



## Report on British Athletics League Match 4 – Glasgow – 3 Aug 2019

Chelmsford's Senior Men's team made the long trip to Glasgow over the weekend, for the final match of the curtailed, three-fixture, British Athletics League season – and after struggling in their first two matches, pulled off effectively their best ever result – a third place finish in a Division 2 BAL match. Although previous results meant that the team ultimately ended the season in seventh place in the table, a terrific performance across the board, boosted by the return of some their previously sidelined injured stars, demonstrated that they can be very competitive at this level of athletics.

Given the fact that even with the return of some key team members, Chelmsford still needed to field a total of FIVE Under 17 athletes – compared with no other team having more than one – and a further three being Under 20 – the result, at Glasgow's impressive Scotstoun Stadium was one of which the club can be hugely proud.

The final match score was:

1. Glasgow City AC – 400
2. Havering AC – 299
3. Chelmsford AC – 274
4. Kingston AC – 272
5. Herne Hill Harriers
6. Bristol & West AC – 228
7. Notts AC – 225
8. Crawley AC – 222

One of Chelmsford's break-through U17's this season – Nathan Bushnell - was into action early, in the Hammer, and despite some of the throwers being twice his age, he was by no means daunted and recorded a superb PB with the Senior Men's weight, as he claimed a valuable third place in the B string. Yasha Bobash ensured a solid start for the team with fifth place in the A string event.

Attention quickly switched to the next Field event – the Pole Vault – in which James Allway was making a return after a hamstring injury. With very little serious training under his belt since his injury, the return to competitive action came too soon in reality, but Allway shrugged off the effects of his lay-off, registering a clearance of 3.80m – only 10cm down on his Season's Best – to take fourth place. U17 Oliver Early, competing in the first of his three events, cleared 3.20m to claim third place in the B string, and keep the team's score steadily building.

Nathan Bushnell was quickly back into action – this time in the Discus – immediately doubling his personal points tally by taking third place in the B string, and only missing out on a PB by matter of inches. Kevin Wilson kept up Chelmsford's positive start to the match by grabbing fourth place in the A string.

The 400m Hurdles was the first Track event of the day, and Rhys Collings was the first to benefit from noisy vocal support from his team-mates in the stands as he battled to fourth place in the A string. If anything, the support was even louder for Luke Keteleers, who took a fine third place in the B race moments later.



The 800m came next – a race in which Chelmsford fielded two U20 athletes – and BOTH recorded PB's! Joe Lane recorded his third sub two-minute finish of the season as he crossed the line in sixth place in the A race, and Joe Abbott knocked two seconds off his PB as he claimed fifth place in the B race.

In the Long Jump Chelmsford had even younger athletes in action – both being Under 17's – and both jumped out of their skins in two of the most impressive performances of the day. Johnson Alo is only a first year U17 athlete, but he claimed an outstanding third place in the A event, adding almost half a metre to his PB, with a distance of 6.61m! Oliver Early, in his second event of the day, wasn't far behind him with a Season's Best jump which was good enough for third place in the B event.

Back on the track, the sprinters were on their blocks for the 100m races, and Lewis Thorn took fifth place in an exceptionally competitive A race, before Darcy Sullivan received an unfortunate DQ for a false start in the B race.

With the sun shining brightly, on a humid afternoon, the 3000m Steeplechase was a punishing race for all of the athletes involved, but the vastly experienced Nick Hardy ran a Season's Best to take third place in the A race, with Owen Thomas doing likewise to grab more vital points with second place in the B event.

The 110m Hurdles provided another opportunity for the Chelmsford support team to lend their boisterous vocal support, as the highly consistent Bradley Reed took a classy second place in the A race, and Chelmsford's current top points scorer this season, Luke Keteleers, secured third place in the B race despite suffering from a painful, ongoing knee injury.

With half of the match complete, news came in that Chelmsford were sitting in third place in the match, and that a far more positive end to the season was possible than had appeared likely as they had travelled North. This news certainly seemed to act as a boost to Kevin Wilson, as he added a superb 25cm to his PB in the Shot, throwing 13.83m, and taking second place. Nathan Bushnell in his third event of the day, claimed an excellent fourth place in the B event.

Next in the Field was the High Jump. Tom Hewes was another member of the team returning to competition sooner than his rehabilitation after a knee operation would recommend but, in a display of commitment to the team cause that echoed a terrific team spirit in general, he claimed a valuable third place in the A event. Oliver Early (U17) narrowly failed to improve on his PB, as he took a fine equal second place in the B competition, in his own third event of the day.

Back on the track, highly rated Lewis Thorn produced one of the performances of the day in the next event, taking over half a second off of his PB, to claim fourth place in a high quality 400m, while Joe Wells powered around the track to cross the line in sixth place in a very competitive B race.

The 1500m was another very hard race in the hot conditions, and Steve Woodford and Nick Hardy both pushed themselves to exhaustion to keep the Chelmsford score ticking over, and keep the team in third place.

The Triple Jump saw Chelmsford field another U17 pairing, as Johnson Alo returned to action, to accompany Joshua Ogunfolaju. Ogunfolaju beat a number of far more experienced campaigners, to



record a fantastic second place in the A event, while Alo completed an outstanding day of his own by winning the B event!

The 200m saw the long awaited return to action of Marcus Hunt, back on the track after missing two years through injury. Once again, his return to competition was far sooner than he would have wished, but the mere presence in the squad of one of the club's star performers gave the whole team a lift, and was undoubtedly a factor in the team's excellent showing. U17 Darcy Sullivan took the points for team in the A race.

The 5000m saw Owen Thomas return to the track after his earlier run in the Steeplechase. The combination of two such arduous events was a real challenge, but Thomas rose to it superbly by recording a fine PB over the distance. Veteran Ken Hoye, as ever, played his own valuable part by taking on the 5000m too, and ran a Season's Best to take fifth place in the B race.

The last Field event of the day – the Javelin - saw Chelmsford represented by Kevin Wilson and Mark Woodley. Neither are specialist Javelin throwers, but they collected more vital points, and both recorded Season's Best performances in the event.

Attention switched back to the track for the relays, to end the day. In the 4x100m event, the Chelmsford team (Bradley Reed, Lewis Thorn Luke Keteleers, and Darcy Sullivan) record their fastest time for three years, though it was only good enough for sixth place, such was the quality of sprinting on display.

All eyes then focussed on the final event of the day – the 4x400m relay – and the match position couldn't have been tighter. Chelmsford and Kingston AC were tied in third place, on 262 points each, and the relay squad (Darcy Sullivan, Joe Wells, Joe Lane and Lewis Thorn) therefore knew that they needed to finish ahead of a powerful Kingston team to hang on to third. They certainly rose to the occasion. With the rest of the team shouting themselves hoarse in support, they ran their fastest BAL time ever, and missing out on setting a new club record by only 0.1 sec! Lewis Thorn's outstanding final leg was the highlight of Chelmsford's day, and on top of his earlier performances, he was deservedly awarded Chelmsford's 'Man of the Match'.

So, a third place finish was secured. The result meant that Chelmsford ended their BAL season equal on points with fifth placed Notts AC, and sixth placed Bristol & West. Only a lower number of match points meant that the team actually finished in seventh place in the final Division 2 table – a position which belies both their performance on the day, and the obvious quality and depth of their squad when fully fit.