bobash in the Hammer earlier in the day, all picking up valuable places, Chelmsford still led at half way!

Next on the track was the 1500m. Once again the Chelmsford middle distance duo of Mark and Darren were running. It developed into a tactical but great race, with Mark coming through strongly in the home straight for the overall win and, as a result, later winning the Chelmsford Man of the Match award for his efforts.

The second sprint race of the day, the 200m, again impeded the team's points total, with Rhys and Harry Sloman, both 400m runners, having to step in to support the team effort.

As the last events approached Grant and Ken had to race again in the 5000m. The combination of the 3k Steeplechase and the 5k flat has to be the most gruelling double events to take on but these two performed brilliantly.

By time the 4x100m and 4x400m relays started, the match score had stopped being announced, but Chelmsford, Havering and Rugby all knew that the result was on a knife-edge. Disaster struck in the 4x100m with a poor change-over causing disqualification, before the 4x400m squad stepped onto the track to try and swing things back in Chelmsford's favour. Mark Woodley led away to a solid start



and was with the leaders on the first lap. Darren Blackwell snatched the lead at the takeover at the end of leg two. Paul Owen held a close second place by the end of leg three but it was very, very, close between everyone. Marcus Hunt had the task of bringing the team home. Taking back the lead on the back straight four teams were locked together just 100m from the finishing line. In efforts to shout on their respective athletes the crowd began spilling onto the track, but it was Marcus for Chelmsford who held on for the win in a fantastic finish!

The elation of that win was dampened slightly when the overall result was announced. Chelmsford had not caught the two teams ahead in the league. However, all the Chelmsford athletes can hold their heads high. Everyone put in a fantastic last match effort and produced some very exciting athletics. The feeling is that Chelmsford should have been promoted, except for some bad luck in the middle of the season, so the expectation is that promotion is definitely next year's, very achievable target.