

**SOMERSET SCHOOLS' AA / SOMERSET COUNTY AA
COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Millfield School, Street
Saturday and Sunday 26 and 27 April 2014**

On Thursday 20 February, information and entry forms were sent to 67 schools and colleges and the 4 major Track and Field clubs in Somerset, with a closing date of Friday 22 March so that the programme could be prepared during the Easter holidays. The details were also emailed to the schools and colleges, and to all the Somerset clubs by David Cooke. The information was also sent to the Dorset Schools' AA, the Dorset County AA and to all those guest competitors who had competed in recent years.

Final details were sent to all competing schools, colleges, clubs and guests on Tuesday 15 April. As usual, substitutions could be made after the entry date, and indeed, on the days of competition.

We enjoyed the usual first-class hospitality at Millfield School, thanks to close liaison with Gary Jennings, excellent co-operation from the ground-staff and the generosity of the school. The track and the field event sites were in superb order, offering the athletes every chance to perform at their best. Grateful thanks must go to everyone at Millfield for such attention to detail. Despite two storms on the first morning conditions were generally favourable, with warmer temperatures on the Sunday.

The meeting continues to be popular and after a dip below 200 Somerset entries in 2012 (for the first time in almost a decade) it was good to see a total of 205 in 2013 and a further rise to 223 this year. We have attracted between 30 and 40 more entries than that though, so 250 should be a realistic target. The recent trend has been: 175 entries in 2002, 192 in 2003, 218 in 2004, 235 in 2005, 224 in 2006, 254 in 2007, 259 in 2008, 268 in 2009, 203 in 2010, 240 in 2011, 190 in 2012 and 205 in 2013. One or two schools entered athletes for the first time, but, once again, thanks are due mainly to those loyal schools and clubs who support the meeting year after year, appreciating the value of the unique atmosphere generated for their athletes by Combined Events competition.

Since 2008 the quality of performance in the Senior age groups has been enhanced enormously with the acceptance of guest competitors (many of international standard) but they abandoned us this year, possibly seeking big scores abroad where they felt more favourable weather conditions might be guaranteed. Nevertheless, talented younger guests did travel from Cornwall, Devon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Avon, South Wales and Kent. Dorset joined us once again, with 31 entries and interest continues to grow to our east with Wiltshire Schools' AA (and St Laurence School) making 33 entries. Therefore, the grand total was 295 and that number compares most favourably with recent years – 299 in 2009, 277 in 2010, 308 (a record) in 2011, 268 in 2012 and 289 last year.

With the Somerset County AA Track and Field Championships continuing to be a two-day meeting we did not need to incorporate any additional events this year, though Race Walks were offered for all age groups, attracting a total entry of six from Brymore Academy.

The 2014 County Champions were:

Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon (39 Somerset entries – 28 competitors)

Rowan Austin	(The Castle School)	766 points
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Junior Boys' Pentathlon (34 - 26)

Cliff Schwabauer	(Millfield School)	2316 points
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Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk (3 - 2)

Callum Harris	(Brymore Academy)	22:02.3
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Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (17 - 14)

Matthew Trickey	(King's School)	4117 points
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Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk (2 - 1)

Nicholas Bretherton	(Brymore Academy)	32:52.4
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Senior Boys' Decathlon (5 - 0)

Senior Boys' 5000m Race Walk (1 - 0)

Senior Men's Decathlon (1 - 1)

Ben Thompson	(Yeovil Olympiads A.C.)	5052 points
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Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon (53 - 36)

Elena Sidman	(Wells City Harriers)	661 points
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Junior Girls' Pentathlon (51 - 35)

Ellie Lloyd	(Millfield School)	2302 points
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Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (10 - 10)

Anya Turner	(Wellington School)	4257 points
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Senior Girls' Heptathlon (6 - 2)

Grace Cottrell	(Bridgwater College)	3225 points
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Senior Women's Heptathlon (1 - 0)

A number of teachers, coaches and parents assisted our loyal band of officials and all worked incredibly hard throughout the entire weekend. Sally and Nick Higman (Referee and Technical Manager respectively) led the officials brilliantly, ensuring the meeting ran efficiently.

Computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of totals and positions immediately after each event and thanks go to Brian Baker for that vital service. Fully automatic timing and photo-finish were in operation throughout the meeting, fascinating aspects of the weekend for the athletes, and another development which has enhanced the status of our Championship, thanks to the time and effort put in by David Cooke, Dominic Cooke and Eleanor Brock. This is typical of the superb co-operation between the Somerset Schools' AA and the Somerset County AA.

Five or six of the top performers from the Under-13 Quadrathlons and the Junior Pentathlons will be notified of the Academy of Combined Events by way of an opportunity for structured winter coaching.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil
Saturday and Sunday 28 and 29 June 2014**

The organising county (Somerset) and the venue (Yeovil Athletics Arena – at the time) for the 2014 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were decided at the 2012 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting, with Richard Bowden as the Local Organiser. Nick and Sally Higman hosted our initial Planning Meeting on Wednesday 12 February where the provisional timetable was designed, and an information letter was sent to County Secretaries on Monday 14 April with a reply requested by Friday 30 May. I implored all counties to support the meeting and set an overall target of 120 entries.

The electronic system for entries operated smoothly, though, as I report every year, some counties persist in failing even to estimate personal best performances for some athletes, possibly disadvantaging them in their allocation to heats and pools. Brian Baker quickly organised the lists of competitors and their seeding so that this information could be given to Team Managers at the South-West Schools' AA Track and Field Championships a week prior to the meeting. Once again, the programmes were printed professionally, this year by Frome Printing Company, which ensured a neat, attractive finish.

Some years ago, entries were up around the 130 mark and after several years of slight decline – 117 in 1998, 121 in 1999, 114 in 2000 – an encouraging 126 entered in 2001 and 121 in 2002. There followed an alarming dip to a total of 93 in 2003 and 96 in 2004, so I was pleased to note that the decline had been arrested with 121 entries in 2005, 113 in 2006 and 116 in 2007. I was hopeful that the 2008 total of 109 was not about to herald the beginning of another downward trend but increases to 119 entries in 2009 and 118 in 2010 suggested healthier interest. The total entry of 120 in 2011 maintained our optimism but we fell back to 109 in 2012 and I was dismayed to report that last year's total fell by a further ten to fewer than 100 entries (99) for the first time in a decade. Although our target of 120 was not achieved, entries bounced back up to 111 this year (with 99 actually competing) and, once again only the South-East Region with 145 entries (123 participants) topped our totals. The remaining four Regions saw entries (and participants) of 97 (85) in the Midlands, 92 (87) in the North-West, 87 (70) in East Anglia and 83 (75) in the North-East. The South-West entries were as follows:

	Junior Boys	Inter Boys	Senior Boys	Junior Girls	Inter Girls	Senior Girls
Avon	4	4	0	4	4	3
Channel Islands	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cornwall	4	2	0	4	1	0
Devon	4	1	0	4	4	1
Dorset	4	1	3	4	4	1
Gloucestershire	3	0	0	4	1	3
Somerset	4	4	3	4	4	3
Wiltshire	4	4	1	4	4	0
TOTALS	27	16	7	28	22	11

With 99 athletes taking part (compared with 103 in 2009, 102 in 2010, 99 in 2011, 92 in 2012 and 78 in 2013) the recent decline in participation has, hopefully, been halted. Sadly though, there were no Race Walk entries this year.

Obviously, considerable numbers of volunteers are vital to ensure the efficient running of the meeting. Thus, I should pay tribute to the work carried out by Pat Gillett (Somerset Schools' AA Officials' Secretary) and Sally Higman (Somerset County AA Officials' Secretary) in the recruitment of officials so that events were well staffed. With Sally Higman as Referee and Nick Higman as Technical Manager the weekend ran smoothly, despite a flash-flood causing a suspension of over an hour on the first day. Photo-finish was in operation on both days, thanks to David Cooke and Eleanor Brock (Somerset) on the Saturday and Kate Martin (Devon) on the Sunday. Brian Baker wore several hats – those of announcer, scorer, results provider and certificate printer! The officials' lunches were provided by Yeovil Olympiads AC.

Standards at the head of most fields remain encouraging (especially in the Girls' age groups), with ten individuals and seven teams achieving places in the South-West "All-Time Top-10" rankings – though clearly the lighter implements in the Junior Girls' Pentathlon and the Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon account for a fair number of the new inclusions. The highlight was a magnificent Championship Best Performance of 7128 points in the Senior Boys' Decathlon by Nicholas Hunt (Dorset) – a score which would have earned 24th place in the IAAF World Junior Championships a month later in Eugene, Oregon.

The depth of talent amongst the Girls' age groups was emphasised when the rule concerning individual qualification for the ESAA Championships came into operation as the following South-West athletes deservedly progressed to Boston: Natasha Smith (JG Gloucestershire), Grace Chambers (JG Wiltshire), Olivia Dobson (JG Devon), Lauren Bell (JG Somerset), Breagh Campbell (IG Wiltshire), Anya Turner (IG Somerset) and Georgia Doyle-Lay (IG Cornwall).

It was gratifying to see that athletes from all seven competing South-West counties qualified for the ESAA Championships in September in the following numbers (once all the Senior Boys and Senior Girls were invited): Somerset 15, Devon 7, Avon 7, Dorset 6, Cornwall 4, Gloucestershire 4 and Wiltshire 3.

The leading results and the list of automatic qualifiers* for the ESAA Championships were as follows:

<u>Junior Boys' Pentathlon (Record - 3169)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 7816)</u>	
1. Cliff Schwabauer	(Somerset)	2738	1. Somerset	6870
2. Henry Williams*	(Cornwall)	2516	2. Avon	6606
3. Tommy D'Cruz*	(Devon)	2445	3. Devon	6540
			4. Cornwall	6524
			5. Gloucestershire	6254
			6. Dorset	5405
<u>Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (Record - 5786)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 14009)</u>	
1. Matthew Trickey	(Somerset)	4949	1. Somerset	13116
2. Ryan Long*	(Dorset)	4395	2. Avon	9236
3. James Slipper	(Somerset)	4187	3. Wiltshire	7303
4. Ethan Tyler*	(Cornwall)	4126		
<u>Senior Boys' Decathlon (Record - 7050)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 18124)</u>	
1. Nicholas Hunt	(Dorset)	7128 CBP	1. Dorset	17700
2. Matthew Curtis	(Dorset)	5712		
3. Luke Reynolds*	(Somerset)	5051		
4. George Walker	(Dorset)	4860		
5. Danny Burrowes*	(Wiltshire)	4001		
<u>Junior Girls' Pentathlon (Record - 3143)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 8371)</u>	
1. Molly Caudery*	(Cornwall)	2983	1. Avon	8282
2. Bethan Burley*	(Dorset)	2950	2. Dorset	8019
			3. Somerset	7481
			4. Devon	7424
			5. Wiltshire	7404
			6. Gloucestershire	7244
			7. Cornwall	9839
<u>Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 4687)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 12277)</u>	
1. Ada'ora Chigbo*	(Avon)	4630	1. Devon	12767 CBP
2. Jade Simson	(Devon)	4597	2. Somerset	12671
3. Ellen Barber*	(Somerset)	4544	3. Avon	10445
			4. Wiltshire	10056
			5. Dorset	9815
<u>Senior Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 4847)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 13129)</u>	
1. Kate Davies	(Gloucestershire)	4483	1. Gloucestershire	11959
2. Mollie Courtney	(Gloucestershire)	4313		
3. Grace Cottrell*	(Somerset)	3357		
4. Jenna Berton*	(Devon)	3293		

Throughout a thoroughly enjoyable weekend the unique atmosphere of Combined Events was maintained thanks to some excellent performances, rousing team spirit and the commitment of so many individuals and groups mentioned earlier. The team aspects were enhanced by the presentation of the South-West Track and Field trophies won the previous weekend.

The venue for the 2015 Championships (due to be held on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 June) will once again be Yeovil – at the now-officially-named The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil and will be organised by the Somerset Schools' AA.

With regard to the organising county and venue for the 2016 South-West Regional Championships, the usual letter to County Secretaries (supported by an email to other interested parties within the counties) inviting 'bids' to stage the meeting was not necessary this year as the 2016 hosting county and venue were also decided at the 2013 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting at Wellington School – Devon Schools' AA will organise the Championships and the venue will be Exeter Arena as a 'dry-run' for the 2016 ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Princess Royal Sports Arena, Boston
Saturday and Sunday 20 and 21 September 2014

The 2014 ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships involved a lengthy trek of 240 miles to Lincolnshire but, once there, the group was treated to superb hospitality at the Boston Premier Inn and first-rate facilities at the Princess Royal Sports Arena.

The local organising county (under the leadership of their County Secretary, Guy Bull) was the Lincolnshire Schools' AA who deserve great credit as sound preparation and attention to detail were clearly evident throughout a wonderfully enjoyable and successful weekend.

With 2 teams and 7 individual athletes qualifying for the Combined Events Championships, our group would once again be one of the largest on show - Durham also had 15 and only Essex (with 24 Combined Events qualifiers) arrived with more athletes. Unfortunately, we had no Race Walkers in our party this year. Inevitably we encountered a few hold-ups on the Friday journey on the motorways which took over seven hours from Taunton; however, the athletes were patient and well-mannered despite the delays and this encouraging attitude set the tone for the entire weekend.

Devon joined the Somerset group once again (with 6 qualifiers) and shared the Somerset transport and accommodation. A 33-seater coach from Knight Brothers of Taunton again proved our best option (and a significant money-saver). The team hotel was the Boston Premier Inn (and Brewer's Fayre Restaurant), just 3½ miles and a fifteen minute journey to the stadium. This hotel had been selected and booked in October as I had become aware that to delay could well mean long, inconvenient journeys to the stadium on each morning.

The weather was chilly and mainly overcast throughout the weekend with breezes on the Sunday. The organisation was most efficient, the stadium looked in fine condition and our athletes were given every chance to perform well.

Our full results were:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon

Cliff Schwabauer	(Millfield School)	3	2918 (PB)
Ollie Thorner	(Millfield School)	26	2275 (PB)
Oliver White	(King's School)	32	2071
Andrew Paulin	(The Castle School)	38	1475
Team Score		3	7264

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Matthew Trickey	(King's School)	6	4684
James Slipper	(King's College)	21	4102
Harry Atkinson	(King's School)	31	3727
Alex Yeates	(Millfield School)	34	3605
Team Score		3	12513

Senior Boys' Decathlon

Luke Reynolds	(Richard Huish College)	18	4859
Jack Malden	(Taunton School)	27	4202 (PB)

Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Lauren Bell	(Millfield School)	30	2512
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Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon

Ellen Barber	(King's School)	3	4775 (PB)
Anya Turner	(Wellington School)	7	4252

Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Grace Cottrell	(Bridgwater College)	26	3266
Lydia Guest	(Wells Cathedral School)	36	2799 (PB)

The Intermediate Boys' team achieved the expected place on the podium but a similar third place for the Junior Boys was a real bonus. The major highlights were the bronze medals won by Cliff Schwabauer (Millfield School) in the Junior Boys' Pentathlon and Ellen Barber (King's School, Bruton) in the Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon – results which earned England vests for the Home International Indoor Pentathlons in Glasgow on Saturday 13 December.

Every one of the Somerset athletes had family support (most impressive at such a remote venue) and this particularly loyal group of parents and grandparents certainly helped engender a most encouraging team spirit. That was clearly evident on the Sunday morning as several parents offered to assist with transport to the stadium, obviating the need for taxis.

Another factor which should never be underestimated is the incredible work carried out by the Team Managers – Jane Yandell, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton and Rhys Llewellyn-Eaton. It should be noted that people continue to want to be involved with Somerset teams thanks to the excellent response we invariably see from everyone who dons the red vest. Superb care and attention to detail during an exhausting two days were afforded to yet another most deserving group of Somerset athletes whose reliability, conduct, pride and loyalty throughout the trip made the meeting a fitting end to another tremendous season.

RICHARD BOWDEN