



Southern Athletics League Division 1 – Chelmsford – 16th July 2022

Chelmsford AC hosted a true 'top of the table' clash in the Southern Athletics League Division 1 on Saturday. Going into this third of a five match season, Chelmsford and visiting Harrow AC were equal on points at the top of the league, both clubs having won their opening two fixtures. Also involved were sixth placed Blackheath & Bromley, and newly promoted Eastbourne Rovers, who won the Division 2 East title in the last full season in 2019.

The closeness of the clubs' league positions was mirrored during the match, with the lead changing hands regularly throughout – and Chelmsford and Harrow impossible to separate for long periods. In the early stages, Blackheath & Bromley's strength on the Track had them in the lead, only for Chelmsford and Harrow to fight back with some excellent results in the Field and greater coverage across all disciplines.

Going into the last few events the result was too close to call, but with some excellent results in the Women's High Jump and Women's Steeplechase, Chelmsford finally edged the closest finish in many years, winning the match by just 7 points:

1. Chelmsford – 227
2. Harrow – 220
3. Blackheath & Bromley – 197
4. Eastbourne – 106

In the Southern Athletics League, match points are also scored by officials, and huge credit must also go to Chelmsford's team 'off the track', who worked tirelessly in very hot conditions, to out-score their Harrow rivals by a crucial 10 points.

On the track, it was even hotter of course, and it was in the longer distance races that some of Chelmsford's most notable performances were seen. Ben Felton cruised away from the rest of the field in the Men's 5000m, to win by over 30 seconds, while Jacob Alexander and Scott Thomas (in the 800m), and then Will Nuttall and Joseph Perry (1500m), and Scott Thomas and Ken Hoyer (Steeplechase) all teamed up well to score heavily.

The Women's team also put in some very impressive performances in the distance races – and none more so that in the 3000m, where debutante Megan Harris won her race by an even greater margin than had Ben Felton, before collapsing from her incredible efforts, during her warm-down. Another debutante – Charlotte Barnard – also pushed herself to her limits, winning the 3000m B race.

Hannah Bolton and Rachel Broome each displayed outstanding endurance by scoring well in the 800m and 1500m respectively – before combining later to take that vital maximum score in the Women's Steeplechase at the end of the afternoon. Megan Williams, and veteran Wendy King also deserve huge credit for their efforts in the 1500m and 800m respectively.

Elsewhere on the Track, U17 Archie Sims fully justified his call up to the Men's 400mH A race by taking a fine second place, while the ever-reliable Bradley Reed claimed victory in the 110mH.



Erin Minton-Branfoot was again demonstrating her value and commitment to the team by scoring well in the 100m, 200m and 400m, where U17 youngsters Grace Tremelling, Gaby Bilbie and Nneka Okoh all claimed vital points in the respective B races.

In the Field, Sam Tremelling showed enormous stamina to compete in five events for the Men's team, while also playing his part as a member of the Sports Centre ground staff! Amongst his results were a win in the Long Jump, and second place in the Pole Vault. Dan Botnari was taking on a similar workload as usual, and contributing a maximum points score in the Triple Jump.

In the Throws, Yasha Bobash claimed victory in the Hammer, where he was supported by Joe Wells, winning the B event. Kevin Wilson won the Men's Shot, and finished second in the Discus, while Luke Keteleers was quietly picking up valuable points throughout the day in a wide range of B events, in Track AND Field.

The Hopkins sisters once again dominated the Women's Shot and Discus events, while Lily Brand again showed her value by winning the Javelin with a PB – an event where she was supported by the returning Mia Chantree, who won the B event before coming second in the Long Jump.

Emma Rattle was also making a very welcome return, winning the Triple Jump, before pairing up with Zion Ateba to take that vital late maximum in the Women's High Jump, where both cleared 1.64m. Earlier in the day, Zion had cruised to victory in the 110mH.

With so many superb performances, Women's Team Manager Shirley Quinn found it hard to pick a Woman of the Match, and ultimately awarded it to the 4x400m Relay team, comprised of U17's Nneka Okoh and Gaby Bilbie, Hannah Bolton (straight from the Steeplechase) and the tireless Erin Minton-Branfoot. Going into the race knowing how important it was to finish ahead of Harrow in the final event of the day, they battled tremendously hard, with the order changing a number of times during the race before Erin held off the Harrow runner in the home strait with a great last leg.