



National Athletics League Match 2 – Manchester – 4 June 2022

Chelmsford AC's senior team made their longest trip of the season on Saturday, travelling up to Manchester, to compete at the Sportcity stadium in match two of their 2022 National Athletics League campaign. Bouyed by an outstanding victory in their first fixture, at home, last month, the team were confident, but under no illusion as to the size of the challenge, taking on two of the Championship's biggest clubs – Sale Harriers and City of Liverpool – in their own 'back yard'.

Although the team were happy to welcome back some athletes who missed the opening match due to University commitments, numbers were still limited, and it was to the huge credit of the athletes in a small Ladies team that they stepped up to cover many events outside of their usual specialities, pushing themselves to their limits to score points for the club. One such team member was Ndidi Okoh, who was into action very early in the day, competing alongside veteran and team manager Shirley Quinn in the Hammer, and getting Chelmsford's points total started. Ndidi returned to action late in the day, taking on the challenge of the Steeplechase too!

Men's team manager Paul Owen matched Shirley's commitment by picking up points in the Men's Pole Vault, together with Oliver Early, who was taking on the first of his own three events.

Zion Ateba took on the maximum events permitted for one athlete during the day, and she performed well in the Women's Long Jump, where she was paired with Kirsty Ronald, who went on to win the Women's Triple Jump later in the day.

The team's first major points haul came next – in the Men's Hammer, where Alex Reynolds and Yasha Bobash finished third and fourth overall, to claim 18 points for Chelmsford – Alex exceeding the coveted 50m mark with his best throw – a PB.

Next up was U20 Onyeka Okoh, who has broken the 400mH club record on numerous occasions already this season – renewing his rivalry with Liverpool's James Webster. Both found the blustery conditions difficult and were hence below their best times, with Onyeka taking second place on this occasion. Not to be outdone, Onyeka returned later to take revenge in the Men's 400m, where he set a new U20 Chelmsford club record with a winning time of 47.73. His efforts won him Chelmsford's Man of the Match award.

The Chelmsford Women of the Match accolade went to Chay Clark – running in the 400mH, 400m AND 4x400m Relay, scoring plenty of points, and not far short of her best times on her return to the team. Like team mate Zion Ateba, Erin Minton-Branfoot also competed in her maximum allowed events, and she took valuable points in the 400mH B race, finishing in second place.

Veteran Paul Grange took an excellent third place in the Men's 800m (followed by eight place in the 1500m), while Nick Hardy and Scott Thomas teamed up to score maximum points for Chelmsford in the Men's Steeplechase – Scott recording a substantial PB.

Sisters Jess and Maegan Hopkins threw well together in the Discus, finishing seventh and eighth overall, only 26cm apart. Jess then went on to claim third place in the Shot, where she was partnered by Alexandra Adeniji, who took fourth.



Tracy Minton – competing as a V60 veteran, incredibly took on the 800m, 1500m, 3000m AND Steeplechase – ending up with a personal points contribution of 26 points!

Oliver Early was soon back in action, claiming a fine second place in the Men's Long Jump – before a controversial moment in the Men's 100m, where Chelmsford's Lee Dollard was disqualified for stepping on the white line of his lane. Undeterred, Lee returned later, to take an excellent third place in the 200m, in a high class field.

The Women's 100m saw Kisiwaa Mensah in action for the first time, crossing the finishing line in fourth place. She went on to also post excellent times in the 200m, and both the 4x100m and 4x400m Relays – in the latter of which, she is looking stronger with every match.

Kevin Wilson is one of the club's most consistent and reliable performers, and he made his first contribution by taking an excellent second place in the Men's Discus, where he was very ably supported by Alex Reynolds, who was fourth in the B string. Kevin went on to record third place in the Shot, where Yasha Bobash was third in the B string.

Bradley Reed is also a mainstay of the Men's team, and he recorded equal first place in the 100mH, where even the photo-finish couldn't separate him from his Tonbridge rival. As usual, Luke Keteleers was there in support, in the B string, keeping the Chelmsford points total ticking over.

The Women's 100mH saw the very welcome return of Lily Parris, back in the UK from University in the United States, and she reminded everyone what a fantastic athlete she is, with a fine second place in a very close race, before weighing in with third place in the 200m B race.

Back in the Field events, Chelmsford claimed maximum points in the Men's High Jump for the second time this season, with Tom Hewes and Oliver Early teaming up to win the A and B string events respectively, in gusty conditions that all athletes were finding difficult – including Dan Botnari, who took equal fourth in the Triple Jump.

The highlight of the relays was third place for Chelmsford (Kisiwaa Mensah, Erin Minton-Branfoot, Lily Parris and Zion Ateba) in the Women's 4x100m relay

The team were also extremely grateful to the team of officials who travelled with them. Officials also contribute very valuable points to the team score, and it was a very long day for Geoff Tyler, Ralph Burrows, Paul Tremelling and Geoff Reed, who worked tirelessly to both help the event go smoothly, and to propel Chelmsford into a superb third place overall, beaten only by the local 'big guns' from Sale and Liverpool.

The final placings were:

1. Liverpool
2. Sale Harriers
3. Chelmsford
4. Tonbridge
5. Basingstoke & Mid Hants
6. Wigan Harriers
7. Bournemouth
8. Enfield & Haringey



Lastly, thanks go to Chelmsford College, who lent two minibuses to the club, which were invaluable in getting the team to Manchester!

The team are in action again next Sunday, with a home match in the Southern Athletics League, followed by their third NAL fixture, at Bournemouth on 2nd July, where they will be looking to consolidate their chances of promotion to the NAL Premiership.