

Kent Cross Country Championships at Detling Showground
13th February 2010

Eight out of ten county team titles for Tonbridge

Including the senior men's team title, TAC came away from the Kent Cross Country Championships at Detling, with wins in eight of the ten championships available. In addition to these team awards, individuals won five of the races and gained nineteen medals of the possible thirty available across the races.

A freezing day on the exposed Detling Showground venue, provided a tough test for the runners, although the courses were generally dry and fast, with a few gradual inclines. In four of the races Tonbridge runners provided a clean sweep of the medals, with the under 17 women's race being the closest contest.

Senior Men

After a very strong performance in the Kent Cross Country League fixture before Christmas hopes were high that a county senior men's title could be won, if all our athletes ran.

As things turned out it seemed that only veteran runners Ben Reynolds (ill) and Graeme Saker (ankle injury) were missing, whilst Sam Bradley moved up from under 20 to contest this race.

The race up front was very competitive and Will Levett was on or almost on terms with leaders Dean Lacy and Mike Coleman for the entire race. Lacy and Coleman completed the closest finish that I can ever remember, as only half a stride separated them at the line, whilst Will came home for the bronze, which must have been very pleasing after a few difficult races recently.

TAC packed all six scorers in the first 12 to win the team title convincingly and it was just a shame that Medway and Maidstone won the 12 to score title by 289 to 302 or 13 positions across 12 athletes.

Under 17 Women

Ellen Holmes, Abblie Shepherd-Barron and Lucy Reid all worked together to build a gap on pre-race favourite, Rebecca Weston of Invicta AC and as they entered the last 800 metres of the 4100 metres course all three were within a few strides of each other. It was Ellen who was forcing the pace, as she had been for much of the second half of the race and as she approached the finish she had managed to shake off the attentions of her two team mates, winning by just three seconds from Abblie, with Lucy third.

In the other three races, featuring Tonbridge clean sweeps, the tactics, however, followed a different pattern, as George Duggan, in the under 13s, Charlie Joslin-Allen in the under 15s and Robbie Farnham-Rose in the under 17s all took the pace on from the start. All three were convincing winners.

Under 13 Boys

Stuart Brown and a resurgent Alex Kidd followed George Duggan home in the youngest age group, whilst the club recorded the perfect score as Tim Faes placed fourth. Euan Nicholls (6th) and Will Roud (8th) both ran well to give themselves a chance of county selection.

Luke Gunter told me that he felt his 22nd place represented his best run to date.

Under 15 Boys

As expected Tom Devlin took silver behind Charlie Joslin-Allen in the under 15 boys' race, but the surprise came from Chad Bryce-Borthwick, who took the bronze medal, looking very strong throughout. In-form Sean Molloy completed another perfect score for the club in taking fourth, by outsprinting Jake Rogers of Invicta AC. Hanro Rossouw (6th) and Max Nicholls (8th) were also high up the field.

Under 17 Men

Perhaps the best run of the day from a Tonbridge perspective came from Tom Cox, who claimed the bronze medal, behind Farnham-Rose and Luca Russo in the under 17 men's race over 6,300 metres. He had a race long battle with Adam Gilbert of Medway and Maidstone, but put in a determined last three minutes of running to take the medal. Tom has been one the biggest improvers this year at the club, having been injured twelve months ago and his medal was just reward for a Winter of consistent training. Jamie Bryant (6th) and Jack Keywood (9th) also took top ten placings.

Under 20 Men

The fifth individual gold medal came from Andy Combs in the under 20 men's race, where he led all the way to win by almost a minute from team mate James Taylor. With three to score in this event a close contest was secured by Alex Hookway, more of a track specialist, taking a fine 12th place, to put Tonbridge just ahead of Invicta AC and Cambridge Harriers.

Under 20 Women

Tonbridge's win in the under 20 women's event was secured by Catherine Symons (2nd), Jess Owen (3rd) and Vicky Rukin (6th). Jess pushed Catherine hard for the first half of the race and hung on well for one of her best cross country races to date.

Under 15 Girls

In the under 15 girls' race the club also took gold, led home by Alice Wood (4th), Nicola Wilkinson (5th) and Dominique Von Oppel (8th).

Under 13 Girls

The Tonbridge under 13 girls' squad all ran well and took bronze medals behind Invicta AC and Blackheath. Leah Melvin had her best run to date, to take the individual silver medal, pushing the winner Bobby Clay of Invicta all the way.

Senior Women

Deirdre McDermot won the bronze medal in the senior women's race, which was won by international Natalie Gray of Medway and Maidstone AC. Pippa Blackstone also had a strong run to place 18th, four places higher than last year.

Some of the statistics

Over all the races TAC had 72 competitors, which was down on last year's record of 81.

The senior men with 15, equalled the record number from 2008.

TAC had a scoring team in the under 20 women's event for the first time.

TAC's longest winning sequence is in the under 15 boys with five titles in five years.

It was the first time ever that TAC had won all five male team titles.

Charlie Joslin-Allen's win was the fifth in a row by a TAC under 15. The last 4 were Kurt

Wolfe, Michael Mason, Josh Bentham and Robbie Farnham-Rose.

Will Levett's bronze was TAC's first senior men's medal since 2003, when Huw Evans took silver.

Ellen Holmes' under 17 win was the first for TAC in this category this century.

Fingers are crossed that our athletes are generally in good shape as they approach the English National at Leeds in two weeks time.

Mark Hookway