



Southern Athletics League Division 1 – R5 – Bedford – 18th August 2018

Chelmsford AC's Senior Men's and Women's team visited Bedford on Saturday, for the final match of the season in the Southern Athletics League, knowing that a match win would clinch a SAL Division 1 title, while anything less would mean a nervous wait to find out the results of other matches.

Competing against Nene Valley Harriers, Thames Valley Harriers and the hosts – Bedford & County, the pressure was on, but as the day went on, it became clear that that 'nervous wait' would not be needed as the team rose to the challenge and ultimately became champions even before results of the final few races came through.

The day began with a flurry of Field events, including the women's Hammer, which saw U20 athlete Laura Runciman claim second place, losing out on a win by just 43cm, with a distance of 47.02m. Caroline Hill won the Pole Vault, whilst U17 national multi-events champion Jessica Hopkins leapt 5.47m in the Long Jump to claim second place, alongside fellow youngster Lily Parris, who won the B-string with 5.06m. In the men's High Jump, international U20 athlete Tom Hewes, hopped over a height of 1.95m to easily see off the competition.

The Field was continued with the Men's Hammer competition, which provided Joe Bloomfield with an opportunity to once again assert his dominance, with a distance of 62.46m, bettering second place by over 20m. Next, in the Field, Toni Egbulefu and Marleen Avontuur both claimed second places in their respective throwing events – Toni with 11.84m in the Women's Shot Putt and Marleen recording 28.65m in the Women's Javelin.

Chelmsford's consistently excellent pole-vaulting duo, Mike Bartlett and Jamie Allway provided the team with a one-two in the A and B string of their event - Mike vaulting 4m to claim the A-string victory and Jamie reaching a height of 3.80m for the B-string, after a scare early on in the competition. U17 English Schools bronze medalist, Ndidi Okoh, made an impact in the Women's High Jump, reaching a respectable 1.50m – short of her best of 1.69m, but enough to easily claim second in a competition where she was the youngest competitor.

For the final Field event of the day, Joe Bloomfield stepped up again for the Men's Discus, recording a distance of 46.92m, for second place.

It wasn't just in the Field where Chelmsford dominated - they put on an impressive display of Track races throughout the distances.

The Track events kicked off with the longer hurdles distance of 400m. The Women were first to take to the blocks, and representing Chelmsford was international, serial British Championships podium placer, Hayley McLean, who eased to victory in 58.26s, beating fellow international athlete, Jessica Tappin from Thames Valley Harriers. Chelmsford's Woman of the Match, Claire Netley took the B-string victory with a time of 67.58s.



In the same event, the Men continued Chelmsford's fantastic start to the track day with Bradley Reed grabbing the victory in his less favourite of the two hurdle distances with 55.98s, followed by a superb B-string second place by Chelmsford's Man of the Match, Luke Keteleers in 60.26s.

Once the hurdles were removed, the 800m runners lined up, starting with the Women's race, where it was a battle of the youngsters, with all competitors being U17. In the A-string Hannah Bolton came in second, recording a time of 2:24.41 before Faye Sweeting earned first in the B-string with 2:29.17.

The prestigious 100m followed, the Women achieving second in both A-string (Beatriz Melo in 12.72s) and B-string (Lily Parris in 12.99s).

The 400m was covered by Hayley McLean, this time without the obstacles, who obtained another first-place finish in the A-string, dipping in at 56.44s. Erin Minton-Branfoot provided Chelmsford with maximum points in the women's 400m by following up with 59.23s in the B-string.

The female long-distance athletes were next to have their time on the track with the arduous 3000m. Just thinking about this distance would make most people need a lie-down, but Rosa Prideaux stepped up to the plate with her first ever 3000m race, and showed class with an easy win by just under a minute. Tracy Minton was the only B-string in the race and so claimed a valuable maximum points haul for the team.

Hayley McLean lined up again, for her third race of the day, this time over the shorter hurdles distance of 100m. This time she came second in 15.04s, joined again by Claire Netley, who added to her 400mH B win with another victory in the 100mH B-string.

The Men's 5000m race followed, with Ken Hoyer gaining third in the A-string with a time of 17:41.84s. Following Ken home was Chris Youell who came in at second, completing the 12½ laps in 19:09.82s.

The hurdles were lined up once again for the Men's 110m race. Chelmsford's Bradley Reed, who is 15th in the UK for this season, dipped in second place with a very respectable time of 14.83s, with Luke Keteleers hot on his heels, in 16.77s, taking first-place in the B-string.

The half lap race of 200m was next up on the track. A couple of second-place finishes were in store for the women - Beatriz Melo coming in at 26.03s, quickly followed by Erin Minton-Branfoot with 26.39s.

1500m was the next opportunity for Chelmsford to pick up points. This gave U17 Martha Smith the opportunity to fix her place in the team for next season with a fantastic, tactical race combined with a superb sprint finish in the final 200m to win by over 20m. Her time of 4:46.18 was a PB. Georgia Tombs, another U17, finished in 5:09.41 to get second place in the B-string.

Chelmsford's favourite time of the day was up next - the relays. The Women were up first in the 4x100m, storming to victory in 50.84s. The Men rose to the marker set by the Women, to also run to victory with the quartet sending the rest of the team wild at the finish line as Nyakeh Duwai held onto a narrow lead down the finishing straight, to out dip his opponent in 45.25s.



Before the rest of the relays could take place, the Women completed the 2000m Steeplechase with youngsters dominating once again - with U17 athletes Hannah Bolton and Faye Sweeting winning the A-string in 8:17.22s and B-string in 8:36.38s respectively.

It was back to the relays for the final event of the day, and season, as the teams lined up for the 4x400m races. The women were victorious once again, commanding the race, and winning by 16s, completing the four laps in 3:59.59. The Men couldn't quite live up to the Women this time around finishing in second with a time of 3:29.79. A tremendous final leg by Harry Sloman, cheered noisily by the rest of the team, narrowed the lead of Nene Valley Harriers to just 0.09s as they crossed the line. In terms of the match though, Chelmsford had already done enough to be crowned champions for the second time in 3 years, and the celebrations quickly ensued!