

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

**Millfield School, Street
Saturday and Sunday 28 and 29 April 2018**

Full information and entry forms were sent to our 60 schools and colleges and to the 4 major Track and Field clubs in Somerset on Tuesday 20 February, with a closing date of Thursday 29 March. The details were also emailed to the schools, colleges and clubs and to various parents and coaches. In addition, the information was 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 17 April and 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 Alan Richardson, excellent co-operation from Colin Ashman and his ground-staff and the generosity of the school. The track and the field event sites were in superb order, and refreshments were on sale on both days. Grateful thanks must go to everyone at Millfield School for such attention to detail and to Nick and Sally Higman for their careful inspections and meticulous preparation of the field event areas and all the implements on the day before the meeting. Sandwiched between 2 weekends of glorious sunshine (which then continued throughout the season), the last weekend in April offered temperatures of 9° to 10° with a cool breeze on the Sunday making it still chillier. With only a 5% chance of rain though, at least we were spared wet shirts. Wind readings also showed a little more kindness this year – though still up to -2.0mps on the Saturday and -3.5mps on the Sunday in some track events. Athletes did enjoy better luck in the Long Jumps, however, with negligible winds in either direction across the track.

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 205 (in the overall total of 289) in 2013 and a further rise to 223 (of 295) in 2014. After an alarming slump to 164 (of 257) in 2015 I reported that a Somerset total around 220 to 230 should be a realistic target. It was gratifying to get back beyond 200 in 2016 (with 206 of the 292) but although I then reported another 20 would be pleasing in 2017, we actually received 20 fewer Somerset entries last year with 186 of the 285. The total slipped to 181 this year but 20 Dorset athletes and 80 guest competitors boosted the overall total to 281 (just 4 fewer than in 2017) – plenty to keep the officials busy. The record of overall entries remains 308 from 2011 but in terms of actual participation, figures are remarkably consistent. Recently those have been: 215, 224, 209, 220, 224 and 232 this year (the largest number for the past 6 years).

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 standards of performances in the Senior age groups (and increasingly, in the younger competitions) have been enhanced enormously with the acceptance of guest competitors (many of international standard). They arrived in excellent numbers again this year, from as far afield as Cornwall, Devon, Avon, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Berkshire, West Midlands, Warwickshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, London, West Sussex, Kent, Essex, Merseyside, South Yorkshire, South Wales, Northern Ireland, Ireland and even Malta in order to post an early-season score.

An important development since 2015 has been the inclusion of Under-18 Decathlon and Heptathlon competitions (at the request of UKA) so that some of the most talented athletes in the UK (and Ireland) would have an opportunity to take part in a high-quality meeting using IAAF Under-18 hurdles and implements, including EDM, photo-finish and fully automatic timing with a view to qualification for the European Youth Championships or the IAAF World Youth Championships. The target this year was a trip to Gyor, Hungary, for the second staging of the European Under-18 Championships and we received 5 Under-18 Decathlon entries with 6 Under-18s in the Heptathlon.

Race Walks were offered for all age groups and alongside the usual entries from Brymore Academy, Anna Rose (Crispin School) returned for the Junior Girls' 3000m event, setting a CBP of 20:05.60. Catriona Edington (Wiltshire) competed in the Senior Girls' 5000m event but the busiest walker of the weekend was Toby Wright (Taunton AC) who, having scored 419 points in Saturday's Under-13 Boys' Quadrathlon, competed in the Under-13 1000m Race Walk on the Sunday for a CBP of 7:20.51.

The 2018 County Champions were:

<u>Under -13 Boys' Quadrathlon</u> (36 Somerset entries – 32 competitors)		
Jack Amor	(Millfield Preparatory School)	840 points
<u>Under-13 Boys' 1000m Race Walk</u> (1-1)		
Toby Wright	(Taunton AC)	7:20.51 CBP
<u>Junior Boys' Pentathlon</u> (33-26)		
Oliver D'Rozario	(Wellington School)	2774 points CBP
<u>Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk</u> (2-2)		
Will Hatch	(Brymore Academy)	19:41.53
<u>Intermediate Boys' Octathlon</u> (12-9)		
Jami Schlueter	(Millfield School)	4632 points
<u>Intermediate Boys' 5000m Race Walk</u> (1-1)		
Rhys Thomas	(Brymore Academy)	31:49.53
<u>Under-18 Boys' Decathlon</u> (2-2)		
Jack Turner	(Wellington School)	6836 points CBP
<u>Senior Boys' Decathlon</u> (3-2)		
Toby Sauter	(Richard Huish College)	4827 points
<u>Senior Men's Decathlon</u> (1-0)		
<u>Under -13 Girls' Quadrathlon</u> (30-22)		
Grace Fielder	(King's Hall School)	755 points
<u>Junior Girls' Pentathlon</u> (48-34)		
Lucy Chalmers	(Millfield School)	2982 points CBP
<u>Junior Girls' 3000m Race Walk</u> (1-1)		
Anna Rose	(Crispin School)	20:05.60 CBP
<u>Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon</u> (8-8)		
Holly-Mae McKenna	(Bishop Fox's School)	4198 points
<u>Under-18 Girls' Heptathlon</u> (1-0)		
<u>Senior Girls' Heptathlon</u> (6-4)		
Cerys Lee	(Taunton School)	4319 points
<u>Senior Women's Heptathlon</u> (2-2)		
Lottie Garratt	(Yeovil Olympiads AC)	3580 points

A number of teachers, coaches and parents assisted our loyal band of officials (including a very welcome number from Wales) and all worked incredibly hard throughout the entire weekend. As usual, Sally and Nick Higman (Referee and Technical Manager respectively) led the officials brilliantly, ensuring the meeting ran efficiently. We were very lucky to have the services of other international-standard officials in Chief Starter Alan Bell and Starters' Assistants, Lesley Minervini and Jemma Bates.

Announcer, Stuart Matthews (and his willing 'results runner', Shelley), together with the prompt computer scoring kept athletes, parents, teachers and coaches fully aware of totals and positions immediately after each event and thanks go to Brian Baker, Ann Whistlecroft and Barbara Gadd for that vital service. Fully automatic timing and photo-finish were in operation throughout the meeting, another development which has enhanced the status of our Championships, thanks to David Cooke and Eleanor Brock. This is typical of the superb co-operation between the Somerset Schools' AA and the Somerset County AA.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA SOUTH-WEST REGIONAL COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

**The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil
Saturday and Sunday 23 and 24 June 2018**

The organising county (Somerset) and the venue (The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil) for the 2018 South-West Regional Combined Events and Race Walking Championships were decided at the 2016 South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting, with Richard Bowden and Brian Baker as the Local Organisers. The provisional timetable was agreed (largely a replica of the 2014, 2015 and 2017 editions), and an information email was sent to County Secretaries (and other county contacts) on Wednesday 2 May with a reply requested by Friday 25 May. This email implored all counties to support the meeting, provide officials and repeated 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. This causes a good deal of trawling through Power of 10 to ascertain season's best performances so that athletes are not disadvantaged in their allocated heats and pools. Once those performances were added to the entry forms Brian Baker quickly organised the start-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 in Exeter a week prior to the meeting. Once again, the programmes were printed professionally by Frome Printing Company, which ensured a neat, attractive finish. Track slips, pins and numbers were supplied by ESAA and arrived in good time this year, with Brian Baker producing the field cards.

25 years ago, entries were up around the 130 mark and after several years of slight decline – 117 in 1998, 121 in 1999 and 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 the 2013 total fell by a further 10 to fewer than 100 entries (99) for the first time in a decade. Although our target of 120 has not been achieved for several years, entries bounced back up to 111 in 2014, slipped back slightly to 104 in 2015 but returned to an improved 112 in 2016, a solid 108 last year and 107 this time. After a pleasing number of 99 actually competing in 2014 and 98 taking part in '15, '16 and '17 there were 10 fewer this year following almost 20 late withdrawals. Interest has grown in some of the other Regions, however - the South-East attracting more than 20 extra entries this year with 149 (and 131 participants). The remaining four Regions saw entries (and participants) of 101 (90) in the North-West, 99 (81) in the Midlands, 85 (72) in East Anglia and 73 (58) 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	4
Channel Islands	0	0	1	0	0	0
Cornwall	2	0	1	1	1	2
Devon	4	4	0	4	4	1
Dorset	1	1	1	1	4	2
Gloucestershire	1	1	1	2	4	2
Somerset	4	4	4	4	4	4
Wiltshire	4	4	1	4	4	0
TOTALS	20	18	9	20	25	15

With 88 athletes taking part (compared with 103 in 2009, 102 in 2010, 99 in 2011, 92 in 2012, 78 in 2013, 99 in 2014, 98 in 2015, 2016 and 2017) we must note another decline in participation. There were 5 Race Walk entries this year – Somerset entering an Intermediate Boy (Rhys Thomas), 2 Junior Boys (Will Hatch and Will Holter-Hovind) and a Junior Girl (Anna Rose), with Wiltshire entering a Senior Girl (Catriona Edington).

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 Brian Baker (Somerset Schools' AA Officials' Secretary), Sally Higman (Somerset County AA Officials' Secretary) and Keith Reed (South-West Schools' AA Officials' Secretary) in the recruitment of officials so that events were well staffed (though some Team Managers were required to assist). With Sally Higman as Referee and Nick Higman as Technical Manager the weekend ran smoothly, with only minor tweaking of the timetable necessary. Photo-finish was in operation on both days, thanks to Jayne Reed and Kate Martin (Devon County AA) with Track Referee Keith Reed ensuring the running events started punctually and were contested according to all the relevant rules. Brian Baker wore several hats – those of announcer, scorer, results co-ordinator and certificate printer. The officials' lunches were supplied by Yeovil Olympiads AC and Tim O'Neill was the First Aid provider.

Although overall participation has declined, the mood need not be all doom and gloom as standards at the head of the fields continue to be extremely encouraging (with the girls back to the fore this year) and 9 individuals (8 girls and 1 boy) and 7 teams achieved places in the South-West "All-Time Top-10" rankings. The highlights were brilliant individual Championship Best Performances of 5064 points by Emily Bee (Devon) in the Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (adding over 300 points to her 2017 CBP) and Olivia Dobson's (Devon) score of 5223 which topped the previous best Senior Girls' Heptathlon total by over 200 points.

The depth of talent throughout our Region was emphasised when the 'next best 9' rule concerning individual qualification for the ESAA Championships came into operation as the following South-West athletes deservedly earned a September invitation to Bedford: Lanre Alli (JB Wiltshire), Ben McIntyre (IB Gloucestershire), William Scammell (IB Wiltshire), Toby Sauter (SB Somerset), Kieran Short (SB Wiltshire), Olivia Bagg (JG Somerset), Olivia Willmore (IG Dorset), Jenna Blundell (SG Avon), Olivia Jones (SG Gloucestershire), Bethan Burley (SG Dorset), Rebecca Ousby (SG Avon) and Lowenna Riley (SG Cornwall). In addition, two more Senior Boys were invited as wild-cards, having missed the Regional Decathlon due to selection for Great Britain in the European Under-18 Championships – Jack Turner (Somerset) and Ollie Thorner (Somerset), with Renee Jelf (Avon) and Dani Rawson (Cornwall) brought into the Senior Girls' Heptathlon as there were fewer than 45 competitors in the 6 Regional Rounds.

7 of the 8 South-West counties featured in the ESAA Championships, with 48 qualifiers in the following numbers: Somerset 20, Devon 11, Avon 4, Wiltshire 4, Cornwall 3, Dorset 3 and Gloucestershire 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 - 8003)</u>	
1. Oliver D'Rozario	(Somerset)	3051	1. Somerset	7683
2. Luke Ball*	(Avon)	2705	2. Avon	6784
3. Daniel Hamilton-Strong*	(Devon)	2694	3. Wiltshire	6614
			4. Devon	6506
<u>Intermediate Boys' Octathlon (Record - 5786)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 14009)</u>	
1. Jami Schlueter*	(Somerset)	4924	1. Devon	13910
2. Luke Cressey	(Devon)	4859	2. Wiltshire	12606
3. Rory Howorth*	(Wiltshire)	4758	3. Somerset	12107
			4. Avon	10102
<u>Senior Boys' Decathlon (Record - 7128)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 18124)</u>	
1. Cameron Hale*	(Dorset)	6202	No Team Scores	
2. Kaya Cairney*	(Cornwall)	5529		
<u>Junior Girls' Pentathlon (Record - 3221)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 9176)</u>	
1. Katie Chapman	(Devon)	3177	1. Devon	9171
2. Megan Hamilton-Strong	(Devon)	3167	2. Somerset	8752
3. Lucy Chalmers*	(Somerset)	3065	3. Avon	7436
4. Lydia Smith*	(Somerset)	2943	4. Wiltshire	7127
<u>Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 4763)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 13818)</u>	
1. Emily Bee*	(Devon)	5064 CBP	1. Somerset	12391
2. Emily Tyrrell*	(Devon)	4491	2. Devon	12372
			3. Wiltshire	10999
<u>Senior Girls' Heptathlon (Record - 5014)</u>			<u>Team Result (Record - 13129)</u>	
1. Olivia Dobson*	(Devon)	5223 CBP	1. Somerset	12310
2. Natasha Smith*	(Gloucestershire)	4861	2. Avon	11204

The unique atmosphere of Combined Events was maintained throughout the weekend thanks to some outstanding performances, rousing team spirit and the commitment of so many individuals and groups mentioned earlier. The team aspects were enhanced by the usual presentations of the South-West Track and Field trophies. Finally, we were delighted to welcome ESAA Combined Events Co-ordinator, Roger Blades on the Saturday. Roger officiated throughout the day before leaving for Stockport to work at the North-West Regional Championships on Sunday.

The venue for the 2019 Championships (due to be held on Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 June) will be Exeter Arena and the meeting will be organised by the Devon Schools' AA - as a dry run for the September 2019 ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships. With regard to the organising county and venue for the 2020 South-West Regional Championships, an email to County Secretaries (and other interested parties within the counties) inviting 'bids' to stage the meeting was sent out on 5 September. The hosting county and venue was then decided at the South-West Schools' AA Annual General Meeting at Wellington School on Saturday 6 October – Somerset organising the meeting to be held at The Bill Whistlecroft Athletics Arena, Yeovil on 27 and 28 June.

RICHARD BOWDEN

ESAA COMBINED EVENTS AND RACE WALKING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Bedford International Athletic Stadium Saturday and Sunday 15 and 16 September 2018

The ESAA Combined Events and Race Walking Championships returned to Bedford International Athletic Stadium after another 2-year absence and once again this proved to be an excellent venue. With Dennis Johnson (a Combined Events coach with immense enthusiasm and experience) as Organising Secretary, and a stadium with staff used to holding national championships, we could be sure we were in good hands.

With 5 teams and an individual athlete in the Combined Events Championships (plus a non-scoring individual), and 2 Race Walkers accepting selection, our group would once again be one of the largest on show with a total of 22 athletes and 9 Team Managers (an outstanding show of loyalty and commitment).

In 2009 we began our journey to Bedford in Wellington and the trek took 6½ hours. In 2012 that was down to 5½ (from Taunton) but despite leaving 2 hours earlier in 2015 we still encountered several hold-ups on the Friday journey which took almost 6 hours – including a mandatory half-hour break just 9 miles from our destination. This time we offered our usual 3 pick-up points (King's College at 10.30am, Junction 25 on the M5 at 11.00am and Junction 23 at 11.30am), with all 27 passengers arriving on time. Steve Jones (our usual driver) needed only a single break (from 1.35pm to 1.55pm) but the inevitable delays on the M5 and on the A roads around Oxford meant we arrived at our hotel at 4.10pm – still a 'PB' though, as our first official pick-up for athletes is Junction 25. The Team Meeting was brought forward from 6.00pm to 5.30pm, with the first evening meal sitting scheduled for 6.30pm.

Devon joined the Somerset group once again (with 10 qualifiers) and some shared the Somerset transport with most staying in the team hotel. The 33-seater coach from Knight Brothers of Taunton again proved our best option (and a significant money-saver) and as usual the team hotel was the Bedford Priory Marina Premier Inn (27 rooms had been booked almost a year in advance) within easy walking distance of the stadium. Evening meals were scheduled in 3 sittings and breakfast times (in 4 sittings) were arranged by age groups according to the various competition start-times. Another advantage was that some athletes could return to the comfort of their rooms immediately following competition on the Saturday without having to wait for the Junior Boys' Pentathlon Presentations.

The weather was pleasantly warm throughout both days (though a little cooler and overcast on the Sunday) and generally favourable for the athletes. The organisation was most efficient, the stadium looked magnificent and our athletes were given every chance to perform well.

Our full results were:

Junior Boys' Pentathlon

Oliver D'Rozario	(Wellington School)	2	2974
Harry Barton	(Millfield School)	10	2672 (PB)
Alex Hardy-Stewart	(Ansford Academy)	27	2367 (PB)
Hamish Ruthven	(Queen's College – Taunton School)	33	2094 (PB)
Team Score		3	8013

Intermediate Boys' Octathlon

Jami Schlueter	(Millfield School)	2	4981 (PB)
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Senior Boys' Decathlon

Jack Turner	(Wellington School)	1	6808 (PB)
Ollie Thorner	(Millfield School)	2	6544 (PB)
Toby Sauter	(Richard Huish College)	15	4904
Team Score		1	18256

Junior Girls' Pentathlon

Lucy Chalmers	(Millfield School)	4	3108 (PB)
Olivia Bagg	(Robert Blake Science College)	18	2799 (PB)
Lydia Smith	(Bishop Fox's School)	21	2773
Team Score		3	8680

Intermediate Girls' Heptathlon

Holly-Mae McKenna	(Bishop Fox's School – Richard Huish College)	19	4115
Maya Jones	(The Castle School)	22	3962
Andrea Gilbert	(Kingsmead School – Taunton School)	34	3641
Ellie Carrow	(King's College – Richard Huish College)	37	3587
Team Score		5	11718

Senior Girls' Heptathlon

Elise Thorner	(Millfield School)	5	4329 (PB)
Cerys Lee	(Taunton School)	8	4024
Harriet Fox	(King's College)	20	3148
Anna Brophy	(Millfield School)	DNF	
Emily Whitehouse	(Millfield School)	28	2617 (N/S)
Team Score		1	11501

Junior Boys' 3000m Race Walk

Will Hatch	(Brymore Academy)	4	18:17.24 (PB)
Will Holter-Hovind	(Brymore Academy)	DISQ	

Having won 8 team trophies in the 31 years of the competition (Junior Boys in 1989, 2005 and 2006, Intermediate Boys in 1991 and 1992, Junior Girls in 2015 and Senior Girls in 1999 and 2000) we won 2 this year, taking both Senior titles. Particularly pleasing aspects were that 3 of the Senior Girls had been in the victorious Junior team of 2015 and the Decathletes broke Kent's 7-year domination of that age group.

It is also pleasing to note that all 8 Somerset Seniors taking part will be young enough to compete in 2019.

The individual highlights were a gold and three silver medals, and the fact that there will be 3 Somerset athletes in the England team for the Home International Indoor Pentathlons in Glasgow on Saturday 3 November.

Almost every Somerset athlete had family support and this particularly loyal group of parents and grandparents certainly helped engender a most encouraging team spirit. Celebrations at the various presentations were remarkable and with Harriet Fox having her 18th birthday during the weekend (with 2 cakes, balloons and a card signed by the whole group) the mood was bubbly all the way.

Elise Thorner qualified for her 4th consecutive Ultimate Trophy, the award being presented to her by Roger Blades in the team hotel on the Friday evening. Elise then reciprocated with the presentation (on behalf of the South-West Region) of a map of the South-West of England to mark Roger's forthcoming retirement from the post of ESAA Combined Events Co-ordinator.

Jane Yandell, Richard Llewellyn-Eaton, Lloyd Williams, Steve Shaw and Rhys Llewellyn-Eaton were joined as Team Managers by debutants Emma Radford-James, Alan Richardson and Sam Ellis, with each playing his or her part in helping to make this meeting a fitting end to another tremendous season.

RICHARD BOWDEN